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Robert Seely MBE MP

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Fran Collins – *Red Funnel*
Keith Greenfield – *Wightlink*
Neil Chapman – *Hovertravel*

29th October 2018

Fran, Keith and Neil,

I am writing to you as chief executives of the three cross-Solent operators to express the concerns of thousands of Islanders who have had their travel plans disrupted in the past few weeks.

Since August, cross-Solent services have been badly affected by a mix of technical and mechanical faults, legal issues and accidents. In addition, there have been cancellations, necessary or not, due to weather conditions.

Many Islanders are concerned by your ability to get people and vehicles to and from the Island without delays or cancellations. I should not need to state the need for a reliable service for Islanders, regardless of whether they are going to the mainland for medical, business or other reasons. An unreliable service damages the Island and harms Islanders. Delays also have knock-on effects for those using other forms of public transport.

Therefore, I am asking you individually to explain – to Islanders – your companies' respective performances since the summer. In particular I would like to ask whether you consider the current levels of technical or mechanical faults are acceptable and what, if any, steps you intend to take to ensure that your companies manage to run the service you advertise.

In addition, there are some specific issues. Regarding Wightlink, may I ask if it is a legal requirement for the vessel 'St Clare' to have valid, in-date certification and on what date and time did the certification of St Clare expire, and what effect might this have had on passengers in case of accidents? For Red Funnel, there is concern that accidents are now more common

in the Medina. Is this the case and if so, why? For Hovertravel, when can you give clearer information regarding issues with one of your craft?

This letter does not cast doubt on the efforts of those who work for you, and indeed it is wrong when they are verbally abused or criticised simply because they are the public face of your companies.

However, can you understand the frustration of Islanders at the current state of affairs? I look forward to your comments. Clearly, I will be making them public. I enclose a list of incidents below.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bob Seely". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Bob Seely MP

Here is a list: <https://www.islandecho.co.uk/islanders-suffer-8-weeks-of-cross-solent-chaos/>

26th August – Wightlink’s Wight Sky suffers an engine fire mid-Solent

27th August – Wightlink’s Yarmouth-Lymington service suspended as a result of the fire

29th August – Wightlink involved in man overboard incident outside Portsmouth Harbour

6th September – Wightlink run a revised timetable for 3 days due to a mechanical issue with Victoria of Wight

11th September – Hovertravel operate a shuttle service for approx. 1 hour

16th September – Red Funnel cancel 2 vehicle ferry sailings due to a technical issue

18th September – Hovertravel suspend their service due to strong winds

19th September – Hovertravel continue suspension of service due to strong winds

19th September – Wightlink cancel the 07:50 sailing from Lymington

20th September – Hovertravel announce a shuttle service due to a technical issue with Solent Flyer

21st September – Hovertravel withdraw Solent Flyer from service for 7 weeks and enter a 1-craft service

21st September – Red Jet service suspended due to a failure with Red Jet 4

21st September – Hovertravel suspend their service due to adverse weather

21st September – Wightlink cancel 4 sailings on Yarmouth-Lymington route due to adverse weather

23rd September – Hovertravel suspend their service due to a technical issue

24th September – Wightlink’s Victoria of Wight suffers a technical fault mid-Solent

27th September – Red Funnel’s Red Eagle collides with moored boats in foggy conditions

29th September – Red Funnel’s Red Osprey collides with a motorboat off Calshot

30th September – Hovertravel suspend their service due to a technical issue – twice

1st October – Hovertravel service suspended for almost the entire day

1st October – Hovertravel resumes service after some 30 hours

3rd October – Wightlink's Yarmouth-Lymington service reduced to 1 ferry due to a mechanical issue

5th October – All routes affected by fog with delays, cancellations and suspensions

10th October – Maritime and Coastguard Agency appeal for witnesses to Red Funnel's 29th Sept collision

11th October – Hovertravel suspend their service for 4 hours due to a mid-Solent technical fault

12th October – Wightlink operate a 2-hourly service due to anticipated high winds

12th October – Hovertravel suspend their service due to adverse weather

12th October – Wightlink's St Clare pulled from service resulting in 5 hour delays

13th October – Hovertravel suspend their service for over an hour due to a technical issue

14th October – Red Funnel cancel a number of sailings due to a technical issue

15th October – Hovertravel suspend their service for an hour due to a technical issue

15th October – Island Echo exclusively reveals Wightlink's St Clare was pulled due to a certification issue

16th October – Hovertravel suspend their service for around an hour due to a technical issue

21st October – Hovertravel suspend their service for 8 hours on the day of the Great South Run

21st October – Red Funnel's Red Falcon collides with a moored yacht and runs aground – Major Incident declared

21st October – Red Jet services suspended as a result of the closure of Cowes Harbour following the Red Falcon incident

21st October – Wightlink cancel a number of sailings on the Yarmouth-Lymington route due to a 'clutch issue'

22nd October – Wightlink cancel even more sailings on the Yarmouth-Lymington route

24th October – Hovertravel suspend their service due to another technical issue

25th October – Wightlink cancel a number of sailings on the Yarmouth-Lymington route

25th October – Wightlink operate a revised timetable on their catamaran service due to essential maintenance

26th October - Wightlink cancel even more sailings on the Yarmouth-Lymington route due to continue engine issues

27th October - Hovertravel suspend their service for around 90 minutes due to a technical issue

27th October - Hovertravel suspend their service without notifying customers

28th October - Hovertravel finally announce suspension of service after 13 hours - miss first crossing of the day