Investment boost for Orkney boatbuilders

STEPS are being taken to protect the long-term viability of an Orkney boatbuilding firm who recently broke into the Icelandic market.

Orkney Islands Council and the Highlands and Islands Development Board are planning investment in Halmatic (Scotland) Ltd., a firm building fibreglass fishing and workboats at Hatston, near Kirkwall, although final approval by the Scottish Secretary has to be given for HIDB participation.

Halmatic have been facing financial difficulties, but general manager and director Mr Pierce Webb said yesterday the investment plans gave them a tremendous chance for the future.

Mr Alan Coghill, secretary of Orkney Boatbuilders Association, said it was planned to revitalise the company with the emphasis on marketing. Some modernisation was planned to give the company a broader front.

He added: "Market trends are fairly healthy at the moment, but capital investment is required to promote the company further."

Until now, the Hatston factory have built hulls only —fitting-out has been carried out by other yards. The intention in future, Mr Coghill said, would be to provide a standard finished workboat. This would be a fairly basic vessel, but if a customer wanted refinements this work could still be offered to other yards.

Confirming what Mr Coghill had said, Mr Webb added: "We have been facing work difficulties which have been creating financial difficulties through the lack of a really positive marketing effort. Of course the fishing industry has been in a bit of a problem area for some time now and we have diversified into water tanks and workboats with some success."

Hopes are high that there will be an expansion of the Halmatic workforce from the present 11, within a year or so.

New Orkney ro-ro terminals

TERMINALS are to be constructed on three different islands in Scapa Flow to provide a roll-on, roll-off ferry for Orkney's south isles.

The terminals, costing £400,000, are in the island of Flotta, at Lyness in Hoy and at Houton on the Orkney mainland..

Another suggestion that Stromness, which already has ro-ro terminal facilities, would be preferable to Houton as the terminal on the Orkney mainland has been turned down by the islands council, who have opted for Houton as they claim that running costs for the shorter route would be more economic.

The South Isles service is at present operated by the Orkney Islands Shipping Co. with the Lyrawa Bay functioning meantime as a conventional ship and operating between Lyness, Flotta, Graemsay and Stromness.

Firm win Mid East orders

AN ORKNEY boatbuilding company have made a breakthrough into the competitive Middle East market, **writes Bob Kennedy.**

Halmatic (Scotland) Ltd., Hatston, have landed orders for two vessels—one for Bahrain and the other for Dubai.

Yesterday, a company spokesman, who hinted at the strong possibility of a third order from the Middle East, described the identical vessels as inshore mobile port workshops which will provide on-the-spot repair facilities for shipping using the Middle East ports.

He said that, at this stage, they would prefer not to name the customer.

"We are obviously delighted with these orders and we are pretty confident about a third one. The boats will be used for the conveyance of men and equipment for repair work on ships passing through these ports."

Halmatic intend to produce completely finished vessels, but on this occasion fitting out has been contracted out to Orkney boatbuilder James Duncan, Burray.

Halmatic specialise in glass-fibre construction and the Middle East-bound vessels have glass-fibre hulls, wheelhouses and fuel tanks.

Recently Halmatic were revealed as the subject of a capital injection exercise, with the accent on marketing, involving the Highlands and Islands Development Board and Orkney Islands Council.

It was said then that capital investment was required to further promote the company although it is understood that this cash is not yet available for the company's use.

In the meantime, the Orkney firm, who hope to increase their workforce ultimately from the present 13 to 20, appear to be riding the crest of the wave as far as overseas orders are concerned.

For, example, they are moulding a fishing vessel for French owners which will be fitted out at a Stromness yard.