

Record double-call day for cruise liners at Portland Port

Portland Port in south Dorset has celebrated a record-breaking double-call day.

The docking at the same time of the 330m Regal Princess and 326m Norwegian Getaway was the largest by vessels size that the port has accommodated in its 27-year history.

More than 7,250 passengers were on the cruise ships, with many disembarking on day tours to tourism attractions on the Jurassic Coast, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The ships, with a respective gross tonnage of 141,000 and 145,655, were moored alongside the newly redeveloped £26 million deep-water berth and extended outer coaling pier.

Ian McQuade, Portland Port's commercial general manager and chair of Cruise Britain, said: "The double-call broke a port record; the newly developed deep-water berth is testament to the unwavering belief port management had that the facility would attract international passenger ships vessels of up to 350m in length.

"The redevelopment project provided 16,000 sq m of additional quayside space, with 11.7m of water depth, 380,000 tonnes of locally sourced infill material and 4,800 tonnes of steel."

It became operational when the MSC Virtuosa visited in April with a record 5,000 passengers for the port.

Mr McQuade added: "Various records have been set this year with the cruise calls at Portland, including the annual number of passengers at 130,000.

"Saturday's double calls also saw a record number of guests using the port's complimentary shuttle bus to Portland Castle and on into Weymouth.

"Over 4,000 passengers took advantage of the service, no doubt delivering a welcome financial boost at the end of the summer season.

"There was another new record when 18 cruise calls arrived between the tail end of August and the end of September, with an estimated £3.6 million generated in the local economy."

The estimate includes combined spending by day excursion visitors to shops, bars, cafes and takeaways, along with expenditure on tourism attractions, taxis, coaches, shuttle buses and tours.

A total of 57 cruise calls have been booked in at the port for this year. Mr McQuade confirmed that bookings are already being made as far ahead as 2026.

Also, for the first time at the port, cruise calls are scheduled for 10 out of 12 calendar months, ending the so-called traditional 'shoulder season'. Only January and March are currently free of cruise calls in 2024.

Regal Princess and Norwegian Getaway were moored up at the port during daylight hours on Saturday [30th September] as part of a 25-day voyage to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and 16-day voyage to northern Europe respectively.

The port employs 53 staff, with a further 220 people employed by commercial port occupiers, including dry and liquid bulk cargo businesses.