

Coastwise Offshore Services and Next Generation Shipyards sign a contract for the building of a new type of vessel on Groningen soil

On Thursday, 27 August, a contract for the building of a new, energy-efficient and fuel-saving aluminium vessel for the offshore wind-industry was signed, together with an option for three other vessels. The signing took place at Next Generation Shipyards on Lauwersoog. The contract involves a special new type of vessel which combines the stability of a catamaran with the speed and fuel efficiency of a monohull. The building of the vessel was at the initiative of Coastwise Offshore Services, the new shipping enterprise owned by Messrs Eelko Wijdieks, Douwe van den Berg and Onno Nienhuis. The project also gives a significant impulse to the province of Groningen.

A new, Lauwersoog-based shipping company which applies itself to the offshore wind industry, an innovative, homebuilt vessel, and an investment of € 5 million – the harvest of more than 20 months of enthusiasm, dedication and faith in a lasting future. And the festive climax: the signing of a contract between shipping company COS Master and the Groningen shipbuilder Next Generation Shipyards in Lauwersoog for the building of an offshore service vessel. Harlingen-based SeaZip Offshore Service will be responsible for the commercial management of the vessel.

Shipping entrepreneurs Messrs Eelko Wijdieks and Douwe van den Berg, who have operated in the dry cargo market for years, are extending their operations to the offshore energy market. Everything fell into place after they had contacted Mr Albert Keizer, the Managing Director of Next Generation Shipyards, and the *Ondernemershuis Noord-Groningen*.

Groningen vessel design unites the best of both worlds

Says Douwe van den Berg from Coastwise: “For quite some time already, Albert Keizer intended to design a crew tender himself. Our plans complemented one another well. In close collaboration with marine architect Fred van Dorresteyn (VDD Design, Dordrecht), Next Generation Shipyards succeeded in translating our basic principles into an unparalleled vessel design. The design provides the stability of a traditional catamaran and the speed and fuel efficiency of a monohull, which implies ultimate comfort combined with the best possible performance. Absolutely the best of both worlds”.

This combination is reflected in the name under which the new type of vessel is put onto the market: *30 Pax Monomaran Crewtender- Endurance class NG2727*. The vessel will be delivered to Coastwise December next year and sail under the name of *COS Master*. The aluminium vessel is over 27 metres long, provides ample and comfortable room for 30 passengers and can carry a load of 15 to 22 tons. It will be fitted with a deck crane. Its cruising speed is 27 knots. The design is innovative and sustainable, which means that Next Generation Shipyards presents a concept which appeals to the market and symbolises the role which the Groningen region wishes to play in the field of energy transition and renewable energy.

Counter-cyclical investment without the need for bank financing

Making plans and executing plans are two different things altogether. To execute a plan, one needs money. In this case: € 5 million. In the face of the corona crisis, Messrs Wijdieks and Van den Berg managed to raise the money. All the more remarkable is the ‘counter-cyclical financing’ which has been accomplished. In a short space of time, with the help of *Ondernemershuis Noord-Groningen*, Coastwise succeeded in stirring the interest of a small group of private investors in the project. The fact that entrepreneur Mr Onno Nienhuis (Hendrikson Holding B.V., Zoutkamp) decided to participate as partner/owner worked as an accelerator. In the development phase, the Province of Groningen offered a helping hand by providing seedcorn funding. The *Fonds Nieuwe Doen*, which was set up at the initiative of the Province of Groningen and finances projects in the fields of healthcare, renewable energy, and quality of life in the Province of Groningen, granted a loan.

Once the vessels have been completed, Coastwise Offshore Services will outsource the commercial management of the Monomaran Crewtender to SeaZip Offshore Service in Harlingen. Over the past decade, SeaZip has built up a substantial network in the offshore wind, oil and gas industry, both in Northern Europe and elsewhere in the world. Says Douwe van den Berg: “We have known each other for many years and will be grateful to make use of SeaZip's skills and expertise as well as their international contacts. Our vessels, which are suitable for 30 passengers, are supplementary to the vessels owned by SeaZip, which accommodate 12 persons.”

Innovation and personal commitment

Eelko Wijdieks and Douwe van den Berg themselves will be responsible for the vessels' operational management. Literally, because – in the best captain-owner tradition – they will set sail as the masters of the vessels themselves. The other crew members – 2 up to 5 men, depending on the project – will be picked from the pool of skilled professionals which they have at their disposal. Says Mr van den Berg: “The innovative, durable design of the vessels and our personal involvement in the operational processes guarantee the distinctive quality of the services provided by Coastwise Offshore Services. The offshore wind market is growing and an important factor when it comes to employment in the Province of Groningen. We are proud of making a contribution to that.”

Douwe van den Berg and Eelko Wijdieks call attention to the fact that their extraordinary initiative which has led to building the vessel could not have succeeded without the cooperation and confidence of a large number of parties, including: the shareholders, Mr Onno Nienhuis, Next Generation Shipyards, VDD Design, Ondernemershuis Noord-Groningen (OHNG), Fonds Nieuwe Doen, Jonker Belastingen (Taxes), Trip Advocaten & Notarissen (lawyers and civil-law notaries), Accountantskantoor Spijk, Bastide advocaten en fiscalisten (lawyers and tax specialists), Jelsma Koelma Notarissen en juridisch adviseurs (civil-law notaries and legal advisors), and SeaZip Offshore Service.

Editor's Note

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