



PASSENGER SHIPBUILDING RETURNS TO THE ISLE OF WIGHT

Red Funnel is delighted to confirm that it is bringing fast ferry construction back to the UK with the announcement that its new passenger ferry Red Jet 6 will be built in East Cowes on the Isle of Wight.

After receiving tenders from shipyards around the world, the company has placed an order for a 40m high-speed catamaran with Shemara Refit LLP for delivery in summer 2016. Costing £6m, Red Jet 6 will be the first vessel of her kind to be built in the UK for 15 years.

Aluminium fast ferries have been designed and built on the Isle of Wight in the past. Three pioneering Solent class catamarans were built by FBM Marine in Cowes for Red Funnel in 1991, 1992 and 1998 and FBM's customers included the Ministry of Defence and Thames Clippers. Vessels were also constructed for operators in Portugal, Greece and Asia and large 45m and 53m TriCat catamarans were built between 1995 and 1999 for service in Greece, Hong Kong and Macau. The Cowes shipyard closed in 2000, marking the end of building displacement fast ferries in the UK until now.

Isle of Wight based Shemara Refit won the order for Red Jet 6 by offering a competitively priced vessel which met Red Funnel's design brief and desire to have the vessel built on the Isle of Wight. Confidence in Shemara Refit's management capabilities and quality of workmanship stemmed from the impressive restoration of the famous motor yacht Shemara for Sir Charles Dunstone.

Kevin George, Red Funnel's CEO commented "From the outset, Shemara Refit shared our vision to bring fast ferry construction back to the UK and particularly to Cowes on the Isle of Wight where the specialist aluminium fabrication skills and yard facilities still exist. The fact they could do this at a competitive price is a credit to the team at Shemara. The Red Jet 6 contract will bring significant inward investment to underpin the Island's marine manufacturing sector and help to further grow the Isle of Wight economy. Red Jet 6 will serve the Isle of Wight for many years and we believe that it is important for as many young Islanders to be involved as possible. We will be inviting local schools to participate in mini projects and will be seeking to develop our existing support with the Royal Yacht Squadron Isle of Wight Foundation to ensure apprenticeship opportunities are open to young Islanders. In the competitive world of ship building, it is fantastic news that Red Jet 6 will be built for the Isle of Wight, on the Isle of Wight, by the Isle of Wight."

Peter Morton, MD of Shemara Refit said "The Red Jet 6 contract will create 40-50 new jobs at Venture Quays in East Cowes as well as securing other jobs in the supply chain. Wherever possible these jobs will go to Islanders who have the right skills. We very much look forward to the re-birth of high speed passenger shipbuilding by producing a technically advanced vessel which we believe will have the potential for further orders in the future. As a consequence we will be taking on a number of apprentices to provide the skills for the future.

Jonathan Bacon, leader of the Isle of Wight Council, said: “We are delighted that Red Funnel has chosen a company based on the Isle of Wight to construct its newest Red Jet craft. This certainly demonstrates that the Island has the necessary skills and facilities to build these types of vessels – on a competitive basis with shipyards around the world – and sends out a strong message that the Island is a great place to do business.

The Isle of Wight Council works closely with a wide range of marine businesses, supporting growth, supply-chain development and with innovation. Support was offered to all of those Solent based companies who tendered for the contract and the council’s economic development team and other local partners will now work closely with Shemara Refit to support build process and any future build projects. The potential supply-chain benefits for the marine sector locally are significant.

The council is working hard to attract inward investment, there-by securing more skilled employment for local people. Today’s announcement is very welcome news and credit needs to be given to Red Funnel for seeking to support the economic wellbeing of the Island. This could be described as a win-win situation.”

Red Jet 6 will be Red Funnel’s largest and most innovative high-speed vessel yet, offering ground breaking levels of passenger comfort, reliability and safety. She will also be the greenest ship in Red Funnel’s fleet with a host of design features to reduce fuel consumption and protect the environment in line with the company’s ISO 1400:1 accreditation.

The aluminium hull will be similar in design to Red Jet 4’s but to improve efficiency Red Jet 6 will be slightly longer at 41.12m. The passenger accommodation will be insulated from the hulls to reduce vibration and cabin noise. Like her sisters, Red Jet 6 will use waterjets rather than propellers to aid manoeuvrability and provide impressive stopping power whilst keeping wash to an absolute minimum.

In a break with tradition, she will be fitted with four main engines rather than two. Each MTU 2000 series diesel will power a separate MJP 500 waterjet unit. This configuration will help reduce fuel consumption by 11% vs. Red Jet 4 and 30% vs. Red Jet 5, provide high levels of in-service reliability and ensure emissions comply with the IMO Tier II regulations.

Other technical innovations to help reduce fuel consumption include the use of vinyl instead of paint for the superstructure to reduce weight and the application of the latest Teflon hull coatings to minimise drag through the water.

Red Jet 6 will be configured to carry 275 passengers, who will experience a quiet, spacious and well-lit cabin fitted with leather seats and a sophisticated air-handling system designed to dry, cool or warm the air automatically. A new high bandwidth ship-to-shore Wi-Fi system has been specified which will be free for customers and the latest travel information system will be installed to show connecting services for buses, coaches, trains and flights in real-time. Provision has also been made to carry 22 bicycles.

Red Funnel is also inviting its customers and members of the public to submit their ideas and suggestions for features they would like to see fitted or introduced on Red Jet 6. Some of the more challenging ideas will be given to local students to try and develop practical solutions. The Red Jet 6 project will also be used to engage with local schools and colleges who have students interested in a

career in engineering or manufacturing. Shemara Refit hope to install a viewing gallery at Venture Quays to enable members of the public to watch the build process and fit a webcam so progress can be seen online.

More information about Red Jet 6 and details of how to submit ideas and suggestions can be found at www.redfunnel.co.uk/redjet6

Notes to editors:

About Red Funnel

Red Funnel is the original Isle of Wight ferry company with roots tracing back to 1820. Based in the UK port of Southampton, Red Funnel carries 2.2m passengers and over 800,000 vehicles on its ferry route between the UK port of Southampton and East Cowes and 1.1m passengers on its Hi-Speed Red Jet service between Southampton and West Cowes on the Isle of Wight.

Red Funnel first introduced a high speed ferry service between Southampton and Cowes in 1933 using the 11 seat, 30 knot *Island Enterprise* which took 30-35 minutes to make the crossing. The service ceased at the outbreak of World War II and did not restart until 1969 when the company introduced the 54 seat, 35 knot Italian built hydrofoil *Shearwater*. This vessel made the crossing in 23 minutes and was quickly followed by *Shearwater 2* in 1970. As demand increased, the much improved and larger Italian built *Shearwater 3 & 4* were added to the fleet in 1972 followed by *Shearwater 5* in 1980 and *Shearwater 6* in 1982. New ground was broken in 1991 with the delivery by FBM Marine of two 138 seat, Cowes built 32m Solent class catamarans *Red Jet 1 & 2*. These vessels proved highly successful and were joined by *Red Jet 3* from the same shipyard in 1998. When FBM Marine's yard in Cowes closed in 2000 Red Funnel was forced to look outside the UK for its next new build in 2002. A 275 seat, 40m vessel was ordered from North West Bay Ships in Tasmania and entered service in 2003 as *Red Jet 4*. In 2009, the 33m US built *Red Jet 5* joined the fleet and Red Jet 1 & 2 were sold.

In addition to ferry travel, Red Funnel is the only cross-Solent operator to offer ferry inclusive bonded holiday accommodation, attraction tickets, festival and event tickets and activity packages. Sub-brands include 'Red Jet' (the Hi-Speed passenger only ferry service serving West Cowes) and two food & beverage brands, 'Steam Coffee Company' and 'ReFuel'.

The Company is a founder member of Visit Isle of Wight Ltd, the Island's not for profit destination management organisation and Red Funnel sponsors or supports most of the Island's premier events including the IW Festival, Bestival, AAM Cowes Week, Isle of Arts, IW Literary Festival, IW Newport Jazz Festival, IW Walking Festival, V-Dub Island, Ventnor Fringe Festival and Wolverton Manor Garden Show as well as a range of community and niche interest events.

Red Funnel's Charity of the Year for 2015 is the Cowes-based sailing charity UKSA.

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