

The dream of having a logistics hub has been persistent in the port of Zeebrugge for many years. The development of the Maritime Logistics Zone in the inner port has brought it a step closer to reality as the first warehouse nears completion.

GUY BEYENS



Construction of the logistics platform for SeaBridge Logistics is nearing completion.

will service its customers by rail as much as possible.

#### CAR CENTRE LOCATED SLIGHTLY FARTHER AWAY

SeaBridge Logistics will have Nova Natie, the Antwerp-based freight handling company, as its neighbour. The latter will stuff and strip containers and carry out distribution activities on a 4 ha site. With Nova Natie the port of Zeebrugge has attracted yet another service provider operating in among others the perishables business.

The activities of Horst Mosolf are of a quite different nature. This German car logistics company originally planned to build a terminal specialising in import and export of cars,

special technical and optical modifications for the European market, together with other technical services, storage, repair work according to well-defined standards for new and second-hand cars, and emissions tests specifically for national legislation.

#### NOT A PRIORITY

At the beginning of last year, ECS announced that it had plans to build a new warehouse with rail connection in the MLZ, because the present site in the Transport Zone is too small. The latter would be maintained, with the new storage and transhipment centre supplementing the existing one. According to our most recent information the MLZ is no longer a priority for ECS,

# Maritime Logistics Zone provides the missing link

The Maritime Logistics Zone (MLZ) is a 120 ha site in the Zeebrugge inner port between the Southern Mooring dock and the Boudewijn canal, where interested companies can obtain a concession for 25 years. This brand-new concept offers plenty of space for logistics service providers, along with rail and barge access, good road connections and of course shortsea and deepsea services. "It's a very clean area, and so we want to attract logistics companies that can offer sustainable enterprise," says port authority CEO Joachim Coens.

The port authority has been working towards the MLZ for many years now. "The plan to develop the MLZ dates back

four or five years, but the entire project was delayed by the EU Birds Directive. We were only able to zone the site as a port area because we were able to offset it with nature conservation areas in Ostend and the central coast area," Joachim Coens explains.

The MLZ grew out of Zeebrugge's ambition to combine added value logistics with port activities. "We want to develop from being merely a transit port to being a logistics hub for among others the foodstuffs, car and paper industries, as well as for other projects," emphasises the CEO, who wants to make Zeebrugge a European Food Hub.

Currently the rail connection for the MLZ is being

built, the roadworks are nearing completion and work is going ahead rapidly on the utilities.

#### GREEN COFFEE

The first logistics platform within MLZ is for the Antwerp-based coffee handler Efico, whose subsidiary SeaBridge Logistics plans to carry out processing and distribution of green coffee. The first six containers will be received in August, and the logistics centre will be fully operational by early 2010. Construction of this 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> building began in January this year.

Efico will not only use the platform for storage and transhipment but will also offer a

complete package of logistics services ranging from reception, sampling and cleaning to mixing, drying, sorting and bagging and/or bulking of coffee. The incoming and outgoing goods flows and processes will be completely separate.

The building will have storage capacity for about 450,000 60-kilo bags of coffee, corresponding to 45% of total Belgian consumption. However, not all the coffee stored there will be for the national market: "Coffee roasters in other European countries such as France, Switzerland and Germany will be served from here," explains Patrick Installé, managing director of Efico and SeaBridge. The first two countries each represent

just over one quarter of Efico's turnover, while Belgium accounts for around 25%.

The temperature and humidity in the building will be kept at a constant level all year round so as to preserve the quality of the coffee. There will also be a special filter system to prevent cross-contamination of goods by mould. Electricity will be generated by 6,000 solar panels on the roof.

For this project, representing an investment of 30 million euros, Efico obtained a 10 ha concession from the Zeebrugge Port Authority. In addition to the 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> now being built it will be possible to build another one and a half times as much storage space.

The company is going to transfer 95% of its green coffee stores to Zeebrugge from Antwerp, where it is currently kept in rented warehouses. "Because of growth we were faced with a lack of space in Antwerp, and so we were in search of a new site," says Patrick Installé. In Antwerp we weren't able to find a location of the size we now have in Zeebrugge. Furthermore, the conditions for investing in Zeebrugge were very attractive." Before Efico decided to build in Zeebrugge it held talks with Dutch and French ports. "We absolutely needed extra room," Installé insists.

The coffee will still be brought to Antwerp by ship but will then be taken to Zeebrugge by train or truck. Efico

including a PDI centre. An area of 200,000 m<sup>2</sup> would be required to build this Mosolf Automotive Center (MAC). This would take the form of a trimodal terminal with an annual handling capacity of more than 250,000 and storage space for 7,000 cars. In the meantime, however, Mosolf has decided against an MLZ site and has opted instead for a site to the South of the Toyota Vehicle Logistics Center, on the other side of the Southern Mooring dock. According to sales/marketing & logistics manager Wolfgang Göbel the company simply decided in favour of a different location, but the MAC will be built as planned.

In addition to carrying out vehicle reception and inspection the centre will also offer

which now prefers a site in the Carcoke zone in Zeebrugge. However, this is badly polluted and will first have to be contaminated up. Furthermore the construction plans have been put back. They will still form part of the three-year plan that started last year, but will not go ahead this year as originally intended. At the moment negotiations are still being held with MBZ about obtaining a 5 ha site with an option for an additional 5 ha.

Although both Mosolf and ECS have abandoned their plans for MLZ, a number of applications for concessions should be dealt with this year. Joachim Coens is convinced that this dedicated logistics zone will be fully built up within a couple of years.