It's Electric: Retrofit Kit Powers Manual Furlex

Seldén has a new Furlex option that converts its manual roller furler into a reliable pushbutton power furling system. At the heart of the power furler is a reversible 12- or 24-volt DC motor unit that merges with the lower bearing assembly of an existing or new system, creating a drive unit capable of power unwinding, reefing, and furling.

Electrical wires are led through a stainless deck collar to a well-sealed connection box. From there, wires continue on to a control box that acts as the junction center for battery leads and the control switch input line. Signals from either the cockpit-mounted control or an optional remote control activate a relay in the junction box, switching polarity and delivering an in or out response of the headsail furler.

In order to minimize voltage drop during furling, Seldén recommends having at least 115 amp hours available in the bank operating the furling system. The fuse minimum in the circuit is 125 amps, and the wire gauge is dependent upon the length of run. The nominal 12-volt DC power ratings of the furling units are approximately 18 amps (200E) and 37 amps (300E). The hefty reduction ratio (53 to 1 for the 200E) and belt drive deliver considerable torque at a reasonable power drain. Naturally, as the load on the sail and tension in the furling system increases, so does the current draw.

Those already planning to install an electric windlass and or bow thruster may be able to utilize the high current carrying wiring for these components to do double or triple duty. An energy audit identifying how much total power is available and how much current is used at any one time will indicate whether or not this is a viable alternative.

The installation is well illustrated in the manual that comes with the unit. It begins with the disassembly of the manual furling components and changing of the sail feeder.

With the line guide off, and the line drum split in two, a decision must be made as to whether or not to lower the entire furler to the ground. Once on the ground, mounting the motor drive and replacing the toggle with the "high-torque" alternate is quite straightforward. The installation can be done with the furler in place but fitting the components becomes a little more of a challenge. For a skilled do-it-yourselfer, with a friend willing to lend an extra set of hands, it's a doable task, however the most painless approach may lie in engaging a Seldén-familiar rigger to do the job.

As with any power tool, there's a need to remain aware of the torque available at your fingertip's command. Making sure that the sheets are eased and the spinnaker halyard is not caught in the fray is more important than ever. The auto furling action is like having an extra crew on board—one with very thick shoulders.

The Furlex Electric can turn an existing or new manual Furlex into a power furler.

Seldén's "all parts included" approach (below left) delivers a package that contains a waterproof stainless-steel deck collar (below, center) that leads the electrical wires to a well-sealed connection box. The furler power is controlled by either cockpit-mounted buttons or a remote control (at right).