



Report 07.394
Date 8 June 2007
File T/11/10/01

Committee Passenger Transport
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Wellington Harbour Ferry Service Review

1. Purpose

To receive the full Wellington Harbour Ferry service review report and to address the issues raised at the last committee meeting regarding the possibility of diverting one of the Days Bay services via Seatoun.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Prior to the expiry of the current contract for ferry services a review of the service was undertaken. One part of this review was an investigation into the feasibility of a weekday ferry service to Seatoun – this part was presented to the Passenger Transport Committee at the 15 May 2007 meeting. The full review has since been completed and recommends the continuation of the service at current service levels (included as Attachment 1).

At the 15 May Committee meeting, when the report on the feasibility of a ferry service to Seatoun was presented, Jeremy Ward (Managing Director of ferry company East by West Ltd) requested that the Committee “consider leaving the door open for one diverted Days Bay, Seatoun, Queens Wharf sailing in the forthcoming tender process”.

The Committee debated both the report from officials and Mr Ward’s request, and agreed to receive the report on the Seatoun ferry and note its contents. Some members of the Committee expressed the view that Mr Ward should not be restricted from trialling a service to Seatoun so long as it was at his own cost and did not interfere with his Eastbourne contractual arrangements.

4. Comment

With regards to Mr Ward’s concerns it should be noted that:

- There are no restrictions on operators running a trial Seatoun service on a commercial i.e. unsubsidised, basis.
- The tender process allows for tenderers to submit an alternative tender (one that may deviate from the timetable and other specifications in the Request for Tender). Through this process any tenderer can propose an alternative that would provide a service from Days Bay to Seatoun to Queens Wharf. An alternative tender may be selected if it is in the public interest to do so.
- Contracts may be varied at any time in the future to include service changes, or new services can be trialled.

We do not oppose the operator running a trial service at the operator's cost, providing doing so does not alter the current Days Bay direct service (the current service is the same service we recommend including in the forthcoming tender). We believe this would currently be detrimental to the continuing growth of the current service, as it would:

- **Discourage passengers from taking that sailing.** Our survey showed 81% of people on the 8.10am sailing (surveyed over 3 days) would not take the sailing if it was diverted to Seatoun. 19% of these would use an alternative form of transport. (Note that the 8.10am sailing was selected to be diverted to Seatoun at the suggestion of Mr Ward because of the demand from students wishing to travel to Scots College at this time. This time would also allow commuters from Seatoun to reach Wellington at a reasonable time for work).
- **Reduce the level of service of direct trips** and therefore reduce the attractiveness of the service overall. Direct trips provide highly valued travel time savings for passengers. Diverting a sailing would create a 55 minute gap between direct trips at the peak time.
- **Reduce the quality of service on other trips** through overcrowding – in particular on the most popular trip of the day, the 7.45am sailing.

Additionally, major changes to the timetable were made in July 2006. Prior to July, sailings at this time in the morning departed Days Bay at 7.45 and 8.35am. It has only been since July that commuters have had a regular and relatively frequent service. The additional trips included at this time have also come with a significant increase in the GW subsidy, and it is considered premature at this early stage to further change services that have been well received by the users.

We therefore recommend that the service operates unchanged through at least another high season so that the impacts of the additional trips on patronage can be fully evaluated. It could be that a diverted service to Seatoun could be reviewed after that time.

We have discussed this with Jeremy Ward and we have agreed that no changes be made to the service at this time, and that the possibility of a diverted service to Seatoun be reconsidered in early 2008.

5. Communication

Due to public interest in the possibility of a Seatoun ferry, a media release stating the decision on the Seatoun ferry should be distributed.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Notes the contents of the full Wellington Harbour Ferry service review report.*
4. *Notes there are no restrictions on operators running a trial Seatoun service on a commercial i.e. unsubsidised, basis*
5. *Notes that the surveys are clear that any changes to the current subsidised direct Days Bay to Wellington services would:*
 - *Discourage passengers from taking that sailing*
 - *Reduce the level of service of direct trips*
 - *Reduce the quality of service, especially of the most popular morning service*
6. *Notes that the current schedule of GWRC-subsidised Wellington Harbour Ferry services is recommended to be included in the forthcoming RFT, and that the possibility of a diverted Seatoun service be reconsidered in early 2008.*

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Attachment 1: Wellington Harbour Ferry Service Review final report