

NEWHAVEN

Economic and Social Impact Study

Executive Summary

The Value of the Ferry between Newhaven (Sussex, UK) and Dieppe (Région Normandie, France)

Background to the Study

During Autumn 2025, the Newhaven Enterprise Zone (NEZ) commissioned a research project to provide evidence on the economic and social benefits of the Newhaven-Dieppe ferry service to Newhaven and the wider Sussex region; the implications for the town and region if the service ceased, and the actions that need to be made on the UK side to secure the ferry service over the medium to long term.



About the Ferry

The Newhaven-Dieppe ferry service has been a key feature of the town since its launch in 1825. The arrival of the railway in 1847 made the crossing more accessible and transformed Newhaven into a major international transit point, significantly boosting passenger numbers. Since 2001, the service has been owned and managed by the Syndicate Mixte de Promotion de l'Activité Transmarche (SMPAT), which contracts DFDS Seaways to operate the service on five-year terms, and provides a significant annual subsidy to operate the service.

Key Facts

- Two sister ships: Seven Sisters and Côte d'Albâtre
- 1,690 crossings per year
- 386,305 passengers:
 - 286,502 UK
 - 63,920 French
 - 35,883 Other
- 150,673 vehicles
- 23,390 freight drivers
- 21,811 road goods vehicles carried 281,673 tonnes of cargo

Economic Benefits

At Sussex level, the total economic benefit of the ferry is estimated to be £42.17 million, supporting 655 gross FTE jobs. The net economic benefit is £31.63 million, supporting 495 net FTE jobs. The sensitivity tests reduce this to between £18.83 million and £27.03 million, supporting between 287 and 412 net FTE jobs.

For Newhaven, the net economic benefit of the ferry is £13.45 million, supporting 209 net FTE jobs. The sensitivity tests reduce this to between £8.99 and £11.66 million, supporting between 143 and 183 net FTE jobs. The ferry generates £14.94 million in total economic activity (gross economic benefits) each year supporting 233 gross FTE jobs.

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Importance of the Ferry

The ferry service delivers significant additionality to Newhaven and Sussex. Passengers spend in the town and in Sussex because the ferry service is based in Newhaven.

Newhaven-Dieppe is one of the UK's most successful international short sea passenger routes. Since 2013, the number of passengers using the route has increased by 133,000 (+47.9%). The only other route that has seen a significant increase in passengers is from Plymouth to Santander (+50,000 or 76%).

The Newhaven-Dieppe service's post-Covid recovery has been much stronger than many other routes. By 2022, the number of passengers using the route had virtually recovered to its pre-Covid levels, whilst for all the short sea routes, the numbers are more than 6.2 million (33%) lower. In 2013, the ferry service transported 83,972 passenger vehicles, but by 2024 this had increased to 150,522 — an increase of 79%.

Moving Forward

The Newhaven-Dieppe ferry provides the most direct route between London and Paris for freight and passengers. It has performed strongly since the Covid-19 pandemic and it is a significant asset for both Newhaven and the wider Sussex economy. The ferry service underpins local employment, supports tourism and strengthens the region's connectivity to Europe. At around 40% capacity, there is scope to increase the number of ferry passengers further.

In combination with Gatwick Airport and Shoreham Port, there is enormous potential to make the ferry service thrive as a core component of the region's strategic international gateways, driving international trade and tourism between Sussex, France and overseas destinations. The study recommends a range of priorities for intervention to achieve this.

Report Recommendations

Developing Tourism

The tourism sector currently contributes just over £47m to the Newhaven economy, supporting over 699 full-time equivalent FTE jobs, but there is significant potential to 'ramp up' the visitor offer in Newhaven, with ferry passengers a key target market. Actions recommended include:

- Innovative marketing to promote the town
- Short break packages and itineraries
- Improving facilities for campervans and motorhomes.

Infrastructure Improvement

Significant investment has been made both in facilities on the ferries and in and around the ferry terminal in Newhaven. However, more needs to be done to improve the ferry experience on arrival / exit from Newhaven.

Actions recommended include:

- Expanding facilities to attract hauliers
- Investment to support ferry decarbonisation
- Additional 'Gateway' improvement.

Promoting Trade and Investment

Despite the steady decline in the transportation of freight, the Newhaven-Dieppe ferry offers growth potential as a trading gateway between the UK and mainland Europe. Actions recommended include:

- Raising awareness and the benefits of the route through effective promotion
- Bespoke export brokerage service for freight users
- Improving facilities for hauliers.