

'AURORA'

WINDY HARBOUR'S NEW 7.3-METRE KIRBY NAIAD

BY MIKE BROWN



The swing to re-equipping Western Australia's volunteer sea rescue groups with Kirby Naiad RIBs continues with south coast Windy Harbour's group taking delivery of 'Aurora', a 7.3-metre Naiad.

The rescue Naiad of choice is an 8.5-metre, the 7.3-metre being selected usually when weight has an influence on towing or launching considerations. Both of these apply to 'Aurora': launching is usually off the beach, and it needs to be readily towable by a standard four-wheel drive to other sites. Windy Harbour did not get its name by accident, and a boat capable of quick deployment and recovery is needed for beach launches.

Speed is aided by the use of Kirby's trailer-mounted auto-catch and release that allows instant launching once the trailer is in position. It also locks on when the boat is back on the trailer, and the extra-strong trailer post allows the 224kW additional thrust of 'Aurora's' motors to help the rig start moving out of the water.

The 7.3-metre hull has the substantial beam of a trace under 2.7 metres, reducing to a waterline beam of only 1.9 metres at planing speed. This low drag, assisted by two planing steps in the bottom, gives a top speed of well over 40 knots and cruising of over 30 on the power of the twin 112kW Yamaha four-strokes. A 400-litre fuel capacity gives a substantial radius of action.

The ride provided by the 23-degree deadrise, softened further by the shock-absorbing inflatable tubes, is exceptional; the hull, constructed by Kirby Marine to strength standards far beyond

anything dreamed of by the USL Code, is capable of taking an almost infinite amount of punishment. The human occupants, though, are built in standard fashion, and may be well beyond middle age.

Rob Kirby has always been aware of the need to give the crews maximum protection on what are often long deployments and, especially on the south coast, frequently conducted in very heavy seas. He has long made standard the fitting of a fatigue membrane under the cockpit's carpet, and on the more recent sea rescue vessels he has fitted Ullman seats. These straddle-style suspension seats are widely accepted as the world's best, and unsurprisingly are also the most expensive. The Fire and Emergency Services Authority, sea rescue's controlling body, has accepted that that is the price they need to pay for their volunteers' safe working conditions.

Experience has shown that there cannot be too many handgrips on an all-weather vessel, and 'Aurora' has more than any other Kirby. These are both grips for when sitting and rails for moving about. A fixed ladder is the result of a couple of minor accidents on other rescue Naiads.

The Targa supports a fabric awning, preferred to a hardtop for weight reasons. It is almost as weather tight as a hardtop.

Within its shelter is a considerable suite of electronics. The Furuno navigation display is disposed so that the navigator does indeed take control of it, leaving the coxswain to concentrate solely on driving.

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'Aurora'

SPECIFICATIONS

Type of vessel: Rescue RIB

In survey to: 2C USL

Home port: Windy Harbour,
Western Australia

Owner/operator: Fire and Emergency
Services, Western Australia

Designer: Naiad Design, New Zealand

CAD software: AutoCAD

Builder: Kirby Marine Fabrication,
Western Australia

Hull construction

material: Aluminium

Length overall: 7.3 metres

Length waterline: 6.8 metres

Beam: 2.7 metres

Draught: 0.4 metres

Displacement: 2.55 tonnes

Propulsion: 2 x Yamaha outboards,
each 112kW

Steering: SeaStar

Maximum speed: 45 knots

Cruising speed: 25-30 knots

Range: 200nm

Electronics supplied by: Taylor Marine

Radar: Furuno

Depth sounder: Furuno

Radio: ICOM

Compass: Plastimo

GPS: Furuno

Paints/coatings: International Paint

Windows: Beta Marine Windows

Fuel capacity: 450 litres

Crew: 2

Passengers: 4