



New transport concept for the popular North Frisian Föhr-Amrum line

Sietas Shipyard Awarded Contract for Double-Ended Ferry by Wyker Dampfschiffs-Reederei

Ferry operator Wyker Dampfschiffs-Reederei Föhr-Amrum (Wyk Steam Ship Company W.D.R.) forecasts continued positive development in traffic volumes and has therefore ordered a new ferry from the Sietas shipyard in Hamburg. The ferry is due to have a capacity of 1,200 passengers and 75 cars, and will serve the North Frisian Islands using a new transport concept. This contract is of great significance to Sietas, as it represents the start of a new entrepreneurial direction. Despite the challenges posed by the current economic climate, it has been possible for Sietas to land a substantial order for an innovative vessel design.

“We are confident that visitor traffic to Föhr and Amrum will continue its positive development, and are therefore investing in a new, modern double-ended ferry,” explains Axel Meynköhn, Managing Director of W.D.R., which is based on the island of Föhr. “In the Sietas shipyard we have found an ideal partner for this project, and are taking advantage of the opportunity to have a high-quality vessel built at a top German shipyard. Right from the start, the chemistry between Sietas and W.D.R. has been spot on. The shipyard adapted quickly to our requirements, and as early as the tender phase Sietas were able to optimize our draft plan for the ferry in a highly impressive way, for example in terms of future vessel profitability. That sealed the deal for us.”

The building of the new ship has triggered investment of 20 million euros across the North Frisian Islands. This includes the funding of the double-ended ferry itself and modifications to port infrastructure (e.g. the construction of footbridges suitable for disabled users) required as a result of the characteristics of the new ship. This investment in the popular Föhr-Amrum line shows good foresight, as demand for island holidays remains noticeably strong. Residents of Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein in particular are fans of the Frisian charm of the two islands, and hold them in high regard as a destination for holidays and day trips or as a second residence.



Each year the fleet of six passenger/car ferries operated by W.D.R. carries 1.75 million passengers and 280,000 vehicles between the North Frisian mainland, the main islands (Föhr and Amrum) and the smaller “Halligen” islands. Since 2005, W.D.R. has achieved annual turnover growth of 2.5%, with the 2008 turnover amounting to around 30 millionen euros.

New industrial direction sows seeds for success at Sietas shipyard

In the view of Rüdiger Fuchs, Chairman of the Management Board at the Sietas Group in Hamburg since 1st March, the tender made to W.D.R. represented the first serious test of the new corporate concept at the shipbuilding firm: “We brought all our expertise into play. Our excellent design know-how and the cost effective production using prefabricated modules introduced within the framework of our new industrial direction enabled us to win this important contract.” A new system which takes future assembly processes into account as early as the design phase is to be implemented within the framework of the shipbuilding project. As Rüdiger Fuchs explains: “That strengthened our hand during negotiations, as it was the only way for us to make a competitive offer. We combined classic Sietas values – such as quality and vessel design – with our new corporate concept, and this blend made it possible for us to bring the building of the ferry to Hamburg. We see the W.D.R. contract as delivering a clear message: we are a competitive force.”

In spite of a turbulent economic climate, Sietas have not only gained a new client: the shipyard has also gained access to a new market segment. “Ferries are an excellent fit for our new strategy. Our future plans foresee the construction of an increasing number of special-built vessels which require specialist design and production know-how”, explains Rüdiger Fuchs. Sietas are therefore hopeful of gaining additional contracts to build ferries for W.D.R. Furthermore, the shipyard aims to win over an increasing number of new clients in this promising market sector.

More passenger comfort using double-ended design, separate pedestrian boarding and shallower draught

“The new transport concept sees us use a double-ended ferry to create more comfort for our ferry passengers,” as Axel Meynköhn explains. Designed with identical stern and bow ends equipped with Voith-Schneider propellers, the ferry can travel in both directions and therefore forego time-intensive manoeuvring at port. It features an additional fifth area for passenger vehicle parking, which raises its capacity to 75 vehicles (previously 50). Tracks for passenger vehicles were also widened to an ample 2.50 m, whilst pedestrians can access lounges and deck areas via a dedicated point of entry on the side of the ferry. Passenger and vehicle traffic on the Föhr-Amrum line will therefore be separate for the first time. This will facilitate safer, faster loading and unloading without crossover between traffic flows. The use of tried and trusted Voith-Schneider propellers at either end of the vessel offers greater manoeuvrability – even when the ferry is subjected to winds which would force the other vessels which operate the route to stay in port. In addition, the Sietas shipyard will be building the new ferry using a special structural design. That design will not only take all physical requirements (e.g. related to vibration and oscillation) into consideration, but also optimize each individual material’s thickness in such a way as to ensure a draught of just 1.75m – even when the ferry is fully loaded. This will be of particular importance to the reliability of scheduled services, as the vessel will be less dependent on water levels and able to stick even closer to timetabled crossings.

“Parallel to the commissioning of the double-ended ferry in the summer of 2010, we will also be adapting three of our existing ferries to the new transport concept,” explains Axel Meynköhn. “We also anticipate taking two older vessels out of service,” he adds.



Signs of a new beginning at Sietas

Despite the current general downturn in the shipping industry, Wyker Dampfschiffs-Reederei is sending out a clear, positive entrepreneurial signal. The company continues to foresee growth in marine traffic, and is making targeted investments in quality and efficiency. Travellers on routes between the Schleswig-Holstein mainland and the North Frisian Islands of Föhr and Amrum will benefit significantly from these investments. “The choice of a German shipyard is a sign of the fact that W.D.R. is committed to the health of the North German economy,” says Rüdiger Fuchs. “This contract for the building of the ferry is a symbol of the new beginning at Sietas. We know that our new industrial direction is the foundation stone for a path into a robust future. It is now a question of achieving planned improvements in profitability and continuing to win contracts – even in difficult times.”

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Wyker Dampfschiffs-Reederei Föhr-Amrum

Founded in 1885, Wyker Dampfschiffs-Reederei Föhr-Amrum GmbH (W.D.R.) is a modern provider of island supply and transport services. The firm operates completely unsubsidized ferry services to Föhr and Amrum and the smaller “Halligen” islands of Hooge and Langeneß. The local public transport services it provides on Föhr and Amrum also receive no public funding. W.D.R. operates six ferries which carry 1.75 million passengers, 280,000 vehicles and 30,000 HGVs and trailers on an annual basis. The company employs 180 staff and generated turnover of around €30 million in 2008.

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Sietas Group

Based in the Hamburg district of Neuenfelde, the Sietas Group comprises the J.J. Sietas shipyard and three subsidiaries: Neuenfelder Maschinenfabrik, Norderwerft and Neuenfelder Wohnungsgesellschaft. Founded in 1635, Sietas is the oldest shipyard in Germany, and to this day it remains family-owned. The Group is synonymous with high-quality, attractive ship designs. The 2009 fiscal year saw the start of a phase of corporate redirection towards innovative, industrial special-purpose shipbuilding. The Sietas Group generated turnover of €450 million in 2007.

www.sietas-werft.de