

Residents anticipate upgraded 'Tembek'



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THE "TEMBEK": The vessel (pictured during its naming ceremony) is expected to arrive this weekend.

Photo: Lucy Hine

A UK pressure group is hoping that upgrades on a Q-flex's silencers will reduce noise levels at South Hook.

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Residents living close to the UK's South Hook LNG-receiving terminal, who are plagued by noise from vessels, are awaiting with interest the arrival of an LNG carrier this weekend.

Electronic data shows the 217,000-cbm Q-flex *Tembek* (built 2007) is due to arrive at the South Wales terminal on Saturday. The *Tembek* shipped in South Hook's commissioning cargo in March 2009. At the time, locals described the noise from the vessel as being like "a droning helicopter". South Hook issued an apology, saying the sound was caused by the reliquefaction plant compressors on the vessel while the

ship waited to offload its cargo. *Tembek* has since had work done to upgrade the silencers on all five of its generator sets in August 2009 but has not visited the terminal since.

Members of the South Hook LNG Noise pressure group have been complaining for over a year now about low-frequency noise from the new Q-flex and Q-max LNG carriers that have been visiting the terminal. Their complaints have been supported by the Pembrokeshire County Council Port Health Authority, which has registered statutory nuisances from at least seven of the vessels that have called at South Hook.

In response, South Hook LNG, working in partnership with pro-

ducer and vessel charterer Qatargas, said in a statement on 1 July that a "phased upgrading of silencers" on eight Q-flex and six Q-max vessels that have visited South Hook in the past would be completed by mid-July.

Conventional-size LNG carriers calling at the neighbouring Dragon LNG terminal do not appear to have given any similar problems.

The South Hook pressure group members, who have lived with visiting tankers at the nearby refineries for years, speak of feeling a throbbing in the air pressure inside their homes, where the vibration caused by the vessels can be felt in window panes.

They identify the worst offenders as Q-max ships, which have been built at Samsung Heavy Industries. Interestingly, residents recount that they can tell the difference between a Samsung-built Q-max and one built by Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineer-

ing simply by the noise emanating from the ship. However, vessels from both yards have caused problems.

They cannot understand why repeat offenders have been scheduled to return to the terminal. A Samsung-built Q-max has called at the terminal three times, even after statutory nuisance was recorded in connection with it. It also appears that the problems are not confined to those vessels that were built first. Some of the later ships in Qatar's huge LNG-newbuilding programme, which according to the group had improved silencers retrofitted at the yard, also caused problems. They point to the Samsung-built, 266,000-cbm newbuilding *Shagra* as having a statutory nuisance order made against it on its second visit after producing a much quicker-paced thumping noise.

However, not all the big ships prove troublesome. The group re-

ports that the Samsung-built, 215,000-cbm Q-flex *Al Ghanafa* (built 2008), seemed almost totally silent when at the berth. However, they are unable to obtain any information as to whether this vessel had any work done on it.

A spokesman for the group says they are frustrated at not being able to get any response to their feedback and questions from charterer Qatargas or South Hook LNG, particularly as some have had their homes kitted out with noise-monitoring equipment issued by the council and consultants employed by Qatargas. They also identify discrepancies in the information that has been given out.

He stresses that the group's members are not against LNG imports or the companies involved in any way but simply want to help resolve the problems.

"All we want to do is see an end to this situation," he said.