

# ASD TUG 2609 ICE

## HEADS FOR THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST



ASD TUG 2609 ICE PETER



Vladimir Grigoriev  
chief executive  
Nakhodka Marine Trade Port

In February 2019, Nakhodka Marine Trade Port, located in Russia's far eastern Primorsky Krai (maritime territory), signed a contract with Damen for the delivery of an ASD Tug 2609 ICE this coming summer, the first Damen Tug to join their fleet. The order is a significant one for Nakhodka Port as a recognition of its growing importance to this once remote area of Russia and its bright prospects for the future.

The port has undergone some changes in recent years. Up until two years ago it was part of steelmaking company EVRAZ, but in 2017 it was sold off and is now an independent entity. It has been an important transport junction for many years due to its position on the Trans-Siberian Railway section of the Eurasian Land Bridge. This allows it to act both as a gateway for Russian exports such as coal and timber to the Pacific Rim markets, and as a transshipment point for goods from China, Japan and other nations looking for rapid, overland access to the markets of western Russia and Europe.

### Upgrading for the future

Today Nakhodka Marine Trade Port is one of the key stevedoring companies in the Russian Far East, making an important contribution to the development of the region. The port is eastern Russia's biggest, equipped to handle around 10 million tonnes of cargo per year and unload around 500 rail transports each day. Since it parted company with EVRAZ, the key objectives that the port has set itself over the last two years have been to upgrade its facilities and expand its cargo turnover by at least 30%. It is also undertaking a programme introducing environmentally-responsible cargo transfers and is currently installing systems to suppress dust formation and treat sewage.

Looking further ahead, plans include additional purpose-built facilities for unloading bulk cargoes including an advanced rotary car dumper to unload railroad cars much more rapidly whilst preventing dust emission. The goal is for the port to leverage its modernised facilities and expertise in cargo handling so as to broaden its customer base of shipping companies and destinations.

### Adding and updating capacity

With an area of 3.5 km<sup>2</sup> stretching down both sides of Nakhodka Bay, the port is able to berth up to fifteen cargo vessels at any one time and, with business expanding, traffic has been growing. The port's own pair of tugboats; the *Osl'yabya* built in the USSR in 1971 with 882 kW of power, and the *Yermak*, built in South Korea in 1996 with 2,100 kW of power, are working as hard as their ages will allow them, and on occasions a third vessel has to be chartered to assist with the berthing and vessel handling.

"The decision was therefore made to investigate the new build options for adding a third, full-time tug to the fleet and various ship builders were approached for proposals," says Vladimir Grigoriev, chief executive of Nakhodka Marine Trade Port. "The brief was to put forward for tugs that could safely manage the critical task of positioning and removing dry cargo ships and bulkers with a deadweight of up to 60,000 tonnes and lengths of up to 200 metres.

"We finally opted for Damen because they were the best in terms of technical specifications and price. Additionally, Damen is known for the consistent high quality of their products, and this has been confirmed by positive feedback from other stevedoring companies who are using similar Damen tugs. Our new Damen ASD Tug 2609 ICE will make us less reliant on external suppliers and help us to earn a better margin on our services as we berth and undock our ships."

Nakhodka Port's new Damen ASD Tug 2609 ICE has been built at Damen Shipyards Changde, China, and its engines uprated to 3,500 bhp (2,610 kW) of total power to give over 40 tonnes of bollard pull ahead. While at 43 degrees north the Nakhodka Bay is generally ice-free, mid-winter temperatures can fall well below zero, so the hull is rated ICE3 and is in full compliance with ARC4. The delivery from Shanghai to Nakhodka will be used to familiarise the new crew with her handling and systems, and Damen's team of field service engineers dedicated to supporting clients in the Russian Federation will take care of any services needed during the warranty period and beyond.

"Operational efficiency together with the environmental safety of cargo transfer operations remain the key priorities of Nakhodka Marine Trade Port," says Vladimir Grigoriev. "We strive to be the leading port in the Russian Far East by the use of the best available technologies and capacities in our terminals. Getting this new tug will help us to enhance the quality of our services and significantly improve technical opportunities for our port."



## TUGS MARKET

Towage expert Alec Laing delivered a presentation at ITS last June in Marseille on the state of the industry at the time. In this edition of the Harbour and Terminal Journal, we catch up with him to see if there's been any changes in the meantime.

"Overall, the economic and political backdrop has not changed a lot since last summer. There was an extensive market review in February for European ports. What it showed was that prices remained under great pressure, but had been relatively stable in small ports over the last 1-3 years.

"It's the large volume ports where there's been most competition and therefore most pressure on prices. This has been driven in part by the formation of so-called 'ocean alliances', where container liners are forming cooperations to make themselves more competitive. At the ITS there was a lot of talk of consolidation in the industry as a result of this – which has been borne out by Kotug Smit's recent letter of intent to sell all shares. I think there is more consolidation to come. It's hard for companies – particularly the smaller ones who are not back up by activities in other sectors – to cope with the pressure on their own.

### What impact will all this competition have on safety and sustainability in vessels?

"There is a limit to how low rates can go before safety

becomes compromised. That would be disastrous. Safety will always be the primary concern in this industry. For operators their reputation is on the line so they place it before everything else. Any compromise on safety is only a short-term fix – it actually compromises business.

"However, while safety will not be compromised, the current market conditions could slow down advances in improvement."

"What is threatened by current conditions is sustainability. Tugs have a long lifespan and, without increased earnings, it likely to take a long time to see sustainable vessels become commonplace.

"With no regulation to force owners to scrap older assets and no financial incentive to do so, there is a buildup of older vessels – which may be more polluting. If we want to see more sustainability in the industry we need either rate increases or smart, cost-effective solutions, such as Damen's NO<sub>x</sub> Reduction System, making stock vessels modularly compliant with IMO Tier III."

### What can be done to regain healthy profitability in the current market?

"Opinion is that consolidation will be positive for the industry. It's likely that consolidation will enable prices to bounce back – less players competing means less pressure to reduce costs. It's also important that they incentivise their crew – to invest in them. Not just in the crew, but the whole organisation. That's where operators will find improvement and get that little bit extra. If goals are aligned, they can expect loyalty. In the end, it's not only about short-term profit, but with assets lasting 25 years or more, we are in it for the long-term.

"What could help is some way of helping owners to predict how their vessels can be operated for maximum efficiency. Currently such information is not readily available. There is some retrofitting of measuring devices taking place right now, but this is a traditional industry and it can seem expensive. It's important that operators can see that the benefits of the reduced fuel consumption that can be brought about by sailing optimally.

"What will also help is for there to be raised awareness of the critical importance of towage in the logistics chain. Ultimately this is down to bodies such as the European Tugowners' Association and the British Tugowner's Association to address. It's not something that smaller players can address on their own. And those organisations are working hard to get that message across."