James Fisher and Graig launch the innovative ULSTEIN TWIN X-STERNTM SOV concept aimed at transforming the UK’s offshore wind supply chain

James Fisher and Sons plc (James Fisher), the global provider of specialist products and services to the energy, marine and defence industries, and Graig Shipping PLC (Graig), long established UK shipowner, have today unveiled a pioneering service operation vessel (SOV) design concept. The ULSTEIN TWIN X-STERN named ULSTEIN SX221 Diamond SOV will support the UK’s ambitious target of 50GW of offshore wind energy generation by 2030 - as part of its Net Zero Strategy.

The innovative concept is the result of extensive collaboration by the Diamond Consortium, a collaboration between James Fisher and Graig with support from DNV and design partner, Ulstein Design Solutions. The result will provide a future-proof design to address the increased demand for SOVs and will reduce the levelised cost of energy while delivering high levels of operability, personnel comfort and sustainability.

Placing sustainability at the fore, the Diamond SOV concept will address the supply chain chasm threatening to stymie offshore wind progress with a scalable, modular solution that can be achieved through high volume series construction to meet developer time and budgetary constraints. With a significantly reduced energy consumption and increased manoeuvrability, the vessel will also help developers lower scope 3 emissions in the construction of offshore wind farms.
As a top performing ship operator in Europe with strong safety and environmental standards, James Fisher has been facilitating the UK’s energy system transition through innovation in vessel design, technology and propulsion systems throughout its 175-year history. It is ideally placed to support the UK’s offshore wind journey and help address the challenges and operational requirements of developers.

Commenting on the launch of the ULSTEIN SX221 Diamond SOV, Jim Hey, group business development director at James Fisher said:

“The philosophy behind the Diamond SOV has been successfully applied to other vessel segments for many years: developing a specification that meets a market need while allowing for a high degree of customisation and configuration for individual owners and developers. We chose to go with ULSTEIN due to their history of successful innovative designs and believe the TWIN X-STERN to be the best choice for service operations of offshore wind farms.

Building SOVs in series volumes achieves significant economies of scale and delivers a design that can be built in multiple yards simultaneously. Considering the anticipated market demand for SOVs in the UK and beyond by the end of the decade, this exciting new concept places the UK at the centre of enabling global offshore wind ambitions.”

Bringing over 100 years’ experience in allowing clients and partners to enter the international shipping market, Graig Shipping PLC’s expertise means that it is well-placed to deliver solutions to support the rapid growth of the UK’s offshore wind industry, ensuring that ambitious goals for the energy transition can be met.

Hugh Williams, CEO, Graig Shipping PLC says:

“We are extremely pleased to be working closely with James Fisher on this project, and to be bringing our experience and expertise to it. We have successfully partnered over many years with DNV on the Graig-led Diamond business model and we are now applying this proven, scalable strategy to the global offshore wind markets with a particular focus on UK waters, helping to meet the challenging environmental goals in front of us.”

Arnstein Eknes, segment director, Special Ships, DNV says:

“With larger turbines being installed further out at sea, vessels and crews will be travelling greater distances and working for longer periods of time in harsher environments. The opportunities offered by digitalisation and introduction of sustainable solutions, whilst maintaining high dependability during operations are vital for the next generation of SOVs. This is why we are thrilled to be spearheading development of smart notations and services facilitating the novel solutions provided by this next-generation ULSTEIN SX221 Diamond SOV.”

The Diamond Consortium is currently in discussion with major shipyard groups to reach specifications in conjunction with valued customers, with the first vessel capable of being completed by the end of 2024.