

Making the future greener together

PES met up with Mette Dietz Lilkaer, Market Analyst & Marketing Manager, Port of Aalborg, to learn how it has been reacting to market changes and challenges. Our last trip to the port in northern Denmark took place in the autumn of 2021. The wind sector and indeed the world has changed quite dramatically since then.

PES: A warm welcome back to PES Wind Mette. How has life been at the Port of Aalborg since we last spoke?

Mette Dietz Lilkaer: Thanks! It has been challenging but also very exciting. Rising energy prices, the global race towards net zero and increased sustainability have all been very much at the forefront of life at Port of Aalborg in recent months. As one of the world's leading manufacturing hubs for the wind energy sector, it is well placed to not only take on these challenges, but to adapt and grow stronger, even through adversity and uncertainty.

Scope for growth in the wind sector has never been greater and life at the port has never been busier.

PES: The focus of the port is on the green transition, how has this developed since we last spoke?

MDL: From our perspective, wind energy is the foundation of the green transition, and the capacity needs to be increased even more in the future. But at the Port of Aalborg, we know that wind energy can't solve all the problems related to climate change. There is a need for system-wide solutions, and the port wants to be at the forefront, which is why the green transition is a focus of strategic importance.

Green transition is now a strategic focus for us in a broader perspective, which comes in line with recognising that green fuels and energy are critical to reaching net zero. At Aalborg, we are setting out a blueprint for developing and scaling these industries in the most sustainable way. We are focussing both on the commercialisation of the company's activities and competences within the green transition and on the development of future business areas.

PES: As competition within the sector grows, access to research and testing is vital, in what ways does the Port help with this?

MDL: We are closely connected with the local university, which is the best in Europe within energy, and other educational institutions. We use this relationship to facilitate and foster collaboration between the local



Mette Dietz Lilkaer

educational institutions and the companies who are located at the port.

Furthermore, we have the largest concentration of test facilities in the world in the area around Aalborg. BLAEST test center is located at the port, where turbine blades measuring more than 100 meters long are tested. We are in dialogue with BLAEST to make sure that we provide the best facilities to accommodate the market demand for larger blades. Østerild test center, also in the area, is testing the largest offshore turbine.

Within future fuels and PtX we will later in 2023 be the host of a PtX e-methanol lab, which is being relocated from the University of Aalborg to the port. This lab will enable a lot of companies to come and test their new technologies at the port.

PES: Our last article mentioned the new established community, Aalborg Renewables. How has this evolved?

MDL: We have further developed and established Aalborg Renewables as a community, which is helping us create the best possible surroundings and circumstances for companies located in greater Aalborg. Aalborg Renewables is bringing companies and research and education together and we have seen and



Based in the northern part of Denmark and with direct access to the Limfjord, Port of Aalborg is very well located to take part in the huge expansion of offshore wind projects in the North Sea and in the Baltic Sea

experienced a huge interest in building stronger relations and sharing ideas on innovation. Aalborg Renewables industry members include the big players like Bladt Industries and Siemens Gamesa, but also a range of SMEs.

Aalborg Renewables is looking into a number of common issues for our members and right now the focus is on competences needed in the renewable industry and the handling of innovation and funded projects.

PES: Are you now working with other ports and on other collaborations too as part of your mantra of Gate to Great?

MDL: Yes, we are a part of the Ports Platforms, which is hosted by WindEurope and brings ports that serve the wind industry

together. We are also a part of the Danish port community. Gate to great is our vision and we want to help companies develop by providing the best facilities in our intermodal logistic hub and the surrounding business park and by facilitating innovation.

The Port of Aalborg is creating activities and results by playing two roles. One as a company where we are constantly developing and optimizing our business. And the other is as an integrator where we are focussing on how the ecosystem of stakeholders is strengthened and developed. That is why we create and support activities across companies, knowledge institutions and authorities.

PES: The sector still has enormous potential for further expansion and

growth, are you able to grow with it in terms of space and logistics?

MDL: Port of Aalborg has the space and logistical facilities that are necessary to be a production, knowledge and test hub for the renewables energy industry now and in the future. It is also ready to accommodate the production of future technologies that are needed for the creation of system wide solutions to the pressing climate changes.

PES: What challenges are you facing?

MDL: There are different challenges, on varying scales that are being faced not just by the Port of Aalborg, but the wider community and of course the industry as a whole. On a broad scale there is the challenge of reaching net zero to minimize the effects of climate change. In Greater Aalborg and within the port community, the challenge lies in competencies in the renewable energy sector, particularly in terms of education, training and leveling up a skilled workforce. These challenges run in parallel with each other and are things that as a port we are working hard to overcome together.

PES: Aalborg Renewables has been established to help overcome some of these challenges. Can you tell us more about the idea behind this exclusive community and its vision?

MDL: Aalborg Renewables is an exclusive community envisioned to accelerate and foster growth and innovation. A business environment dedicated to cooperation and commercialization of ideas.

In terms of tackling climate change, achieving net zero can only be done through close collaboration and cooperation across the value chain, spanning academia and R&D,



Large components are produced at Port of Aalborg. Pictured are monopiles produced by Bladt Industries and the blades in the background are produced by Siemens Gamesa



Blades from Siemens Gamesa being shipped out at the Port of Aalborg. In the front, Blaest, world-leading test center where blades above 100 metres is tested

start-ups, industrial producers and renewable energy companies. Aalborg Renewables is bringing companies together and, supported by the integrator approach from the Port of Aalborg, we trust that we are able to show innovative small-scale solutions that can be implemented in larger scale in the long-term.

By sharing ideas and best practices, the companies in the community can learn from each other. Aalborg Renewables is building a bridge between the labour market and educational institutions, to help overcome the mismatch in supply and demand.

PES: How do you think this community aspect helps build a greener future?

MDL: Incremental and radical innovation is not created from a vacuum. To foster innovation and development requires people to experience new and unfamiliar things, so they can connect new dots and see new possibilities. Aalborg Renewables is connecting people from the industry with actors from research institutions, and relevant actors outside the industry. We keep our community up to date and help them discover new possibilities. Aalborg Renewables will not build a greener future, but it will support, inspire, and connect the

people who will. The green transition needs system wide solutions, and these cannot be created in isolation.

A community aspect is critical to building a greener future because sustainable development requires collective action and shared responsibility. Communities can play a crucial role in advancing sustainability by fostering social norms, promoting sustainable practices, and creating shared visions of a greener future.

PES: Why is the port the perfect place for companies who want to participate in the green transition?

MDL: We have the foundation and prerequisites needed, both in terms of facilities and regional context. Aalborg University is the best engineering school in Europe, North Jutland is going to be the first CCUS hub in Denmark, and Siemens Gamesa and Bladt Industries are building the renewable generation technology.

In Aalborg, we have a proven track record of working with ecosystems and symbioses and these are competences and methods that already are playing an important role however these approaches will be even more important in the future. This symbiose approach is supported by the UN Sustainable

Development Goals to enable truly sustainable growth where resources are reused or recycled. Having contributed to the development of symbioses in several projects on a small scale, we are now ready to take these to the next step = commercial and industrial activities.

PES: If we were to feature the port again in 18 months' time, what do you think it may look like. Will we be talking about more developments and collaborations? What does the future look like for Port Aalborg?

MDL: You would find a business park even more dedicated to the green transition. The area around the Port of Aalborg has been transformed into a production, knowledge and test hub for green transition where we have the whole value chain represented. The PtX projects now on the planning board will be up and running. That means we have test facilities and related office facilities dedicated to addressing the challenges in scaling up PtX projects.

This green transition has led to new industrial activity, jobs and sources of revenues in and around Aalborg.

www.portofaalborg.com

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