

PRESENTATION – COVID 19 IN GOZO AND THE WAY FORWARD

(A) Present Situation

Currently Gozo Channel Operations Ltd as a company is taking all the necessary measures as requested by the health authorities, these include:

- Sanitizing of the vessels daily and terminals every other day.
- The Company is providing all employees with face masks/shields and gloves. They are always being requested to wear them to protect themselves and the passengers.
- All ferries and terminals have been supplied with hand sanitizing gels which are at the disposal of all passengers and employees.
- All ferries and terminals air condition systems have been adjusted to change the air at 3 times per hour as suggested by the health authorities so that our air conditions are fully functional throughout the Summer season.
- At present the vessels are operating at half of the normal passenger capacity as requested by the health authorities.
- The company is operating at the same schedule of last year despite the loss in business but in order to provide an efficient service to all commuters. This included the re-introduction of the 4th Vessel the M.V Nikolaos with the company's fleet.
- With the re-arrival of M.V Nikolaos, the company has re-introduced its cargo timetable to provide an efficient service to the local business community.
- Seating in the cafeteria/lobby has been restricted to avoid overcrowding in the enclosed areas.

- Several signs have been put in place for our passengers and also employees to abide accordingly.
- Vending Machines of masks and sanitizers have been placed in the terminals so that passengers always have access to .
- Enforcement officers have been randomly checking the vessels to enforce the use of face masks.

Needless to say, all of the above has put a severe financial burden on the company which has resulted to a significant loss during the last six months.

(B) Way Forward

The company is planning to continue to provide an excellent service to all commuters who would like cross between the islands and it is doing its utmost to keep the same time table as that of last year. We believe that this will encourage more commuters to cross over to Gozo and so it will help the Gozitan economy to overcome the recent downward trend.

As we have done in the past, we will continue to cooperate with the Ministry for Gozo so that when any new incentives are introduced in the future, these will be successful.

Gozo Channel Operations Ltd will continue to abide with all the directives issued by the health authorities even though these will continue to aggravate the financial situation of the company. The company has applied and obtained a loan from a local bank in order to continue to operate in these challenging times and also to avoid any redundancies.

Furthermore, we are determined to continue with our social responsibilities and commitments towards Gozo even though this could be a huge financial burden.

In view of the above, the government should not leave the Gozo Channel Operations Ltd to fend for itself during this very difficult time. We have seen other European governments giving substantial amounts of financial aid to those companies offering essential services for their countries.