guide mechanism protrudes away from the hull for guiding a line of the marine vessel towards the predetermined region of the perimeter.

[0019] Optionally, the operation position is between the stowed position and the deployed position.

[0020] Optionally, the line guide mechanism comprises a driver for driving movement of the line guide mechanism to and from the operation position relative to the hull. Optionally, the tugboat comprises a user operable controller for controlling the driver.

[0021] Optionally, the line of the tugboat is a messenger line.

[0022] Optionally, the line handling system is movable relative to the hull so as to vary the predetermined region of the perimeter towards which the line guide mechanism is able to guide the line of the tugboat. Further optionally, the line handling system is rotatable relative to the hull about an axis that passes through the hull so as to vary the predetermined region of the perimeter towards which the line guide mechanism is able to guide the line of the tugboat. Optionally, the axis is substantially parallel to a yaw axis of the tugboat.

[0022a] In view of the above, according to a first aspect of the present disclosure, there is provided a line handling system for locating on a tugboat, wherein the tugboat is for assisting a marine vessel to manoeuvre and the tugboat comprises a hull having a perimeter; wherein the line handling system comprises a line guide mechanism that, when the line handling system is located on the tugboat, is movable relative to the hull to an operation position, at which the line guide mechanism is for guiding movement of a portion of a line of the tugboat towards a predetermined region of the perimeter.

[0022b] According to a second aspect of the present disclosure, there is provided a tugboat for assisting a marine vessel to manoeuvre, the tugboat comprising: the line handling system as described herein; and the hull having the perimeter.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0023] Embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0024] Figure 1 shows a partial schematic top view of an example of a tugboat according to an embodiment of the present invention, wherein a line guide mechanism of a line handling system of the tugboat is at a stowed position on or adjacent a deck of a hull of the tugboat;

[0025] Figure 2 shows a schematic front view of the tugboat of Figure 1, wherein the line guide mechanism has been moved to an operation position, at which the line guide

CLAIMS:

1. A line handling system for locating on a tugboat, wherein the tugboat is for assisting a marine vessel to manoeuvre and the tugboat comprises a hull having a perimeter;

wherein the line handling system comprises a line guide mechanism that, when the line handling system is located on the tugboat, is movable relative to the hull to an operation position, at which the line guide mechanism is for guiding movement of a portion of a line of the tugboat towards a predetermined region of the perimeter.

2. The line handling system of claim 1, wherein the line handling system comprises a line engager for engaging with the line of the tugboat when the line of the tugboat is at the predetermined region of the perimeter, when the line handling system is located on the tugboat.

3. The line handling system of claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the line handling system comprises an actuatable coupling mechanism for coupling the line of the tugboat to a line of the marine vessel when the line of the tugboat and the line of the marine vessel are at the predetermined region of the perimeter, when the line handling system is located on the tugboat.

4. The line handling system of claim 3, wherein the actuatable coupling mechanism is for coupling the line of the tugboat to the line of the marine vessel by applying a connector to the line of the tugboat and the line of the marine vessel.

5. The line handling system of any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the line guide mechanism comprises at least one guide device, the or each guide device comprising a guide arm that, when the line guide mechanism is at the operation position, protrudes upwards away from the hull and is configured so that, in use, a part of the line of the tugboat overlying the guide arm is encouraged to move along the guide arm towards the predetermined region of the perimeter.

6. The line handling system of claim 5, wherein the at least one guide device comprises first and second such guide devices.

7. The line handling system of claim 6, wherein the first and second guide devices are arranged so that the respective guide arms of the first and second guide devices are movable towards and away from each other, when the line handling system is located on the tugboat.

8. A tugboat for assisting a marine vessel to manoeuvre, the tugboat comprising:
the line handling system of any one of claims 1 to 7; and
the hull having the perimeter.

9. The tugboat of claim 8, wherein the line handling system is according to any one of claims 5 to 7, wherein the guide arm is rotatable relative to the hull about a pivot point so as to move an end of the guide arm distal to the pivot point towards and away from an axis that extends in a fore and aft direction of the tugboat.

10. The tugboat of claim 8 or claim 9, wherein the line guide mechanism is rotatable about an axis that is substantially parallel to a deck of the tugboat.

11. The tugboat of claim 10, wherein the axis about which the line guide mechanism is rotatable is substantially parallel to a width of the tugboat.

12. The tugboat of any one of claims 8 to 11, wherein the line guide mechanism is movable relative to the hull between the operation position and a stowed position, wherein at the stowed position the line guide mechanism is located within the perimeter of the hull.

13. The tugboat of claim 12, wherein, when at the stowed position, the line guide mechanism is located on or adjacent a deck of the hull.

14. The tugboat of any one of claims 8 to 13, wherein the line guide mechanism is movable relative to the hull between the operation position and a deployed position, wherein at the deployed position the line guide mechanism protrudes away from the hull for guiding a line of the marine vessel towards the predetermined region of the perimeter.

15. The tugboat of claim 14 when dependent on one of claims 12 and 13, wherein the operation position is between the stowed position and the deployed position.

16. The tugboat of any one of claims 8 to 15, wherein the line guide mechanism comprises a driver for driving movement of the line guide mechanism to and from the operation position relative to the hull.

17. The tugboat of claim 16 comprising a user operable controller for controlling the driver.

18. The tugboat of any one of claims 8 to 17, wherein the line of the tugboat is a messenger line.

19. The tugboat of any one of claims 8 to 18, wherein the line handling system is movable relative to the hull so as to vary the predetermined region of the perimeter towards which the line guide mechanism is able to guide the line of the tugboat.

20. The tugboat of claim 19, wherein the line handling system is rotatable relative to the hull about an axis that passes through the hull so as to vary the predetermined region of the perimeter towards which the line guide mechanism is able to guide the line of the tugboat.