

House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
[Bob.seely.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:Bob.seely.mp@parliament.uk)

8<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Dear Bob

Thank you for your letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018. My reply takes the opportunity to provide some information about the disruptions and outlines the steps we have taken to improve Hovertravel's reliability and the services to our customers.

I would firstly though like to apologise to any customer that has been affected by any disruption. Hovertravel is a family owned company and continues to be passionate in its involvement with the Isle of Wight. We are committed to ensuring we offer a safe, reliable and consistent service for all users to and from the island.

Hovertravel's owner committed to investing £10 million some years ago into two new hovercraft to replace the craft which were built in the 1990's, ensuring the security and longevity of the fastest link across the Solent. We appreciate there has been a number of disruptions as we manage the implementation of these new craft. We are dedicated to seeing the successful fruition of this process and we have technical solutions for all of the issues which have been identified.

To maintain our two craft fleet, however, we need to finish the current engineering tasks on Solent Flyer which is expected back at the end of November, and then make the same modifications to Island Flyer, which will be completed by March 2019.

A comprehensive review of the complete business was undertaken in September and October, which assessed all areas of Hovertravel, including reliability, the operation, the customers and the effective use of the resources. Following this, and the feedback we received from our customers, we announced a number of changes, including our new timetable; the continuation of the 30-minute departures for morning and evening commuting periods and the return of the hourly winter service outside of peak times.

By continuing the 30-minute timetable, Hovertravel can fully utilise its two craft fleet to help manage the peaks and troughs which all transport business face when operating an intensive, daily service. Hovertravel operates up to 62 crossings per day, excluding just Christmas Day and Boxing Day, starting from 0615 and finishing at 2100. With two craft we can minimise

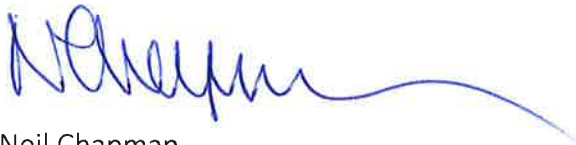
delays and, on busy days or for special events, add in extra services to answer additional demand.

In our announcements we have been to stress that the review revealed that our 15-minute service had not been fully utilised across the peak period, more often than not, only 50% of seats were being used. Our review also looked at more efficient customer communications, enhancing our on-time performance and how we interact with the local communities on both sides of the Solent. Hovertravel is a significant local employer, an enthusiastic supporter of local charitable causes, passionately dedicated to work with all sectors of the island community and a responsible contributor to the local economy.

Part of being a considerate company with outstanding customer service is continually looking at how the operation can be improved as we have done with our review, and we want to build on the 96% reliability we achieved over the summer to work towards 100% in 2019.

The entire team at Hovertravel are totally committed to ensure continual improvement to our services, and once again we sincerely apologise for any disruption our customers may have experienced.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Neil Chapman', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Neil Chapman  
Managing Director.