

“We are well aware that time is money”

The Port of Felixstowe is preparing for the vessels and cargo of the future, says **David Gledhill**, Chief Executive Officer, Hutchison Ports (UK) Limited

“The Port of Felixstowe is the UK’s largest container port and the only one in the UK equipped to handle the next generation of container vessels. In addition to container traffic, Felixstowe also handles a significant quantity of RoRo traffic with Northern Europe.

“The UK economy is dependent upon imports and a very wide range of products are imported through Felixstowe. One of the advantages of Felixstowe for importers and exporters is that they can connect with just about every overseas market through the port.

“Berths 8&9 are the first phase of a project to refurbish and redevelop facilities in the southern part of the port. Ultimately, the project will provide an additional 1,285 metres of quay. Berths 8&9 provide the first 730 metres of quay dredged, initially, to 16 metres alongside but we have designed and built the terminal to allow this to be increased to 18 metres as and when required.

“The other factor behind the development of Berths 8&9 has been the drive by the world’s major shipping lines to secure economies of scale. Every week we are seeing new vessels of 12,000 TEU, 14,000 TEU and soon 18,000 TEU. We are wholly committed to providing our customers with the facilities they require and there is a clear requirement for terminal capacity for the largest ships. Berths 8&9 provide that capacity.

“From a customer perspective, it is also important that these facilities can be accessed with minimum deviation from the main shipping routes. We are well aware that time is money, and that schedule reliability is crucial, and these new facilities will help our customers provide the efficient and reliable service that shippers rightly demand.

“The construction phase of Berths 8&9 is all but complete. We have handled the first trial vessels and are now ramping up the testing phase to ensure that all the systems and equipment are functioning as designed and, importantly, will continue to operate as designed when under full load. Comprehensive commercial operations will commence later in 2011.

“The new facility is equipped with the largest cranes of their type in the world. They have an outreach capable of handling ships



with containers stowed 24-wide on deck, which is larger than anything currently on order.

“Larger cranes present a range of challenges for the crane drivers and to help them in their tasks, and to ensure we achieve maximum operational performance, the cranes are equipped with a number of driver aids. These include a Trailer Positioning System, which recognises the trailer under the crane and aids the truck operator to correctly position the container by

means of ground level indication, an Automatic Skew Control, which corrects any skew movement of the spreader caused by wind, vessel cell guides or load imbalance, and a Semi-automatic Positioning System which allows the crane operator to pre-select a ship discharge or loading operation from which the system will automatically calculate and position the crane to the target position with an optimised path and with anti-sway control.

“At the Port of Felixstowe were very pleased to be able to report a 10% reduction in our carbon footprint since 2008. We are determined to build upon this success and these efforts will be helped by the Rubber-Tyred Gantry cranes (RTGs) we have specified for Berths 8&9. These Eco-RTGs will allow a reduction in fuel use, and therefore emissions, of 40-50% per machine.

“It is important that we provide the facilities that help others reduce carbon across the whole supply chain. The largest ships that can use Berths 8&9 have a significantly lower carbon footprint per unit than smaller vessels, and the investments we are continuing to make in rail facilities within the port and beyond, mean that we put more containers onto more trains to more destinations than any other UK port.

“The scale of operation at Felixstowe not only ensures that we are able to offer shippers a much wider range of rail and coastal feeder services than the alternatives, it also means that these services are better utilised. A full train is environmentally much more sustainable than a half-empty one. This all produces a virtuous circle in which we offer better choice and lower emissions to the users of our port.”