



**Commercial Diving**

**ROV Pilot Technician Training**

**ALST Training**

**Sea Trials**

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## The Subsea Industry is on a Rise - Diver's Win a 45% Pay Increase



Divers give the new pay award the thumbs-up

**Commercial divers gained one of the largest pay offers of modern times after voting to accept an increase of 45% over two years.**

The pay award was won following a strike in November as the initial pay offer of 35% was overwhelmingly rejected by divers.

In a busy offshore industry increased investment and exploration has created high demand for subsea personnel (divers, ROV pilots) and topside support staff (Life Support

Technicians). This has given the divers excellent bargaining power when in negotiations with employers.

Historically subsea companies have not invested in the training and development of staff, instead they relied upon existing skilled personnel. This has left the industry dependant on an aging workforce, in the North Sea the average age of divers is now over 45.

Many divers are nearing retirement leaving the industry facing a looming skills gap. At the same time the overall growth of the industry has stimulated demand for personnel.

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**Diving - whats it worth...**

This month Closed Bell divers in the North Sea are earning a day rate of £1000

## Subsea Industry Training

**In a new agreement with Fugro Rovtech, The Underwater Centre will be providing ROV training to all new Fugro recruits. Fugro, an international company with 45 vessels and approximately 100 ROVs, is a significant player in the offshore industry.**

Recruits from Fugro's operating companies around the world are attending three week pilot technician courses run at The Underwater Centre's Fort William training base. The pilot technician course is the same as the one undertaken by other students at The Centre. The course covers theoretical classroom work as well as practical experience launching, flying and recovering one of the Centre's Seaye

Falcons at our open seawater dive site.

George Robertson, Fugro's Global ROV Training Manager said: 'I've been impressed with both the facilities and professionalism demonstrated at The Underwater Centre. We are dedicated to providing excellent training at Fugro and this course will give our new recruits a solid grounding in the real live operation of ROVs in sea conditions.'

The growth of the offshore industry has lead to the International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA) to predict the need for thousands of additional offshore personnel in the next



The Underwater Centre's private pier in Fort William

2 to 3 years. And these new personnel need the correct training to prepare them for work. Training that The Underwater Centre has a solid track record in delivering.

**For training to work in today's offshore industry call:**

+44 (0)1397 703786

## Subsea 7 On Board

The Underwater Centre has been delivering subsea familiarisation training for Subsea 7 – one of the world's leading subsea engineering and construction companies.

Teams of Inspection Engineers have attended a comprehensive training course covering inspection, diving and ROV operation. After training the Inspection Engineers are deployed to Subsea 7's offshore facilities around the world. The course enabled the engineers to better understand the different roles and capabilities of offshore personnel, allowing them to manage worksites efficiently.

Lloyd Duncan, Inspection Manager at Subsea 7 said:

"The facilities and training provided by The Underwater Centre are ideal for giving Inspection Engineers a true appreciation of what is involved in undertaking the work of a diver or ROV pilot.

The training at The Underwater Centre gives an ideal foundation for new recruits and dovetails neatly in to our internal training programme and also compliments their development towards attaining the underwater inspection industry approved CSWIP accreditation.

Through these programmes Subsea 7 is able to demonstrate to its clients its long term commitment to bringing new people in to the industry and training them to meet current and potential future demands."



Subsea 7 at The Underwater Centre with our Seaeeye Falcon ROVs

**Find out more about training for work in the subsea industry or to visit our Fort William facility:**

info@theunderwatercentre.co.uk  
+44 (0)1397 703786

or to see press coverage on commercial diving check:  
www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk

## New IMCA Requirements for Closed Bell Divers increases demand for Qualified ALSTs



Saturation system

### New IMCA Requirements for Closed Bell Divers increases demand for Qualified ALSTs

IMCA (the International Marine Contractors Association) is the industry body which sets guidelines and standards for the subsea industry. In the past IMCA has recognised closed bell divers for work as ALSTs. But the subsea industry is increasingly rigorous in its attitude to safety and now a recent change in IMCA requirements means that to gain work as an Assistant Life Support Technician (ALST) you must

also have specifically passed the IMCA ALST qualification.

ALSTs are the skilled surface personnel who tend divers living in saturation. Divers living in decompression chambers need constant monitoring and the chamber environment must be carefully regulated to ensure the safe living conditions are maintained. This is a vital topside job, and can be undertaken without becoming a diver. With an existing international shortage of Life Support Techs there are fantastic job prospects for anyone wishing to follow this career path. To find out more about a career which offers international travel and excellent pay, check the websites listed below.

At The Underwater Centre all Closed Bell courses include a free ALST course. At no extra cost divers are able to gain this valuable qualification.

#### For more information:

www.imca-int.com  
www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk

## Great News on Funding for MOD Personnel



Funding is now available for HSE commercial diver training

**Serving members of the Ministry of Defence are entitled to Enhanced Learning Credit (ELC) funding towards training costs. Service personnel can claim up to 80% of course fees to a maximum amount of £1000, dependant on years served.**

A number of HSE diving courses are now eligible for ELCAS funding. This is fantastic news and means that if you are a serving member of the forces and you are interested in a subsea career you could benefit.

Courses must be from registered Learning Providers and must be recognised as Level 3 or higher on the National Qualifications

Framework (NQF). The Underwater Centre is a recognised ELCAS Learning Provider, offering a number of diving and ROV courses eligible for ELC funding.

#### For more information: The Underwater Centre

Telephone  
+0044 (0)1397 703786

ELCAS Learning Provider  
Number - 1593

**ELCAS**  
Email -  
elcas@gslglobal.com

Telephone  
From UK call 0845 300 5179  
From overseas 0044 1386  
842745

## Tug Boat Loch Shiel gets a £125,000 Refit

**As part of ongoing investment The Underwater Centre's tug boat Loch Shiel has been given a full refit.**

As Loch Shiel is now 18 years old we had been looking for a replacement. But nothing could be found that quite matched Loch Shiel's capabilities, so instead she was given a complete makeover and a new lease of life. New engines and electrical systems have been installed and bodywork replaced.

Steve Ham, General Manager at The Underwater Centre said 'In effect we have a brand new tug, which helps us deliver the

large number of commercial diving courses we are now running at the centre.'

The Underwater Centre owner Finlay Finlayson said the refit was part of the major investment made in the centre since taking over in 2004.

'We are continuing to improve our facilities and equipment and aim to make the centre the recognised centre of excellence worldwide for commercial diver and ROV training.'

Other recent new investment at the Centre has included the purchase of new commercial diving helmets a new hot water system and new generators.



A refurbished Loch Shiel is re-launched

## New Technology Trials

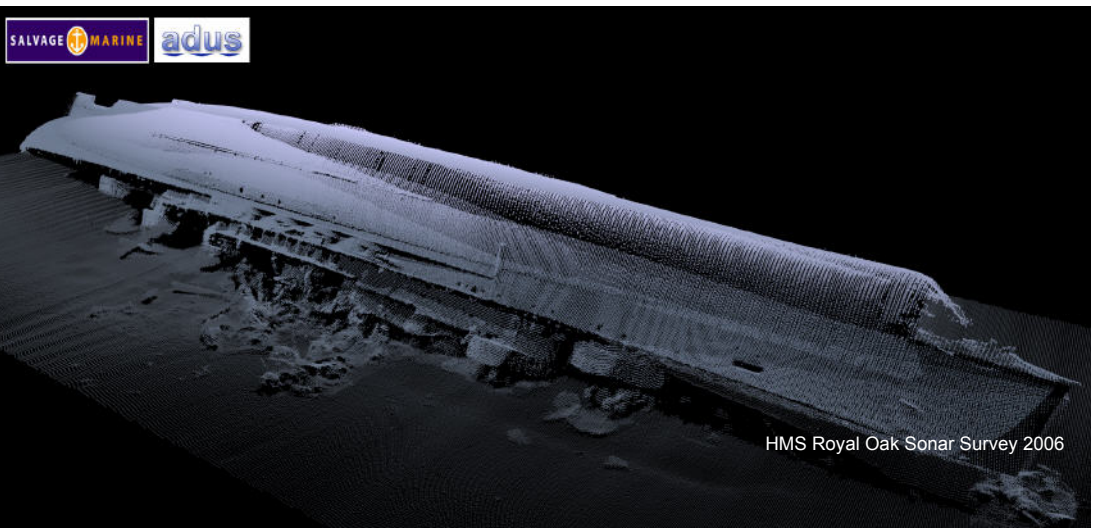
**The Underwater Centre was founded by the British Government in 1972 as a commercial diver training and underwater trials facility. Since then the MOD, universities and engineering companies have trialled new technologies at this ideal test site. This year a range of subsea organisations have tested a number of ground-breaking projects.**

### Multi-beam Sonar Survey

Archaeological Diving Unit Survey is a company that specialises in ultra high resolution multi-beam sonar surveys. Working with the MOD's Salvage and Marine Operations branch, they have developed their system so it can be mounted on an ROV, allowing surveys at great depths.

ADUS and the MOD used our large onshore pool to refine the basic operation of the ROV mounted sonar, then moved onto our seawater dive site to test the operation of the sonar amongst our various underwater structures and shipwrecks.

Mark Lawrence of ADUS said 'The time spent at The Underwater Centre allowed us to prove the effectiveness of the ROV mounted system. It's



ADUS multi beam sonar survey images

allowed us to quickly develop our capability to undertake these deep sonar surveys, and we are now working with the Salvage and Marine Operations team within the MOD to apply the system to future operations including the survey of the sunken Russian submarine K159 in the Barents Sea.'

### ROV Systems

Subsea 7 were here in March for a week to test two new Seaye Cougar's and their launch system. They took over the end of our pier for 7 days and used our shallow and deep water dive site to check out the operation of the new ROVs.

As well as easy access from our pier to an ideal test environment, Subsea 7 also had the added comfort of The Underwater Centre's tug, ROV and dive teams on hand in case of any mishaps during the trial.

Andy Walker, Subsea 7, said 'Its been a productive week. The easy access to the pier right in Fort William meant we had the maximum amount of time to spend testing our system, making it a very cost effective trial.'

### Dynamic Positioning & Acoustic Positioning Systems

Seebyte and Nautronix were both with us for a week in May testing cutting-edge positioning systems. Nautronix position themselves as global leaders in through-water technology and positioning systems for the offshore industry. And Edinburgh based company Seebyte focus on developing advanced ROVs and AUVs capable of complex inspection and maintenance tasks.

Seebyte were testing advanced acoustic positioning systems for ROVs, taking advantage of

facilities on-site using our own Seaye Falcon and one of our experienced ROV pilots.

Nautronix have been testing their Nasnet Acoustic Positioning System with us. Our deep water dive site gave them the 120m water depth they required for the test, and they made full use of our tug Loch Shiel and our ROV team during the trial. Richard Main of Nautronix was delighted with the support he received. 'The team at The Underwater Centre provided exceptional support, coming out around the clock to make sure our trial was successful. It was well worth the trip across from Aberdeen'.

**For more information on trials at The Underwater Centre contact Steve Ham on:**

+44 (0)1397 703786

## Opportunities at The Underwater Centre

We are a growing company and we regularly have vacancies for instructors at The Underwater Centre. Check our website for current opportunities.

The Underwater Centre was founded in the 1970s by the British Government who selected it as the ideal location for a commercial diver training and underwater trials facility.

Located on the shores of Loch Linnhe - one of the deepest Scottish Lochs - our large private pier gives unrestricted sea access, with water depths of 50 metres nearby and 150 metres within half a mile. Our site provides conditions similar to those experienced offshore, and has a range of underwater structures and wrecks. Unlike most seawater sites our sheltered waters allow operations to continue all year round in almost all weather.

We are the only Health & Safety Executive approved training centre to offer a full range of HSE Commercial Diving Courses from Scuba to Closed Bell. And our Career Packages include additional skills training preparing divers for the real experience of commercial diving.

## Diver's Win a 45% Pay Increase (cont. From page1)

High demand for divers has come as a result of increased investment and exploration in the oil industry, driven by high oil prices. Oil fields which in the past were too small to investigate, are now viable, and last year a record number of exploration licences were granted by the Government. This growth looks set to continue for a number of years. A survey commissioned by Subsea 7 in 2005 revealed that the subsea industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the UK economy. It was also predicted that the global subsea industry will quadruple in size

one of the fastest growing sectors in the UK economy. It was also predicted that the global subsea industry will quadruple in size... in the next four years.

from \$5 billion to \$18 billion in the next four years.

Other new developments such as offshore windfarms also need divers to carry out underwater structural work as well as maintenance. In 1995 Hurricane Katrina devastated much of the oil and gas infrastructure along the Gulf of Mexico. Efforts to repair this disaster have also increased demand for subsea personnel.

Increased wages and excellent employment prospects are both signs of the industry's increased need to invest and maintain its workforce, and it also makes this

an excellent time to consider starting a career in diving or to take the next step into closed bell diving.

For more news coverage of Commercial Diving visit

[www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/inthepress.asp](http://www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/inthepress.asp)

For more information on subsea careers:

[www.subseauk.org](http://www.subseauk.org)  
[www.divingpersonnel.com](http://www.divingpersonnel.com)  
[www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk](http://www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk)

## The Underwater Centre - Tasmania

### New Vessel - Stay Calm

The Underwater Centre in Tasmania is thriving, and with lots of courses running the centre has recently taken on an extra vessel for dive operations.

Our new boat is named 'Stay Calm'. Built in 1998 'Stay Calm' is an ex Abalone fishing boat. Her twin steel hull gives the stability and strength which made her an ideal vessel for running a complete dive spread.

After a full re-fit she is now equipped with a twin lock

chamber, hot-water machine, primary and secondary winches and a wet bell. She has on-board accommodation to sleep 8 people.

'Stay Calm' forms part of Tasmania's fleet of five vessels. 'Stay Calm' will be used alongside 'Dive Devil II' to operate air and mixed gas diving courses.



Stay Calm sailing the seas off Beauty Point, Tasmania

Check out The Underwater Centre in Tasmania, visit: [www.theunderwatercentre.com](http://www.theunderwatercentre.com)

Or call: +61 363 834844

**THE UNDERWATER CENTRE**

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