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## Bibby to launch one-stop shipmanager operation

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LIVERPOOL-based Bibby Line Group is looking for substantial growth in third party shipmanagement activities with the launch of a new company next month.

Bibby has pulled out of the Liverpool-based joint venture Meridian Marine Management, in order to focus on the newly formed Bibby Ship Management Group, which will trade from Wednesday.

The company will be based in Liverpool with subsidiary operations in other parts of the UK, the Isle of Man, Ukraine, India and the Philippines. There are also plans to open a subsidiary in Singapore.

Bibby was previously involved in technical management through Meridian, a 50:50 joint venture with Pacific Basin, and crew management through Bibby International Services. "We are rebranding our technical offering and a number of people at Meridian who were Bibby employees will be coming back," said Jon Osborne, the new managing director of Bibby Ship Management Group. "So while this is a new company, we have a lot of experience and expertise already."

The new firm will employ 150 people, with all but 10 of these coming from either Meridian or BIS. Bibby left the Meridian venture after being paid "an undisclosed sum" and the parting was amicable, said Mr Osborne.

"Discussions with our clients and prospects have repeatedly shown real market demand for a one-stop shop shipmanagement offering," said Mr Osborne. "In a tough economy, shipowners are looking for ways to optimise their performance and consequently seeking partners who can provide the right level of expertise and flexibility. Our tailor-made approach will meet this need.

"The business strategy for Bibby Ship Management is clear — we are focused on strengthening our position in key markets and are planning to achieve significant growth over the short and medium term."

Bibby Ship Management services will cover all aspects of specialist crew and technical management, including training, payroll, insurance, vessel inspection and accident investigation. “We did not have a true one-stop-shop before and it was difficult to explain the relationships,” said Mr Osborne. “Now we are saying — give us your shipmanagement contract and leave it to us.”

Within the new organisation will be the most recent acquisition by BIS, the former crew manning agency MA Olevent in Ukraine.

Training will be a major part of the new offering; BIS already had an established training centre in Mumbai with two dynamic positioning (DP) simulators and other courses offered including welding, electrical/technical and GMDSS.

There are plans to broaden the range of courses offered and also grow the training element in Ukraine, where a DP simulator is due for delivery by the end of this year.

“The most common problem shipowners face is where to get competent crew at reasonable prices — but it is quality crew that is worrying everyone,” said Mr Osborne. “Training is interesting for us because there is great demand from shipowners for training — and also, as we are supplying crew, we feel it is a real bonus for our customers.”