

# Ferry Business

In association with **INTERFERRY**



## A FLEXIBLE FUTURE

Joëlle Croc, Frederic Pouget and Arnaud Le Poulichet of Brittany Ferries discuss five new vessels



## GREEN AGENDA

Mike Corrigan outlines Interferry's key priorities



## SAFE SAILING

Mary Ann Pastrana talks about FastCat's growing fleet

## A flexible future

Frederic Pouget, Arnaud Le Poulichet and Joëlle Croc of Brittany Ferries explain to Simon Johnson how five new E-Flexer vessels are renewing the operator's fleet

Photo: Brittany Ferries



Brittany Ferries' E-Flexer vessels have been adapted specifically for the brand

**B**rittany Ferries first announced it had chartered two E-Flexer vessels from ship designer and owner Stena RoRo in 2018. At the time, the move to work alongside Stena and shipbuilder CMI Jinling

new direction was motivated by the potential of the E-Flexer design.

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represented a significant shift in strategy for the operator, which had previously ordered and owned its own vessels. According to Frederic Pouget, Brittany Ferries' group maritime director, the decision to go in a

says Pouget. “The process of finding a shipyard to meet those aims turned out to be very complex, especially in the European market. When we started to have discussions with Stena, however, we were able to identify a really strong vision

and opportunity through the E-Flexer. The flexibility of the vessel type, from both a technical and commercial point of view, really convinced us.”

Brittany Ferries has taken delivery of three E-Flexers – Galicia, Salamanca and Santana – and has agreements in place for a further two vessels, Guillaume de Normandie and Saint-Malo. While based upon the same basic design platform, each E-Flexer can be adapted to fit the needs of a particular customer. In the case of Brittany Ferries, these adaptations included a significant increase in accommodation to provide capacity for 1,015 passengers and, for all the vessels after Galicia, the additional capability to operate using LNG fuel. Guillaume de Normandie and Saint-Malo will also be equipped with batteries, enabling them to operate under battery power, as well as a further increase to a capacity of 1,300 passengers.





Photo: Klunderbie

Brittany Ferries aims to immerse guests in their destination through the design of its vessels

“The shipbuilding process for each of the vessels has been different,” says Arnaud Le Poulichet, director of engineering and maintenance for Brittany Ferries. “We have always had a very precise view of the ship we would like to create and creating that alongside our partners takes a lot of negotiation and convincing, both externally and internally. We are looking to create something new and technically challenging with each vessel and I think our work and that of our partners has created real success so far.”

The vessels have significant technical advantages over Brittany Ferries’ previous vessels, with the use of LNG as a fuel providing a marked reduction in emissions during their operation. There have also been operational benefits to having a series of broadly identical vessels within the fleet, explains Joëlle Croc, director of customer experience and onboard sales at Brittany Ferries.

“It’s been a huge advantage to have ships which are so similar to one another,” she says. “When we’re training crew in how to operate in all the different areas of the ship, we’re now building knowledge of a common platform. Once

The similarity of the ships also created a challenge in delivering a unique experience onboard. Brittany Ferries therefore aimed to differentiate the ships by introducing small but significant variations in the design.



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they’re familiar with that platform, crew members can easily transfer to another ship and quickly become accustomed and operational. That makes it easier to implement operational changes, and it saves time and money in training.”

“Our first three E-Flexers are like triplets that look like each other, but are dressed differently,” says Croc. “It was a challenge, but also an interesting opportunity. We found that we could adapt the base design quite quickly with the architect and the



The upcoming Guillaume de Normandie will be the fifth E-Flexer to join the fleet

shipyard to create that personality and introduce new concepts.”

The introduction of the new vessels will also signal the end of an era for two of Brittany Ferries’ longest serving vessels, Bretagne and Normandie, as they are set to be replaced by the operator’s fourth and fifth E-Flexers. Brittany Ferries has sensitively negotiated the process of retiring these two well-loved ships by emphasising the promise of the newer vessels.

“Sometimes, people don’t understand why we don’t keep sailing on our old vessels,” says Arnaud. “Everybody knows and likes these ships, which are very iconic for us at Brittany Ferries. We therefore have to bring both passengers and crew with us as we show them that our new vessels and solutions offer an improvement over those older ships.”

Croc adds: “We’re quite unique at Brittany Ferries in having such a strong link between the crew and the ships they sail on. There’s a lot of sadness about Bretagne, our first-ever ship, leaving the fleet after 35 years. So, we have to make sure that our customers and crew are reassured that we will bring them with us on the new ships and expressing how they will be better. It’s about change management.”

However, Brittany Ferries has preserved the legacy of Bretagne and Normandy through the ships’ artwork, with many pieces from their collections being transferred onto the upcoming vessels. Originally commissioned from Scottish

artist Alexander Goudie, the artworks will be featured alongside more contemporary pieces that will immerse passengers in the sights of their destination.

“Artwork plays a big role in our designs, and it’s especially important in maintaining that emotional link,” says Croc. “We are going to move more than 150 artworks onboard for the two new E-Flexers to continue the story after the transition. All the contemporary artists we’ve commissioned works from will also all have a connection to Brittany and Normandy and will create works showcasing the regions. One artist, for example, is collecting pieces of nature

regions the operator visits.

“We are also still working to inject the atmosphere of Brittany and Normandy regions into the interior design of the new vessels in terms of the colours, graphics and products we use,” says Croc. “We want guests to feel and understand their destination, and every part of the design, the music, the art and the food plays a role in that.”

The E-Flexers have therefore allowed Brittany Ferries to renew its fleet in terms of technical capabilities and onboard experience. The flexibility which first convinced the operator to choose the vessels could also provide further value in



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from the beaches and fields of Brittany and incorporating them into her work.”

The commitment to an immersive guest experience also extends to the wake-up music onboard Brittany Ferries’ vessels, which was commissioned from Galician musician Carlos Nunez to evoke the Celtic musical traditions of the four

the future, suggests Le Poulichet.

“If we need to, we can further adapt the ships again,” he says. “Our job is always to adapt to new regulations and to meet new needs for our customers. We know this means we will have to keep changing for the future, and we are confident in our ability to keep doing so.” **CFR**