

4 November 2005

HOVERSPEED ANNOUNCES EARLY CLOSURE ON DOVER-CALAIS ROUTE

Cross Channel fast ferry operator Hoverspeed today announced that following consultations with its permanent staff in the UK and Europe, it had reluctantly decided on an early closure to the season.

Hoverspeed, which operates on the Dover-Calais route, said it could no longer sustain the losses on the English Channel.

Hoverspeed will retain a certain number of staff who will look after the care and maintenance of its two SeaCats whilst a decision is made on future deployment of the craft. Consequently many jobs will unfortunately be at risk over coming weeks.

A spokesman said: "We have implemented a number of changes to the business over the last few years in an effort to improve our financial performance, including moving to a seasonal service.

"However despite vehicle carryings increasing by 17 per cent this year, there remains surplus capacity on the Dover-Calais route and our average yields have declined. We have also seen a dramatic increase in the price of fuel – up 54 per cent from last year – and this, coupled together with a diminishing market and less retail opportunities have been the principal causes of our financial problems."

The spokesman added: "The regrettable decision to cease operations has not been taken lightly and it is a sad moment. I would like to pay tribute to all Hoverspeed staff for their hard work, flexible working practices and effort over the years. We shall be looking at various options as to how we may assist those employees who may now face redundancy."

Hoverspeed said that last scheduled sailing of its service would be the 17:30 hours crossing from Dover returning from Calais at 20:15 on Monday 7 November 2005.

Any passengers with a forward booking from that date will be contacted and arrangements will be made for them to have an alternative crossing with another operator to minimise any inconvenience. Passengers who do have any queries are asked to call 0870 240 8282.

ENDS

Media contact: Steve Lawrence on 07785 337157 or 020 7805 5830

