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DART TALES

RNLI Lifeboats

NEWS FROM THE RNLI LIFEBOAT TEAM IN DARTMOUTH

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) announced on 13 April 2018 the exciting news that a B class inshore lifeboat will join the fleet at Dartmouth for a two year trial.

Dart lifeboat station currently has a single engined smaller D class inshore lifeboat but following a review at the start of 2017 it has now been decided that the station will receive the larger twin engined lifeboat on trial to test its suitability for the area.

Dart's current D class lifeboat operates, often at night, in very challenging and diverse waters with strong wind and tide conditions. So the addition of the faster and larger B class lifeboat will benefit the station in being able to meet the demand of the rescues they face.

Simon Crayford, Area Lifesaving Manager, says: 'The review has indicated a potential need for a B class lifeboat stationed at Dartmouth based on the number and type of incidents that the station has responded to over the last five years. The current lifeboat is sometimes operating close to the limit of its capability so the larger lifeboat increases the effectiveness of our response to a casualty.'

The trial will start later this year, with a review taking place after two years looking at the success of the trial and whether a B class will be placed permanently at Dart lifeboat station.

B CLASS ATLANTIC LIFEBOAT

The Dart RNLI volunteers will be trained on an Atlantic 75 inshore lifeboat. She carries a seated crew of three and has a capacity for 20 casualties. She is one of the fastest lifeboats in the fleet with a top speed of 32 knots. She is powered by two 75hp Yamaha engines as opposed to the single 50hp engine on the D class.

The B class has a manually operated righting mechanism in the event of a capsize, which involves inflating a bag on top of the roll bar over the stern. Her engines are inversion-proofed so that they shut down should she capsize and can be restarted after she has been re-righted.

Although she is an inshore lifeboat designed to operate in shallower water, the B class can handle fairly challenging open sea conditions as well – force 7 near gale winds in daylight and force 6 at night.



Manoeuvrability

The B class lifeboat is ideal for rescues close to shore and near cliffs and rocks – areas inaccessible to all weather lifeboats. She can also be beached in an emergency without damage to her engines.

Night-time rescues.

Many rescues by the Dart crew take place in the dark and can involve being close to dangerous cliffs and manmade structures.

In addition to night vision equipment, the B class lifeboat carries a searchlight and parachute illuminating flares to light up the surrounding area, helping to keep crew members safe as well as locate those in need of help.

The medical equipment stowed onboard includes oxygen and full resuscitation kit, responder bag and a multi-purpose ambulance pouch. A stretcher can be carried if needed.

Communications.

These are similar to those on the D class. Fitted and hand-held VHF radios, an onboard global positioning system and an electronic chart. Hopefully, the increased height of the aerial will improve communications up river but it will still be necessary to work closely with the local Coastguard SAR team.

Launching

It is planned that the lifeboat will be kept afloat for the duration of the trial.

Training.

The current lifeboat crew have entered a period of intensive training to make sure that everyone is fully signed off on their learning targets in relation to the D class lifeboat so that when the trial begins the training can be completely focused on the B class. Many of the skills learnt by the D class crew will be directly transferable to the larger boat. Training will take place based on the Dart lifeboat station and other parts, such as self-righting the boat in the Sea Survival centre, take place at the Lifeboat College in Poole.

News, details of launches, photographs and videos can be found on the Dart station website. www.dartlifeboat.org.uk or the station Facebook page www.facebook.com/dartnllifeboat

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