



Westport Marine Pilot 6

Mike Thrussell takes a close look at the Pilot 6 from Westport Marine, and makes no bones about it being one of his favourite boats!

The Pilot 6 from Westport Marine, based in Plymouth, is designed by Charles Broughton. Charles is a former naval design architect and is experienced in a wide range of different types of craft, from rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) to amphibious vehicles.

This latest design, the big brother of the already well-established and highly popular Pilot 4 recently reviewed here in TSF, was first launched at the Southampton Boat Show in 2007.

With a length of a little over 17 feet, she fits into one of the most popular categories of trailerable angling boats and has already proved herself a popular choice among newcomers to small-boat fishing – especially to the more experienced crews looking to work small boats well offshore.

DESIGN AND BUILD FEATURES

Westport Marine uses modern technology in the shape of moulding

tools developed using advanced CNC machining, which incorporates a robotic router machine controlled directly from a computer. This cuts full-size patterns, resulting in greater mould quality, and development times are also cut in half to produce a consistently high standard of craft.

The reinforced medium V hull features an internal girder system joining the hull and deck, to create a strong and rigid structure. This also includes four separate foam-filled buoyancy chambers, producing more than 1,300kg of buoyancy to the craft.

The main deck also sits above the water line, allowing aft deck drains to be fitted to each quarter to ensure that the deck drains as fast as possible – even in bad sea conditions. These deck drains lead directly back through the transom, which means that any blockage can be cleared instantly, and a non-return flap also prevents water sloshing back up onto the deck.

INFORMATION Specification

Length: 5.2m
Beam: 2.2m
Weight: 550kg
Category: C
Engine size: 50hp to 90hp

Price

The Pilot 6, as tested, retails for £17,500 including VAT – with a Brenderup braked roller trailer £1,185 for the Pilot 6 adding £1,952 including VAT.

Information

For more information and to arrange a boat test of the Pilot 6, contact Charles Broughton, Westport Marine, Gurnshed 9, Crownhill Fort, Plymouth, Devon PL46 5BX. Tel: 752 772224. E-mail: sales@westportmarine.co.uk. You can also visit the company's website at www.westportmarine.co.uk.

The bow features a stainless-steel bow roller, with the anchor locker on the port side and a double cleat in the middle for anchoring off – plus double cleats at each side for tying off. Access to the bow is through a wide Houdini hatch in the cabin roof, which is in a comfy position and allows full physical pressure to be applied to the anchor rope from a totally safe position.

The windscreen is split into three at the front with side screens, all tinted in green to reduce glare. The windows are also bolted in for maximum strength.

The cabin top has room for a full gantry, if required, to accommodate aeriels, radar etc – but the test boat was fitted with a stem-type steaming light in the middle and a duo navigation light below. The rear edges of the cabin also have a grab rail fitted for passenger comfort when the boat is moving at speed.

Stepping on deck you are instantly aware of the massive amount of open deck space that's available, for what is still only a 17ft boat – it's huge and totally uncluttered! The deck and locker tops are also deeply stippled to give good grip.

Access into the cuddy is fully free and without causing you to bend too much. Inside you have a U-shaped seating area with plenty of locker storage. In the

middle of the seating area at the bow is a hinge-up seat, with space beneath big enough to accommodate a tackle box of ice cooler box, which is a nice touch!

The helm position is on the starboard side, and the console has a flat area on top big enough for a GPS and fishfinder, with the instrumentation easy to read from the seated position. The wheel is a hard-grip car type and comfortable for long travelling times. The throttle is to the right and in a perfect comfort position so that your hand discovers it more or less instinctively.

The test boat was fitted with two swivel chairs and these were very comfy, plus they allow you to be seated comfortably to watch your rods fishing off the gunnels and stern.

The gunnels are upper-thigh height, but offshore anglers may choose to fit 4in to 6in safety rails – just to give that bit more gunnel height should they happen to be working in a big sea. The tops of the gunnels are flat and have wood underneath for screwing fixtures to. The test boat wasn't fitted with rod holders at all, but these could easily be fitted anywhere you choose on the gunnel tops.

Across the transom is a huge, middle fuel-tank locker, flanked by a smaller battery/stowage locker at each side. There's loads of stowage space here



for all your gear, along with life jackets, fenders and more.

The splash well is a shallow basin type that is designed to be safe. Charles was telling me that deeper splash wells can have people, especially kids, fall into them and consequently out of the boat, but the shallow type tends to reduce this risk.

The stern quarters carry stainless-steel grab rails and double cleats for tying off, plus there is a stainless-steel dive ladder fitted to the starboard stern corner. You also have acres of space on the port side of the stern for an auxiliary engine bracket.

All the fixtures and fittings are stainless steel, and the overall finish of the boat is excellent. The hull is blue with a white topside and cream fendering. With the green-tinted windscreen, the boat looks really classy bobbing alongside the pontoon.

PERFORMANCE

The test boat was fitted with a 90hp Suzuki four-stroke outboard. As you ease the throttle forward, power input is instant and you feel the boat's desire to leap forward. You're out of the hole and on the plane in the blink of an eye – no hesitation.

Settling into a straight run through the choppy sea, she happily cruises at 20 knots, pulling around 4,000rpm, but will exceed 30 knots at 5,000rpm and pulls all the way through to 5,950rpm. Fuel consumption is exceptionally good, and only if running all day would you expect to swap to a second tank.

Throwing the boat into tight turns



under power, the stern grips the sea like glue with no hint of slide at all. In fact, the more power you add, the better the hull seems to grip!

The boat is responsive on the wheel and instantly does what you ask. She's highly manoeuvrable and remains totally stable while you're walking about on deck, and the helmsman needs no wheel compensation at all to correct the shifting balance.

She is also predictable on the drift and seems to drift almost beam on in a strong wind.

Running at speed into the wind, hardly any spray gets back on the screen, and none gets back on deck, so your passengers are totally dry. Also, hull noise is minimal, with little vibration coming back through the deck into your feet at speed.

The helm seat is comfy and provides excellent all-round vision, plus the green tint cuts down surface glare, making it all the more easy to spot lobster-pot buoys and any floating debris.



Things I'd Change

I'd definitely add 4in stainless-steel safety rails to the tops of the boat gunnels to increase gunnel height for offshore work, and for if you intend to take small kids onboard.

With a boat of this size and class I'd also consider a full stainless-steel gantry fitted to the cabin roof to increase the height of your VHF aerial, add deck lights and a radar pod, plus I think such a gantry would make this superb-looking boat look even sexier on the water.

I'd fit three rod holders down each gunnel top at equal intervals, and I also think that offshore anglers may find the white deck glare on bright, sunny days a tad too much, and prefer to paint the deck grey or blue to kill the glare.

Conclusion

The Pilot 6 just stormed into my all-time favourites!

The design of this craft is almost perfect for angling from. The open deck space is massive and offers as much room as many of the 20ft boats I've been on.

There are huge stowage lockers built in that don't intrude into the deck space. The helm position is comfy and with good all-round vision, plus hauling anchor through the tried-and-tested Houdini hatch cannot be bettered.

The performance of the boat is outstanding – she flies along yet remains economical. The medium V hull cuts through water smoothly and will take on big seas should you ever get caught out on the run home. Plus, when running constantly, hull noise is minimal.

She is also one of the most stable boats I've ever been aboard for her size. You can have two guys on one side of the boat and she barely moves, making her ideal for hauling tope and sharks over the side for pictures and tagging prior to release. I'd go chasing common skate in this boat and not flinch!