



EXTENDING THE AFRICAN CONNECTION

Aberdeen Harbour's key role in servicing the offshore oil industry's activities in West Africa has extended to the opposite side of the continent, with the first shipment of equipment for the east coast.

The *Susan K* loaded equipment for Mozambique in May, the first time the country has appeared among the port's international connections. Pentagon Freight, who chartered the vessel, expects more shipments as part of an ongoing international freight-forwarding contract.

Meanwhile, cargo to West Africa totalled almost 23,000 tonnes in the first five months of this year, on a par with the same period in 2007 – and compared with 19,500 tonnes in the whole of 2001.

The lack of available vessels was a constraint on trade last year which ended with 46,500 tonnes shipped to West Africa. However, new vessels have recently been introduced on the routes by Universal Africa Lines, with the *UAL Cyprus*, and Safmarine, with the *Safmarine Anita* and the *Safmarine Angela* – all calling at Aberdeen on maiden voyages.

Angola, Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria and Togo are amongst the African countries which have featured among Aberdeen's international connections in recent years.

Additional links

As well as Mozambique, Aberdeen has added New Zealand to its overseas links, with the recent arrival of a first cargo of oilfield equipment from there, further reinforcing the port's role as a worldwide freight hub for the oil and gas sector. The harbour has direct connections with around 35 countries each year.

Annual dredging completed

The port's annual maintenance dredging was completed earlier this month by UK Dredging, part of Associated British Ports, under the second year of a three-year contract.

Around 180,000 cubic metres of material were removed from the channel and berths over three weeks by the dredger, *UKD Marlin*, assisted by the seabed levelling tug, *UKD Seahorse*, which was used to pull material from the berths and to smooth out the seabed.

The Harbour Board's Engineering Director, Ken Reilly, explained: "Samples of dredged material were analysed by the Marine Laboratory to make sure it was within permitted limits for dumping offshore in the Board's designated spoil ground. Fortunately the harbour is very clean and the material has always more than met the requirements."

Strong first quarter performance

Aberdeen Harbour continues to attract more shipping, with almost 10 million tonnes handled in the first five months, up 6% on the same period last year.

Harbour Board Chief Executive, Colin Parker, commented: "The strong performance this year again reaffirms the importance of our ongoing strategy in reconstructing quays and deepening berths, with extensive marshalling and lay-down areas, to provide key assets, giving the port the capability to handle the larger vessels now operating in the offshore oil industry and international trade."

With around 20 deep-water berths now available, the development of capacity continues as part of the Board's £57 million, five-year programme to sustain the port's future.

Pocra project undertaken

The programme to improve access within the port has passed another milestone, with the completion of a £430,000 project to reconstruct the roadway at Pocra Quay. The work, carried out over six months by Hunter Construction, also included improved lighting and drainage, as well as traffic calming measures.

The Harbour Board also provided new fencing and gates around the perimeter of the Sea Cadets' base and relocated a war memorial, commemorating dock workers and previously sited at Blaikies Quay, to Pocra Quay where it is accessible to the general public.

En route for the Barents Sea

The prospects for the UK oil and gas industry in the exploration for and development of reserves in the Barents Sea were examined at a two-day workshop in Aberdeen earlier this month as part of the EU's Northern Maritime Corridor (NMC II) initiative.

Speakers included the Harbour Board's Chief Executive, Colin Parker, who said: "The port is well established as an internationally-linked hub handling freight manufactured and serviced in the region, as a centre of excellence for the industry, and from much further afield."

"Shippers have the option of using the weekly roll-on/roll-off Sea-Cargo freight ferry from Aberdeen to Norway, with onward connections to the Barents area of North-west Russia and Northern Norway, or by shipping direct on cargo vessels, as per the scheduled services trading with West Africa, for example."

The event, hosted by Aberdeenshire Council and including a Russian delegation, looked at infrastructural requirements and the opportunities associated with logistics, transport, exploration and production, and support services, as well as the development of a maritime route to the High North by Scottish, Norwegian and Dutch partners in NMC II.

Update presentation

Port users and members of the public received an update on the Harbour Board's strategy and on development and activity at an event in the Maritime Museum hosted by Chairman, David Paton, and Board members.

A presentation by Chief Executive, Colin Parker, can be viewed on the Board's website, where the Annual Review and Annual Report for 2007 are also now available.

French lessons in hydrography

The Harbour Board's Hydrographic Surveyor, Eddie Aitken, has delivered a series of lectures on all aspects of port surveying to students at ENSIETA (Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Ingénieurs des Etudes et Techniques d'Armement), a University of Oceanography and Engineering in Brest, France.

It is one of only three universities in Europe which provides a course on IHO Category A Hydrographic Surveying - the highest standard in hydrography.

Eddie, who presented six, 90-minute lectures over two days, said: "My near 29 years at Aberdeen Harbour as Hydrographic Surveyor was put to good use and it felt great to share my experience with the students."

Additional craneage

Craneage availability at the harbour is expanded from this month, with Port Services (Aberdeen) taking delivery of a new £4 million mobile crane to service the oil and gas industry.

The 1000 tonne class Terex Demag TC2800-1 is the largest mobile lifting machine produced by German manufacturer, Demag. "This is the first time that a crane of this capability has been located in North-east Scotland," said Steve Clark, Managing Director of Port Services (Aberdeen). "It will offer greatly enhanced lifting capabilities, including operating in much greater wind speeds."

A new 500 tonne class crane will also be delivered to the company's base at Altens by the end of the year.

Sponsoring education again

The Harbour Board are again supporting HM Theatre's education programme, with funding to help provide subsidised tickets, workshops and transport for children from schools in Aberdeen City and Shire made available for a second year.

This month, the first event under the renewed sponsorship saw around 80 children, aged four to six, attend a workshop in St Machar Academy with the main character, Sportacus, from the BBC's *Lazytown*.

Lorna Christie, Development Manager with Aberdeen Performing Arts, who operate HM Theatre, said: "The support scheme was successfully piloted last year, with more than 1,000 primary and secondary pupils from schools across the region attending performances, participating enthusiastically in workshops and benefiting from the experience."

Basra delegation's visit

A delegation of Basra Development Commissioners from Iraq was given an insight into the port as part of a UK study tour. They became the first visiting group to tour the harbour on the new launch, *Sea Haven*, following her entry into service.



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