

PSA HNN misses Vlissingen container terminal deadline

Operator fails to meet May 1 deadline to secure exclusive rights for Dutch box facility

Roger Hailey

SINGAPORE-based global container terminal group PSA has passed on a deadline to have first call in operating a planned European deepwater box terminal at the Dutch port of Vlissingen.

Belgian subsidiary PSA HNN did not meet the May 1 deadline for retaining exclusive rights to the Westerschelde Container Terminal, a still-to-be-built, 2m teu final-phase capacity hub with direct access to the North Sea.

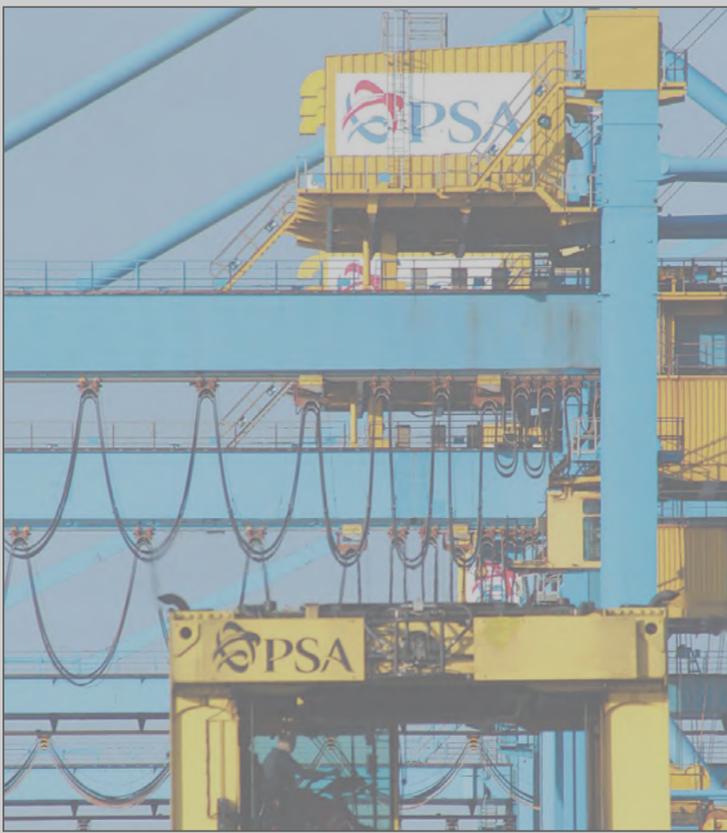
Zeeland Seaports, the authority responsible for the ambitious project, confirmed that PSA had missed the original deadline, but added that the Singapore ports giant had not been ruled out as a future bidder for the WCT project on the north of the Scheldt.

A spokesman said: "The deadline has passed for PSA to respond to an agreement that it should have the exclusive right to develop the new terminal."

A spokesperson for PSA HNN declined to comment on the situation.

The ports group already has interests in substantial European container terminal capacity at the Belgian ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge, Rotterdam in the Netherlands and a recently opened North Sea facility at the UK port of Great Yarmouth.

Thus PSA's decision to forgo first call on



In the running: PSA HNN has not been ruled out as a future bidder for the WCT project.

the WCT has not surprised industry observers, given the state of the global economy and the ambitious scale of the Dutch project for Vlissingen and sister port Terneuzen, to the south of the Scheldt.

The planned Continental Gateway envisages both ports leaping from today's negligible container traffic volumes to more than 4m teu within a decade.

A number of existing container terminals in northern Europe are already mothballed or working at much lower throughputs, so the demand and timescale for additional European box handling capacity has receded.

WCT, with 2,000 m of deepwater quays able to handle five 12,000 teu boxships simultaneously and a 900 m quay for inland barges, is just one of three terminals planned by Zeeland Seaports, the others being Scaldia Container Terminal and Verbrugge Container Terminal.

The port authority confirmed that it will next week present its redrafted environmental impact assessment for the WCT to the local provincial government.

The original assessment was rejected as inadequate after legal objections from environmentalists.

The new assessment could be approved by early next year, with construction work starting in 2012 and a WCT opening date of 2014, although sources close to the project concede such a timetable is optimistic.

Scaldia Container Terminal, a joint venture between Belgian companies Sea-Invest and Zuidnatie, is due to open later this year. Originally conceived as a 1m teu annual capacity hub, the terminal will now function as a multipurpose facility, the Zeeland Seaports spokesman confirmed.

ICTSI close to clinching Portland box facility lease

COMMISSIONERS at the Port of Portland in Oregon are to consider a proposal on May 12 to lease the state's only container terminal to Philippine terminal operator International Container Terminal Services Inc, write Colum Murphy in Hong Kong and Rajesh Joshi in New York.

The proposal has the backing of Portland officials, who see it as a means for the small US northwest port to globalise its operations. The proposed 25-year lease on the 386-acre facility has already received the blessing of the trade union representing dockers at the port.

ICTSI chairman Enrique Razon, scion of a powerful Filipino business clan known to be close to the family of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, has received generous media publicity in Oregon.

Portland had short-listed a reported 10 bidders during an earlier tender in 2008, but this effort was suspended as the recession set in.

The port, 100 miles from the Pacific Ocean, was struggling to retain market share during the boom.

The post-recession lull has provided an opportunity for several smaller US ports to seek third-party participation in developing modern facilities that would position them to take advantage of the recovery when it happens.

The ICTSI lease is understood to have been negotiated directly with Mr Razon's company, instead of taking bids. Port officials told local media that a private party would market and operate the facility much better.

Portland handled 174,203 teu in 2009, down from 245,459 teu in 2008.

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Champagne night — the Shipping Professional Network in London board (l-r): Ilias Angelidis, Lorenzo Casarosa, Gustav Ellingsen, Claudio Chiste and Valentina Nikiforova.

Champagne with a touch of class

CHAMPAGNE and class went hand in hand last week at the latest event held by the Shipping Professional Network in London. More than 135 people attended the event, with a mix of lawyers, bankers, brokers, traders and students looking to meet other members of the shipping industry.

Norwegian law firm Wikborg Rein hosted the evening at its new office in St Pauls, London, which included a presentation from Det Norske Veritas' UK and Ireland manager Martin Crawford-Brunt on Classification Societies in Modern Shipping, followed by drinks and finger food. Those with a taste for bubbles then headed off to champagne bar Diron to continue the party late into the night.

Although there is technically no age limit for entry into the SPNL, membership is targeted to younger members of the maritime community in their 20s and 30s. But that did not stop a few familiar faces from the industry's older generation popping up.

SPNL chairman Gustav Ellingsen explained that the board invites established figures along to its events to share their experience with younger members.

Having started in 2007, the SPNL has 13 events under its belt, with its board members kept busy organising four more evenings planned in 2010.

The board is headed by Ellingsen, who works for Gearbulk, and includes deputy chairman Lorenzo Casarosa from DNV,

treasurer Ilias Angelidis, also working for Gearbulk, and Stephenson Harwood's Valentina Nikiforova and Banca IMI's Claudio Chiste, who flew in from Milan for the evening.

Greek coastal chronicler

FORMER Union of Greek Shipowners board member George Foustanos can look back on two decades since he changed tack, leaving the shipowning life and devoting himself to researching and chronicling Greek shipping. A huge amount of material has enriched his Argo periodical, of which there have been no less than 22 books... and counting.

The latest of these, Greek Coastal Service 1945-1995, is devoted to half a century of the country's island ferry operations and thoroughly documents 144 ships. It also provided the material for an exhibition, held in co-operation with the Eugenides Foundation, which opened last week on the latter's premises.

Foustanos relates the frustrations and — on occasion — tragedies that marked the resurrection of services to the Greek islands after German bombs reduced the fleet to just two floating vessels, and one refloated ferry, in 1945.

The unhappy reality is that whoever has been involved in post-war Greek coastal shipping, and did not abandon it in good time, not only failed in the end but in some cases were financially ruined. Which begs the question: did everyone follow the wrong path, or did certain forces not allow them to achieve what for decades their compatriots were achieving in international shipping?"

According to Mr Foustanos, mistakes in the coastal ferry sector have irreparably harmed the development of the country's islands. "We must not forget that coastal services are one of the most important factors in the development of a healthy tourism industry which, together with oceangoing shipping, offer the best hopes for Greece to regroup its economy.

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