

Highland gains

Northern Spain's maritime cluster is central to the latest project of a UK operator for a cruise vessel tailored to the Caledonian Canal

An elaborate project has been set in motion to convert a small Turkish ferry into a deluxe cruise vessel for operation on Scottish inland and coastal waters.

The 398gt *Necdet Ali Yildirim* arrived at a shipyard in Vigo, northwest Spain, on 22 October 2018 to undergo an 11-month transformation into *Lord of the Highlands*, incorporating cabins for 50 passengers. The two-deck ferry, which currently measures 42m x 9m, formerly plied a 7km route between the Turkish port of Çeşme and the Greek island of Chios. After rebuild, the vessel will be deployed on week-long voyages through the Caledonian Canal, the coast-to-coast waterway in the Scottish Highlands.

Main elements of the remodelling will include: installation of an additional deck, fabricated from aluminium; extension of the hull envelope to 44.4m x 10.3m; and complete redesign and reconfiguration of the interiors.

Redesign remit

The turnkey contract, covering design, engineering and conversion, was awarded by the vessel's UK purchaser, Magna Carta Steamship Company, to Bilbao-based Oliver Design. The Spanish company completed a similar project for the British client in 2000, whereby a Greek ferry was adapted as *Lord of the Glens*, allowing Magna Carta to offer a coastal and Hebridean cruise programme utilising the Caledonian Canal.

Oliver Design is supervising all technical aspects of the redesign and outfitting, in conjunction with Vigo-based naval architecture firm Insenaval, as well as being responsible for the interior

The ferry *Necdet Ali Yildirim*, pictured prior to her transfer to Vigo for conversion into a deluxe cruise vessel



design and decoration. The task list ranges from stability plans, safety solutions and obtaining certificates of compliance for the new layout from Bureau Veritas and the MCA, to fitting the electrical installations, piping, heating, air-con and fire prevention systems, and other services and equipment.

Some of the work will be carried out afloat, complementing drydocking at the premises of Astilleros Armada. Besides the additional top deck and wheelhouse, the vessel will be fitted with a new bow section, increasing ship length by just over 2m, while the parallel mid and after body will be widened by 1m.

The remit for the interiors encompasses 22 passenger cabins plus suites with balconies, restaurant, bar and lounge area, galley and the crew's quarters. The development of the exterior includes new rails, windows, skylights and hatches, plus a retractable mast on the bridge.

Elegant appeal

The *Lord of the Glens* contract of 18 years hence posed the initial technical design challenge to fashion a vessel suited to both the particular requirements for transits of the Caledonian Canal and to conditions on

TECHNICAL PARTICULARS	
<i>Lord of the Highlands</i> (post-rebuild)	
Length, oa.....	44.36m
Length, wl.....	39.51m
Length, bp.....	37.93m
Breadth.....	10.3m
Main engines.....	2 x 608kW
Passengers.....	50
Crew.....	17
Classification society.....	Bureau Veritas

the inshore waters of Scotland's west coast. That vessel's elegant appeal calls to mind that of a luxury yacht. The exterior livery, with its Mauritius deep-blue hull, complemented by all-round band and motifs in gold, and white superstructure, draws comparisons with the former Royal Yacht, *Britannia*. Dual propulsion systems and bow thrusters facilitate manoeuvring into the tight locks and around the tortuous bends of the waterway. The project created the template for the *Lord of the Highlands* scheme.

The Caledonian Canal extends for 60 miles in a north east /south west direction between Inverness to Fort William, running through Great Glen and linking Loch Ness, Loch Oich, Loch Lochy and Loch Linnhe.

Navigating the complete length entails passage through 29 locks, which restrict vessel dimensions to 45.7m length, 10.6m breadth and 4.0m draught. The Canal's role today is essentially geared to leisure and tourism, and Magna Carta Steamship runs the largest cruise vessels along this historical route, with itineraries extended to the west coast and Skye during summer. **SBI**

The stylish *Lord of the Highlands* is due in September 2019

