

Gear On Test

Our long term gear and equipment tests editor, **Colin Jarman**, reports this month on his trials of an antifouling paint formulated with East Coast waters in mind, a VHF that includes AIS reception, a solar panel system and a special antifouling coating for propellers.

FLAG PERFORMANCE EXTRA ANTIFOULING £63.40 per 2.5ltr



Flag Performance Extra is a copper based, semi-hard, but eroding, antifouling. It's designed to work well against all types of fouling in all waters – including use by boats on drying moorings – but the paint cans now carry a yellow label stating that it has been 'Specially formulated for the UK's South East waters', so we thought we'd better try it out.

A large part of the fouling problem in that area, particularly for boats kept within the boundaries of the Thames Estuary, is slime. Barnacles can be fairly well controlled by modern antifouling, but slime, which can become a fibrous mat, is a real problem. Will Flag Performance Extra work against this heavy coating? We shall see. When we tried the paint in 2007 it worked quite well, but modifications to the formulation have been made since then.

When Flag first produced Performance Extra it was, in part, to pre-empt future legislation against or to restrict the use of biocides and it went back to a high copper content. This is a known and proven antifouling material and it is less harmful to the general marine environment than some of the biocides can be. What it means, however, when preparing to apply the paint, is that it takes a huge amount of stirring to ensure that all the copper is in suspension and evenly distributed. There's no point in applying



Above: Freshly painted and ready to go after two coats. Below left: The Flag product with its yellow label. Below right: We used a roller in the main areas and a brush for details.



the stuff and leaving all the copper in the bottom of the tin, so stir, stir and stir a great deal more. Then keep stirring throughout application.

Once it is thoroughly mixed, the Performance Extra can be applied with either a roller or a brush and, as usual, I found that a roller did the big areas well, but a brush was needed for the awkward bits. The paint is suitable for



use on GRP, wood, steel or ferro cement hulls, but not on aluminium or galvanised surfaces. Its coverage is quoted as about 10m² per litre and the Flag Finishes website provides a simple guide to the quantity you will need for the recommended two coats plus extra on all leading edges. Flag recommends a minimum of six hours between coats, even though the paint should be touch dry in just a couple of hours. Once painted, you can wait two to three months before launching if ambient

temperatures are moderate.

One other recommendation is to apply the antifouling on a dry day. Well, I got the first coat on one fine and lovely spring day, but without time to get the second coat on. Two days later, with rain forecast for the afternoon, I applied the second coat, finishing by 0930. Around 1000 the skies opened and we had heavy duty showers for the rest of the day. None of the paint ran or washed off, but I think luck was pushed.

Because of the heavy, gluey nature of the paint, applying it is fairly hard work, but it covers well. It should not be spread too thinly, but needs to be worked enough to give full coverage over any earlier paint. That paint also needs to be in good condition; any flaking paint should be removed and undercoated, otherwise the Performance Extra will just pull it off and not cover properly.

Flag also produces 450ml tins (£15.28) of Performance Extra for use as boot topping. The paint, in either quantity, is available in black, dark blue, light blue, red or white.

Our trial boat is kept in and cruises the Thames Estuary, so we hope to find that the 'special formulation' for those waters is indeed successful. We'll let you know.

Colin Jarman

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