A landmark 25 offshore wind projects ensure valuable experience

How does the offshore wind service and accommodation industry keep up with operators’ requirements? The industry has changed over the years and now wind farms are farther and farther from the shore, making accommodation an even more important focus for employers, who want to make sure their highly skilled workers are well rested and relaxed, whilst on site for longer periods of time. PES asked C-bed’s Managing Director, Jesper Nielsen how his company has evolved over the years.
PES: It’s great to have you back with us at PES and have the opportunity to catch up on the developments at C-bed.

Jesper Nielsen: Thank you, it’s great to be with you again.

PES: So, just what is the secret behind reaching the 25 projects mark?

JN: I believe, the secret is a mix of experience, knowledge and the right people. The experience comes from pioneering the market in 2008. We saw a gap in the market for offshore accommodation, as wind farms gradually gained distance from the shore and over 100 installation technicians were transported by small vessels to and from remote sites.

Our idea was simple: we would convert a ferry into an offshore hotel which would then be anchored at the wind farm and allow for easy transfers. This concept worked very well for years, before new requirements pushed for the introduction of SOVs to replace the ferries.

With 11 years of accumulated offshore accommodation experience and a team of carefully selected employees, high standards remain a priority for us. With our quality hotel levels for offshore technicians, we keep pursuing our ‘almost better than home’ strategy.

Furthermore, our employees have been involved in more wind farm projects than their average counterpart, which often makes us an attractive sounding board at the early stage of a project.

PES: How would you describe your current vessel, Wind Innovation?

JN: I think that Wind Innovation has a unique design where all our years of experience have culminated to optimise flows in the vessel, for the on-board technicians.

In 2015, the technical industry requirements were gradually evolving from ferries at anchor to modern advanced SOVs. We stuck with our original strategy and co-designed a commissioning SOV, with Siemens Wind Power. The intent was to reach across-the-board technical superiority. Thereby, the vessel was carefully selected, redesigned and ultimately rebuilt in close collaboration with the client.
In addition, she has special characteristics such as a sheltered cargo deck, 80 single cabins and flexible gangway access ranging from 12 to 26 metres, which brings her high up on the list of best-in-class vessels on operational limits.

**PES:** We would love to know about projects you are currently working on?

**JN:** C-bed is currently deployed in the German sector of the North Sea to service the Trianel Windpark Borkum II offshore wind farm. Here, Wind Innovation is supporting the installation and commissioning of 32 turbines. We have been working on the Trianel project since the summer and expect to continue into Q1 2020.

**PES:** Could you tell us what differences in requirements for offshore service and accommodation you have noticed over the past 5 years?

**JN:** Overall, I am pleased to conclude that the industry has gone from being considered a means of optimisation to a project necessity. We are now a key component in modern wind farm construction.

If I take a closer look at the market for SOVs, there has been a significant increase in the intensity of rivalry as a result of the downturn in the neighbouring oil & gas sector. Shipowners, previously engaged in the collapsed oil & gas sector, were now desperate for employment and started equipping suitable vessels with gangway systems and hotel staff to aggressively compete for projects in offshore wind. This significant influx of tonnage migrating from the oil & gas sector rapidly shifted the market supply curve as the number of available vessels quadrupled from 2015 to 2016.

Over the last five years, there has also been an increase in the demand for vessels that are able to assist with more than just accommodation. Clients now request services like ROV support, helicopter transfers and offshore bunkering options, for both CTVs and generator testing on site. In 2017, daily charter rates were barely able to cover operating expenses, but we chose to stick to our high standards and premium solutions to positively differentiate ourselves. Looking back, it was the right decision, and we are happy to have kept the many small details that make C-bed unique and to maintain our high service levels.

**PES:** What trends are you seeing here on the cusp of 2020? Are there any current changes in behaviour from the wind operators?

**JN:** I would say that they moved from wind to oil & gas - and now they are back again. We see that many oil & gas vessels have left offshore wind and returned to their original environment after oil prices picked up last year. Also, what we see is that after a few years of using smaller teams of technicians for the commissioning phases, resulting in smaller vessel requirements, a new trend is starting to appear. Now, the larger vessels dedicated to offshore wind with room for 50+ passengers are once again in demand, however, most of the newly built SOVs can only accommodate around 35 passengers. The introduction of Wind Innovation’s 80 single cabins is most welcome from my perspective.

**PES:** Looking to the future – where do you think the offshore service industry and C-bed heading?

**JN:** In the future, C-bed must capitalise on the unparalleled experienced we have gained over the past 11 years. When I try to look 3-5 years ahead, I see an industry with a growing number of big players with multiple large vessels in their fleet. Competition will grow, but at the same time, requirements from the operators favour logistics that work on the project from day one, in order not to stay on schedule with the increasingly large offshore wind projects.

At C-bed, we are therefore confident that Wind Innovation and the experience we have on board will continue to be our market edge and will also take us beyond 2020.

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**Facts about C-bed floating hotels**

Danish offshore ship-owning company founded in 2008

Employs around 75 maritime specialists

Strong track record with 25 individual offshore projects in Northern Europe since 2008

3,772 safely completed gangway transfers on Wind Innovation since the first project in 2016.

Involved in the installation of a total 9,572 MW of green energy

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**Facts about Wind Innovation**

Registration: Builder Mjellem & Karlsen Verft AS

Year built 1999 (converted 2016)

Classifications DNV-GL Comfort Class 3 SPS

IMO 9189512

Registry London

Dimensions:

- Length (LOA) 93.4m
- Breadth MId. 22.0m
- Summer Draught 6.2m
- Gross Tonnage 8,395

Vessel details:

- Walk-to-work Uptime 23.4m heave compensated
- Offshore crane Norcrane 5mt @ 23m
- Helideck D= 22.2m L= 12.8t

Accommodation:

- Total POB 140
- Total PAX 105 (80 single cabins)

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