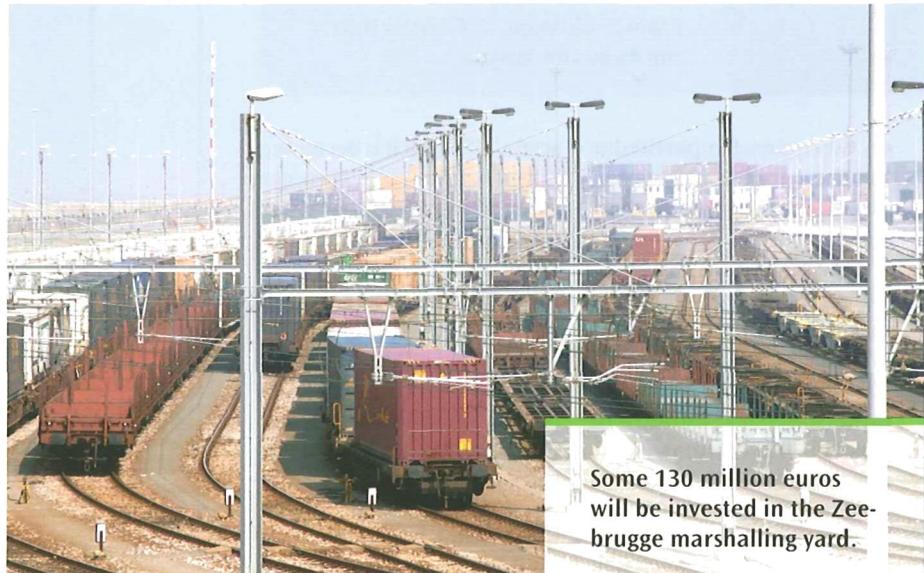


Rail will carry 40% of Zeebrugge freight by 2030

The port of Zeebrugge handled just over 32 million tonnes of freight last year. Of this amount, nearly 7 million tonnes was carried by rail, representing a market share of 21%. This is expected to rise to 40% by 2030, with the number of trains increasing from 14,307 in 2007 to nearly 60,000 in 2030.



Some 130 million euros will be invested in the Zeebrugge marshalling yard.

ALAIN LEGLAY

Not counting natural gas, the 32 million tonnes handled in Zeebrugge were made up of 6.8 million tonnes of lo/lo containers, 9.5 million tonnes of ro/ro containers and 1.6 million tonnes of cars. Of these tonnages, rail carried 80% of containers arriving as lo/lo (5.4 million tonnes, or nearly 11,000 trains), 11% of these arriving by ro/ro (one million tonnes, or just over 2,000 trains) and 24% of cars (1,140 trains).

According to Infrabel there are several operators active in Zeebrugge, namely Interferryboats, TRW, DLC (now Crossrail) and Transport. Interferryboats has a strong presence in Zeebrugge, with of course its Railbarge between Zeebrugge and Antwerp, which has just expanded from 68 to 98 trains per week. Some of the 30 new trains are former spot trains that have become regular, partially with new contracts. There is also the well-known Narcon national service which runs every night to terminals elsewhere in Belgium such as

Charleroi, Athus, Mouscron and Kortrijk.

But Interferryboats also has other services concentrating more on international traffic.

Its Alsace Flanders Express (in collaboration with Naviland Cargo) runs four times per week between Zeebrugge/Antwerp and Strasbourg. In Zeebrugge reception of the containers is carried out at the CHZ and APMT terminals. The Ottmarsheim Flanders Express has been running since April 2008, also from Zeebrugge/Antwerp (the same terminals in Zeebrugge), with two trains per week. In this case the collaboration is between Interferryboats and CTS. Another service covers Duisburg, with five trains per week in collaboration between Interferryboats, CMA CGM, Port-Connect and DPA. The containers are accepted at the CHZ, APMT and P&ONSF terminals.

Finally there are the “company trains” (not available to other customers) such as those operated for WCT to Meerhout and CTS to Cologne. The train runs twice per week from Zeebrugge to Meerhout

and twice per week (the next day) to Cologne, whence it returns to Zeebrugge, also twice per week. There is also the twice-weekly service between Zeebrugge and the Czech Republic.

Although it is a member of the same group as Interferryboats, the operator TRW offers a different kind of product in Zeebrugge, concentrating more on combined rail/road transport.

TRW operates to Spain via Irun, travelling four times per week to Madrid, Vitoria, Vigo, Murcia, Seville etc. and back. The Mouguerre terminal near Biarritz is also served from Zeebrugge with three trains per week.

Italy of course is also served, with the Novara Shuttle four times per week and the Milano Shuttle five times (there and back in both cases). Finally, the port of Zeebrugge is linked five times per week to Luxembourg (and back) and three times per week to Oradea in Romania via Genk.

TRW has considerably improved the quality of its services in Zeebrugge by concentrating



From Zeebrugge, DLC serves Italy, the Ruhr and Austria.

on two quays (in particular the Britannia dock), which avoids shunting in the marshalling yard.

Crossrail (formerly DLC) is also an important player in Zeebrugge, with five container trains per week to Italy (there and back), six to the Ruhr (and back) and two to Austria. The company currently has a fleet of around 40 locomotives, with another 14 to be added by the end of the year, some of which will run from Belgium. Crossrail, which is 52% owned by Babcock & Brown (replacing Hupac) is in the process of obtaining certification for locomotive driver training.

The Belgian rail operator Trainsport is a fairly modest player on the Zeebrugge

scene, although it is becoming increasingly regular; it comes three to five times per week with cars for export and once per week carrying containers in both directions. It began operating between Zeebrugge and Aachen in May 2007 with spot trains, but since then regular contracts have been signed. Trainsport currently has two diesel locomotives in operation, one Class 66 and one Vossloh G 2000, both of them certified for the Belgian, Dutch and German networks. The company is actively looking for new traction equipment (six-axle diesel locomotive). It also seeks engineers (trilingual); recently it submitted an application for certification as a training centre for engineers.

INFRABEL INVESTS SOME 700 MILLION EUROS BETWEEN ZEEBRUGGE AND GHENT

Infrabel, the Belgian rail track operator, is well aware of the importance of the port of Zeebrugge, for which it has introduced a large investment programme. Some 20 million euros have been earmarked for various rail spurs within the port.

A Royal Decree was issued at the beginning of July for compulsory purchase of the land necessary for construction of the Ter Doest loop, which will avoid having to travel as far as Brugge to get to the marshalling yard when a train is coming from the port. This will affect about 20 trips per day. The work is due to begin at the end of this year and should be completed by July 2011. Modernisation of the marshalling yard is also planned, but this will take until the end of 2016. Infrabel will build a new signalling cabin and eliminate the crossing with line 51A which currently separates the A and B tracks. The work should start in February next year and will cost some 130 million euros.

Another long-term project is the tripling of the line between Brugge and Zeebrugge, which will similarly cost 130 million euros and taken until 2016. Finally, work already started several years ago on quadrupling the line between Brugge and Ghent, which will cost 400 million euros and should be completed by 2018.