

Ministerial Offices | Government of Jersey | Union Street  
Jersey | St Helier | JE2 3DN

By email

15<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Dear Chair,

### **Ferry Services**

Thank you for your letter of 14<sup>th</sup> April, in which you ask a number of questions regarding the provision of ferry services following the recent delay to the *Tarifa Jet*'s scheduled start of services. I have set out answers to each of your questions below in turn:

*1. What were the problems with the vessel(s) that prevented it/them from being used?*

The delay to the *Tarifa Jet*'s entry into service was caused by the decision, by DFDS, to re-flag the vessel on the United Kingdom shipping register. The associated flag state inspection was delayed whilst work was undertaken by DFDS on the vessel loading ramp to accommodate heavier vehicles used by Jersey exporters.

The flag state inspection could only be conducted upon conclusion of the ramp modifications and that inspection left some issues for remediation. The combined effect led to a delay in securing *Tarifa Jet* into scheduled service.

Although the *Tarifa Jet* re-flagging has caused a short delay, I welcome the decision. By registering the vessel under the UK Red Ensign, DFDS are committing to their full compliance with UK employment law and high standards for crew working conditions.

*2. Whether these issues were envisaged during the tender process, and if not why not?*

Bidders in tender process 1 were required to clearly identify the vessels to be used in the mobilisation phase and DFDS demonstrated a credible mobilisation fleet solution with named vessels to be deployed. This was repeated in tender process 2.

*3. What assurances were given by DFDS that they would be ready to start operating from the agreed start date?*

The Concession Agreement between the Government of Jersey and DFDS provided assurance that DFDS would provide services from the operation commencement date of 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025. Importantly, this was entirely successful on the Northern Route and missed by just one sailing on the Southern Route.

*4. Whether or not you believe that DFDS was given sufficient time between winning the tender and starting the service to prepare operations?*

The Panel will recall that, following termination of tender process 1, Jersey offered *Condor* (on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2024) a seven-month extension to the previous concession agreement which would have

provided all parties with additional time to conduct a second tender process and for the successful bidder to enter the new concession agreement in Q4 2025. This offer was rejected by Condor's Chief Executive on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

The subsequent judicial review brought by Brittany Ferries further delayed the signing of the new concession agreement until after the legal proceedings concluded.

DFDS therefore mobilised its services within three months of the concession agreement being signed. The pre-commencement works included the acquisition of vessels, re-flagging (and in some cases refurbishing) of vessels, scheduling, creation of a new booking portal, acquisition of relevant permits from port authorities and the hiring of staff – many of whom were previously employed by Condor Ferries and so could not commence their DFDS roles until 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

Less than three months is a very ambitious timescale to achieve such a service and it is regrettable that the joint tender did not reach a successful conclusion in early November and that, failing this, the offer of a seven-month extension was rejected.

*5. What assurances have you sought from the operator to ensure a reliable service provision?*

Key Performance Indicators within the concession agreement ensure service reliability by incentivising target achievement and imposing concession fee penalties for underperformance.

*6. What contingency is available for such service disruptions in the future and how will this be assured?*

The concession agreement contractualises a 4-vessel fleet to serve Jersey's passenger and freight requirements. The concession agreement provides flexibility and capacity to recover from delays and cancellations and to plan around forecasts of extended bad weather. DFDS has also identified additional cover for scheduled dry-docking activity that usually occurs in low-season months.

DFDS already has demonstrated its ability to organise suitable contingency arrangements at pace, which provides me with confidence that they are able to arrange a suitable alternative vessel again if the need arose.

*7. What procedures you have put in place to inform yourself as Minister, as well as the States Assembly, of such issues if and when they arise?*

Government of Jersey and Ports of Jersey Officials meet DFDS on a regular basis to discuss the implementation of the services as outlined in the concession agreement. Officials brief me on the content of these discussions as and when appropriate.

*8. Can you confirm when you were first informed about the delay in the commencement of operations and explain why there was any delay between you being informed and a public announcement being made?*

I was made aware of the Tarifa Jet re-flagging issue on the evening of Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March and the public were notified on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March. I am committed to prompt and transparent communication with the public, however, to ensure confusion was minimised, I was mindful to allow DFDS time to secure

a solution prior to informing passengers. This benefitted affected passengers as they were able to know the alternative travel arrangements at the same time as being informed of the need to make changes.

9. *What lessons have been learnt by Government to avoid this scenario being repeated in the future?*

This scenario has highlighted the importance of open and continuous communication between Government and DFDS, which is exactly what took place, as well as the need to regularly assess potential risks and to have mitigations in place.

New and complex partnerships can take time to embed, and I am impressed by the way DFDS has responded to the issues they faced and am confident that once the operator has had time to fully mobilise the service, they will continue to offer excellent customer service as has been shown during these first weeks of service.

I hope the above information provides clarity to the areas you have raised.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsten Morel', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Deputy Kirsten Morel**

Minister for Sustainable Economic Development