

New offshore support vessel unveiled in Grimsby

Monday, January 16, 2012
Grimsby Telegraph

A NEW generation of offshore support vessel has been unveiled in Grimsby, underlining the importance of the town to the industry, as well as the urgency surrounding the modernisation of the lock gates.

The 20m by 8m vessel, which can sleep 12, is capable of carrying 10 tonnes of cargo and has a bigger galley than most domestic kitchens.



all aboard: Leo Hambro, left, of Tidal Transit, and Chris Holden, offshore operations manager for RES, on the deck of The Ginny Louise. Buy this photo at www.thisisphotosales.co.uk/grimsby or by contacting 08444 060910

Ginny Louise is the first of ten vessels brought to the UK from a Spanish shipyard by Tidal Transit, a Norfolk owner-operator company launched in January 2010, that like several in Grimsby, has a history based around fishing.

So it was fitting that the old fish docks, or Port of Grimsby East as it is now known, welcomed her, after she co-ordinated the arrival to fit in with the tight window of entry for a vessel of her size, two hours either side of high water.

She was brought to town by RES Offshore, and attracted quite a crowd from the burgeoning operations and maintenance sector.

Leo Hambro, commercial director of Tidal Transit, said he could "absolutely" see the day when a

fleet of the £1.5-million vessels operates out of the town.

"Grimsby is such a hub for the industry," he said. "There are so many turbines still to be installed around here."

And Chris Holden, Grimsby-based offshore operations manager for RES, said there was a role to be played now, as well as for the larger projects as they emerge towards the end of the decade.

Telling how 17 operational days were written off in November because of adverse weather, he said: "This boat would have been able to get out there some of the time. Existing vessels still have a big part to play, but as we move further and deeper offshore it will only be vessels of this size needed. This shows the importance of the Grimsby lock being extended, so Grimsby can take advantage. If we don't, someone else will.

Hornsea, one of the Round Three zones, will have its nearest turbine 62 miles off the Yorkshire coast. With the need to bring energy costs down, the ability to get out to them with crew, and stay out, is crucial.

Winston Phillips, chairman of Grimsby Renewables Partnership, said: "The fact this vessel is on display in the town shows the importance of Grimsby in the future of operations and maintenance.

"More importantly it is a major step change in the development of the passenger transfer market and we wish the owners every success for the future.

"This reinforces all the efforts that have been put in so far to improve the infrastructure at the port for what we have foreseen already as the growth in the size of the passenger transport vessel market."

Talks continue into lengthening the lock, to allow larger vessels 24-hour access. Those in the industry are eyeing up funding streams, with the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership infrastructure pot also just opened up.

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