

Setting sail to take wind power across the world

BBC Chartering is a recognised global leader in providing tailor-made shipping solutions for both heavy lift and project cargoes. It was founded ten years ago and now operates more than 140 vessels from a network of 21 offices. In recent years the company has come to be known as a leading shipper of wind turbines. In this article, we discover how the company operates in this growing field and catch up with Chief Executive, Svend Andersen, to find out more about the logistics of moving these unique structures.

As countries around the world search for clean, renewable energy sources that reduce greenhouse emissions, more and more decision makers are choosing wind power. In terms of CO2 emissions, wind power is currently the cleanest and best option. As the technology has advanced, wind power has become a viable and reliable source of energy generation. The price is competitive and predictable and the supply of wind is relatively unlimited and free. Short construction times offer the potential to meet the booming world energy demand more quickly than building coal or nuclear facilities, and wind power provides the energy independence that many countries desire.

According to the International Wind Energy Industry, global wind power generation is projected to increase approximately 500 per cent over the next decade as the world's fastest growing economies attempt to lower their production of greenhouse gases. This rapid growth will translate into a corresponding high demand for wind turbine production and the need to transport the large structures around the world.

BBC Chartering is playing a leading role in filling this growing need for transporting wind power generation equipment. The company was founded ten years ago with a fleet of ten vessels serving a small niche in the chartered shipping market. Today, BBC has grown its fleet to more than 140 vessels,

supported by a global network of 21 offices and an efficient organisation staffed by more than 250 highly trained and experienced employees.

Jens Meilvang, BBC's Executive Chartering Officer of Windpower in Leer, Germany, states that the company is currently the largest carrier of wind turbine equipment in the world. "BBC's role in the wind power industry has grown primarily because of its flexible and efficient cargo delivery capabilities," he says.

"BBC will transport approximately 150 full-charter shipments of wind turbines in 2008 amounting to a total of 3,500,000 freight tons, Meilvang says. In 2009, he estimates this number to increase to between 4,300,000 to 5,500,000 freight tons.

Modern wind turbines generally come in four parts: blades, towers, hubs and nacelles (engine housings). The blades can be 20 to 50 meters in length. Tubular steel towers can range from 60 to 90 meters high and weigh 55 to 60 tons. The components are heavy, massive in size and awkward to transport. Handling very large equipment such as this requires a high level of precision and control. A carrier's stowage and securing plan must ensure both the safe handling and delivery of the cargo as well as the safety of the vessel and crew while at

sea. BBC's seasoned global team of breakbulk experts has just the specialised skills and experience to effectively handle cargo challenges of this type.

The company's role in shipping wind power equipment has grown primarily because of its flexible and diverse cargo delivery capabilities ranging from the traditional tramp service to liner services with regular delivery schedules. The company's multi-purpose fleet is ideally suited to handle large or unusually shaped structures, as well as a wide range of bulk cargoes. This versatility ensures that customers get the right vessel for their needs and the best value for their money.

Two guiding principles that have fueled BBC's expansion in the past decade are flexibility and versatility. As the demand for quality ocean transportation has increased, BBC has proven time and again that it can deliver the most efficient solutions for complex shipping challenges. Its modern (average age of five years) and versatile fleet of box-hold, 'tweendeck vessels ranges in deadweight capacity from 3,500 dwt to 20,000 dwt and are capable of lifting up to 900 mts. The fleet's relatively shallow draft enables the company to deliver any cargo to any port. By offering tailor-made shipping solutions, BBC can reach shallow and small ports in remote locations that larger bulk vessels are unable to navigate.

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Svend Andersen

Chief Executive Officer, BBC Chartering

PES: How did BBC Chartering become involved in the carriage of wind turbines?

Svend Andersen: We started in windmills about eight or nine years ago. I can't remember how many we were working with at the time but it was quite small. Of course, things have changed now and wind energy is seen as a popular choice for the generation of electricity, so the carriage of windmills is a big part of what we do and we carry for Vestas, Siemens and General Electric.

PES: How important an area is the movement of wind turbines to BBC?

SA: Today it represents something 20 per cent of what we do as a company, so it's very important to us indeed. Because of the global interest in wind turbines we find ourselves carrying them across the world, but our biggest markets are in North America and Canada. I would estimate that about 80 per cent of the windmills we carry go there but of course we also deal with the more local markets in Europe.

PES: What are the main challenges involved in the shipping of wind turbines?

SA: First and foremost, you need a high level of expertise. Simply transporting windmills on ships might look easy but it isn't and there are a lot of logistics involved, a lot of preparation and organisation before the ship sets sail. We have to pay a lot of attention to the financial side because the process can become very costly, so you need a lot of thought and a lot of expertise to make it work. If we're shipping windmills out of Denmark, Spain or the UK it can take around 25 days from loading them from

those countries to unloading them in North American and Canadian ports. We have the ability to ship turbines to relatively remote locations and our increased expertise in this particular field has been very productive over the years. For example, we do ship windmills to the Great Lakes of North America, which is a more complicated business than simply unloading them at seaports, but we've developed expertise in this and so it is not as big a deal as it once was for us.

PES: This is a growing business and you say you're probably the world leader in the shipping of turbines now. Can you sustain this position if so, how?

SA: Indeed it is a growing business. Firms like Siemens have doubled their production of windmills and it seems obvious that the sector will grow even more over the next few years. It is going to be more profitable and we will see growth in this sector. As for sustainability on our part, well, we are extremely busy, and we have something like 60 new shipbuildings starting in the next couple of years to serve the growing demands on us as a company. I think there seems to be a healthy future for the delivery of goods by sea and of course we will continue to fight for our position in the market.

PES: How does the 'green' side of your business integrate with other areas of your operation?

SA: The new ships we are planning are up to the highest sustainable standards and so in that respect we are trying to be as green as we possibly can. The fuel we're using is as green as possible at the moment and overall we are working

towards being as environmentally sustainable as we can.

PES: How important is communication and networking for your business?

SA: We're a multi-national company and we have a variety of offices around the world. So it is vital that we have local people on the ground to understand the particular problems in that country and apply solutions accordingly, as well as taking care of our customers and being on top of the situation. This is one of our particular strengths as an organisation.

PES: The theme of this issue is the rising price of oil and how it will affect the industry. Do you feel it will impact upon your business? How?

SA: It's difficult to predict how it will impact on the business. It would be very nice if I did know, but unfortunately I don't! Obviously the rising price of oil is something that we have to consider very seriously. We would like to see a more stable situation but if the price does go over \$200 a barrel then I can see it creating problems, not just for us but for the whole world and it's a big issue as to whether industry can afford this to happen. Being in the energy transportation sector it's very important to us. ▀

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