

Docking's Tidal Transit on course for multi-million pound fleet extension



Docking firm Tidal Transit is poised to make even greater waves in the rapidly growing offshore wind energy industry with plans to more than double its multi-million pound fleet of bespoke state-of-the-art boats.

Its third purpose-built boat, Tia Elizabeth, is due to arrive this year and it also planned to place an order for a further two boats to arrive next year, bringing the fleet of specially-designed catamarans up to five.

The firm's significant achievements, from a two-man team to one which now employs 14 people and has a projected turnover this year of £2 million, won recognition with a shortlisting in the Mayor's Awards for Business 2012.

The company's development has been steered by two men, Leo Hambro, commercial director, and Adam Wright, operations director, who were first introduced through a mutual friend in 2010. Adam was operating Norfolk Fishing Trips, which he still runs today.

Their vision to provide boats for the transfer of crews to the off-shore wind farms, a fast-growing industry worth billions, became reality with their first two boats, the Ginny Louise and the Eden Rose, both named after Adam's daughters. Each boat cost £1.5 million pounds and they were built by Spanish boat builder Mercurio Plastics.

"We had a long wait between putting in the orders for the boats and their arrival, one in December 2011 and the other in March 2012. But this gave us time to prepare which was useful and we started to build our team," said Leo.

"We spent January 2012 doing sea trials. The boat was custom-built and unique and we had the opportunity to train the future crew. One of the things we had to trial was to get the boat to push onto a metal structure to simulate it doing the same on a turbine at sea. Scottish and Southern Electricity (SSE) was keen to see what the boat could do."

The trial was a success as the boat gripped onto the structure, stabilising it significantly allowing for a safe transfer of crew from boat to structure in adverse weather conditions. "This made a massive difference because crews are able to service and maintain their turbines even in bad weather conditions which increases the efficiency and yield of those turbines. We were delighted with this," said Leo. Another feature of the design which makes crew transfer at sea particularly successful is in the design of the hull drawn up by Leo and Adam.

Said Leo: "It is designed to relieve pressure while the boat is moving about on the water so it doesn't slap down hard on the water. This reduces sea sickness and makes transfers safer."

Tidal Transit won a contract with SSE to work out of Lowestoft for the Greater Gabbard Wind Farm and since then it has had continuous contracts here and also at Sheringham Shoal operated by Scira. At present both boats have ongoing contracts with Scira to run until the autumn.

“We are feeling confident about the market and are sure that Tia Elizabeth will be able to achieve long-term contracts,” said Leo. “The future for us is very exciting and there is lots of potential out there with the development of massive wind farms off the east coast of England. There is a fantastic opportunity for expansion in this industry and it’s all happening on our doorstep in Norfolk, so we are well placed to benefit from this.”

Speaking about the shortlisting in the Mayor’s Business Awards, Leo said: “We are delighted that our performance has been recognised by an external body. It’s a great opportunity to recognise all the hard work and commitment of our team.”

Leo said he was a great advocate of awards and his personal goal for Tidal Transit in the future is to win a Queen’s Award for Enterpris