

UK-based Vikoma International is a world leader in the design and manufacture of oil and chemical pollution control systems. “We provide solutions that will work first time and every time in an emergency scenario,” said Managing Director Karen Lucas. Report from Colin Chinery.

Oil Spill ALERT!

Look back at the 2010 Macondo Deepwater Horizon blowout or any big oil spill of the last 20 years and you will find Vikoma equipment deployed in the big anti-pollution fight back.

Vikoma International, founded by British Petroleum in 1967 following the Torrey Canyon oil spill, and now privately-owned, is a world leader in the design and manufacture of oil and chemical pollution control systems.

Its product portfolio includes a comprehensive range of oil spill containment booms, skimmers, tanks, pumps and vessels. With 95 per cent of its sales exported, major oil companies, governments, ports and harbours and major spill response organisations are among its worldwide customers.

As the original solution equipment designer and manufacturer of oil spill response equipment, this Isle of Wight company is one of a select few manufacturers of oil spill response equipment in the world to hold the BS ISO 9001:2008 certification for sales, design, development, manufacture, installation and commissioning.

First Time – Every Time

“We stand out from the competition because we are all about quality and reliability,” said Managing Director Karen Lucas. “We provide solutions that will work first time and every time in an emergency scenario. We were the leading innovators for the oil spill market and following our MBO we are investing in a programme of development to bring new innovative products and solutions to our customers worldwide.”

To say a spill can have a huge impact on the environment and an oil operator is a deep water understatement. The US Attorney



Boom reel in container

General recently told BP it will be paying more than \$20 billion in fines – the largest corporate settlement of its kind in US history – to resolve nearly all claims from its deadly Macondo blow out which killed 11 workers and discharged an estimated equivalent of 4.9 million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico.

It was a disaster that hammered the reputation of the offshore industry. A terse order went out from the White House – “Plug the damn hole,” and drilling in new Gulf areas was banned until the cause of the Deepwater Horizon accident was established.

The ensuing massive response to protect beaches, estuaries and wetlands included floating booms, skimmer ships and other counter-measures, with the English Channel Coast company’s equipment deployed at the front line.

“If you look at an oil spill, there’s not one every day, so when there is one the equipment has to work,” said Sales Director Paul Rayner. “The analogy is with a fire extinguisher; it sits in the corner of a room, you ignore it, and when there’s a fire it has to work. And our equipment is exactly the same.”



Boom reels



Boom reel



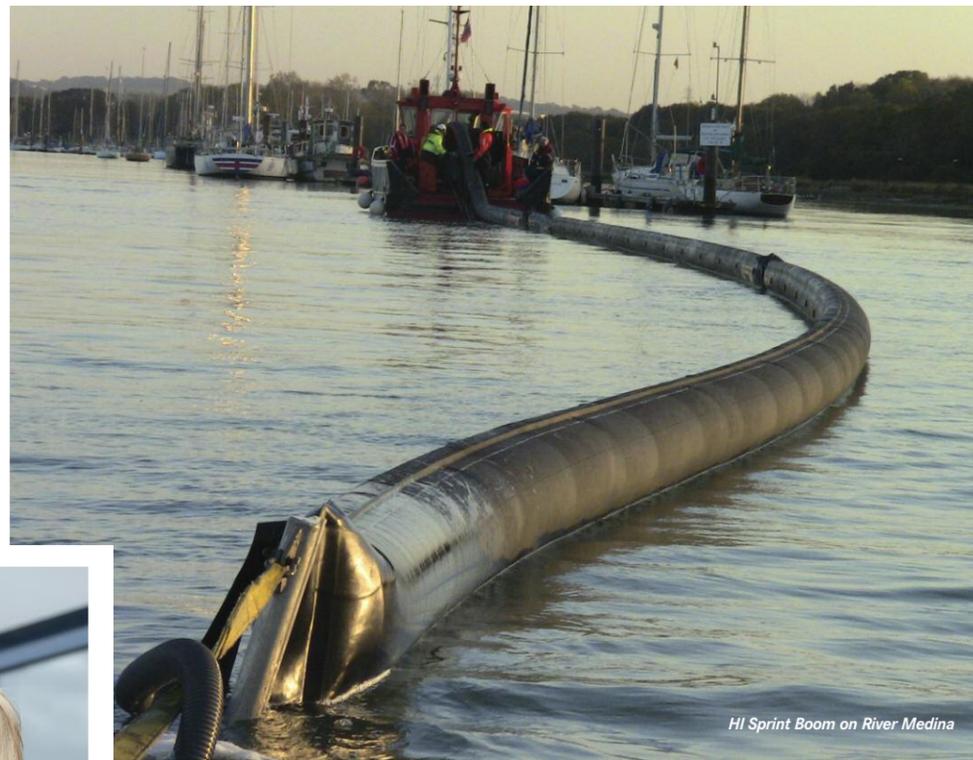
Boom with debris

“If you look at an oil spill, there’s not one every day, so when there is one the equipment has to work”

Komara 30 Skimmer



Managing Director Karen Lucas ▶



HI Sprint Boom on River Medina



Factory in East Cowes

It's a guarantee that has seen all the oil majors such as BP, Shell, Exxon, Mobil, Chevron and Texaco choose Vikoma. The British Coastguard service and Ministry of Defence, and every leading oil spill response body including Oil Spill Response and NRC - the National Response Corporation - are among other bodies choosing Vikoma.

The Isle of Wight-based company designs and manufactures the leading range of oil recovery skimmers in the world; the Komara series. This self-contained, versatile oil recovery system can be used in ports and harbours, shoreline operations and coastal waters - and almost any similar environment where oils must be removed from a water source - and has an oil recovery efficiency of greater than 98 per cent.

Vikoma's history of research and development ensures an unparalleled understanding of the fundamentally important elements of oil containment and recovery.

Key Service

A key part of the service that Vikoma offers its customers is the commissioning of Vikoma-supplied equipment. Completed by members of an experienced and dedicated commissioning team, it includes safety features, equipment inspection, set up and/or installation, pre start checks and equipment training.

And should an oil spill occur, this ensures equipment is ready to deploy as soon as needed, with customer training in the operational aspects reducing the possibility of costly delays.

"We have a one-stop shop where we completely design, engineer, manufacture and commission and train on our products. And this is all accomplished at our UK base - we are the only one in the field where we provide this total solution," said Ms Lucas. "Many competitors will get their manufacturing done through contracts in the Far East and elsewhere."

With a strong network of partner companies, agents and distributors, Vikoma is able to give both local and head office technical support and spare part availability. "We train, commission, support our products technically for a minimum of ten years, and are always at end of a phone for customer support," said Mr Rayner.

Founded by BP in 1967, Vikoma changed hands in July 2015 in a management buy-out supported by Agathos, the family-run London SME investment firm. With a new board that includes three managers with day-to-day executive responsibility and over 80 years Vikoma experience, the reconstructed business is characterised by strong leadership and a very open, inclusive style of management, said Ms Lucas.



GP10 Powerpack



GP20 Powerpack

"We now have a good level of investment, investing heavily in research and development. We have some exciting new developments offering both new products and improvements in some existing products to gain an increased presence in the market.

"A recruitment drive for new agents and distributors has been launched, and we have strengthened lines of feedback from our customers to ensure we are getting the right products and solutions for them."

"The same company but with better, stronger values," added Mr Rayner, a Vikoma executive for the past 20 years. "Some of our employees have been here 30 or 40 years; we have a very loyal workforce."

Continuous Protection

Among Vikoma's containment booms, the Shoreguardian offers superb beach sealing capability for protection of beaches, marshes and intertidal zones, and can be used with other booms to provide

continuous protection in coastal waters. Available in neoprene or polyurethane material, both options are highly durable and resistant to UV and hydrocarbons.

The ultimate high capacity Weir Boom is designed for mass oil recovery and oil well 'blow-outs', and can recover floating oils at up to 210m³/hr'. The containerised design offers ease of transport, deployment, recovery and storage, and the system can sweep to a width over 120m and up to a speed of two knots.

The Vikoma Ship to Ship Transfer Boom is the latest in its highly effective boom range, focussing particularly on oil spill during oil or fuel transfer operations, while a new ship-to-shore permanent feeding system for jetties and piers is set for commissioning imminently.

Karen Lucas joined Vikoma in August 2014. A member of the chartered institute of certified accountants, she played a key role in the UK and international expansion of the Straininstall Group, a group specialising in the design and manufacture of load and stress monitoring systems for the oil and gas, marine and industrial fields.

Beyond Oil

"The Isle of Wight is a really great place, with lots of initiatives and engineering technology businesses. And with so much expertise on the island, it's an ideal location for testing our products."

Turnover has varied over recent years with the oil price, varying between €10 m and €18 m, and Vikoma is looking at alternative markets not specifically related to barrel price. Even so, Ms Lucas is anticipating a 2016 growth of 20 per cent. "With our new products and diversification we see us gaining market share, turnover and increasing our head count."

Vikoma can help to deal quickly and effectively with spilled oil situations to minimise the cost to the operator and the natural surroundings, said Mr Rayner. "Customer assurance of the consistent high quality of Vikoma products is one of the main reasons why they come back to us year after year." ■