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**SOV starts work**

After an official naming ceremony in June at the Dogger Bank operations and maintenance (O&M) base in Port of Tyne, Newcastle, UK-based shipping operator North Star officially welcomed the Grampian Tyne to its fleet. She’s a service operation vessel (SOV) destined for a life at sea, helping to maintain the Dogger Bank Wind Farm, which, on completion in 2026, will become the world’s largest offshore wind generation site.

Weighing in at just over 5,000 tonnes, she’s over 70m long with a crew of up to 42.

The propulsion system features four 6-cylinder Yanmar 6EY22ALWS developing 1,370kWm/1,300kWe, attached to a pair of Voith eVSP 26/230 propellers.

James Bradford, North Star’s chief technology officer, explains, “The propulsion system uses the Voith eVSP main propulsion for instantaneous repose to vessel motions, improving stability for operations, comfort on board and reducing fuel burn by around 13%. Rim drive tunnel thrusters mounted forward also provide highly responsive thrust whilst being very quiet to aid in comfort on board. Our propulsion system is fully electrically driven, allowing us to utilise hybrid technologies, including just under 1MWh of batteries used for spinning reserve in DP and peak shaving. We believe this saves a further 20% of fuel burn versus standard technologies.”

Explaining the choice of Yanmar as engine supplier, he continues, “We have used Yanmar before on the existing ERRV fleet. When choosing an engine, we look for efficiency, reliability, adaptability to greener fuels and cost. We have an excellent relationship with the company and believe its medium-speed engines offer a highly efficient solution for our SOVs. Having four identical generators allows us to spread the load, and the medium-speed approach allows the engines to work closer to optimal load in operations. This was more expensive than a father-son approach, but we believe the Yanmars will offer efficiency and reliability in the long run, saving opex and improving available days. Yanmar also has a development plan for its EY22 engines for modification to dual fuel with methanol, and we have a lot of trust in its R&D approach and credibility in the development of new solutions.”

Also featuring hybrid technology is a daughter craft, which will be used mostly for crew transfers. Named after a lighthouse keeper’s daughter who famously rescued survivors from a sinking steamship in 1838, the Grace Darling has been built by Alicat Workboats in Great Yarmouth to a Chartwell Marine design.

The Grampian Tyne is the first in a series of up to 45 similar vessels commissioned from Vietnamese constructor Vard Vung Tau. All will feature hybrid drive technology. Next in line, the Grampian Derwent, a larger ship with increased accommodation capacity and a helideck, has also been delivered.

North Star is looking to have a fleet of up to 40 vessels by 2040, ensuring operations and maintenance can be completed in a timely fashion for wind farm developers in the UK and beyond.

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| READER ENQUIRIES TO: | Dana van Kammen, Marketing. A. Manager |
| MEDIA ENQUIRIES TO: | YANMAR Europe BV, Marketing dpt., PO Box 30112, 1303 AC Almere, The Netherlands, dana\_vankammen@yanmar.com |

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