



HRH The Princess Royal visits Solent Whisper

Southampton Solent University was pleased to welcome HRH The Princess Royal when she visited Solent Whisper at their stand at the London International Boat Show yesterday, 14 January 2015.

Met by Vice-Chancellor Professor Graham Baldwin, she was introduced to Southampton Solent lecturer, graduate and Solent Whisper designer, Ron Price and boat-builder Thom White from White Formula UK Ltd - the company building the boat, and shown the Solent Whisper prototype.

Commenting on the visit the Vice-Chancellor said: "The University was delighted to welcome HRH Princess Anne. She was interested in the University and its innovative approach to learning and work generally, encapsulated in the design and manufacture of the Solent Whisper. Real-world learning at its best."

Princess Anne was also shown the production version, which has been taking shape before the eyes of the world's media and the public as part of the live boat build, launched by Southampton Solent graduate and Paralympian Helena Lucas at the show last Friday, 9 January 2015.

Boat builders from White Formula UK Ltd have been demonstrating each stage of production - from the preparation of the moulds to the final infusion of resin into the carbon fibre of the boat.

Princess Anne helped with the live build by injecting the resin into the hull mould to start the infusion process.

"The Princess took the opportunity to start the infusion process on the very first Whisper, injecting the resin into the hull mould" said Ron Price.

"She was very interested in the progress and development of the boat, particularly its potential use by disabled sailors," he continued.

Thom White said: "It was good to see Princess Anne get really involved in modern boat building technology. We're proud that she infused the first production boat."

The Solent Whisper catamaran has continued to capture people's imagination, with huge interest in the design of the hydrofoils and build of lightweight carbon structures.

The live boat build continues throughout the week with the aim to complete the production version model by the end of the show on 18 January 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT THE MEDIA OFFICE ON 023 8201 3642 or press.office@solent.ac.uk

Southampton Solent University offers more than 23,000 students over 200 qualifications ranging from HND to PhD, in subjects such as maritime education and training, fashion and design, media and television, music, health, sport and leisure, business, IT and technology. The University was awarded the 2013 Quality Assurance Kitemark for quality and standards of teaching and learning. Solent was voted one of the most creative universities in the UK in a Which? University 2014 poll of students. Solent Business School has been awarded the Small Business Charter Award, which is supported by the Association of Business Schools and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and 'gold approval' by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

It has a reputation for leading the world in maritime education and technology, and Ron is one of a long line of design graduates who continue to shape the world of sailing including: Jason Ker, working on Sir Ben Ainslie's GB America's Cup bid; Guillaume Verdier, who designed the yachts that came both first and second at 2012 Vendee Globe; German Frers Jr; Bill Dixon; Ed Dubois; Rob Humphreys; and Juan Kouyoumdjian.

On the sailing-side world-class Solent alumni include Hervé Piveteau who sailed to victory in the Production Boat Class at the Mini Transat 2008.

The designer, Ron Price trained at Sandhurst as an Officer Cadet and then spent seven years in the Armed forces, before starting his degree in Yacht Production and Design at Southampton Solent University - alongside Paralympic sailing gold medallist Helena Lucas. Following graduation he started his marine engineering career at Rockport Engineering where he was responsible for Design Systems and Composite Engineering. Ron returned to the University as a lecturer on the Yacht Production degree courses, before moving over to Warsash Maritime Academy as a Senior Lecturer in Naval Architecture, where he currently teaches.

Helena Lucas is British sailing's golden girl, who made history claiming 2.4mR Paralympic gold at London 2012, becoming the first ever female winner of the male dominated Paralympic class and Britain's first ever Paralympic sailing gold medallist. Helena, who was born with no thumbs and limited extension in her arms, is in the unusual position of having done both Olympic and Paralympic campaigns. Having sailed 470s since 1997 she moved into the Paralympic 2.4mR in 2003 before making her Paralympic Games debut at Beijing 2008, finishing seventh. Helena is continuing on the road to Rio 2016 on a quest for her second gold medal. Outside of her Rio campaign she is looking to experiment with new classes and will be fronting her own SB20 campaign. **Helena** started sailing at the age of eight with her parents in their Enterprise, but she didn't take to it until she was 12 and started racing Toppers. She soon moved into the 420 and was selected for the Youth Squad. Helena had her sights set on going to the Olympics in the 470, but decided to get a degree before embarking on an Olympic campaign. So she stayed in the 420 class until graduating from Southampton Solent University with a BEng Hons in Yacht and Power Craft design in 1996.

White Formula has always been at the cutting edge of composite production, having produced a diverse range of products ranging from Formula 1 car parts to helicopters and even the London Stock Exchange beehive. The company was founded by Reg White, an Olympic gold medallist in the Tornado class, and is now run by his son Rob White, also an Olympic competitor in the Tornado class. White Formula have been using carbon fibre since the 1970s and have over 30 years' experience of building catamarans. The makers of the Dart and the SL16, they were an obvious choice to build the boats. The company is very excited to be bringing a high performance foiling catamaran to market.