



Commercial Diver Training ROV Pilot Technician Training Diver Medic Training Sea Trials

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The Underwater Centre Adds New Training Package



Diver in training on the loch-bed, using hand tools

Following direct UK diving industry feedback, The Underwater Centre has announced a new course it has introduced to its training programme.

The leading subsea training facility in Fort William has developed the 'New Construction Career Package', focusing on the key skills specifically requested by members of the Association of

Diving Contractors (ADC) and the International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA). Subsea tools and skills training, including welding, burning and rigging, has been incorporated into the course, to ensure students are confident and proficient in performing such tasks underwater.

With over 70% of employers surveyed by Subsea UK and Highlands and Islands

Enterprise (HIE) identifying 'unfamiliarity with mechanical work' as a key skills gap among new divers, the new course is on track to address this issue. The research has also led to boat handling and Kirby Morgan hat operator training being added to the 11-week New Construction Career Package.

Steve Ham, General Manager at The Underwater Centre, commented; 'Our position as the leading training facility for commercial diving means that we're continually striving to refine the courses we offer. Our aim is to directly mirror industry needs and expectations.

'Through our commitment to offering the most relevant and valuable training for commercial divers, employers can be confident that The Underwater Centre graduates can competently work to a high standard from their very first day of employment.'

*Survey Source: Market Study Commercial Diver and ROV Pilot Technician Future Training Requirements. HIE and Subsea UK.

For information on the Centre's courses visit:
www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/courses.asp

Centre Embarks on Multi-million Pound Redevelopment

The Underwater Centre is to embark on a £5million improvement and expansion programme to cement its position as a world-leading subsea training facility. The Centre in Fort William has been awarded £1.5million by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE).

The project will create 20 new jobs and safeguard the 53 already at the Centre, as well as increasing diver training capacity by around 100 students per year.

Finlay Finlayson, Managing Director of The Underwater Centre, said; 'This redevelopment project will

improve our existing facilities, including the pier infrastructure, a new diver training barge and various other training amenities at the Centre. This will undoubtedly give us a great platform for future growth in Fort William. With a growing oil and gas industry and a new focus on marine renewables, improving the training for divers and ROV pilots will help our students be prepared for these expanding employment sectors. This is the largest investment we have ever undertaken and we are grateful for the support of HIE.'

Alex Paterson, HIE Chief Executive added; 'The development of The Underwater



The Underwater Centre's pier facilities stretching out into Loch Linnhe

Centre is vital if the Highlands & Islands are to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the marine renewable sector.

This is a great example of a locally-based company showing the ambition to be world-leading.'

New Contracts Boost to North Sea Workforce

The UK subsea sector has grown by 40%, according to a recent report by Subsea UK in Aberdeen, and the news coming from the industry at the moment is very optimistic.

There are currently 10 new dive support vessels (DSVs) in production; RBG has announced that it is to invest more than £3million to enhance its diving and ROV services capability and was recently awarded a three-year, £36million contract by Maersk; Aberdeen-based PSN are looking to add another 100 people to its workforce following a surge in North Sea work.

Subsea 7 have recently announced the award of a contract worth approximately \$75million for the engineering, procurement and installation of a subsea pipeline bypass around the B11 platform; Aker Solutions have been awarded a contract to install subsea power cables in the Goliat field in the Barents Sea; Statoil are fast-tracking a number of subsea projects and BP and Shell both



Divers and ROV pilots are training at the right time

have a wide range of new subsea construction projects in the North Sea and worldwide. All of this investment and growth has given 2011 a healthy start and are good indicators of the positive years ahead.

This positive industry news, following a relatively quiet 2010, shows that the demand for commercial divers and ROV pilots will only increase over the coming years.

Subsea Testing in Fort William



The Centre's pier in Fort William

Through-water communications continue to develop, with Weatherford recently using The Underwater Centre's facilities to test their new system.

With access to a wide range of depths within easy access of the Centre's pier and supported by the Centre's expert staff, the team from Weatherford were pleased with the successful outcomes of their trial.

Alistair Goodall, Senior Mechanical Engineer at

Weatherford said; 'We chose The Underwater Centre as we needed to prove our system in open water in close proximity to a metal structure, but also at depths down to 50m within easy access of the launch point. The pier, subsea structures and convenient access to depth were absolutely ideal.'

Applied Acoustics also took advantage of the Centre's facilities and support, testing their new acoustic positioning equipment. Using the Centre's support vessels, transponders were deployed to the seabed and then assessed at depths of 100m.

Neil MacDonald, Technical Manager at Applied Acoustics said; 'Thanks to the support of the team at the Centre and the facilities they were able to provide us with, the trial was completed efficiently and on budget.'

To read more about the Centre's facilities visit:
www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/facilities.asp

You Can Teach an Old Dog New Tricks: ROV Pilot Jeremy Douglas

Having spent more than half of his life serving his country in the Armed Forces, Morayman Jeremy Douglas, 55, was looking to embark on a new challenge – a search which took him to The Underwater Centre in Fort William, where he trained as an ROV Pilot Technician.

Moving from a career in the Forces, which saw him serving in Belize and Afghanistan, to piloting remotely operated vehicles in the North Sea may not seem the most natural career progression, but it is one which Jeremy has taken to with great commitment and enthusiasm.

After completing his service with several decorations and achievements, Jeremy researched the options which were available and discovered The Underwater Centre, a world-renowned subsea training facility. He signed up for the three week, intensive ROV Pilot Technician Course, which is aimed at those with a good grounding in electronics.

'There are other providers offering ROV training for less, but The Underwater Centre is recognised as the premier facility, and the only one which offers concurrent ROV and diver training – an important skill for an ROV operator to master.

'The course was very well structured and well delivered and provided me with the skills which I required when looking for my first job in the industry. There was a mixture of classroom learning and hands-on experience, including flying the ROVs in an open seawater environment, which I found to be hugely beneficial.'



Jeremy on course at The Underwater Centre

After Jeremy had completed his first job in what can be a very competitive industry. He believes the support he received from staff at the Centre was vital in helping secure his first post.

'What the Centre offers, which in my opinion is priceless, is a commitment to keep supporting you once you have completed the course.

'As a minimum, it means regular emails from Paul Bury, The Underwater Centre's Head of ROV Training and Operations, about upcoming jobs from the large network of ex-students who use Paul as a hub of useful information.

'I have been told by several people that the hardest job to find offshore is your first one. Once you have your first mobilisation under your belt, doors then start to open for you. My first door has opened for me, thanks to Paul and The Underwater Centre.'



The Centre's ROV course includes training on a 7-function master/slave manipulator arm

Additional Hands-on Flying Time

Following feedback from previous students, The Underwater Centre has created two new, industry-specific, add-on training programmes to give even more in-depth knowledge of ROV systems.

The one week Fibre-optics and ROV Manipulator Training Course goes into greater detail of fibre-optics systems commonly found on ROV systems. The course further prepares students for challenges encountered in the workplace. Focusing on the practical repair elements of ROV fibre operations, students will receive training in hot-melt fibre end termination and fusion splicing and joining.

The ROV manipulator training covers the theory and practical demonstration of a variety of manipulator systems, which students will encounter frequently during their careers. Including extra hands-on practice operating a 7-function hydraulic manipulator on the Centre's work-class ROV, this course provides additional skills, knowledge and experience; allowing graduates to hit the ground running in their new career.

During the Centre's three week ROV Pilot Technician Course or seven week Premium ROV Course, students will receive approximately 8 hours of flying time with one of the Centre's live Seaeeye Falcon ROVs in the challenging tidal waters of Loch



Gain additional flying time on one of the Centre's industry-standard, Seaeeye Falcon ROVs

Linnhe. Students and graduates now have the opportunity to gain an additional 10 hours flying time for their logbook on the Centre's one week ROV Piloting Course.

Giving 40 hours operation over the week, the additional logbook hours translate as more experience when looking for work as an ROV pilot; making graduates even more employable.

Spotlight on... Senior ROV Instructor Rob Carswell

As an extremely experienced commercial diver and ROV pilot, Rob Carswell's career has taken him all over the world, and as The Underwater Centre's Senior ROV Instructor, he knows a thing or two about the subsea industry.

Rob's diving career followed the 'traditional' route; after leaving the Royal Navy, where he initially trained as a diver, he worked in 'civils' diving. This included engineering and construction projects such as the Thames Barrier, and usually involved deep, dark expanses of water with zero visibility.

Well into his diving career, Rob encountered his first ROV in the Persian Gulf, where he was lucky enough to be given a shot at flying it. Having recently learnt to fly aeroplanes, he was able to convince the company he worked for that he had the perfect foundation for training as an ROV pilot. He duly signed up for The Underwater Centre's ROV course. It didn't take long for him to delight in swapping 12 hour days on a sunburnt deck for an air conditioned ROV 'shack'.

Rob's extensive experience as both an ROV pilot and dive supervisor means that he wears a number of hats at The



Rob with his 'hard hat' on down the pier

Underwater Centre – He also has a Diver Medic certification, gained from training in Fort William.

However, he's found working as an ROV pilot in the Middle East particularly interesting; 'The ability to operate at greater depths for much longer periods has meant that while divers will always have a role to play, they no longer have exclusive claim to many tasks. Pipe laying, platform inspections and seabed surveys are just a few of the projects I've been involved with.'

Rob knows men and women from all walks of life who have successfully retrained as ROV pilots. He believes that the key to a successful career is understanding that it's just as important to know how to fly an ROV well, as it is to know how to fix it when it breaks down.

'The ability to repair an ROV is vital to employers so an electrical, mechanical or hydraulics background or qualification will stand you in good stead.'

'However,' says Rob, 'attitude and aptitude count for a great deal and many students, with limited technical knowledge, have gone on to forge very successful careers. Perseverance and the ability to take rejection are important too, given the nature of the work out there.'

Thanks to Rob's long and very successful career as a commercial diver, dive supervisor and ROV pilot, he has many contacts in industry. This proves very useful to students when they come on course and get talking to Rob; another thing Rob is also very good at!



Hands-on learning with Rob, in one of the ROV control cabins on the Centre's pier

Underwater Centre Provides American with a Ticket to Dive

For North Carolina man Daniel Hammond, risk taking and adventure had always been a passion – he counts rock-climbing, kite boarding and spear fishing among his favourite hobbies.

After spending eight years as a competitive snowboarder in the mountains of California, he decided a career change was needed and wanted to combine his love for adventure and the water. This led him to commercial diving.

Daniel first heard about The Underwater Centre while completing his air diver training in Seattle, when the Centre's diving operations manager, Alf Leadbitter, came to give a presentation. He was also informed by one of his lecturers that this was *the* place to go to gain an accredited certification in saturation diving.

Daniel signed up to the three week HSE Closed Bell Course, and was delighted with the training facilities and staff. He said; 'I have nothing but praise

for The Underwater Centre. The saturation dive training covers all the bases to give you a great foundation to start your new career as a mixed gas diver.

'The school has a great reputation within the industry, and without a doubt it gives you the best training from which to forge or strengthen your career in commercial diving. There are elements of the course which are far and above what other training schools offer, such as the amount of bell bounces that you do and the amount of time you spend in the bell.

'The instructors are brilliant guys that have been doing this for years. They're all incredibly experienced divers which is evident in the way they supervise. They've been there and done what we're going through so they know exactly what we need and how to help us.'

Daniel also believes that his training at the Centre has provided him with opportunities



Daniel Hammond on the Centre's pier, in the shadow of Ben Nevis

that he may not have been able to gain by training elsewhere.

'It's more difficult for American divers to get work outside America, but with the HSE certification, the world's now my oyster in terms of where I can work.'

Read more about the courses on offer at the Centre:
www.theunderwatercentre.co.uk/courses.asp

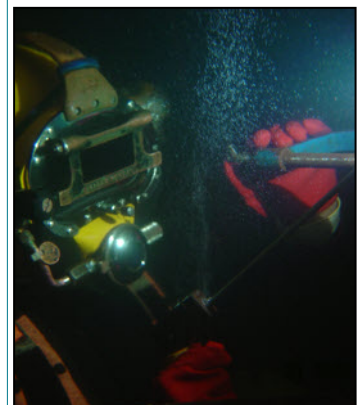
Getting a Job

In addition to providing students with the best possible training for their job, whether as a commercial diver or ROV pilot, The Underwater Centre also now gives students guidance on how to get that crucial first job.

The 'Get a Job' sessions were developed by the Centre's instructors, all of whom have extensive experience working as commercial divers or ROV pilots and can pass on that knowledge. The students are provided with important pointers and tips on how to get ahead, both when looking for a job and during their careers. They also get good advice on how to create an effective CV and on how to approach the companies who will be employing them. As well as the advice, all students who complete a course at The Underwater Centre are given a comprehensive database of international diving and ROV contractors, ensuring that they're armed with the tools to help kick-start their new careers.

The Underwater Centre is also now on Facebook and their page will be used to let students, past and present, know about job opportunities. As well as this, the page will provide the latest industry news, videos and course information. Make sure you know what's happening at the Centre and in the subsea industry, and 'like' their page:

<http://www.facebook.com/theunderwatercentre.co.uk>



Vital help for getting that important first job

Taking the Plunge at The Big Scuba Show



Trying out surface supplied diving

It's not often – if at all, in fact – that you get the chance to dive in surface supplied equipment in the centre of London. Yet that's just what was on offer at the first-ever Big

Scuba Show 2011, held at London's Olympia in February.

The Underwater Centre mobilised a full dive team in support of the event, including a Kirby Morgan 37 to dive with, and a 47 on display. Those who signed up to dive on the day were given a full brief as to the equipment and how it works; got dressed in a Northern Diver dry suit; put the helmet on and into the tank they went. There was a task for them to complete once in the water, to let them get a real feel for working underwater as a commercial diver. It was also a great chance for them to speak directly to some of the Centre's instructors, who are all experienced commercial divers.

Martin Williams, who was one of the first to don a dry suit and Kirby Morgan helmet, had a great time in the tank; 'Firstly I

would like to whole-heartedly thank all of the crew for the opportunity to complete the commercial dive. I received loads of information from everyone that was present to help my decision-making about my new career.'

If you would like to try diving in surface supplied gear, and weren't able to try it out in London, The Underwater Centre holds 'Introduction to Commercial Diving Careers' days on a regular basis. It's a great opportunity to take a look around the Centre's pier complex and extensive facilities, chat to the instructors, and also have a go at diving in a Kirby Morgan helmet in their 1.5million litre, indoor tank. It helps many potential students appreciate the quality of training provided and gain useful insight into their future career.

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