



**National  
Trust**

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## **A variable pricing model proposal for the Sandbanks Ferry**

### **Premise**

1. The model relates to vehicle movements only as this is where the bulk of income is drawn from
2. The ferry company quotes 788,000 vehicle movements a year
3. This equates to an average fee achieved of around £3.70 per vehicle (income £2,901,946)
4. The ferry undertakes 32,760 crossings per year. (Winter 84 per day, Summer 96 per day)
5. The ferry can take 48 vehicles per crossing. This the maximum capacity per year is 48 x 32760 = 1,572,480 vehicles.
6. The ferry is thus running on average at 50.11% full

### **November Refit**

7. In the years when the ferry company closes for a refit for three weeks in November it is possible to calculate from projections that the loss of income for this period is £69,534.
8. At an average crossing cost of £3.70 this equates to 18,793 journeys down or 6264 each week.
9. In winter the capacity is 588 crossings each week, each carrying 48 vehicles = 28,224 vehicle spaces each week.
10. Thus, in a normal November the ferry runs at only 22% full.

### **Points to consider**

The ferry was established to provide local benefit and improve communication yet is running half empty on average across the year and significantly more than this in the winter months.

As the ferry is obliged to provide a regular service, it would seem logical to consider how to increase usage levels of the ferry to improve its' income as well as its utility to regular users.

Anecdotally, I use the ferry at prime commuting times throughout the year and it is typically at least half empty for prime commuting slots (morning and evening off season and morning only during sunny summer days), with only one side of the ferry opened to traffic. My experience confirms the figures. Usage in the middle of the day during low season is even less.

The commuting alternative around the harbour is busy with traffic at commuting times, suggesting that the issue is the too high pricing to regular users, not that the ferry is not required.

National Trust staff regularly refer to 'treating themselves' to a ferry ride in the mornings, illustrating that they consider it to be a luxury not their regular option.

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Virtually all deliveries received by the NT, are from routes driving around the harbour to avoid the ferry cost.

### **Proposal and model**

The proposal therefore is to introduce a variable pricing model to incentivise people who would benefit from regular ferry use to do so, in order to increase overall usage figures as an alternative to the blanket fare rise proposal that is currently on the table.

It is proposed that pre-bought tickets in batches of fifty for £100 be available. This equates to £2 per crossing. By restricting it to a bulk purchase, casual users are unlikely to purchase this amount and will pay the full ticket price of £4.50. This also prevents complicated administration over who may be entitled to buy. In our view it should be anybody who needs to use this route regularly, wherever they live. (70% of NT staff live the BCP side for example)

Most regular users are likely to still avoid the ferry at busy times, so the cheaper tickets are unlikely to be used when higher premiums could be achieved by visitors. However, it would be possible to limit cheaper ticket use to specific times.

In order to manage traffic on ferry road better – it could even be possible to flex the model further to include a super peak charge to reduce traffic on the road on the really problematic days.

### **Conclusion**

The attached spreadsheet has broken the year down into times of year and day and calculated through likely occupancy by regular users and casual users. It clearly demonstrates that by incentivising the locals to use the ferry more for commuting and necessary journeys – an increase of only around 7% usage of the ferry per year, at currently quiet times, would achieve the following **benefits**.

1. An affordable crossing price for regular users, (£80per month for daily commuting as opposed to the current £136).
2. This model only increases use to 57% of capacity. This conservative improvement still leaves much capacity for future growth. For example, lower fares again for off season middle of day usage.
3. A return to the ferry being seen as the utility it was originally intended to be.
4. The ferry company able to achieve its financial targets.
5. Less impact on the environment by avoiding the 44 mile round trip for regular users.
6. The potential ability to manage peak traffic on ferry road better.
7. A reduction on traffic on commuter routes around the harbour. This will also benefit the Purbeck villages on main roads.
8. Reputational benefit for the Ferry Company.
9. A benefit to businesses in Studland/ Swanage from additional business in the off season.
10. A clear benefit to people of BCP wishing to access nature on their doorstep.
11. A benefit to Purbeck residents needing to access the facilities of BCP.

This off-peak model works well for other travel industries, it is therefore a proven model. As part of the inquiry - We cannot see what would be lost by a trial period in the current winter months.

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