



Southampton  
**SOLENT**  
University

## What's the Whisper at the London Boat Show?

A first for the London International Boat Show in January 2015 is the real-time build of a 5.9m sailing catamaran with a cutting-edge hydrofoil system developed by a Senior Lecturer at Southampton Solent University.

The 'Solent Whisper' which has already turned heads at both the PSP Southampton Boat Show in September and the Paris International Boat Show in December, has begun to take shape before the eyes of the media and the public.

Helena Lucas, Paralympic Gold medallist and graduate of Southampton Solent University, led the media launch for the catamaran building activities on Friday 9 January together with fellow Southampton Solent graduate and designer Ron Price. They were ably assisted by Thom White from White Formula, who will be manufacturing the catamaran.

Helena, who studied with Ron on the Yacht and Powercraft Design degree course and has sailed Solent Whisper with him, is enthusiastic about the craft's potential. "For me it is particularly exciting as it opens up the foiling experience to everyone; young and old, disabled and able bodied alike", she says. Ron Price, who is now Senior Lecturer in Naval Architecture at the University's Warsash Maritime Academy developed the innovative hydrofoil technology for the Solent Whisper.

"The skills I gained from the Yacht and Powercraft Design degree, have all borne fruit in the design and build of this new craft", he said, "ranging from the Aero-hydrodynamic design of the hydrofoils and sails, to the structural design and build of lightweight carbon structures".

Orders are already coming in for the retail production version, a version of which will be built and showcased at the London Boat Show. Ron is working with White Formula UK Ltd to manufacture the craft. "We are engineering the boat in a way that the design is smart enough to keep the production costs low. I'm hoping that my design ideas will make inshore and small boat racing more accessible and affordable for the average club racer, those who sail for pleasure and people with disabilities," adds Ron.

The Solent Whisper is the result of months of Ron's hard work, as well as technical experience, support and skills from colleagues across the University and the state-of-the-art yacht design and facilities at both the engineering workshop at the maritime academy and the composites lab and towing tank at the main campus. The catamaran's cutting edge technology attracted attention from world-class sailors during sea trials this summer.

The revolutionary new hydrofoil system provides stability, ease and safety, which along with an affordable projected purchase price, has the potential to offer America's Cup-style sailing to the masses. The craft's easy and stable sailing style also mean it could prove popular and accessible for disabled sailors.

Primarily designed with ease and safety in mind, Solent Whisper has also exceeded expectations on the speed front. It comfortably achieves over 25 knots and it can 'fly' on its foils in as little as five knots of wind.

Over the next three days visitors will be able to watch all the stages of production from the preparation of the moulds, to the final infusion of resin into the carbon fibre of the boat.

There will be an opportunity to see a completed Solent Whisper in its finished state on the final day of the show, with viewings and a 'photocall' taking place on Monday 12 January at 2pm.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT THE MEDIA OFFICE ON 023 8201 3079 or [press.office@solent.ac.uk](mailto:press.office@solent.ac.uk)

## About Southampton Solent University

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 Vendée 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 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.