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Committee Passenger Transport  
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## Wellington Harbour Ferry Service - Feasibility of weekday trips to Seatoun

### 1. Purpose

To advise the Committee of the results of an investigation into the feasibility of a Seatoun commuter ferry service.

### 2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

### 3. Background

The Council currently contracts East by West Ltd to provide a ferry service between Days Bay in Eastbourne and Queens Wharf in Wellington City. This contract will expire in November 2007. In order to establish the service specifications for the next contract, a wider review of the ferry service was undertaken. As part of this review, an investigation into the feasibility of a commuter service to Seatoun was conducted. The results of the Seatoun study are presented in this report.

#### 3.1 The Current Service

The ferry trip between Days Bay and Queens Wharf takes approximately 20 minutes, which is significantly less than the time to travel around the harbour by bus or car. East by West operates two ferries allowing an approximately half hourly service at peak times. One ferry can accommodate 91 passengers and the other 99.

The Days Bay service is viewed positively by passengers, and this is reflected in the upward trend in patronage growth. For example, average weekday patronage increased from just over 500 per day in January 2006 to approximately 700 in January 2007. This growth can in part be attributed to

the increased frequency that became possible with the introduction of the second ferry (originally bought for the Petone trial) in July 2006.

### **3.2 The Seatoun Review**

The review assessed the feasibility of a service to Seatoun during the weekday commuter period. This concept was one that had been suggested by a variety of people over recent years. In this review we considered two possibilities:

- A stand alone Seatoun to Queens Wharf commuter service.
- Diversion of a single trip from Days Bay to Queens Wharf in the morning peak via Seatoun, with two return trips in the afternoon.

There were several reasons to believe that there might be a base to support a service to Seatoun:

- A ferry service would provide a faster alternative to car and bus during peak traffic.
- The Seatoun area has similar demographics to the Eastbourne area which currently supports a ferry service.
- A service between Days Bay and Seatoun would provide a far shorter and more direct trip for students from Eastbourne travelling to Scots College.

As part of the review we conducted two major surveys (conducted by market research company TNS), contacted local community representatives, schools, community groups, and received feedback from the general public following articles in local and regional newspapers.

The first survey polled the existing users of the ferry service. Over 3 days passengers on the 8.10am ferry from Days Bay were asked to complete a short questionnaire seeking their response to the proposed diversion of the 8.10am service via Seatoun. Diverting the 8.10am trip would allow pupils of Scots College living in Eastbourne to travel to Seatoun (many Scots College pupils currently travel by a variety of means from Eastbourne to Seatoun), as well as allowing commuters from Seatoun to reach Wellington at a reasonable time.

The second survey was a telephone survey of Seatoun and Karaka/Worser Bay residents. Respondents were asked how likely they were to take the ferry from Seatoun to Queens Wharf.

## 4. Results of Consultation

Feedback received from the community, in summary, had three major themes:

- Representatives of the Seatoun area expressed their support for a ferry service.
- Representatives of the Eastbourne area expressed concern about a reduction in quality of the existing service.
- Eastbourne residents with children travelling to Scots College expressed support for a trip from Eastbourne to Seatoun.

The results of the existing ferry users survey showed that 81% of the survey respondents on the 8.10am service would not take the trip if the ferry travelled via Seatoun. 58% would take the earlier 7.45am sailing rather than travel via Seatoun, which would mean an additional 39 people travelling on the 7.45am sailing. This sailing is already the most popular sailing of the day, and as a result this number of additional passengers could cause some capacity problems, and limit the ability to further grow the service.

A further 19% would take alternative modes of transport. A similar trend was seen on the return journey.

The survey showed that the duration of the journey was the most important factor in commuters' choice to travel on the ferry.

The results of the telephone survey of Seatoun and Worser/Karaka Bay residents showed that only 19% were likely to take the ferry at 8.20am, and similarly, only 21% in the evening.

There was a large spread of preferred departure times (the proposed 8.20am departure being the least popular time with only 9% of respondents selecting it), which would indicate that several trips would be needed to provide for the potential passengers in Seatoun.

The executive summary for these surveys is included as Attachment 1 to this report.

## 5. Comment

The Census 2001 'journey to work' data for the Seatoun, Karaka/Worser Bay areas shows 1,131 people travelled by car or bus to work from these areas. If we take the survey result of 19% and apply it to this figure, we can estimate that approximately 215 people would state that they are likely to take the ferry.

However, the number of people who will actually take the ferry each day is reduced by the fact that only 23% of the Eastbourne survey participants take the ferry 5 times a week or more – a similar percentage could be expected in Seatoun. This equates to approximately 49 people who would be daily users of

the ferry. This figure also includes those who are not travelling to the CBD and for whom therefore the ferry would not be an option.

Finally, not all of those who indicated interest in taking the ferry in the survey will actually do so. Taking this in to account, the figure of 215 people will be significantly reduced, and when spread over four to six trips in the peak will not sustain a separate commuter ferry service.

Based on the survey results we conclude that there is not enough support to warrant a separate Seatoun to Queens Wharf ferry service.

In addition, diverting one of the existing Days Bay trips would reduce the quality of service on the two most popular trips of the morning, through overcrowding and increased journey time. This would result in current public transport users reverting to the private car. Diverting a trip may also have a negative impact on the growing patronage of the existing service. Therefore, neither option is recommended at this time.

## 6. Communication

If the Committee agrees with the recommendations in this report, a media statement to inform the public should be released.

## 7. Recommendations

*That the Committee:*

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***
3. ***Does not approve a Seatoun to Queens Wharf commuter ferry service.***
4. ***Does not approve the diversion of any of the existing Days Bay to Queens Wharf trips.***

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**Attachment 1: Executive Summary of TNS surveys**