

First Meeting with Cherbourg Chamber of Commerce: Wednesday 29 February 2012

Alderney Delegation:

Stuart Trought, President

Alderney Chamber of Commerce Members:-

Andrew Eggleston (President)

Stephen Hope

Ilona Soane-Sands

Darren Machon

Cherbourg panel:

Chamber of Commerce President Jean Claude Camus

Francois Dublaron

Thierry Lenepveu (Cherbourg Harbour development manager)

Guillaume Hamel (Cherbourg Tourism Mgr)

Gilles Lechevalier (President of Cherbourg Tourism)

Conseil de la Manche:

Eric Beaufils, Vice President

Michel Laurent (Council member and Mayor of Beaumont-Hague)

Thierry Motte (International relations)

Aurelie Leroy (Maison de Normandie Mgr, Channel Islands)

Benjamin Bon, owner of Vedettes du Cotentin

Subjects discussed:

1. Sustainable, affordable and regular reliable passenger ferry service Cherbourg/Dielette-Alderney.

Victor Hugo requires 120 passengers each way to break even on a trip. This number is very difficult for Alderney to achieve at anytime and the current timetable offered by Manche Iles Express is extremely limited. The proposal is to involve 2 or 3 small boats each carrying 12 passengers and also able to carry freight, to provide a regular service that allows tourists to plan a holiday or short break in Alderney or to dovetail into train and ferry arrivals/departures from Cherbourg.

The problem of empty return journeys or low passenger numbers and the cost of fuel, passenger and landing fees/taxes can be offset by transporting freight to Alderney (food/produce and building materials etc), and possibly domestic and recyclable waste from Alderney to Cherbourg.

Vedettes du Cotentin has already been contracted to transport building material for the Tourgis Project and intends to acquire a vessel which can carry 12 passengers or up to 80 tons of freight and will be solid to cross the Race 12 months of the year. The company also has another 12-seater passenger vessel. Lady Maris has a 12-seater vessel.

Harbour dues and taxes will be revised by the Conseil de la Manche to ensure that the service can operate and offer competitive rates. They will also facilitate for both companies to embark and disembark from Dielette under a special dispensation. The same would be required by Alderney States.

We have requested a coach transfer from Dielette to Cherbourg and the Chamber and Conseil de la Manche believe that they will be able to assist.

Both companies will be able to ensure that in case of any cancellations due to bad seas/weather, they will pick up each others passengers.

2. Air link Alderney-Cherbourg

It is proposed for Aurigny to reconsider a weekend service Alderney-Cherbourg and the Conseil de la Manche may subsidise a number of seats to make it viable for Aurigny to operate flights without making a loss. The Chamber will discuss this option with Aurigny next week. Such service would ensure alternative transport and add further capacity.

3. Waste disposal – possible shipment of domestic waste and recyclable waste to France.

The Conseil de la Manche and Cherbourg Chamber of Commerce will ask waste disposal companies to contact us directly with their proposals. Initially we suggested that Houlin Renouf could provide the transport, as they have weekly runs between Alderney and Cherbourg. However, at the meeting we were advised that due to lack of freight/cargo, Houlin Renouf will suspend its freight services to Cherbourg from 5 March and until they are able to secure important freight contracts to make it viable for them. We were also advised that their rates are considered high. The Vedettes du Cotentin proposal of a passenger/freight vessel would be a very good option.

4. Work experience/apprenticeship exchanges

This idea put forward by Stuart Trought was welcomed and both chambers will advise their members and advertise in their local media.

5. Event-driven Tourism

The suggestion of both communities hosting competitions for sports clubs (tennis, golf, football, boules/bowls, sailing, art etc.) was welcomed and we will be receiving their list of clubs and contact details

As a first we have been offered to become part of the Ports de la Manche Regatta 2013 which has Guernsey and Jersey firmly on the map. Our harbour would accommodate up to 110 sailing boats and will have to cater for up to 700 people. We've done it before on a much larger scale (Eclipse – 10,000 people and 400 boats), and believe it can be done by speaking to all hoteliers and caterers and using the Alderney Week marquee and hiring another marquee. The revenue would be a tremendous bonus for the island and will put us back on the map. The race circuit will be announced at the end of this year's race (14 July) and we will need to make an early commitment to be part of this.

We also suggested a promotional "Alderney" day in Cherbourg on a market day or during one of their festivals, when we would like to take the Island Band, perhaps Wine & Song, the KFA and have a stand to distribute brochures and promote the island. This idea was welcomed and the Tourism Manager will be providing me with a list of forthcoming events in Cherbourg. Subject to large numbers, Transport would probably have to be with Victor Hugo.

Meanwhile, we have offered to organise a French food fayre in Alderney, possibly during Alderney Week Plus, in conjunction with Le Cocqs who are importers. Aurelie Leroy is contacting the producers and also Guernsey Health and Safety to find out what restrictions there are as to the import of fresh produce/food. They already organise a French market in Guernsey and Jersey.

The next stage is for the Cherbourg Chamber of Commerce to contact their members and advise them of business opportunities in Alderney and for the Alderney Chamber of Commerce to advise its members of possibilities to source from France – subject to the Euro exchange being favourable.

It is proposed for the President of the Cherbourg Chamber of Commerce and a delegation representing businesses (including possibly a recycling company) and traders who are keen to re-establish connections with Alderney, to visit the island, possibly during the last week of April, when they will familiarise themselves with Alderney and meet States Members, States Departments and potential business partners.