How can we make the most of the UK's green industrial revolution?

Wijnand van Aalst, CEO of Van Aalst Group, talked to PES about the place of Safeway Gangway in the group. There are various gangways all providing safe walk to work solutions, with differing options depending on where they are being used. Training and safety are key and thus taken very seriously, as can be seen in the introduction of the Safeway Academy. Read on to find out more...

Wijnand van Aalst

PES: Hi Wijnand it's great to welcome you to PES Wind. To begin with would you like to give us a brief overview of Van Aalst and explain where Safeway fits into the group?

Wijnand van Aalst: The Van Aalst Group is a diversified company with decades of experiences with equipment installations on over 850 vessels. Companies extend from the Netherlands, multiple companies in Norway as well as in China. Safeway Gangway is part of the group.

PES: Of course, we know about Safeway Gangways in general, but what different types are there and what are their different uses?

WA: The rental fleet on Safeway consists of the Seagull type, the Safeway Seagull is the most flexible, versatile unit with roll compensation mast, stepless height elevation, hover mode, operator cabin, covered walkway, low energy consumption, small footprint, easy to install with push button 3D tip hook function.

The Safeway Osprey is used on wind farm installation vessels assisting with the installation of monopiles and wind turbines. Providing access combined with grouting solutions. The Safeway Osprey is able to be parked vertically which allows enormous advantages in keeping deck space free for other crane activities.

The Safeway Gannet has all good features of the Safeway Seagull but was designed specifically for SOVs. Trolley handling, traditional bumper mode and stepless transfer of persons and trolleys from warehouse to turbine decks are all feasible.

PES: What about installation, is a trained technician required, or are they plug and go? If so, is any special training needed and who provides it and where?

WA: Trained and certified operators are essential on all motion compensated gangways. Last year, Safeway took this one step further, with the introduction of the Safeway Academy.

The Safeway Academy takes the industry operator training requirements to the next level and provides a combination of theoretical training on hydraulics, electrics, mechanics, as well as virtual reality training from a real operator chair by using VR glasses. The training covers all possible eventualities. It is completed with an independent examination by experts from STC-KNRM. Thus, all parties involved are assured of the highest possible level of training and certification.

PES: Once in situ is anyone able to operate the gangway?

WA: Once the gangway is placed on the vessel, either the Safeway certified operator, or personnel, or the vessel crew can operate the gangway.

PES: Safety must be a preoccupation for you as a company, are there any special considerations, how do you ensure that everyone is kept up to date with the latest requirements?

WA: Of course, safety is most important, we are certified ISO 9001 (quality) ISO 45001 (health & safety), as well as ISO 14001 (environment). This means annual audits on QHSE of our work and our performance.

We consider safety a top priority, for example this is shown in the fact that all our gangways have an operator cabin with heating, air conditioning and additional trainer chair. Most of our competitors' gangways are not equipped with even an operator cabin. The operator cabin enables the operations to be executed under full safety, in any weather conditions, extreme heat or extreme cold. Plus, our walkway is enclosed, which definitely adds to the comfort of the technicians walking on the gangway.

PES: Looking at the sales, is offshore wind your biggest target

WA: The offshore wind industry has by far the greatest potential. The numbers indicate that in 2030 100GW will be added to the global offshore wind fleet with the expected demand to reach 100 SOV vessels.

In 2050 the numbers look even more astonishing, with up to 1000GW needed to be added to global offshore wind, resulting in

Olympic Invervention SW4

the need of a global fleet approaching 1000 SOV. Indeed, we believe long term the offshore wind is our biggest market.

PES: Why do you think clients should choose your solutions, what added value do you offer?

WA: Looking forward, the key is to reduce Levelized Cost Of Energy (LCOE). The quest is to reach subsidy free offshore wind. This requires the operations on board the SOV to be much more efficient than today. There will be more focus on performance, the conditions in which the works can continue, and how many days per year the work can be performed.

The added value proposition of the Safeway Gangway is to provide year round W2W operations, whenever the vessel is able to remain in position our gangway is able to connect and transfer personnel. The performance is second to none due to the combination of the hover mode with the roll compensation mast. The roll compensation mode reduces all movement of the gangway up to 70% and the hover mode makes it possible to transfer people even when there is no favorable landing points, or the gates are closed due to maintenance or damage.

PES: We would be interested to know where your main clients are based and if this has changed over the years?

WA: Our clients are often similar to the existing clients of the Van Aalst Group. This is one great example where the corporate strategy strengthens the business strategy. As large marine contractors, such as Van Oord, Jan De Nul, Boskalis, Sapura, DEME, Heerema, Subsea 7 and turbine manufactures such as Siemens Gamesa, General Electric and Vestas, are more and more involved in offshore wind, the focus of Safeway Gangway is on these companies as well as the vessel designers, owners and yards.

PES: Are there are any other markets you would like to break into?

WA: We very much believe in floating wind and have much to offer our clients. Our technology is already able to connect to floating offshore structures without modifications to the target floater. This technology is unique with Safeway and is developed from the hover mode, in combination with connections to the oil & gas FPSO (Floating Production Storage & Offloading). As our gangway already has multiple years of proven track record and received the Safety Award from Shell, we can proudly say that we are leading the industry with Ship-to-Ship transfer technology, which will be very beneficial in the rapid development market of floating wind.

PES: We know you are currently working on a project for Dogger Bank, can you tell us anything about this, and/or any other future projects?

WA: We will be using our new Safeway Osprey Gangway at Dogger Bank. We benefit from our cooperation with Tyne Gangway for their service from the Port of Tyne. Dogger Bank has a challenging wind and wave combination, which makes it particularly interesting to be part of this area and its development.

PES: COVID-19 made 2020 a difficult year for many companies, what impact did it have on Van Aalst and do you see that changing as we move forward in 2021 and where do you see Van Aalst in particular and the offshore wind industry in general, in 5 years' time?

WA: The Van Aalst Group had challenges in 2020 as many companies, however we have together with our investors, The Port of Rotterdam and NIBC Bank, long term vision on the market. We therefore will push on to continue our rapid growth of our Group and Safeway Gangway according to the outlined roadmap in the strategic plan of becoming world leader in W2W solutions and services in 3-5 years from today.

www.safewaygangway.com