

Celebrations as Portland opens £26m berth for business

Portland Port has officially opened a new deep-water berth as part of a record £26 million development.

It held a ceremony with more than 150 guests to celebrate completion of the landmark project.



The Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset Angus Campbell unveiled a commemorative plaque in front of port employees, tenants, dignitaries and other invitees to mark the occasion.

Redevelopment of the deep water quays at the port has enhanced its cruise and cargo handling operations as well as its service provision for vessels including those from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. It enables the port to meet rising demand and keep ahead of the trend for increasing sizes of cruise ships, including liners of up to 350m in length.

The investment is the largest in the port's 27-year history and comes as it welcomes a record 130,000 passengers over the coming cruise season.

Bill Reeves, chief executive of Portland Port, said: "This redevelopment is a tremendous vote of confidence in the port and the local economy. It is the largest single investment in Portland Port and its infrastructure in its history, and one of the large redevelopment projects in the area in recent years. It sets the stage for significant further growth in the future at the port and for the local economy through jobs and local supply chain.

"I wish to thank all of our partners and contractors for their support during the course of the redevelopment, including members of the local community, our tenants at the port and neighbouring businesses as well as our managing contractor Knights Brown for their exceptional project delivery. We're also grateful to HSBC UK for its support with an eight-figure financial package to enable this work to go ahead."

Guests attended a welcome reception, heard speeches, toured the new berth and enjoyed entertainment from local band The Decadettes. Guests included Cllr Paul Kimber from the Portland Harbour Consultative Committee and the president of Weymouth and Portland Chamber of Commerce Paul Appleby.

Work on the redevelopment with Knights Brown started last September and had to be completed against a strict deadline of April in time for the cruise season.

It involved removal of the existing deep water berth, and creation of a new, extended berth 250m in length

with 12m of water depth alongside capable of handling cruise ships up to 350m long. In addition, the project delivered a 75m extension to port's Outer Coaling Pier (OCP), used for the handling of dry bulk cargo and also used as a cruise berth, to a length of 250m and 11m water depth alongside. Overall, the project has provided 16,000 sq m of additional quayside space. It means the port can handle two 350m long cruise ships alongside at the same time.

Overall, the development has used 380,000 tonnes of locally sourced infill material and 4,800 tonnes of steel. Knights Brown co-hosted the opening ceremony with Portland Port. Kevin Valentine, managing director at Knights Brown, said: "I am delighted to see the berth fully operational having been delivered early and on budget. When we embarked on delivering this for the port there were many who thought that it couldn't be delivered within the required timescale, cost and quality.

"However, through true collaboration between all partners on the project we have achieved everything that we set out to. I would like to thank all of the partners involved in the success of this scheme but in particular Portland Port who had to foresight to understand that true collaboration really does work."

The deep water berth become operational when the MSC Virtuosa visited in April with a record 5,000 passengers for the port but it has become officially open following final works.

The port's cruise business contributes an estimated £10m to the local economy. It recently held trade association Cruise Britain's annual summer event in Weymouth and Portland with Princess Cruises.

Portland Port is based in South Dorset and has operated on a commercial basis since 1996. It has a number of commercial tenants and provides maritime and marine related services