

Irish Mainport Continue Fleet Expansion Drive

The Mainport Group are one of the rising stars of the Irish shipping sector. From its beginning as a shipping agency and stevedore in Cork, a business which is still core to its operations, it has expanded its horizons into becoming a successful shipowning and operating group. Today, buoyed by a flourishing joint venture, merger and acquisition activity and several recent purchases of vessels, it is now also one of the leading operators in its field managing and controlling more than 30 vessels in the offshore and supply vessel sector. The company has operations in Europe, Africa, Asia and most recently south America.

In January (2007) The Mainport Group has announced the purchase of a US\$6 million offshore supply vessel which it has just announced will be deployed on seismic projects in Brazil at the end of the month having won a major contract with Compagnie Generale de Geophysique (CGG) in a deal worth US\$13 million to the Group over the first four years. The latest purchase vessel will be renamed "Mainport Oak" and provide support services to large seismic vessels. Her sister ship, the "Seahorse Supporter", currently operates off the coast of India for CGG.

The Mainport Group has its origins in Ronayne Shipping, which was established in 1957, as a ship's agency business. Since this time the company has expanded to include a wide range of other maritime activities. At present the Mainport Group is Ireland's leading ship agency employing more than 100 people in the ship management, stevedoring, and offshore services sector in Ireland. The company is headquartered in Cork and has offices in Dublin, Limerick, South Africa and Norway. In the mid 1970's the company began offering stevedoring services which it continues to do today. However, the direction of the company was altered by an agreement with Marathon Oil to manage its base operations at Kinsale. Once Marathon Oil began production at the Kinsale oil field Mainport, under its Seahorse division provided two vessels serving a dual purpose. One a monthly basis the vessels would supply the production platform and then act as a standby vessel until the following month. However, Mainport was quick to realise that there was a need for greater development in the sector. In 1995 under a new division, Celtic Tugs, the company began operations in direct competition against Irish Tugs, who were operated by Cory, for Cork and Shannon estuary duties. Celtic Tugs then went on to supply the ESB Moneypoint coal-fired power station with towing and berthing services. This led to the acquisition three 55bp Z-peller tugs from Japan and Hong Kong that are currently employed on the Shannon for the electricity power stations at Moneypoint and Tarbert and the alumina plant at Aughinish in conjunction with Foynes port as well as assisting tankers at Bantry Bay's SPMB import terminal.