PRESS RELEASE
13TH SEPTEMBER 2019

Sandbanks Ferry Company says passenger safety must be a priority for any interim ferry plans

The Sandbanks Ferry Company has stated that passenger safety remains its primary consideration as the company continues to assess options for an interim service for whenever the chain ferry is out of action for sustained periods of time.

The Ferry Company has explored a variety of potential alternatives to maintain a level of service while the ferry is under repair. These have included investigating the temporary use of a replacement vehicle ferry from Germany. The Company was unable to progress these plans as while the vehicle ferry met German safety standards, it did not comply with UK regulations.

Other potential interim options have been presented by members of the local community, including the suggestion to partner with the Brownsea Island Ferry Company to run a service from a new temporary modular floating pontoon at Shell Bay in Studland to the existing Brownsea Island Ferry jetty in Sandbanks.

Mike Kean, Managing Director of the Sandbanks Ferry Company, said: "We are very sorry for the impact this ferry suspension is currently having upon the local community, particularly in Studland and Swanage. We have been working tirelessly to investigate all potentially viable options until the chain ferry returns to service, including options put forward by the Studland community. We are looking carefully at the suggested plans to install a temporary pontoon at Shell Bay and are consulting with several external agencies to assess its viability.

"We are currently awaiting the outcome of an application to the Marine Management Organisation, which is needed to progress the plan. Our investigations so far have raised considerable concerns, including that the proposed pontoon may be unsafe in certain tidal conditions and in poor weather. Additionally, a temporary ferry service may be suspended at short notice should conditions change suddenly, running the risk of leaving passengers stranded.

"We cannot, and will not, compromise on passenger safety, which continues to be our number one priority as we progress these plans."

The Sandbanks Ferry Company has met with members of the public from both Sandbanks and Studland to update concerned residents on the Company's continuing efforts to identify a viable interim solution.

Mike Kean added: "I am very grateful for the continuing understanding of the public, especially those who have taken the time to suggest potential interim options. I would

like to reassure local residents that we will continue to assess all potentially viable alternatives as a priority."

The Sandbanks Ferry Company is in receipt of regular updates from the manufacturers of the chain ferry replacement parts, the last of which are scheduled to arrive at its ship repair facility in Southampton by mid-October. Reassembly works will commence immediately on a 24 hours a day basis, with the objective, weather permitting, to return the ferry to Poole by the end of October.

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