

25th March 2011



Mr Mike Dovey
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Dear Mr Dovey

Paquebot Marks

I am writing in reply to your letters of 8th February to me and to our Chief Executive, Moya Greene.

I am sorry to give you disappointing news, but I can only reiterate that if mail carries foreign stamps, and is not posted into an Office of Exchange, then the mail is at risk of being refused by at the post office counter or surcharged by our revenue protection officers. Of course, Royal Mail is still in a position to accept mail posted on ships, but only if it carries a GB stamp

So far as I can ascertain, the operational 'Paquebot' or Ships Mail service, which would have been of practical benefit to passengers on long sea voyages, passed out of use more than twenty years ago. I am told that it has not featured in the Post Office operations manual for this length of time. On the Royal Mail side of the operation, there would need to be an instruction not to surcharge items carrying foreign stamps which are found in the stamped mail stream, and there has been no such instruction for at least fifteen years.

Additionally I have contacted two cruise lines to check on their approach. I was told that they do accept mail posted at sea, but they take care to post it only with stamps of the appropriate country.

As I have said before, we would be willing to offer philatelic quality versions of a valid operational stamp, but not to perpetuate a purely philatelic service. I think we are agreed that it is the philatelic service which ceased last October, and not the operational service.

I agree that Article 119 of the current UPU Letter Post Manual is intended to provide a mail service for passengers on board ships. We are in regular contact with the UPU, and we

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have asked them for their position on this matter, but we do not do not believe there is an issue under international law.

I note that you intend to post envelopes using Bermuda stamps at Southampton at the end of March, and you will be asking for them to be accepted at a post office. I have to remind you that Bermuda stamps are not valid to pay postage within this country.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Dale', with a stylized flourish.

David Dale
Head of Social and SME

cc Helen Lamont