



# Milford Haven...

## Lloyd's List Port Operator of the Year 2007

### Milford Haven Port Authority



[Whole site](#)

[Home](#) | [Archives](#) | [Search](#) | [Channels](#) | [Contact Us](#)

#### CONTENT

[Home](#)  
[Cover Story](#)  
[Lead Features](#)  
[Exhibitions](#)  
[Profiles](#)  
[News](#)  
[Foreword](#)

#### CHANNELS

[T](#)  
[Technology](#)  
[Equipment](#)  
[Health & Safety](#)  
[Exploration & Production](#)  
[Drilling](#)  
[Lifting Gear](#)  
[Subsea](#)  
[Support Services](#)  
[Manufacturing](#)  
[Hire & Rental](#)  
[Human Resources](#)

#### OTHER MAGAZINES

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[Food Chain](#)  
[Construction Today Europe](#)  
[Manufacturing Today](#)  
[Europe](#)  
[Modern Utility Management](#)  
[European Supply Chain](#)  
[Management](#)  
[Schofield Publishing](#)

#### RSS FEEDS

[Feeds](#)

Home: [Issue 5 2008](#) › [Full of fibre](#)



### Full of fibre

23/06/2008 | Channel: [Manufacturing](#), [Support Services](#), [Lifting Gear](#)

BEXCO is a leading manufacturer and supplier of fibre ropes for marine and offshore applications including for FPSOs and mooring lines.



It was formed after a merger nearly a decade ago although the origins of its founding companies can be traced back to 1725.

"We're a fibre rope manufacturer that has mainly been active in the maritime sector, as was the original Vermeire company that helped form BEXCO," explains sales and marketing managing Guy Blondé. "The other company, Le Lis, was more of a manufacturing unit mainly active in offshore and partly within the maritime business. When the two companies came together in 1999 they formed BEXCO."

During the last ten years BEXCO has evolved from a traditional rope-making company into a high tech specialist rope maker for marine and offshore applications. Through a worldwide network of distributors the company has built up credibility as a reliable supplier of high quality ropes for general shipping, towing, fishing and industrial purposes. As well as this, BEXCO is a leading SPM manufacturer and one of the first experts in the deepwater market, introducing its DeepRope mooring lines in the early 1990s.

"From the moment we merged our founding companies, we were strong in both the maritime and offshore industries," says Guy. "In the last few years we have developed this offshore business and will continue this in future, especially considering new deepwater developments where the trend is for more fibre rope to replace the traditional wire and chain. We started doing tests into this ten years ago so we're a pioneer in that field. The trend now is to use high performance materials such as HMPE because it's possible to go to even greater depths, which requires stronger and lighter ropes – weight becomes critical. With materials like HMPE you get the same diameter as the wire rope for a certain strength but the weight is eight to ten times lighter, which is a major benefit."

BEXCO prides itself on offering technical advances, as Guy details: "In offshore, we're market leaders in the field of Single Point Mooring (SPM) systems – where a synthetic rope is used to connect an offloading tanker to a buoy – and looking to expand our market share even further," he adds. "We're introducing some new developments such as inherent buoyancy. Originally SPMs required extra floats to keep them afloat, which could sometimes become detached or damaged, but now we've developed a rope where the floating element is already incorporated and we've been seeing good results for two years."

Besides being technically competent, BEXCO is flexible and offers an exemplary level of service. "In the concept and design of the SBM, we try to modify aspects in order to make improvements," Guy comments. "The service level we offer is another key strength and in some cases price is the only issue we work on although, as in every market, there is a need to look at quality, delivery time, performance and technology. Technically speaking, we have one of the better ropes on the market, which is why we're not feeling any competition from the Far East yet. Quality and certification are important issues here so it's not easy to copy the product for manufacture in places like China and Korea – it's predominantly European manufacturers that are steering this market."

BEXCO has increased its focus on R&D so that it can meet the high demands of its clients and stand out in the market. "Since September 2006 we've had a new department that is more involved with special offshore projects relating to installation and lifting work in the offshore environment," reveals Guy. "There is a greater need for fibre rope due to its lighter weight and easier handling compared with wire. As there are no standard products in this area then we need stronger R&D and sales

people play a role in that we produce in a technical way. We have developed some ropes for special applications that have received positive feedback. We differentiate ourselves from competitors by developing what BEXCO first made available to the oil and gas industry and to have the best reputation in the market when it comes to special technical ropes."

Technological advances also help BEXCO to seize new opportunities, as Guy BEXCO: "Climate change means some places, such as arctic areas, have become more available to us. Changes in these geographical areas present challenges and opportunities because people who are exploring the arctic to look for oil need a rope that can perform in extremely cold conditions. We're involved in joint industry projects to develop rope for arctic conditions so we're on top of this trend."

Continuing comments: "Besides the deepwater and Arctic developments, we see great potential in the offshore market. The three main pillars of our strategy are the offshore, marine and industrial side, although we'll focus more on offshore as it's technical and we can develop more aspects. When I joined the company we were world of aramids

**GN Rope Fittings**

Heavy forgings

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