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Celebrating the first anniversary of our fourth guest-funded RNLi lifeboat, Spirit of Fred. Olsen

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines is celebrating the first anniversary of its fourth guest-funded Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLi) lifeboat, Spirit of Fred. Olsen, at the Kyle of Lochalsh, in the Highlands of Scotland. Officially launched in April 2012 – and aptly named by Fred. Olsen cruise guest Karen Potter, winner of an online voting poll – the lifeboat was called out 11 times in 2012, and rescued a total of three people.

The new Atlantic 85 B-856 Spirit of Fred. Olsen replaced the previous Atlantic 75-class boat, Alexander Cattanach, which had been stationed at Kyle since

1997. In 2012, Spirit of Fred. Olsen responded to a variety of call-outs, or 'shouts, in and around the Kyle of Lochalsh, involving many different casualties and circumstances, including fishing vessels, passenger vessels, commercial and leisure traffic, and individuals.

Mike Rodwell, Managing Director of Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, said:

"Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines is delighted to have made such an important difference to the community of the Kyle of Lochalsh with Spirit of Fred. Olsen, which was brought about by the generous donations of our guests across our cruise fleet. Our association with the RNLI has been going strong since the 1960s and will continue for many years to come. The work of the RNLI is invaluable, and any of us who go to sea owe them an enormous debt."

One of Spirit of Fred. Olsen's more dramatic rescues of the year occurred on 27th March 2012, when Kyle's volunteer crew members responded to the call of an injured elderly woman, who had fallen on a rocky shore near Broadford, nine miles away from Kyle of Lochalsh. Upon arrival at the scene, the crew could immediately tell that the woman's injuries required medical attention. Luckily, one of the volunteer lifeboat crew members on board Spirit of Fred. Olsen that day was a qualified Doctor, and he and another crew member climbed ashore to treat her injuries, before bringing her safely on board the lifeboat. The woman was transferred to the care of paramedics at Broadford Pier, who would not have been able to reach the position where she initially fell.

John Macrae, Helmsman and Lifeboat Press Officer at Kyle of Lochalsh, joined the RNLI in 1996, after deciding that he wanted to put something back into the community. Because of the high level of boating activities in and around Kyle, and influenced by his brother, a keen sailor, John decided to put his skills to use with the RNLI, and has been a volunteer ever since.

John explained the benefits that Spirit of Fred. Olsen has brought for RNLI Kyle:

"I've been out on a lot of shouts on the Atlantic 85. It's a big step up from the class we were using previously, so we're still getting used to it as a crew - but it's performed very well indeed so far. The Atlantic 85 can get a four member crew on board, which couldn't be done on our previous lifeboats, so that is the biggest improvement for us. It's made life much easier, with the ability to

use headsets on board, so we can listen to each other clearly, and communicate with each other using the microphones. It makes such a difference compared to shouting to one another over the sound of the engines! It's a lot faster, too, meaning that we can get to casualties quicker, which is another step forward in achieving our mission to end the preventable loss of lives at sea.

“The last shout we went on was quite eventful. We were called out to an area about 45 minutes away from Kyle, where a man and two children had fallen from their dinghy into the water. By the time we arrived, they had been taken aboard a local fishing boat, but due to its size and capacity, they were unable to retrieve the dinghy. Our crew were able to recover the dinghy and put it back in shore for them, knowing that the children were already safely out of the water. We got to the shout much faster than we would have been able to in another lifeboat, which was critical at a time when we believed that these three people were still stranded in the water.

“Being able to help local people is the best thing about the job. Our crew get on so well, and we really enjoy what we do, which makes it all the more worthwhile volunteering to help save lives at sea. We are extremely grateful to Fred. Olsen and its guests for making 2012 another exceptional year for the RNLI Kyle of Lochalsh.”

Over the years, the generous donations of Fred. Olsen's guests' to the RNLI on board its ships have funded:

four inshore lifeboats – the latest one, Spirit of Fred. Olsen, cost £180,000

three mobile training units

three seminar rooms at The Lifeboat College in Poole, Dorset

the development and funding of three DODO (drive-on, drive-off) lifeboat

launching trolleys at Mudeford, Cullercoats and Criccieth

RNLI crew member training programme throughout 2011 and 2012

In May 2010, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines was presented with an RNLI 'Lifetime Achievement Award' by Royal Patron H.R.H. Prince Michael of Kent in recognition of its ongoing commitment, at the charity's 'Annual Presentation of Awards' ceremony at the Barbican Centre, London.

Fred. Olsen Cruise Line operates in the UK with four intimately sized ships for

a more personal cruising experience.

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