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Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines welcomes new guest-funded RNLI lifeboat in the Kyle of Lochalsh

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines is welcoming the launch of its latest guest-funded RNLI lifeboat, which has just been unveiled at the Kyle of Lochalsh, in the Highlands of Scotland. The new lifeboat has been made possible by the generosity of Fred. Olsen guests on board its four cruise ships. In 2009, guests' donations on board amounted to an amazing £91,000, which enabled Fred. Olsen to reach its target and fund the new £180,000 Atlantic 85 class boat – the fourth to be purchased by Fred. Olsen guests.

The name that has been chosen for the new Kyle of Lochalsh inshore lifeboat – nominated by Karen Potter, a recent guest on board Fred. Olsen's Black Watch cruise ship – is Spirit of Fred. Olsen. Karen said of her choice: "A lot of lifeboats start with the name Spirit, and Fred. Olsen supports the RNLI." In an online Facebook poll, this name attracted the most votes amongst Fred. Olsen guests.

Mike Rodwell, Managing Director of Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, said: "At Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, we are very proud of the commitment shown by our guests towards the RNLI, even in these difficult economic times, and we are extremely honoured to be able to name the new Kyle of Lochalsh lifeboat after our company, which has been in the shipping business since 1848.

"Our thanks go to Karen Potter for coming up with such an inspirational and meaningful name for the new lifeboat, and it is most fitting that the Spirit of Fred. Olsen will be saving lives at sea for many years to come."

The new lifeboat has been undergoing tests at Kyle and is now ready to respond to emergencies with a volunteer crew, 24 hours a day. It replaces the previous Atlantic 75 class boat, called Alexander Cattanach, which had been stationed at Kyle since 1997. Kyle has launched 14 times in 2011, and in 2010 it was the 12th busiest station in Scotland, with 24 launches.

Spirit of Fred. Olsen can accommodate four crew, with an enlarged space for casualties. It is capable of speeds of up to 35 knots, and the official naming ceremony will take place in 2012.

Emma Martin, the RNLI's Corporate Partnerships Manager, said: "We are immensely proud of the partnership between Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines and the RNLI, which has been built up over the last 40 years. The new Kyle of Lochalsh lifeboat Spirit of Fred. Olsen really highlights this, and the tremendous amount of fundraising that takes place on board Fred. Olsen's cruise ships, which is so valuable to the Charity."

Fred. Olsen's guests have been raising funds for the RNLI on board its cruise ships since the 1960s, when an RNLI volunteer, Howard Bell (and his wife, Poppy), started the initiative to encourage fellow guests to help the charity to save lives at sea. The relationship has grown ever since, and Fred. Olsen is now the RNLI's longest-running corporate partner.

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

- four inshore lifeboats – the previous lifeboat, B-774 Braemar, went on service in 2001
- 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

In May 2010, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines was presented with a 'Lifetime Achievement Award' by Royal Patron H.R.H. Prince Michael of Kent in recognition of its ongoing commitment, at the RNLI's annual 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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