

Information Note to LegCo Panel on Transport

Transitional Arrangements for the Changeover of HYF's Licensed Ferry Services to First Ferry on 15 January 2000

Purpose

This paper informs members of the transitional arrangements for the changeover of The Hongkong and Yaumati Ferry Company Limited (HYF)'s licensed ferry services to New World First Ferry Services Limited (First Ferry) on 15 January 2000.

Background

2. HYF's licences for the following 8 ferry services would be transferred to First Ferry:-

- Central – Cheung Chau
- Central – Mui Wo
- Central – Peng Chau
- Kowloon Point – Cheung Chau (recreational)
- Kowloon Point – Mui Wo (recreational)
- Cheung Chau – Chi Ma Wan – Mui Wo – Peng Chau
- North Point – Hung Hom
- North Point – Kowloon City

The last sailings of HYF would depart at 12.30 am on 15 January 2000 from Central for Cheung Chau, Mui Wo and Peng Chau respectively. First Ferry would commence its ferry operation at 1.30 am on the same day when its first sailing would depart from Central for Cheung Chau. A Gearing Up Committee comprising representatives from the two ferry operators and Transport Department and the relevant government departments has been set up since November 1999 to oversee the progress of preparation for the changeover of ferry operation from HYF to First Ferry. The following paragraphs provide an update on the transitional arrangements for the changeover.

Transitional Arrangement

Service aspect

3. First Ferry has, as planned, acquired a total of 14 vessels from HYF and leased the vessels currently leased by HYF for the 8 routes. In addition, First Ferry has purchased one additional triple-decker and hired three additional fast ferries from HYF to strengthen the back-up of the ferry operation.

4. First Ferry would refurbish all the vessels acquired from HYF to give them a new identity and to improve passenger comfort. It is expected that the whole refurbishment programme would be completed within 12 months.

5. First Ferry has acquired HYF's Cheung Sha Wan depot which is being held under a short term tenancy and would take over the ferry piers currently used by HYF for operating the ferry services. First Ferry has acquired all the equipment and installation at the ferry piers. There would be a change of logos and passenger information notices at these piers upon the takeover. First Ferry would also arrange to refurbish the ferry piers within 12 months to improve their comfort and user friendliness.

6. There would be no change to the service schedules and fare levels of the 8 routes during the initial period of operation. As a customer service measure, First Ferry has started distributing pocket-sized ferry schedules to the public in early January 2000.

7. After taking up the ferry operation on 15 January 2000, First Ferry would examine carefully suggestions for service improvements raised by local representatives of the Islands District, taking into account also the financial implications as well as views expressed by passengers in the opinion surveys being conducted by Transport Department. First Ferry would present any proposal for change together with the possible fare implications to the Islands District Council for consultation in due course.

Staff arrangement

8. First Ferry has met HYF's staff unions several times and conducted briefing sessions to HYF's frontline staff. All HYF's relevant frontline staff have been offered employment by First Ferry for operating the 8 ferry routes. The terms offered to them were no less favourable than those prevailing in the ferry industry in Hong Kong, having due regard to the current terms and conditions of the staff concerned. All these staff except 5 (for personal reasons) have indicated their willingness to join First Ferry. First Ferry has recently completed the employment formality with these staff.

9. Agreement has been reached between HYF and First Ferry for the secondment of management staff from HYF to First Ferry for up to 12 months to assist the new company to manage the operation of the ferry services. This would help to ensure a smooth transition of ferry operation. First Ferry has an option to either appoint any of the management staff or return to HYF during the secondment period.

Publicity

10. First Ferry has posted notices of the changeover with contact numbers (Tel. No.: 2131 8181; Fax No.: 2131 8877; e-mail: ferry_ideas@nwff.com.hk) for passenger enquiries and suggestions at the various ferry piers. Pocket-sized ferry schedules would be distributed to the public in January 2000. Suitable publicity on the progress of the gearing up activities has been and would continue to be arranged as and when they occurred in late December 1999 and early January 2000. Press releases to announce the changeover would also be issued closer to the D-day for public information.

Contingency Plan

11. To ensure smooth operation of ferry services in the initial period of ferry operation, contingency plans would be put in place to cope with various scenarios of emergency situation. Spare staff would be required to standby on the first day of operation, and more pier staff would be deployed in the initial period of operation for passenger control and counting purposes. Spare vessels would be stationed in the vicinity of the ferry piers to operate

supplementary sailings if necessary.

12. There would be regular testing of the Octopus system for fare collection both before and after the changeover to ensure its proper functioning. In case of breakdown of the Octopus system in the ferry piers, mobile Octopus fare collecting machines and manual ticketing by using coin boxes would be used.

Monitoring the Implementation of the Changeover

13. An Operation Co-ordination Centre (OCC) headed by a Deputy Commissioner for Transport would be set up at Transport Department Headquarters to monitor the ferry changeover on 15 January 2000 as well as 17 January 2000, the first weekday after the changeover. A standby team would be on duty in between these two days. The OCC would be supported by Transport Department's Site Observation Teams at the ferry piers.

Transport Bureau
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