

DP World automatically boosts capacity

DP WORLD is busy switching the Antwerp Gateway Terminal to an automated system, which it claims will lead to a huge boost in capacity.

When the terminal opened its doors in September 2005 it began as a straddle carrier operation but the intention was always that it should be an automated terminal.

Now the joint venture between DP World (42.5%), ZIM Integrated Shipping Services (20%), Cosco Pacific (20%), CMA-CGM 10% and Duisport (7.5%), has four automated stacking cranes on site and a further 10 expected to arrive over the next

14 months. The four automated cranes arrived in February and underwent a few months of testing.

Eventually, there are expected to be 98 automated stacking cranes in place, potentially by 2012-2013, depending on volume developments.

Currently, Antwerp Gateway Terminal, has eight ship-to-shore Kalmar cranes and 35 straddle carriers. The existing 78 hectares facility has a capacity of 1.2m-1.4m teu, with a 1.4 km quay wall.

When fully developed, the total capacity of the terminal will then be 3.5m teu.

It will have a 2,500 m quay and be on a

125 ha site. The plan is to have 20 STS gantry cranes.

Thierry Vantomme, commercial manager containers of DP World Antwerp, says that the automated stacking system facilitates precision stacking and will significantly increase capacity.

At the moment a 1.2 m gap has to be left between containers to allow the straddle carriers to drive through the stacks and containers can only be stacked three high.

But when the automated stacking cranes are introduced, only 35 cm is left between containers and they can be stacked five high. "In the same area we

can handle 50% more capacity with the automated cranes."

When the terminal is fully developed the automated cranes will be able to handle 3.6m teu, he says.

Although the dredging has to be completed for the second phase of the facility, the 2,500 m quay wall is already in place.

Mr Vantomme adds that the terminal can rapidly adapt to the market. Currently, it is operating at around 60% capacity, so there is still space to expand.

Following strikes in Rotterdam earlier in the year, the terminal operator is hopeful that some of the vessel's that had to divert

will look favourably on Antwerp. "There are no delays berthing, no congestion."

One new arrival is CSAV Norasia, which shifted its India/Middle East/ Europe Service from Rotterdam.

Volumes are certainly on the increase at the Antwerp Gateway Terminal.

Last year, which was its first full year of operation, the terminal handled around 500,000 teu and is expecting 800,000 teu.

There are plans for the introduction of dedicated rubber-tyred barge cranes. At the moment, the barges are handled by the main STS cranes. The timing is not certain as yet, but it could be by 2010.