

Strangford Lough Ferry Service

Proposals to Amend Ferry Timetable

Consultation Report



February 2016

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

1.1.1 This report records the findings of the public consultation undertaken on proposals to amend the Strangford Lough Ferry Service timetable. It details how consultation was undertaken, summarises the responses received and indicates how they will inform any decisions to amend the timetable.

1.1.2 The Department (DRD) is grateful to all those who participated in the consultation process.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 On 5 October 2015 TransportNI launched a public consultation on proposed changes to the Strangford Lough Ferry Service timetable. The consultation ran for 10 weeks and closed on 11 December 2015.

1.2.2 The proposed change was to introduce an additional sailing from Portaferry at 07.20 on weekday mornings all year round and offset this by dropping the last two sailings on Sunday to Friday evenings from 1 October to 31 March. The evening sailings from 1 April to 30 September would be unchanged. The number of sailings provided over the course of a year would be the same as at present. The Saturday timetable would be unchanged.

1.2.3 The revised timetable was intended to meet the commuter demand for an earlier weekday sailing from Portaferry within the resources currently available.

2. Public Consultation

2.1 A consultation document was published on the DRD website on 5 October 2015. The document gave full details of the existing and proposed timetables and included average passenger and vehicle numbers on the early and late sailings during 2014/15.

2.2 The consultation document can be accessed using the following link:

<https://www.drdni.gov.uk/consultations/public-consultation-proposed-amendment-strangford-lough-ferry-service-timetable>

2.3 The consultation was advertised in the Down Recorder and Ards Chronicle during the week commencing 5 October 2015.

2.4 Flyers summarising the consultation were issued to passengers at peak times during the week commencing 5 October 2015.

2.5 The consultation document was issued to all MLAs and was sent by e-mail to the local Members of Parliament, Jim Shannon MP, Lady Sylvia Hermon MP and Margaret Ritchie MP.

2.6 The consultation document was sent by letter or e-mail to the following organisations and community groups:

- Newry Mourne and Down District council;
- Ards and North Down District Council;
- The Consumer Council;
- The Maritime and Coastguard Agency;
- Strangford Community Association Developments;
- Strangford Community Association; and
- Portaferry Community Collective.

- 2.7 Consultees were invited to respond in writing, by e-mail or by telephone before 27 November 2015. Following a later request from Newry Mourne and Down District Council, the consultation period was extended to 11 December 2015.
- 2.8 The Department received 43 consultation responses. These were received from the councils, community organisations, elected representatives and individual members of the public. A list of organisations and elected representatives who responded is included in Annex A.
- 2.9 The most common response (20 of 43 respondents) was in favour of the early morning sailing but opposed to dropping the late sailings.
- 2.10 Since the close of the consultation period the Department has reviewed all of the consultation responses and considered the comments received.

3. Consultation Response Summary

- 3.1 20 of the 43 respondents were in favour of the early sailing but objected to the late sailings being dropped.
- 3.2 12 of the 43 respondents suggested that the early morning sailings could be provided within existing resources by suspending sailings in the afternoon.
- 3.3 Many respondents also raised other issues including:
- The need for more late sailings at weekends (12 respondents); and
 - Early morning noise issues (4 respondents).
- 3.4 Chapter 4 outlines the feedback received through the public consultation. It highlights individual comments and suggestions from the respondents.

4. Responses to Consultation

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 This chapter will deal in turn with the comments received in relation to:

- Early Sailings;
- Late Sailings;
- Additional Sailings at weekends;
- Suspension of the Ferry Service on weekday afternoons;
- Staffing levels, and
- Early morning noise issues.

4.2 Introduction of Early Sailing

4.2.1 29 of the 43 respondents were in favour of the proposed early morning sailing. Where reasons were given, they were generally related to getting to work earlier.

'...I, and indeed most, if not all of the workforce would be pleased with an earlier sailing from Portaferry...'

'...At present, if I am taking my car across on the ferry to work it is 'pot luck' whether there is room for my car regardless of the time you attend the ferry..'

'...I would welcome the introduction of an early morning sailing from Portaferry to support the needs of the people of Portaferry...'

'...I, and indeed most, if not all of the work force would be pleased with an earlier sailing from Portaferry. The present time of 7.45 a.m. is too restrictive for workers to reach a site at 8.00a.m...'

'...The earlier sailing is to be welcomed. Many people work on the other side of the Lough and in many cases the early sailing will mean that they don't have to drive up to Newtownards then down the other side to get into work on time...'

'...At the outset, can I welcome the proposed permanent 7.20am crossing - something that I personally have been addressing and lobbying for during recent years. This is excellent news for the regular users of the facility and has been welcomed by everyone. Further, this is in particular an issue that should not be used as a bargaining tool but rather set in stone as a proposed recommendation not up for trading against or used for any other concerns with reference to any future proposed timetable...'

'...Firstly, we would like to throw the full weight of our support behind the proposed additional early morning sailing from Portaferry at 7.20am. That there will be full demand for this service is without question, as evidenced by the queues for the current first sailing at 7.45am, one which leaves disappointed overspill travellers behind on a daily basis. Not only will this new service help them, it will also allow workers, many of whom are connected to the building trade, to get to work earlier and inevitably boost the economic productivity of the town, as well as allowing school children to take part in early extracurricular activities...'

4.2.2 There were no specific objections to the early sailing although some respondents raised the issue of early morning noise.

4.2.3 Of the 29 respondents in favour of the early sailing 20 were also opposed to dropping the late sailings and 3 suggested additional sailings at weekends.

'...While I agree an earlier boat is a good idea for the early morning commuters, the removal of the late boat does curtail the time that people from Strangford can spend on an evening in Portaferry, and vice versa. Already running for the last boat is a regular occurrence for me and several others who live in Strangford when it comes to going for meals/drinks/local events in the evening...'

‘..Whilst the proposal to introduce earlier morning sailings is to be welcomed, I would like to see more ferry sailings overall rather than a redistribution of the current number of sailings. The ferry service provides residents of the Upper Ards with easy access to South Down and beyond..’

‘ Firstly we welcome and fully support the new early morning weekday sailing from Portaferry at 7.20 am as this will accommodate workers. However, we believe that reducing the evening ferry service during the winter months should be reconsidered as this is an essential service to the community...’

4.3 Dropping Late Sailings in Winter Months

4.3.1 30 of the 43 respondents objected to the proposal to drop the last sailings in the winter months. Of these 25 commented on how the proposal would impact on their work, social or family life.

‘...For the residents of the Upper Ards, the ferry service is simply an extension of the road network. This network should not shut down at 22.30 as it currently does Sunday to Friday..’

‘...I have elderly parents who live in Portaferry and I rely on the last sailing to get home after visiting them 3 or 4 nights a week..’

‘...already running for the last boat is a regular occurrence for me and several others who live in Strangford when it comes to going for meals/drinks/local events in the evening...’

‘..I feel that the time of the last ferry is about right at present, losing this last ferry would restrict the ability of those on either side of the Lough to take part in social activities...’

‘..In response to your proposal to drop late evening sailings, this will prove detrimental to the communities on both sides of the Lough. Even though it may

not large numbers crossing, it supports local business and social ties. The option to cross allows planning. To have no crossing means no alternative option available at all..'

'...I would be extremely concerned that late sailings were being axed to accommodate this essential early sailing. The people of Portaferry and Strangford rely on this service to connect them to friends, family and services (shops, restaurants, bars and events) on either side of the Lough. There are no other public transport links between these two villages at this time of the evening. The early sailing would require a meagre 10-15 minute extension to the working day and to axe evening sailings would be devastating to the local communities. The early sailing is already (temporarily) in place with no knock-on effect to late sailing so it can be done...'

'... If I thought that these sailings would not be available for most of the school year I would not be encouraging my daughter to take part in future activities where we would be forced to drive around the Peninsula on a school night and this is not what I should be doing as a parent. I know that the statistics show that the service may be underused late at night but for those who do use it is a godsend...'

- 4.3.2 20 respondents who objected to dropping the last sailing were also in favour of the early sailing and 9 suggested additional sailings at weekends.

4.4 Additional Sailings at Weekends

- 4.4.1 12 of the 43 respondents suggested that there should be additional late sailings at weekends.
- 4.4.2 Of these 11 were also in favour of the early sailing and 9 objected to dropping the late sailings.

'...Having spoken to people in Strangford at the weekend they are generally accepting of the times suggested but would request that the later ferry remain on a Friday night. They ask for this as it is important to people in the bars/pubs industry and music scene and the early stop of the ferry on a Friday night would restrict what can be done/what they can participate in...'

'...we recommend that the Friday evening service is extended in line with the Saturday night sailings of 11 p.m. and 11.15 p.m...'

4.5 Suspension of the Ferry Service on Weekday afternoons

- 4.5.1 10 of the 43 respondents suggested that sailings could be dropped in mid-afternoon so that the proposed early sailing and the existing late sailing could be provided within the existing resources.

'...we are aware that the collective recommendation from the community in Portaferry has been to consider cutting services during the daytime in winter...'

'..I am quite sure that there are several sailings during the day which are not filled to capacity / are virtually empty...'

4.6 Early Morning Noise Issues

- 4.6.1 4 respondents expressed concern that starting the ferry engines earlier would cause noise disturbance in Strangford.

'... It is important that all parties taking part in this consultation should be informed that many Strangford residents have been exposed to high noise levels from MV Portaferry II since it first came into service. The DRD will have records of all our complaints and our meetings with the Department to press for solutions to the noise problems. After many years our justified noise complaints brought some improvements though noise problems can occur regularly...'

'.. I have endured a high level of noise from the ferry from early in the morning.....Can you please ensure that this new timetable does not create noise and pollution from the engines being fired up before 7.00...'

4.7 Staffing Levels

4.7.1 2 respondents suggested that the ferry service was overmanned and that the Department should seek to identify savings from staffing costs.

'...I wonder how far the Department has looked to the Ferry infrastructure to make savings rather than taking the easy course of simply reducing the service. Although I don't know how the Department administers the Ferry, I do know that at times the boat seems to be overmanned ...'

5. TransportNI Response

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 TransportNI welcomes the comments received and is grateful to all those who responded.

5.2 Introduction of early morning sailing

5.2.1 The proposal was to introduce a permanent sailing from Portaferry at 07.20 on weekday mornings. This change was proposed as a result of a number of requests received from passengers and elected representatives in recent years.

5.2.2 Since 2011 a temporary early sailing has been provided for 6 -8 weeks each year to compensate for the reduced capacity when the MV Portaferry II is in refit and the smaller MV Strangford is in service. Passenger numbers show that this temporary early sailing is well used and anecdotal evidence from the ferry crews is that many passengers would welcome a permanent early sailing.

5.3 Dropping late evening sailings in winter months

5.3.1 The response to the consultation confirms the TransportNI view that there is a demand for an earlier weekday sailing. However, it is noted that, while 67% of respondents were in favour of the early sailing, almost 70% objected to the loss of the last sailings on winter evenings.

5.3.2 The consultation responses have highlighted very clearly that many regular users consider that the last weekday sailings are essential for their family, social and working lives. Records show that passenger numbers on the last sailings on weekdays are very low, particularly in winter months. However, in view of this response TransportNI accepts that stopping the late sailings would

have an unacceptable negative impact on the Strangford and Portaferry communities.

5.4 Suspension of afternoon sailings

5.4.1 The proposal to drop afternoon sailings has been suggested as a means of providing both the early morning and late evening sailings without extending the crew working hours. While there may be a perception that the Ferry Service is not busy during the day, passenger records show that the demand for all daytime sailings is higher than for the last sailings in the evening. Suspending afternoon sailings would therefore have a greater negative impact than suspending the later sailings and is not considered to be a viable option.

5.4.2 In addition, suspension of mid-afternoon sailings during the summer months would have a knock-on effect into the evening peak and leading to increased delays for commuters and increased congestion in Strangford.

5.5 Additional Friday evening sailing

5.5.1 TransportNI is aware that there is a demand for a later sailing on Friday evening to improve the accessibility to pubs and restaurants for residents and to support the local hospitality trade. This matter has been fully explored in recent years and the conclusion was that a late Friday evening sailing could not be provided within the existing resources available.

5.6 Early morning noise

5.6.1 TransportNI is committed to complying with the legislation governing noise levels between 23.00 and 07.00. On most occasions the proposed early sailing from Portaferry could be provided without starting the ferry engines before 07.00. As this reduces the time available to resolve minor mechanical problems there is an increased risk that the first sailing may be delayed and that this could have a knock-on effect on some later sailings. While this

occasional reduction in the level of service is not ideal, TransportNI consider that there would be an overall benefit to commuters.

5.7 Staffing Levels

5.7.1 To comply with legislation on passenger safety TransportNI is required to provide a minimum crew of four at all times. The numbers employed provide the minimum crew while enabling cover for meal breaks and holidays.

6. Newry Mourne and Down District Council Survey

- 6.1 In preparing its response to the consultation Newry, Mourne and Down District Council undertook a survey of users of the ferry service and other interested bodies. The survey involved 127 ferry users and was conducted over one weekday and one weekend morning.
- 6.2 The outcome of the Council survey was that the majority of those surveyed used the ferry for business purposes and, of those, 88.3%, agreed with the introduction of the earlier sailing.
- 6.3 While there was mixed opinion about the dropping of the last 2 sailings, 57.4% of respondents disagreed with this proposal. Of those surveyed, 49.6% of respondents noted that they would be affected by the removal of the late sailings. They gave various reasons such as having to cut short visits to elderly relatives or being forced to drive a long distance home following a late work shift.
- 6.4 The Council response included a detailed response from the Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership. This noted the impact of social isolation through stopping the evening sailings and suggested cutting services during the daytime in the winter and providing an additional late sailing on Friday evening.
- 6.5 The findings of the Council survey were in keeping with the overall consultation response in that the majority of respondents were in favour of the early sailing but opposed to dropping the late sailings.
- 6.6 The Council response is included in full within Annex B.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The Minister for Regional Development is grateful to all those who participated in the consultation on the Proposed Changes to the Strangford Ferry Timetable.
- 7.2 In view of the consultation responses TransportNI will not proceed with the timetable changes as proposed. However, as the perceived demand for an early morning sailing has been confirmed, alternative proposals to extend the hours service to provide the early sailings will be explored.

Annex A - List of Consultation Respondents

Organisations

Ards and North Down Council

Newry Mourne and Down Council

Consumer Council

Portaferry Community Collective

Portaferry Regeneration

Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership Advisory Committee

Elected Representatives

Cllr J Boyle

Lady Sylvia Heron MP

Kieran McCarthy MLA

Cllr Colin McGrath

Margaret Ritchie MP

Members of the Public

32 responses

Annex B - Newry Mourne and Down Council Response

1.0 Executive Summary

Transport NI is considering amending the Strangford Lough Ferry Service timetable to provide an additional early morning sailing from Portaferry on weekday mornings. The additional early sailing at 07.15 from Portaferry has been requested by the public and public representatives.

To off-set the cost of this additional early morning sailing Transport NI has suggested dropping the last 2 evening sailings from Sunday to Friday during the winter months.

Transport NI is consulting on these proposals.

In constructing its response to the consultation, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council undertook a survey of users of the Ferry service and other interested parties. The analysis of the responses received is included in this report with all the comments from respondents.

The majority of those surveyed used the Ferry for business purposes and the majority of those,

88.3%, agreed with the introduction of the earlier sailing. While there was mixed opinion about the dropping of the last 2 sailings, 57.4% of respondents disagreed with this proposal.

Of those surveyed, 49.6% of respondents noted that they would be affected by the removal of the late sailings. They gave various reasons such as having to cut short visits to elderly relatives or being forced to drive a long distance home following a late work shift.

The comments from the Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership (included in full at section 5) note the impact of social isolation through stopping the evening sailings and suggest cutting services during the daytime in the winter, possibly between the shifts of workers for example – service from 7.20 am – 2 pm, shift dropped between 2-3 pm, and starting again at 3 pm –

10.45 pm Sunday to Thursday with Friday and Saturday to 11.15 pm.

2.0 Background

Transport NI is considering amending the Strangford Lough Ferry Service timetable to provide an additional early morning sailing from Portaferry on weekday mornings. The additional early sailing at 07.15 from Portaferry has been requested by the public and public representatives.

Transport NI are exploring how best to deliver this service as an extension to operating hours would result in an increase in operating costs and require changes to employment terms and conditions for Ferry crews.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council agreed to undertake a survey to ascertain opinion on the proposed changes to the Ferry Service Timetable. The Council requested that Transport NI extend the closing date of the consultation to facilitate the survey process and this was agreed.

3.0 Survey Methodology

The Chairman of Newry, Mourne and Down, Councillor Naomi Bailie, constructed a short questionnaire in association with Community Planning staff.

Agreement was reached with Transport NI staff to allow 2 Council employees to survey Ferry users from 07.15 – 13.00 on Wednesday 25 November 2015 and 18.00 – 23.00 on Saturday 28 November 2015.

Questionnaires were distributed to businesses in Strangford and Portaferry on Wednesday 25 November 2015.

To allow all interested parties the opportunity to present their opinion, the questionnaire was available to download from the Council's website and the process was publicised on the Council's facebook page and in local press.

4.0 Survey Results

Q1. Type of User

Q1. Do you usually use the ferry for:			
Work	Business	Leisure	Educational / Schooling
57	34	55	19

There were 127 respondents to the survey carried out over one weekday and one weekend morning.

Of the 127 surveys received the greatest number indicated that work was the main purpose for using the ferry with 57.

55 respondents used the ferry for leisure purposes, 34 for business purposes and 19 for educational / schooling purposes.

(Many of the respondents ticked more than one purpose for using the ferry.)

Q2. Do you agree with the additional early sailing i.e. 0720 on week days all year round?

Of the 127 respondents to the survey, 120 answered Q2.

Yes	No
106	14

Of the 120 respondents 106 agreed with the additional early sailing accounting for 88.3% of the total.

The remaining 14 respondents did not agree with it.

Q3. Do you agree that this extra sailing is resulting in the dropping of the last 2 sailings in the evening (Sunday – Friday) from 1st October to 31st March each year?

Yes	No
49	66

More people (66) 57.4%, disagreed with the statement than agreed with it (49) 42.6%.

Q4. Does the proposal to cut the last two evening sailings affect you?

Of the 127 surveys received, 125 responded to Question 4

Yes	No
62	63

63 (50.4%) of the respondents stated they were not affected by the cuts while 62 (49.6%)

respondents said they were directly affected by the cuts.

Of the 62 affected many stated that the cutting of the last 2 sailings would adversely affect their social activities while many more said that it would limit their time spent with families.

Many respondents did not make additional comments.

Any comments made during the survey have been recorded in section 5.0

below.

5.0 Comments received on the changes to the changes to the Strangford Lough

Ferry Timetable:

Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership comments:

The move to introduce an early morning sailing, especially to address the needs of workers and business at 07.20 from Portaferry throughout the year weekdays is welcomed.

However, reducing the evening ferry service is a blow to the developing tourism industry affecting not just Portaferry but Strangford, the Ards Peninsula and the tourism Destination.

Tourism here does not end in the winter – even more so from next year as Exploris reopens

and Portico opens – both year round facilities which gives this area a competitive edge on many other places.

We also have events such as Gala we'en, the Carol Ship, music and restaurants, bars.

When visitors choose a place to base themselves they generally seek somewhere with a good selection of evening venues to try out. With the last boat at 22.30 from Strangford and 22.45 from Portaferry it is already reducing the options for people but to make it 22.00 will effectively halve the evening offering in this area (on either side of the Lough) as most people will not be prepared to leave their meal or drink at 9.30 / 09.45pm to catch a ferry.

Reducing these options may be the difference between people deciding to base themselves in this area or not and we would in fact

recommend that the Friday evening service is extended in line with the Saturday night sailings of 11pm and 11.15pm.

Reducing the evening sailings will mean that people (local and visitors) will make the decision not to use venues not just in Portaferry or Strangford but also Downpatrick, Killyleagh, Portavogie and others.

Many visitors from the ROI travel up from Dublin on a Friday evening to take short break weekends. It is already a disincentive to stay on the peninsula to have to make a boat at 22:30 or risk a further 40 mile drive. To move this to 22:00 could be a deciding factor in not staying

on the peninsula at all.

There is also an issue for people on the peninsula who already have limited access to facilities due to their geographic location and will find that it is impossible to participate in community and social events scheduled throughout the week through the area eg evening classes or

events in Downpatrick will be out of the question for people from the peninsula unless they end before 09.30pm. This increases rural isolation and reduces people's opportunity and quality of life and there may also be an issue relevant to emergency services.

It is understandable that to accommodate the early morning sailings there is a need to offset the costs in another area.

We are aware that the collective recommendation from the community in Portaferry has been to consider cutting services during the daytime in the winter, possibly between the shifts of workers for example – service from 7.20 am – 2 pm, shift dropped between 2-3 pm, and starting again at 3 pm – 10.45 pm Sunday to Thursday with Friday and Saturday to 11.15 pm. This appears to be a sensible solution but would be subject to consideration of related staffing issues. Alternatively if this option is not possible the Department is

urged to look at savings and efficiencies in other areas.

5.1 Comments on how the changes to the Ferry timetable will affect users:

COMMENTS FROM FERRY QUESTIONNAIRE

Distributed November 2015

- *It affects every facet of my day to day life, from work, leisure, family etc. There should be no reason that those who wish to travel between Portaferry and Strangford should receive a substandard service in terms of operating hours. The service as it is currently is below par, so by reducing the evening sailings is absurd. To have the early morning sailing is plain common sense, so to add it to the proposal as if it a new initiative is particularly humorous as this is what many travelling to Strangford have needed for some time. During the current early sailing that is in use during the refit of the larger vessel, this service is particularly busy, i.e. there is a need! By reducing the later sailings in the evening, this does a disservice to those who potentially wish to avail of the beautiful setting which Portaferry is located and to add to the economy within the 'Destination Strangford Lough' which NMDDC and ANDBC have promoted so prominently.*
- *I am part of a sports team. Dropping of the last sailings could leave return journeys extremely rushed with increased chances of missing the ferry.*
- *Every Autumn the ferry goes for service for at least 6 weeks. This year ferry has been docked for three weeks and to date no work has commenced. The smaller ferry takes less cars and unless you are queuing 15 minutes earlier than usual time you don't get on that sailing, this results in arriving late for work. It is unacceptable that the public should be inconvenienced every autumn for 6-8 weeks when you consider how expensive it is to travel on the ferry.*
- *Unable to continue attending traditional music sessions each week.*
- *10 o'clock is much too early for last ferry. If visiting friends or out for a meal you much leave early to get last ferry.*
- *A toll bridge would be good.*
- *Socially. We like to go to the Cuan and the Lobster Pot at least 5 times per year*

- *As a resident of Portaferry, being 'cut off' from access to Downpatrick and further afield. Also work events will be restricted as I need the ferry for work.*
- *Sometimes I would travel to Strangford for a meal on a Saturday and if the weekend sailings are cancelled this would make it very inconvenient.*
- *Does not suit our finish time in evening.*
- *I socialise on the Portaferry side and play traditional music sessions. I use the last ferry regularly. Public transport is not for profit it is a hub of social interaction.*
- *Unhelpful for my business. Cancel ferry from 1.45 – 3.00 thus shortening shift and saving hours.*
- *Family ill and palliative care for them – this limits my ability to travel and limits time with family as I live in Downpatrick and family live in Kircubbin. It would be advantageous to not solely to top up smart card by £50/time but to have £10, £20 top ups also.*
- *Can't get home from work my shift ends at 10.30 on Sunday & Friday.*
- *Usually get one of last boats to Portaferry 5 nights a week. I work in Drogheda.*
- *We are frequently attending school evening fundraisers and sailing club events which would mean we would have to take a 80 minute car journey to get home to Portaferry if the early evening sailings were cancelled.*
- *Sometimes I have matches and might be home late.*
- *I have elderly parents on the other side and i need to be over as quick as possible when they need me. Last thing I need is less boat journeys. In my opinion there should be more boat journeys – the boat is meant to be a service which should be available – many passengers or none!!!*
- *Would be back at time it would be off.*
- *Socialising with work colleagues. My partner attends a regular traditional music session every Tuesday night, and this would make it not worth his while to go (and spend money in Portaferry). My partner's father also uses the boat to play table tennis in the Lecale League and would miss matches to be forced to drive around to Portaferry as a consequence. There is no gain for Strangford residents – only the loss of a ferry which I would regularly use.*
- *Socially when I am visiting Portaferry, I have to leave earlier in evening.*

- *Inconvenience, would have to travel around road after spending leisure time in Portaferry or if business was late. A bridge producing hydroelectric power would solve all these problems.*
- *Portaferry is currently undergoing extensive regeneration – inc the reopening of Exploris, new tenants at Portaferry Hotel, new arts centre PORTICO, the Narrows Social etc curtailing ferry options in evening will not help regeneration! (nor allow me to travel back from work in evenings!)*
- *Some evenings work late.*
- *I am not a regular user of the ferry and therefore any changes will not affect me.*
- *Have to go around the road – work.*
- *Don't always know when I finish work.*
- *Build a bridge.*
- *Car tickets are very expensive - £50 for 20 journeys is extreme. A drop in price is needed.*
- *Any compromise on the cost of tickets? Think the cost of car tickets is excessive to say the least!*
- *Visiting family on Christmas day is a hard one as have to do the over 1 hr journey around the road.*
- *Doesn't affect me really as Strangford side.*
- *I need the 8 am boat.*
- *I recently got married and family live in Ballygalget it cuts of the time in which you can leave when you have to get to boat. I also work 3 days a week in Ballygalget PS so for example Christmas concerts are on – the last sailing at 10.15 may mean a trip around the road.*
- *I think that a bridge being would solve all the problems; it would open a lot of opportunity for Portaferry and the surrounding areas – also the boat is way too expensive!!! – maybe a loyalty card offer so many journeys. Please listen to the PEOPLE!!! No boat xmas day – has this ever been given a trial run?? Even a morning sailing and evening – think of the people.*

- *Needs to be even earlier. Terrible idea! Very much!*
- *Returning for my work and leisure activities. The Ferry needs to operate earlier and later, essential to the area for work/business/leisure*
- *I will be unable to use the ferry to return home after a night out, training for my sport, journeys from the south. Cinema outings. Portaferry is a dying town and needs to be supported not cut off further from facilities.*
- *Removal of last sailing will probably affect many people in Portaferry who use the crossing for accessing entertainment eg cinema & bingo in Downpatrick & also youth sports teams.*
- *Work and social engagements.*
- *School events and visiting friends, relatives at night. I feel Portaferry has suffered enough and to cut ferry sailings at all, just enforces lack of investment in the area.*
- *As it stands it is difficult enough to attend/organise events outside Portaferry. This*
- *will only increase the inconvenience.*
- *I have friends in Portaferry and would use the last boat home.*
- *Need to get home after work from the Strangford side. I often need the last sailing to get home from work at the Strangford side. Any decrease in the service would add significant cost to my business due to the forty mile trip home if I miss the last boat.*
- *Late journeys home from Dublin.*
- *Delivery driver. Only use service occasionally. This doesn't affect my use of service so no comment.*
- *I am involved with Portico concert venue in Portaferry and we plan to have cinema showings on Thursday nights & concerts on Friday evenings over the period 1st October to 31st March. So people would have to leave early to catch ferry.*
- *Like to socialise in Strangford and Downpatrick.*
- *Like to socialise in Strangford and Downpatrick.*
- *We like to socialise in Strangford so its making us miss out. Strangford does*

well with customers from Portaferry. Strangford and Portaferry suffer.

- *Getting stuck with no way back home.*
- *I attend meetings where I need use of ferry late evenings.*
- *I get stuck and have no way home. This is how it affects me.*
- *Service is adequate and reliable – the proposed changes will streamline the system and earlier sailing is a good idea.*
- *Will have to rush to finish meal.*
- *Not regularly. From time to time we would travel down to dine at the Cuan in Strangford and travel back on the last ferry to Portaferry.*
- *Not regularly.*
- *All family live in Portaferry so it will cut down the time I may spend with them.*
- *Can't stay late visiting elderly parents.*
- *Family and work across the water.*
- *Evening travels affect me as I will have to add extra hour journey home.*
- *Travelling to essential meetings. Because I need this ferry to get home from meetings in Portaferry. This will effect myself and others going to and getting home from essential Addiction Recovery meetings*
- *Getting home reason.*
- *Family living on other side.*
- *No way of getting home.*
- *Unable to continue attending traditional music sessions each week.*
- *Family commitments. Attendance to school events/meetings. Attendance at family commitments.*
- *Attendance at school events/meetings. Attendance at leisure & sporting events.*
- *Missing last sailing from Strangford means driving from Downpatrick – Newtownards - Portaferry*

- *I will now have to drive 75km taking me 1.5 hours, when in Strangford after 10pm.*
- *Because it means an earlier start of the ferry engines in the morning meaning more disturbing of the peace early morning. WHAT TIME will the engines now start at. Due to environmental noise regs it cannot be before 7.00a.m. This needs to be confirmed by council BEFORE any meaningful decision can be made.*
- *The information provided for consultation omits any details on what time the ferry noise will start in the mornings. As this would be a year round change (EVERY DAY 365 days a year) there has to be some detail given on this.*

6.0 Recommendations

The response to the survey clearly supports the continuation of the early sailing from Portaferry but users of this service do not wish it to impact on the late sailings.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council therefore suggest that the additional early morning sailing and the late sailings are retained and other options explored for balancing the costs of this such as the suggestions made by the Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership.