

For immediate release

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Partners in Boat Restoration: WEST SYSTEM® Epoxy Supports Abbey Boat Builder on the “Guide of Dunkirk” Project

The Guide of Dunkirk is a historic motor lifeboat, famous for its role as one of the “Little Ships” in the Dunkirk evacuation during World War II. Its story is one of service and courage.

She was damaged under enemy fire, her transom showing clear shell impacts was displayed for decades at Rowhedge boatyard. Now lying in the yard at Abbey Boat Builder, where she will undergo a full restoration scheduled for relaunch in Spring 2026.

The 38ft Watson Class Lifeboat was built by Rowhedge Iron Works, Essex, in 1939 and was funded by the Girl Guides Association. Originally intended to be a Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) vessel, she was unnamed when called directly from the builder's yard for the Dunkirk evacuation in June 1940. She was dispatched to Dunkirk with a volunteer crew to assist in rescuing Allied soldiers. On her first trip, she evacuated troops from the beaches to larger vessels before being heavily damaged. She was then towed back to England for repairs and returned to Dunkirk, saving countless lives under heavy enemy fire.

Today, the "Guide of Dunkirk" is recognised as a historic vessel and is being restored by Abbey Boat Builder. The goal of the restoration is to preserve maritime history and to inspire a new generation of craftspeople by highlighting the importance of traditional boatbuilding skills.

“She spent her life saving lives and now it’s our turn to save hers. To have the support of WEST SYSTEM® and Marine & Industrial will be invaluable to the project as we embark on her restoration. We plan to restore her to her original concourse condition with only some minor tweaks to the internal layout to make it safe to run community trips on the river with young people.” Says Abbey, Abbey Boat Builder.

“We’re delighted to sponsor Abbey on this historic project. Abbey’s decision to use WEST SYSTEM on the "Guide of Dunkirk" is a testament to the trust she places in the quality and reliability that are essential for such a historically significant vessel.” Says Sam Oliver, Wessex Resins & Adhesives.

“We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be involved in the restoration of this historic lifeboat, especially as it’s being undertaken by one of our valued customers. It’s a privilege to co-sponsor with Wessex Resins & Adhesives. Bringing this vessel back to life is truly rewarding, and we’re honoured to contribute to a project that reflects both passion and heritage.” Says Ben Catchpole, Marine & Industrial.

“This restoration is a commitment to preserving a piece of maritime history. The longevity and structural integrity provided by WEST SYSTEM are crucial for ensuring this historic vessel can continue to tell its story for generations to come. We are honoured to be a part of Abbey's

meticulous craftsmanship and a vital component in keeping history alive.” Says Sam Oliver, Wessex Resins & Adhesives.

“The combination of modern and traditional methods will be the ethos of the rebuild and WEST SYSTEM will play a crucial part in enabling us to provide the longevity she deserves to retire gracefully on the Norfolk Broads and become a part of the classic boat community.” Says Abbey, Abbey Boat Builder.

“Throughout the restoration, we will be running workshops in rope making, blacksmithing and boat building to encourage craftsmanship as a career and to bring boat building and traditional crafts to a wider audience.” Says Abbey, Abbey Boat Builder.

Join us at Southampton International Boat Show, 19th-28th September 2025.

You can find Wessex Resins & Adhesives at Stand H378 to learn more about WEST SYSTEM®, PRO-SET® Epoxy and Entropy Resins®.

Visit Abbey Boat Builder at Stand A020 and find out more about the "Guide of Dunkirk" project.

Notes to editors:

- Wessex Resins and Adhesives manufactures WEST SYSTEM®, PRO-SET® Epoxy, and Entropy Resins® epoxy products in the UK under license from Gougeon Brothers Inc. and distributes these leading brands across the whole of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East via a well-respected distribution network. Wessex Resins and Adhesives provides international support for the world-renowned WEST SYSTEM, PRO-SET and Entropy Resins epoxy brands.

More about WEST SYSTEM from eu.westsystem.com

A selection of images is available online at <https://maa.agency/media-centre/>

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