

Bournemouth – Swanage Ferry: Toll Application 2020

Alternative proposals from DC / BCP / STC (the “consortium”): comments and objection from Studland Parish Council

Summary:

We object to the DC / BCP / STC (the “consortium”) proposal because:

- They will increase the car use toll charges for local residents and employees by between 35 – 44%, which will inevitably lead to local residents / employees being forced by the high toll charges to drive the “long way” around to Poole and Bournemouth – which is more time consuming and much less environmental
- The proposals will lead to *higher* charges over the period of the toll application – 2020 – 2032 – than even the Ferry Company was requesting: a total of £49.188m compared to the £48.289m requested by the Ferry Company. Due to freezes on cyclists / pedestrians, this excess will be paid for by motorists, including local residents / employees

Objection

We strongly oppose the DC / BCP / STC proposal:

- Single fares for car users will rise from £4.50 to £6.50: a 44% increase
- Book of 10 tickets will rise from £3.60 a ticket to £4.90: a 36% increase
- Book of 50 tickets will rise from £3.40 a ticket to £4.60: a 35% increase
- Book of 100 tickets: numbers / increase not shown

This will adversely affect local residents, businesses and their employees who are forced to use their cars to travel to work – due to the distances, and very limited availability of public transport. For local residents / employees, use of cars is a necessity, not a life style choice.

Foot passenger fares will stay at £1 - which whilst advantageous will almost exclusively benefit leisure / lifestyle visitors and not residents / employees who overwhelmingly are forced to use their cars due to the absence of reasonable public transport, the hills, the wet / windy Autumn / Winter weather, and the long distances from the ferry to centres of population (Ferry to Swanage: 6 miles; Ferry to Studland: 3 miles; Ferry to Bournemouth and Poole town centres: up to 5 miles).

Bicycle fares will stay at £1 - which again whilst advantageous will primarily benefit leisure / lifestyle visitors and not residents / employees who overwhelmingly use cars – for the reasons outlined above, plus the substantial hills on journeys to and from the ferry.

The proposal accepts the Ferry Replacement Reserve policy discredited by the Inspector at the 2018 Inquiry

The proposal also accepts the exceptional high profits made by the Ferry Company, and dividends enjoyed by the owners, also discredited by the Inspector in 2018 Inquiry.

The DC / BCP / STC proposals also offer to pay more to the Ferry Company in tolls than the Ferry Company requested: £49.188m over the period 2020 – 2032, compared to the £48.289m requested by Ferry Company. It is also front loaded – meaning that local residents / employees will be paying

more sooner than even the Ferry Company has requested (for details, see submission from Malcolm Tice).

The DC / BCP / STC proposals offer no solutions to rural employees and residents who are dependent on use of their cars, especially in the winter months, due the poor quality of public transport, the long distances, the hills and often the weather.

In the “Swanage Advertiser”, dated November 26th 2020, the article says:.....”the Consortium’s alternative proposal places the burden of increases on single-trip car usage, which the consortium says ‘will affect predominately occasional users and one-off visitors’.” This sadly shows a lack of concern for local residents and employees.

We would like the Inspector to be aware that use of cars in a rural area like Studland and the wider Purbeck area is not a “lifestyle” issue: it is essential due to the absence of adequate public transport, the distances, the age of many residents, the topography. The number 50 More Bus, which is the only bus available, has only one bus an hour in the winter months: the first bus leaves Bournemouth Station at 8.02am arriving at Swanage at 9.05 (which is too late for most hotel / restaurant workers), and the last leaves Bournemouth Station at 19.38 arriving at 20.45; the first bus from Swanage is at 06.45am arriving in Bournemouth at 07.47; the last bus leaves Swanage at 18.25 arriving at Bournemouth Station at 19.27: these times make it impossible for hotel / restaurant / hospitality sector workers on shifts.

In terms of cycling, the roads in Purbeck are typically unlit, very hilly, and in the winter it is often wet / cold / dark / windy. Again, use of cars is essential, not a lifestyle choice. The demographics of Studland – with quite a high elderly population – would mean that elderly / retired can only often travel by car: attempting to cycle in the winter and dark for them would be suicidal.

Studland Parish Council conducted a survey of residents – at the start of December - to test their reaction to the toll increases proposed by the consortium. Details have been submitted separately. But a key piece of analysis shows that 52% of residents would stop using the ferry altogether if the toll increases went ahead – driving more traffic through Wareham, and a further 27% would reduce their usage or change their mode of travel.

Cars / vans are the principal methods for people to work to and from work in Purbeck. The 2011 Census data, reported by the Office of National Statistics, showed travel to work data. Of people travelling to work into and out of the now abolished Purbeck District Council over 80% travelled by cars or vans:

	Inflow	Inflow	Outflow	Outflow
	Numbers	%	numbers	%
Total	7,666		8857	
Bus	113	1.5%	253	2.9%
Motorbike	142	1.9%	141	1.8%
Car / van	6,619	86.3%	7,500	84.7%
Bicycle	214	2.8%	210	2.4%
Foot	327	4.3%	348	3.9%

“The Pig on the Beach Hotel”, a nationally renowned hotel and restaurant in Studland, has shared the travel to work methods for their employees; of their 84 employees:

- 28 travel by car across the ferry
- 10 travel by bus across the ferry
- 2 travel by bike across the ferry
- 5 live in staff housing
- 8 live in staff housing in Studland and walk to work
- 31 drive to work – either from within Purbeck, or from Poole / Bournemouth but choose to drive around due to ferry pricing

The comment of Tara Crabb, the GM, was: “We really struggle to recruit staff from the other side of the water due to the pricing”. This comment was supported by other major employers in the area.

The objection by Pippa Lightbown of “The Bankes Arms Hotel” also shows the damage that would be done to local businesses, to employment and to the environment by a significant rise in fares for car users.

Raising ferry fares may well have a detrimental impact on employment in Purbeck – and the ability of nationally renowned businesses to serve their customers.

Summary

We are very disappointed that Dorset Council / BCP / STC fails to understand the needs of their residents, businesses and employees in rural areas such as Studland and Purbeck for whom use of cars on the ferry is essential; it seems that their proposal only favours “leisure / lifestyle” users. It is bizarre that the consortium wish to provide more toll based revenue to the Ferry Company than the Ferry Company has requested. We ask them to withdraw their badly thought through toll proposals.

**Nick Boulter, Chairman
Studland Parish Council**