



Record calls and future terminal extension for Portsmouth

Portsmouth International Port has received 'a record number of calls' since the start of the year and is now preparing to extend its cruise terminal to cater for up to 2,000 additional passengers on turnaround calls.

Construction work is set to take place in January 2022, for completion in April 2023.

It follows the port's recent investment in its cruise berth: the lengthening was completed on July 9, 2020 with Royal Caribbean International's Majesty of the Seas calling the following day, becoming the largest commercial vessel to visit Portsmouth at that time.

Andrew Williamson, Portsmouth port's passenger operations manager told Seatrade, 'I started in this role during the strangest of times, at the very start of the pandemic. However, despite seeing fewer passengers we have since seen a record number of cruise calls - initially due to repatriation and technical reasons - but more recently as domestic sailings have commenced.

'While I initially expected a period of bedding in, it has literally been all hands on deck.'

Making way for larger cruise vessels

To meet its growth ambitions, the port is developing its infrastructure and embarking on a multimillion development plan. Extending and levelling its primary cruise berth to be able to accept larger cruise ships has already enabled the port to welcome its biggest commercial cruise vessel to date, Virgin Voyages' Scarlet Lady.

'We were privileged to support Virgin Voyages as they embarked on their first ever commercial sailing [on Aug. 6],' Williamson said. 'With our berth extension complete we then turned our attention to creating a distinctive pop-up terminal experience for Virgin customers, so we could manage the flow of both ferry and cruise passengers both independently and effectively.

'It is a huge opportunity for the city to be Scarlet Lady's homeport for the summer and we have been thrilled to work with global brand Virgin Voyages on their showcase sailings.'

A season of firsts

Since taking on the new role, Williamson has introduced a complete reconfiguration of the port's terminal layout to accommodate COVID-19 measures and overseen several port firsts, 'We were proud to become the first port in the UK to receive independent verification by DNV for our infection control measures ... We have welcomed the largest ever commercial ship the port has seen, held the port's first naming ceremony for Saga's Spirit of Adventure and managed the inaugural call for Viking's latest ship Viking Venus.'

So what does the new face of Portsmouth International have planned for the foreseeable future? In addition to its environmentally advanced terminal, the port is looking at some innovative proposals to further showcase its green commitment. As Williamson told Seatrade: 'We'll be launching our master plan soon and that includes some exciting proposals on how we plan to develop our cruise offer. We want to enhance our luxury, boutique style offer, but most importantly making sure we continue to protect our green credentials.'