

## Boxship behemoths transit Scheldt

BIG is proving beautiful at the port of Antwerp as the latest generation of large containerhips safely transit the river Scheldt. Six trial voyages of very large boxships are being conducted, specifically for vessels of more than 360 m in length.

Tests had to be carried out for the latest generation containerhips because they are longer than those permitted under guidelines for transiting the Western Scheldt. Until now, 360 m had been the upper limit.

The Permanent Commission for Supervision of Scheldt Navigation decided to carry out these test trips following a positive assessment of the first visit made by the 14,000 teu *MSC Beatrice*, which is 366 m long, on April 7. The commission then decided that MSC could route six more oversized ships to Antwerp.

As well as focusing on safety, the commission took into consideration the economic benefits of larger vessels being able to use the Western Scheldt. It concluded that permanent changes to its policy for admitting ships on the Western Scheldt should not be made until there had been several trips demonstrating vessels longer than 360 m could sail in safety to and from Antwerp port.

The Hydraulic Engineering Laboratory has demonstrated that vessels with a length of up to 400 m can safely reach the port. The longest containerhip in the world is currently the 400 m *Emma Maersk*.

Eddy Bruyninckx, chief executive of Antwerp port, said it was of great importance both for Antwerp and for Flanders to retain the ability to handle the largest ships. Only in this way could Antwerp continue to play a full role as the gateway to Europe, he said. "It is better for everyone to dredge and to enlarge the tidal windows but this was not a case of being aggressive and trying to snatch the biggest vessels from other ports," he said.

He added that everything had gone smoothly with the calls, though there were some restrictions such as having to call in daylight and to aim for a narrow tidal window. • Super-sizing is not only the domain of the box trades. Antwerp Bulk Terminal (SEA-invest) in Delwaide dock welcomed the bulk carrier *Bao Guo*, with a length of 300 m and beam of 50m, carrying the largest cargo yet — totalling 163,106 tonnes for EDF Trading.

# PSA HNN interested in Saeftinghe dock

## Port operator eyes proposed development just north of its Deurganck facility

PSA HNN remains committed to its expansion plans in Belgium but the "timeline will be adapted" to take account of current container market conditions, according to Frank Kho, head of PSA HNN's container division.

In Antwerp, the company is interested in the proposed development of the Saeftinghe dock in Antwerp.

Meanwhile, five new cranes arrived at PSA HNN's Deurganck dock container terminal a few months ago and these are due to begin operations in the coming weeks and months. In all, the Antwerp facility will have 13 cranes and while they were actually ordered in 2007, PSA HNN paced its strategy to maintain capacity, said Mr Kho. The five cranes, the largest in Europe, have a 22 container outreach with an 80 tonne lifting capacity and once the Deurganck facility is fully operational it will boast 24 cranes.

Mr Kho said that even though port of Antwerp had seen a 16% volume fall in the first quarter of 2009, this was not too bad. Antwerp has not experienced a dramatic fall in traffic because "productivity is good and it is improving, making it one of the best ports in the world", he said. "Antwerp is still getting higher productivity rates and it already operates at 37 moves an hour," added Mr Kho. "The mentality of the dock workers is very good and service levels are very good."

Mr Kho said the company was continually looking to bring extra business to Antwerp. Antwerp was becoming known for the container industry, not just diamonds and beer.

Connections were good and the fact that Antwerp was located a relatively long way



Kho: PSA HNN is continually looking to bring extra business to Antwerp.

into the hinterland helped attract business.

PSA HNN, he said, also participated in projects spearheaded by the Antwerp Port Authority designed to combine hinterland volumes so shipping lines could consolidate traffic to make best use of rail cargo and barge connections. "We want to improve our flexibility so we are very alert and can react to follow volume developments, either upwards or downwards," he said.

Meanwhile, PSA Zeebrugge is pushing ahead with plans to develop a facility at the Albert II dock in Zeebrugge. The Port of Zeebrugge Authority has finished most of its work on the dock, with the quay wall under way and while PSA Zeebrugge hopes to start construction this year it is not certain when the facility will be completed. Albert II dock will be a multi-user terminal but will target very large containerships. Eventually it should have a capacity of 1.2m teu. The first phase of the terminal is expected to be operational by the end of 2011 and once fully in use the terminal will comprise 1,300 m in quay length and cover a surface area of 50 hectares.

## Pioneering LNG terminal a step closer

EXMAR has moved a step closer to realising the world's first terminal capable of handling its pioneering regasification vessels.

The Antwerp-based gas shipping specialist and Fluxys LNG have signed a memorandum of understanding under which Fluxys LNG will study the possibility of building a second jetty at its Zeebrugge liquefied natural gas terminal to enable regasification vessels to moor alongside. Exmar, for its part, is prepared to book long term capacity with Fluxys LNG.

Nicolas Saverys, chief executive of Exmar, said: "Natural gas can be moved in any direction from Zeebrugge: to the Zeebrugge Hub short-term market, to the Belgian market, to all neighbouring markets and further afield. This makes Zeebrugge an outstanding location for our regasification ships to unload. The flexibility of our ships is a huge asset, enabling us to respond quickly to market signals."

Pascal De Buck, a member of the Fluxys executive board and commercial director, added: "Enabling reception of regasification ships would further strengthen the role of Zeebrugge as a crossroads for western European natural gas flows and contribute to diversification of sources, security of supply and liquidity of the natural gas market. We expect twice as many ships to unload at the terminal in the first half of 2009 compared to the first half of 2008. This is partly the result of the terminal's first capacity enhancement last year. A second jetty would serve as an attractor for additional LNG shipping traffic."

Zeebrugge will be the first LNG terminal allowing both standard LNG ships and regasification ships to moor and Fluxys's investment plan also envisages a big increase in downstream transmission capacity.

The reception of regasification ships at the terminal requires a second jetty in the LNG dock, as well as a pipeline and ancillary infrastructure allowing injection of natural gas into the Fluxys transmission network.

Under the first phase, Fluxys LNG, in cooperation with Zeebrugge Port Authority and the government, will study the feasibility, safety and nautical aspects of the project.

Little time is needed to implement facilities to receive regasification ships and Fluxys LNG is considering a multi-stage approach. Infrastructure for receiving regasification ships could be developed in the first phase.

## DEME adds to its fleet

BELGIAN titan Dredging, Environmental and Marine Engineering has continued its ambitious investment programme with an order for a trailer suction hopper dredger with capacity of 30,000 cu m.

The dredger is under construction at Dutch shipyard IHC Krimpen and is scheduled to be commissioned in early to mid 2011. It is 168 m long and has a maximum dredging depth of 56 m. The draught has been limited to a maximum of 12 m.

The firm says it has applied the principles and characteristics of other trailers built for the company and it will have the operational flexibility of *Nile River*, another of DEME's jumbo trailers which has a capacity of 18,000 cu m.

DEME believes this 'Next Generation Plus' trailer will be the most advanced of its type worldwide, efficient over short and long transport distances and a trend-setter with regard to emissions output.

The vessel is the 90th to be produced by IHC Merwede for DEME. The 88th — the 5,600 cu m *Artevelde* was launched in December last year at the IHC Beaver Dredgers yard in Sliedrecht. And the launch of the 89th, another suction hopper dredger,

is planned for late December 2010 at the VSH yard in Heusden.

• DEME Group member GeoSea is investing in equipment. The hydraulic engineering and drilling specialist placed an order with the steel construction company Lemants from Arendonk for construction of a jumbo jack-up platform in the middle of last year.

Lemants will build the platform in cooperation with MSC Gusto. Goliath, the seventh in its fleet of jack-up platforms, is due to be delivered in the summer and will be deployed for the installation of six MW turbines in 30 m water depth for the offshore Alpha Ventus wind farm project, located 45 km north of Borkum island, Germany. Goliath will have a 55.5 m x 32.2 m platform and a maximum payload of 1,600 tonnes. The spud length will be around 80 m, making it the largest in its specific market segment.

• Belgian dredging giant Jan de Nul has taken delivery of the fall pipe and mining vessel *Simon Stevin*. The *Simon Stevin*, launched in March, is 191 m long and will be used for precise rock dumping to a depth of 2,000 m. The vessel will be deployed mainly in the offshore industry where oil and gas pipes have to be installed at large depths.

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