

## Warm welcome for cruise ships



Two cruise ships with nearly 1700 passengers between them called into Portland Port in a double boost for the area.

The Holland America Lines' MS Zuiderdam and Hurtigruten's MS Otto Sverdrup both made their inaugural visits to the port when they stopped on consecutive days.

Their visits came as Portland Port prepares for cruise lines to bring a record number of passengers to South Dorset this year.

Of the visiting cruise guests, nearly 80% went on excursions in Dorset or were able to explore the local area using the port's complimentary shuttle bus service, with the remainder going further afield.

Bill Reeves, chief executive of Portland Port, said: "It was a pleasure to welcome the Zuiderdam and Otto Sverdrup on their first visits to Dorset.

"While some passengers went on trips to Stonehenge or Salisbury, the majority went on organised excursions in the south Dorset area, or stayed in the local area.

"We are expecting a bumper season of cruise calls with the most passengers annually in a decade of calls at Portland Port. We are expecting about 130,000 visitors this year, a 23% increase over last year.

"Our new berth development is due to come into operation within the next few weeks, which will further allow us to grow our capacity, provide an even warmer welcome and build upon the £10million our cruise calls contribute to the local economy every year."

Passengers from the ships, which arrived on April 15 and 16, went on excursions to such locations as Abbotsbury, Portland Bill, the Jurassic Coast, Bovington and Corfe Castle.

Others explored under their own steam or visited Weymouth town centre on shuttle buses provided by Portland Port.

As well as the cruise business, Portland Port has a number of tenants in a variety of sectors including marine engineering and boatbuilding, subsea support, bunkering and cargo handling. It also provides berths and services to long-established customers such as the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

The port employs more than 50 staff, and its tenants provide work for more than 250 people.

Preparations for the next cruise ships continue as well as for a Home Office barge for refugees.

Bill added: "We are proud of the strong and diverse business we have built over nearly 30 years, including long-standing relationships with different government departments.

"As the port operator, we have a vested interest in ensuring the safe, secure and successful arrival and operation of the refugees' safe haven.

"We continue to work with the Home Office and local agencies to minimise its impact on local public services and maximise the benefit of its stay.

"It is important for us to support the Home Office and play our part in the national effort in housing some of the thousands of refugees in need of accommodation."

Portland Port is based in South Dorset and has operated on a commercial basis since 1996. It has a number of commercial tenants and provides maritime and marine related services.

For more information visit <https://www.portland-port.co.uk/>.

