

Surprise cruise ship visits boost business for Portland Port

Unscheduled cruise calls at Portland Port over the summer so far have boosted the local economy by a bumper £750,000.

Five liners – including the iconic Queen Mary 2 – have visited the Dorset port at late notice after being unable to stop at their destinations elsewhere. Ambassador Cruise Line's Ambience, Princess Cruises' Regal Princess and SAGA's Spirit of Adventure have also made last minute calls.

Latest to visit was the German line Plantours Kreuzfahrten's MS Hamburg with 360 passengers. It was the first time the cruise line and one of its ships had called at Portland.

More than 8,500 passengers have arrived on these additional ships from mid-May to July as the port – and its Dorset hinterland – becomes established as a 'go to' destination on the cruise map.

Based on industry figures from the Cruise Lines Industry Association (CLIA), the stops were worth in the region of £750,000 to the local economy.

Ian McQuade, general manager commercial at Portland Port and chair of Cruise Britain, said: "It is always a pleasure to welcome cruise ships on unscheduled visits. The unscheduled calls total five to date this year, out of 10 enquiries. They reflect the area's increasing popularity for cruise calls and represent a further valuable boost of circa £750,000 for the local hospitality and tourism industry.

"Our location, new deep water berths which allow the largest cruise ships to moor alongside and our reputation for pulling out the stops to accommodate visiting vessels make the port an attractive proposition for cruise lines on both scheduled and unscheduled visits.

"Our thanks go to our dedicated and responsive team, including our contracted shuttle bus operators and welcome team, who have been able to help us accommodate the unscheduled ships and their passengers at very short notice."

Cruise lines divert to Portland after being unable to enter their destination ports for a variety of reasons, including weather conditions or industrial action.

The Queen Mary 2, from the prestigious Cunard Line, was on a short break cruise of French and Belgian ports when she was diverted to Portland due to strikes in Le Havre, France.

Ian said: "The feedback we have had is that the crew and passengers on the Queen Mary 2 were very happy with their visit which coincided with the popular Wessex Folk Festival on Weymouth harbourside.

"Although she has been to the port before, during Covid, this was her first transit visit and the first by a Cunard ship. It represented another milestone in the development of the port's cruise business and its support for local businesses and the supply chain."

Portland Port's cruise calls bring in circa £10m per year to the local economy, based on statistics from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) trade body for spend per head of passenger.

The figure includes expenditure in shops, bars, cafes and tourism attractions along with transport and

tours.

Portland Port expects to have welcomed 50 ships carrying more than 110,000 passengers by the end of 2024.

Portland Port has invested heavily in its infrastructure over several years, the largest investment being £26m on its deep-water-berth, to increase capacity and capability. This has allowed the port to welcome larger vessels, including ships up to 350m in length on opposite berths on the same day.

The Portland Port estate provides employment for circa 300 people in non-seasonal work. The port itself directly employs 57 in this total. About half of the people employed live on Portland and the rest in Weymouth, or very close by.