

[News story: Thousands of commuters to benefit from UK-built river boats with wifi](#)

Tens of thousands more people will be able to commute by modern river boats kitted out with the latest technology.

In a boost for the UK maritime industry, British shipbuilding company Wight Shipyard has announced recent orders worth £20 million for 4 boats for the Isle of Wight and London.

The news comes during [London International Shipping Week 2017](#), which will showcase the UK's thriving maritime industry to ministers, industry leaders and delegates from around the world.

The shipyard employs 75 full time workers and their construction programme supports 10 apprentices, who begin training this month – backing the government's Industrial Strategy to boost jobs, growth and productivity across the country.

Two of the new 'Hunt Class Mark 2' boats will serve millions of London commuters a year as they travel with MBNA Thames Clippers along the capital's famous river. The other two will join the Red Funnel high speed passenger service operating between Southampton and the Isle of Wight.

The British-built boats can carry some 14,000 commuters a day during rush hour and are more environmentally-friendly, with new modern engines burning less fuel and emitting less CO2. They are also fitted with wifi and USB phone chargers for a better passenger experience.

The shipyard has also secured its first multi-million pound export order for a 250-passenger river boat to operate for Twin City Liner – a commuter service running on the Danube between Vienna and Bratislava, joining two European capital cities.

Transport Minister John Hayes said:

As we celebrate London International Shipping Week 2017, we proudly show off our thriving shipping sector and world-leading manufacturing skills and talent.

Countless more commuters will be able to travel in modern, fully kitted out boats built in the UK – helping to slash congestion on our roads and railways.

What's more, the world is watching and wanting our iconic boats, Wight Shipyard deserve all of our thanks and congratulations for its first international order.

Not only are companies like Wight Shipyard providing specialist training opportunities, they are helping boost our vital maritime sector and the UK economy – especially important making the pace as we look beyond the bureaucracy of the EU to our European friends across the world.

Peter Morton, CEO Wight Shipyard said:

I am extremely proud of my colleagues at Wight Shipyard who I am convinced now build the finest high-speed ferries in the world. Domestic orders for the Red Funnel and MBNA Thames Clippers which we secured against international competition, as well as our first export order to Twin City Liner in Vienna, make the prospects for the Wight Shipyard, jobs on the island and the wider maritime sector in the UK look healthy. Our strong orderbook is a big vote of confidence for the industry and the UK economy.

Sean Collins, CEO at MBNA Thames Clippers

I am extremely pleased that MBNA Thames Clippers were able to recently place an order with a British yard for our 2 new vessels, Mercury and Jupiter Clipper. These vessels are now in full service and delivering a new level of experience to our customers. I have great confidence in the future success of Wight Ship Yard and hope that we can place further orders with them to satisfy the continued growth opportunities open to our business and the industry. Furthermore the new builds have provided significant career opportunities at MBNA Thames Clippers, in particular within Fleet Operations and Engineering, these include several apprenticeships. I believe that London International Shipping Week places great focus on our maritime sector and the valuable contribution of its people and skills to our economy.

Kevin George, CEO of Red Funnel

The construction of Red Jet 6 by Wight Ship Yard in 2016 marked the return of building large high speed aluminium catamarans to the Isle of Wight and to the UK after a gap of 15 years. We are delighted that this investment provided the catalyst for establishing a world class manufacturer that has aided the local and UK economy. Based on the quality and efficiency of the new vessel, which is part of our Red Jet service that carries over 1 million passengers to and from the Isle of Wight per year, we have recently announced the order for a further vessel from Wight Ship Yard to join our fleet in 2018.