

Representing the villages of Worth Matravers and  
Harmans Cross...in the heart of Purbeck

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22/04/2020 By E mail only

Dear Ms Zamenzadeh

**Bournemouth – Swanage Motor Road and Ferry Company**  
**Consultation - Application to increase tolls**

Worth Matravers Parish Council is responding to the recent public notice by the Bournemouth and Swanage Motor Road and Ferry Company which proposes to increase the tolls as suggested by the Ferry Company. Worth Matravers Parish Council objects to the proposals in summary as most of the original objections made in correspondence to the DoT and the Inspector at the Public Inquiry so recently held in September 2018 still apply.

This ferry has been a heavily profitable enterprise in the past and will in due course be so in the future. The past failure of the company has been to concretely and completely financially separate the past and future significant (£ Millions) operating surplus funds for a ferry replacement. Instead it has distributed large surpluses to a few shareholders over many past years.

Undertakings suggested in the application documents state that it is also now the Company's policy that the Ferry Replacement Reserve is ring-fenced and will not be used for any other purpose. Whilst they state "these undertakings have been committed to publicly and can be held to account publicly too" are simply words which appear to have little or no back up or statutory significance.

It is especially inappropriate that at this application should be pursued/ slipped through in these troubled Covid 19 social and economic time for its likely effect will be adverse on the economy and wellbeing of the local often nationally less well-off Purbeck community of businesses and residents.

1. The proposed increase in fares of 50% for pedestrians, pedal, and motor cycles and private motor cars totally ignores all the environmental and practical financial evidence which was given in writing and in person at the last very recent Public Inquiry and accepted by the Independent Inspector. Not least that at the present level pre Covid 19 the enterprise and its private overall Management Company had for many years benefitted from some of the highest possible ferry company profit margins.

Any fare increase would increase and perpetrate these profits in future years and have a significant financial impact on local residents who need to travel to and from Purbeck to the Bournemouth region of Dorset.

2. This increase will have a significant financial effect on local residents. Many, often on low household incomes, need to travel for work opportunity to the Bournemouth conurbation area using the ferry. Similarly the local economy on The Isle of Purbeck needs to bring in staff often to lower paid work in the tourist and hospitality industry.

3. The proposed increase will have a significant deterrent effect on potential day visitors to Purbeck from the Bournemouth area. This will affect the tourism industry the principal economic activity on the Isle of Purbeck peninsula.

4. There have been substantial increases in ferry tolls approved by the DoT for cars in recent years , far above CPI inflation,

5. The ferry operation has been highly profitable in recent years and will be in the future. For example in 2017 the company made £1,244,007 profit before tax on a turnover on £3,056,480, a rate of 31%. The Company's own 2018 submission to that Public Inquiry stated (p8 Para 3.3.12) "the data table at appendix 5.1 show s that the company's Profit before Tax as a percentage of sales is much more favourable than other companies in similar industries."

6 The ferry is one of the two routes leading into the Isle of Purbeck and both need to be managed and to maintain accessibility, balance capacity and demand, and reduce congestion. The longer alternative route is through the busy single carriageway road at Sandford and via the A351 causing in normal times more congestion in the narrow main road through Corfe Castle, a village of outstanding beauty already attracting 300,000 visitors a year.

The Parish Council was only recently made aware of this application as despite being an objector at the last Public Inquiry it was unaware of this application. It therefore reasonably reserves the right to expand upon these grounds of objection within the general principles set out above. It also notes that despite its past very high profit returns from the ferry operation the company proposes to close completely the ferry service with its public transport 50 bus route connection from Swanage to Bournemouth and vice versa. The PC would like to know why this is acceptable to the DoT rather than withdrawing the license completely from this Ferry Operator if it will not provide a service during these difficult times for all of us and seeking a successor.

Worth Matravers Parish Council requests the Department of Transport not to approve this application and to instruct the Company to withdraw it. It does not see that a meaningful consideration of these controversial proposals can even take place until the severe current social and economic impact of the Covid 19 Emergency is better understood .

Yours sincerely

Roger Khanna

Parish Clerk