

31 October 2018

Robert Seely MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Bob

Thank you for your letter highlighting the issues Solent ferry companies have faced over the last few weeks.

I share your disappointment that Wightlink has not provided the high level of reliability that our customers rightly expect of us and want to take this opportunity to make a full apology to everyone who has been affected by delays and cancellations on our services. I understand your anger and frustration.

Although our reliability statistics over the first eight months of 2018 were good with fewer than two in every hundred sailings cancelled, technical issues caused delays to many of our sailings in October. This is completely unacceptable and we are working hard to identify the root causes of the problems. In particular, we are liaising with the suppliers of the systems installed on our Yarmouth-Lymington ferries to address mechanical failures and improve reliability.

Some services were cancelled because of poor weather. Wightlink will always put safety first and our Masters have the authority to decide whether or not to sail if visibility, strong winds or any other factor make it unsafe, in their opinion. However, I acknowledge we need to improve the way we communicate news of cancellations and disruption to our customers and this is in hand.

Our error surrounding the certification of St Clare caused problems for many customers on Friday 12 October and I apologise for this mistake. In common with all passenger shipping companies, Wightlink has a statutory obligation to have an approved Safety Management System (SMS) to cover all operations. We have an SMS in place. In turn, our SMS requires a valid Lloyds Register Certificate of Class for St Clare and it was this certificate (along with an Air Pollution Prevention Certificate) which expired on 5 October due to an administrative error. This omission was flagged up by Wightlink staff on 12 October and the ship was immediately removed from service. St Clare was inspected by Lloyds Register the following morning and the certificates were immediately re-issued without any defects needing to be remedied. The vessel's Passenger Ship Safety Certificate and insurances remained valid throughout.

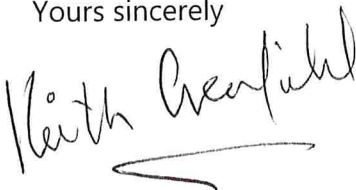
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It is completely unacceptable that this kind of error should have occurred, and I have personally overseen changes to procedures to ensure it is not repeated.

I and my colleagues at Wightlink are extremely sorry that this oversight caused so much disruption to our customers and front-line staff, especially in view of the progress made this year in improving our services. We have already apologised to everyone directly affected.

Once again, I am sorry that we have recently not delivered the reliability that Islanders and mainlanders expect and can assure you that we are focusing all our efforts on putting matters right.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Keith Greenfield". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Keith Greenfield
Chief Executive