

Isle of Wight boat for Falklands Conservation's whale study

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A powerful rigid inflatable boat (RIB), destined to be used in the Falkland Islands on a project to monitor whales, is ready for its 8,000 mile journey south.

East Cowes-based Island RIBs has proudly signed off a 7.5 metre vessel, designed and built on the Isle of Wight.

Sporting a Falklands Conservation logo, the RIB will be used by scientists monitoring the migration of the region's southern right whale population.

To allow the experts to tag the 14 metre long marine mammals (that's around twice the length of the boat), for six weeks a year over several years, the RIB features a specially designed platform.

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The gantry will be added when the boat arrives in the Falklands, in the new year.

Island RIBs got involved in January 2020, when an email kickstarted the long process of applying for grant funding.

The project got the green light in May 2021 and production started just one month later.

This is not the first time Island RIBs has been asked to create a boat for an important scientific project.



The completed boat, moored in East Cowes.

In 2018, the firm was commissioned to build two 7.5m RIBs, capable of withstanding the harsh environment of the Antarctic, for the British Antarctic Survey.

The boats are now based at the Rothera Research Station, the UK's Antarctic hub.

Taking around four months to build, Falklands Conservation's boat is 2.55 metres wide, including the tubes.

Weighing in at 1.2 tonnes (without crew, kit and supplies), it boasts two fuel tanks, each holding up to 110 litres.

Two Suzuki DF90 engines provide 180 horsepower and the RIB can reach a top speed of 40 knots (around 46 miles per hour).



Working on a new boat.

Blake Lucas, design and development engineer, told the County Press: "There were some complexities at the end, around the the gantry.

"We had to design one and everything had to be calculated, like the stresses loaded on it.

"In order for them to use the RIB in certain conditions, we had to test it ourselves."

It had to comply with higher safety, build quality, performance and structural requirements but double engines and fuel tanks means, if one set fails, the crew can still get home.

Island RIBs, based at Kingston Works, designs and makes a variety of models, up to 10 metres long, and prides itself on durability and fast turnaround.



The completed boat.

Director Jo Burke, said: "Things are going very well.

"We are flat-out busy until the latter part of 2022.

"We have a huge amount of new enquiries and plans to expand our employees, as well as our range.

"We feel very fortunate that what we thought might be an end-of-Covid bubble seems to be our brand getting out there and a more sustained growth.

"Long may it continue!"

Jo is proud to have sent boats to aid scientific research around the globe.

"It's great to know your product is out there doing something good," she said.