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SHIPMANAGEMENT

Recession has domino effect in keeping down pay

Wednesday 22 April 2009

UPWARD pressure on seafarers' wages is slowing as the recession cools demand for labour, *writes Steve Matthews.*

Managing director of Bibby Ship Management Jon Osborne told Lloyd's List that the trend was initially affecting the specialist sectors, where officer shortages were having the biggest impact on wage levels. But he said that it was starting to have a domino effect across the board. "This is good news for shipowners and managers, but also good for seafarers in the long-term because it brings greater stability," he said.

Mr Osborne was speaking in Sevastopol, Ukraine, where yesterday Bibby Line Group managing director Sir Michael Bibby officially opened the company's new dynamic positioning training centre and crew management office.

The new facility, costing \$1.5m, has been fully funded by Bibby Marine in the UK and will train seafarers using the latest Kongsberg DP simulators. It will mainly be used by Russian and Ukrainian seafarers, avoiding the need to travel overseas for specialist training to convert from traditional seafaring into the offshore sector.

Mr Osborne cited the large pool of experienced seafarers in Ukraine in both traditional and offshore sectors as a key reason for locating the training centre in the Crimea. The company expects to train almost 250 students in its first year on basic and advanced courses, with graduates expected to double in 2010.

The courses are open to individuals and third parties. Bibby already operates

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a DP training facility in Mumbai, India.

Mr Osborne said that the offshore sector was likely to start recovering more quickly than mainstream shipping markets. To date, it had not suffered too much and was still performing better than traditional shipping sectors.

"Lower freight rates inevitably translate into job losses, but when times are hard it offers an opportunity for retraining."

Bibby hopes this incentive will attract trainees to its new facility in Ukraine.



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