



Oxford River Cruises move forward with electrification of fleet



SME BUSINESS SECTOR:

Leisure cruise
Travel & Tourism

PROJECT COST:

£45,000.00

GRANT:

£8773.75



Our experience is that electric vessels are easier to maintain, have much lower fuel costs and, due to their almost silent running, provide a greatly enhanced experience for passengers.



GILES DOBSON

The Project

Oxford River Cruises have made significant progress on the conversion of their fleet to electric vessels as part of their effort to reduce their overall energy consumption.

Benefitting from an OxFutures grant, Giles Dobson (owner of Oxford River Cruises) has been able to convert his third passenger boat to electric propulsion. Oxford River Cruises currently operates three passenger boats, two of these are 12 seat vessels and are already electrically powered.

“Converting our larger, 50 seat vessel, to electric propulsion is more challenging but the technology is now available to make it possible. By the end of the year we aim to have a fully electric fleet.”

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The motivation behind the decision is that as well as the environmental benefits the change will bring, customers will also benefit. Previous experience has shown that electric vessels can be easier to maintain, have much lower fuel costs and, due to their almost silent running, provide a greatly enhanced experience for passengers. It also removes any risk of diesel oil entering the water.

The work necessary to make the switch will involve removing the existing diesel engine and water jet drive and replacing it with a 20kw electric pod motor and a large bank of batteries. Currently, the project is in the procurement stage and the aim is to have the work completed by early 2020.

Whilst involving relatively high conversion costs the long-term benefits (both financial and environmental) will make the change worth the initial costs.

Looking forward, Giles, who also owns The Folly Restaurant is always seeking new opportunities to improve and reduce the environmental impact of his two businesses. He has already taken action to reduce energy consumption, through the installation of an induction oven in the kitchen which was also part-funded by an OxFutures grant and are now reviewing at the sustainability of the food and drink they serve. They are currently working with a renewable energy electricity supplier and are seeking an environmental charity to partner with.

“I want my businesses to do everything possible to minimise their environmental impact, and, if we can, demonstrate the effectiveness of clean energy technologies to other boaters so that they have increased confidence in making the switch themselves.”

Electric propulsion is considered the best option for use on the UK’s inland waterways due to electric power working best at slow speeds, in low water flow and with long, thin vessels (e.g. a canal narrowboat). Additionally, the vessels are rarely far from shore and thus never too far away from an opportunity to recharge.

The electrification of the 50-seat vessel, the Serafina, will make it the largest electrically powered boat on the Thames and an example of what can be achieved in electric transportation.

Give the OxFutures team a call today on **01865 246009**, or visit www.oxfutures.org to see how you can save money and energy with a free energy audit and grant funding.