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PCTC order boom is over as overcapacity looms amid low scrapping

Following four consecutive years of a buoyant PCTC orderbook, 2025 closed on a distinctly subdued note. Contracting fell to very low levels, at a time when deliveries reached an all-time high, with 75 PCTCs entering the fleet. As the world emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, PCTC ordering went through the roof, with operators and tonnage providers, including several new entrants, betting heavily on surging Chinese vehicle exports. There is little doubt that Chinese vehicle exports will continue to grow, but without a meaningful increase in scrapping, the risk of overcapacity looms.

Today's vehicle production is increasingly China-centric, with even European and Japanese brands producing cars in the country. Mazda, for instance, has joined forces with Chinese carmaker Changan Automobile through its 50:50 Changan Mazda joint venture to develop and produce fully electric models in China, as it would otherwise have risked missing the transition to full electrification had production remained in Japan.

In Europe, the roll-out of fully electric cars is progressing more slowly than initially expected. At the same time, the EU has imposed additional duties on Chinese-made battery electric vehicles (BEVs), adding friction to direct exports into the European market. Chinese manufacturers have once again demonstrated their ability to adapt quickly, shifting their focus towards exporting hybrids, which are not currently subject to the same additional duties.

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Cover Story



Photo: Philippe Holthof

The GSI-built YUAN HAI KOU forms part of a long series of standard 7,000-CEU SDARI-designed PCTCs with 12 decks, four of which are liftable.

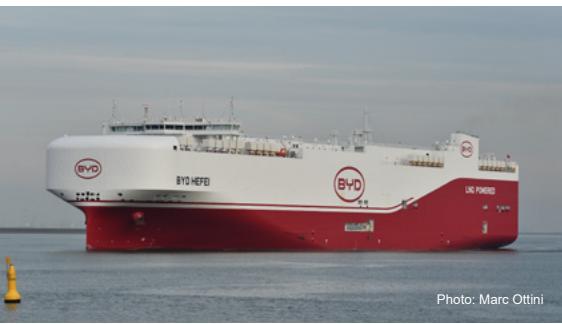


Photo: Marc Ottini

Chinese vehicle manufacturers are increasingly taking partial control of overseas vehicle distribution, with BYD operating an eight-ship fleet, seven of which are owned.

European car manufacturers have actively lobbied for greater flexibility around the EU's planned 2035 phase-out of internal combustion engines and have, at least for now, succeeded in securing a less rigid outcome. While this has been framed as a pragmatic response to slower-than-expected electrification in Europe, it may yet prove to be a Pyrrhic victory. The gap with China is likely to widen further, as vehicle production remains firmly anchored there, a shift that cannot easily be reversed.

Some car industry observers argue that, two decades from now, only a handful of global car manufacturing groups will remain. Even Chinese brands, which have mushroomed in recent years, are expected to face consolidation, with many unlikely to survive in their current form. Against this background, vehicle exports from China look set to remain a defining feature of the global automotive trade.

China becomes the focal point

In 2020, Chinese finished vehicle exports just exceeded 1.0 million units. Monthly car exports crossed the 100,000 threshold for the first time in early 2021 and had risen more than eightfold by December 2025, underscoring the pace at which China's overseas car shipments have accelerated. Japan long dominated global vehicle exports, but in 2023 China overtook it to become the world's largest exporter of finished vehicles, driven primarily by the rapid growth in car shipments.

This shift has drawn PCTC operators that were previously not active in Asia-Pacific trades into the market. At the same time, Chinese PCTC operators have continued to expand their fleets, while a growing number of vehicle manufacturers have taken a more direct role in managing overseas shipments. New entrants have also moved into the PCTC segment, while tonnage providers with no prior exposure to the market began ordering vessels from 2021 onwards.

A volatile ordering cycle

While PCTC ordering peaked at 70 vessels in the 6,000+-CEU segment in 2007, the picture changed abruptly in 2008 as the global credit crunch took hold. New orders in the large-size PCTC segment plummeted to 25 vessels that year, before collapsing to zero in 2009, marking an all-time low, while a number of contracts placed in earlier years were cancelled. Ordering activity recovered modestly from 2010 onwards but remained well below pre-2008 levels. After a brief uptick in 2010, newbuilding orders declined again in 2011 and then followed a stop-start pattern over the subsequent four years. This was followed by a prolonged lull between 2016 and 2020, when ordering activity in the large-size PCTC segment remained at very low levels.

Although 2021 was still marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, ordering activity rebounded sharply, reaching its strongest level since 2008. This resurgence was particularly pronounced in the large, 6,000+-CEU segment, a trend that would continue until the orderbook contracted dramatically again in 2025.

Cover Story

Pushing the boundaries

The 200m berth restriction in many Japanese ports, combined with a 32.3m Panamax beam, has for many years limited the maximum CEU capacity of PCTCs to around 6,500 to 7,000. However, PCTCs operating outside the Japanese trade tend to be longer than 200m, while the adoption of post-Panamax beams has further helped to increase CEU intake.

Even so, many PCTCs built today still adhere to a maximum length of 200m, preserving a degree of operational flexibility. As a result, a significant number of vessels continue to be designed with a capacity of around 7,000 CEUs despite their post-Panamax width. The standard 12-deck SDARI platform is a case in point, although the recent PCTC building boom has also seen a further push towards higher capacities.

When delivered in May 2025, the 228.0m long, 37.8m beam, 13-deck ANJI ANSHENG took the title of the world's largest PCTC, with a capacity of 9,500 CEUs, 300 CEUs more than the previous record holder, BYD SHENZHEN. Meanwhile, the 10,000-CEU threshold is set to be broken with the delivery of the 10,800-CEU GLOVIS LEADER later this year.

With its six upsized Shaper-class vessels, Wallenius Wilhelmsen has the largest PCTC platform by CEU capacity currently on order. The original Mk I version of the Shaper-class measures 228.0m in length and 38.0m in beam, with 12 decks and a capacity of 9,300 CEUs. However, after the initial orders were placed, Wallenius Wilhelmsen decided to upsize four of the vessels, increasing the length to 234.0m and the beam to 40.0m, while adding two additional decks. These Mk II iterations of the Shaper platform will have a capacity of 12,100 CEUs. In November 2024, the company exercised options for two additional Shaper-class PCTCs, which will also be built to the Mk II specification.

Grimaldi Group has likewise modified the configuration of the final five vessels in a series of ten 9,000-CEU KNUD E. HANSEN-designed PCTCs under construction at China Merchants Heavy Industry (Jiangsu), increasing their capacity to 9,800 CEUs. At the same time, the opposite approach has also been adopted, with CMRORO downsizing a quartet of 9,300-CEU PCTCs to 7,800 CEUs. In this case, the length was reduced from 219.9m to 199.9m, while the beam remained unchanged at 37.7m, improving port accessibility and cargo-handling capabilities.

PCTC construction increasingly centred on China

During the first decade of the new millennium, the role of Chinese shipyards in the PCTC sector was still very marginal, with construction largely limited to smaller and mid-size vessels. It was only towards the end of the decade that yards in China began to move into the large-size segment, marking the start of a gradual shift that would later accelerate. At that time, PCTC construction was dominated by Japanese shipyards, with South Korean yards also active in the segment, while European involvement persisted at a much smaller and more sporadic scale.

In Europe, Croatia's Uljanik was a rather prolific builder of PCTC tonnage. However, the completion of Siem Shipping's SIEM CICERO and the subsequent cancellation of its four sister ships, including the semi-finished SIEM ASHANTI – eventually completed at 3. Maj and delivered in 2022 as Neptune Lines' NEPTUNE BARCELONA – effectively marked the end of PCTC construction in Europe. From that point on, large PCTC construction became exclusively an Asian shipyard affair, with Chinese yards starting to play an increasingly prominent role from the second half of the 2010s, before going on to dominate the segment during the 2021-2024 newbuilding boom.



Photo: Marc Ottini

Xiamen Shipbuilding Industry (XSI) was one of the Chinese shipyards that entered PCTC construction relatively early, initially focusing on the mid-size segment before gradually moving into larger vessels. This progression culminated in the delivery of what was then the world's largest PCTC, the 8,500-CEU Horizon-class HÖEGH TARGET, in July 2015, followed by five sister ships.

The subsequent PCTC newbuilding spree spread across China, with recent deliveries and the current orderbook shared among a wide range of shipyards, including Guangzhou Shipyard International (GSI), Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding (SWS), China Merchants Heavy Industry (Jiangsu), China Merchants Jinling Shipyard (Jiangsu), China Merchants Industry Weihai Shipyard, Fujian Shipbuilding Industry Group's XSI and Fujian Mawei Shipbuilding, Longkou CIMC Raffles Offshore, Jiangnan Shipbuilding, and Wuhu Shipyard. Prior to the latest PCTC newbuilding

Cover Story



Photo: Höegh Autoliners

Höegh Autoliners has already taken delivery of eight next-generation Aurora-class PCTCs, with four ammonia-capable vessels in the series still to follow.



Photo: Christian Costa

Japanese shipbuilders no longer dominate the PCTC market. Seaspan Corporation's CAELUM ACE, however, was built at Imabari's Tadotsu shipyard in 2025.

boom, both Yangfan Shipbuilding and the then Tianjin Xingang shipyard were active in the segment, but have since exited.

Newbuildings reshape the PCTC fleet

The effect of the surge in newbuilding orders, particularly in the large-size segment, began to show through a sharp rise in deliveries, from 12 vessels in 2023 to 46 in the following year and a record 75 last year – a total of 133 PCTCs, equivalent to 990,534 CEUs, delivered over the past three years alone. This year, deliveries are expected to ease slightly to 67 vessels, or a total of 517,745 CEUs, still the third-highest annual total in terms of number of ships after the 68 PCTCs delivered in 2008. Looking ahead, deliveries are forecast to remain significant, at 50 vessels in 2027, before declining further to 26 in 2028.

Out of the 276 PCTC deliveries for the 2023-2028 period, 219 vessels, or 79.4%, have been or are being built in China, followed by Japan with 47 deliveries, equivalent to 17%. The current orderbook (situation on 1 February 2026) still represents over one fifth of the active fleet's aggregated CEU capacity of close to 5.1 million. However, as the 238 ships delivered/due for delivery in the 2024-2027 four-year period have an aggregated capacity of 1.85 million CEUs, the recent and forthcoming influx of PCTC tonnage accounts for almost 45% of the aggregated fleet capacity as at 31 December 2023.

While Chinese car and vehicle exports continue to record strong, often double-digit growth, the expansion of the PCTC fleet has become increasingly disproportionate to underlying market fundamentals. Global vehicle sales have not followed a comparable growth trajectory, suggesting that China's rising exports are, to a large extent, occurring at the expense of shipments from other traditional vehicle-producing regions rather than reflecting a fundamental increase in overall demand. Against this backdrop, the number of newbuild PCTCs entering the fleet has grown far more rapidly than global vehicle volumes, raising questions over the long-term sustainability of current fleet growth.

Scraping inevitable

Besides an ordering spree by established PCTC owners and operators, tonnage providers have also ridden this wave, with new entrants moving into the segment, including H-LINE Shipping, Seaspan Corporation, and Atlas Maritime, while Eastern Pacific Shipping (EPS) markedly expanded its footprint in the market. Santoku Senpaku can also be included in this group, as the Japanese tonnage provider had no prior experience in the large-size PCTC segment when it ordered six 7,500-CEU vessels in China in late 2022. Combined with a robust newbuilding programme by Chinese vehicle manufacturers, this influx of additional capacity has further amplified the risk of overcapacity in the PCTC market.

Surprisingly, the number of PCTC demolitions has been few and far between over the past few years, with only Grimaldi Group having effec-

Cover Story



Photo: Christian Costa

Tonnage provider Eastern Pacific Shipping has significantly increased its PCTC footprint during the most recent building spree.



Photo: Christian Costa

Since the PCTC orderbook started to swell in 2021, the majority of owners have opted for LNG dual-fuel propulsion.

tively put words into action through the disposal of its older and smaller REPUBBLICA ARGENTINA and REPUBBLICA DEL BRASILE in 2025. Last year, only one other PCTC, Zodiac Maritime's MORNING MIDAS, left the global PCTC fleet, although this was the result of a vehicle deck fire, after which the 4,902-CEU vessel sank in the North Pacific. There were no demolitions in 2024, and in the preceding years demolition activity was also negligible, with tonnage leaving the fleet largely due to vessels being declared constructive total losses. It was only prior to the ordering wave, and during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic continuing into the first half of 2021, that breaking activity was elevated.



Photo: Grimaldi Group

Grimaldi Group, which has significantly added capacity on the back of an Asia-driven expansion, with no fewer than 17 PCTCs of 9,000+-CEU capacity ordered at two different Chinese yards in 2022/23, has repeatedly stated that older and less efficient tonnage should be disposed of. Besides the two PCTCs sold for recycling last year, it has plans to dispose of additional vessels as larger newbuildings, with a considerably lower emissions footprint per transported unit, come on stream. Although the sale of Grimaldi Group's 2003-built, 5,379-CEU PCTC GRANDE ROMA to Seoul-based Samjoo Maritime has been reported, the vessel has yet to leave the Grimaldi Group fleet. Besides Grimaldi Group, Höegh Autoliners, which has already taken delivery of eight of its 12 Aurora-class vessels, also has plans to dispose of older tonnage.

Potential headwind

US trade policy represents an additional risk factor for the PCTC market. In October last year, the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) suspended its controversial Section 301 port-fee regime for one year following a broader de-escalation agreement with China. The measures, which had imposed a charge of USD 46 per net ton on all foreign-built vehicle carriers calling at US ports, would have affected virtually the entire global PCTC fleet, irrespective of ownership or flag. While the suspension has been welcomed by the sector as short-term relief, the underlying Section 301 framework remains in place. The possible reintroduction of build-origin-based port fees, combined with low scrapping activity and

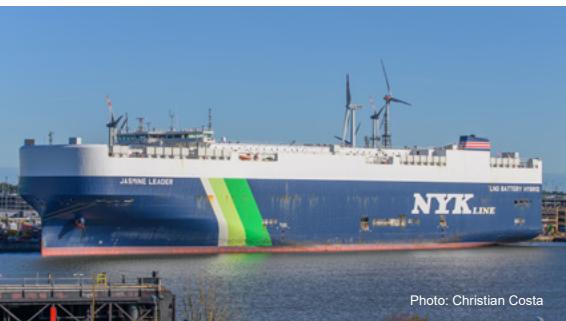


Photo: Christian Costa

Japanese carriers are no longer *per se* loyal to domestic shipbuilders. JASMINE LEADER was built by China Merchants Jinling Shipyard (Jiangsu) in 2023.



The world's first methanol-powered PCTC, CMRORO's 9,300-CEU, Deltamarin-designed CM HONG KONG.

heavy newbuilding deliveries, could further complicate fleet deployment decisions and put additional pressure on the PCTC market.

The PCTC market has entered a phase in which fleet growth is increasingly at odds with underlying trade developments. While Chinese vehicle exports continue to expand and are unlikely to slow materially, this growth largely reflects a shift in production and export patterns rather than a meaningful increase in global vehicle demand. Part of this expansion is expected to be absorbed by emerging markets, with Africa in particular set to see a rising inflow of new Chinese vehicles, gradually reducing its reliance on second-hand imports from traditional source markets.

Even so, the scale of recent newbuilding deliveries, combined with persistently low scrapping activity, is adding capacity at a pace the market will struggle to absorb. Unless demolition activity picks up more decisively, utilisation and earnings are likely to come under pressure. The next phase for the PCTC sector may therefore be less about further expansion and more about adjustment.

LNG as the fuel of choice for new PCTCs

The 2020, Xiamen Shipbuilding Industry-built SIEM CONFUCIUS was the world's first large-size PCTC to feature an LNG dual-fuel main engine. The large-size PCTC ordering spree initiated in 2021 has seen LNG emerge as the primary fuel choice, although there are notable exceptions. Grimaldi Group, for instance, has been critical of LNG, with none of its vessels featuring LNG propulsion. A positive side effect of opting for conventional propulsion is a higher CEU intake, as LNG tanks typically 'eat' vehicle deck space.

However, the Neapolitan shipowner and PCTC operator has embraced hybrid solutions and is betting on methanol for its latest ro-pax generation and ammonia for its PCTC fleet. Although none of its 17 PCTCs recently delivered or on order will be powered by ammonia, they all have an ammonia-ready class notation, as Grimaldi Group is considering a future switch to this cleaner fuel once production is scaled up and availability improves.

While Höegh Autoliners' first eight LNG-powered Aurora-class PCTCs also have ammonia-ready and methanol-ready class notations, the final four vessels in the series, currently under construction at China Merchants Heavy Industry (Jiangsu), will be delivered with ammonia-capable main engines. In these vessels, the Everlance (MAN B&W) 7S60ME-C10.5-GI-EcoEGR LNG dual-fuel main engines will be replaced by Everlance B&W ME-LGIA dual-fuel main engines.

Seven of Wallenius Wilhelmsen's 14 next-generation Shaper-class vessels will have methanol dual-fuel engines, instead of LNG dual-fuel engines for the remaining seven. The fuel tanks of the LNG-powered vessels are designed to store ammonia, allowing conversion once the alternative fuel becomes commercially viable.

CMRORO's 9,492-CEU CM HONG KONG and CM SHEN ZHEN, both delivered during H2 2025, are the world's first methanol dual-fuel PCTCs. CMRORO's smaller quartet of 7,800-CEU vessels will likewise use methanol as their primary fuel.

Ro-Pax Ferry News



Photo: Unity Line

The 4,100-lanemetre, 400-passenger LNG dual-fuel hybrid JANTAR UNITY is a game-changer on the Poland-Sweden trade.



Photo: Unity Line

Prior to its introduction on the Swinoujscie-Trelleborg route, JANTAR UNITY also undertook berthing trials at the port of Ystad.

DFDS reports stable freight and lower passenger volumes in 2025

DFDS reported broadly stable ferry freight volumes for the full year 2025, with total transported freight lanemetres declining by 0.1% year-on-year to 41.482 million. Adjusted for route changes, volumes were down 1.8%, reflecting capacity changes and route exits.

Passenger volumes declined more sharply over the year, with total carryings falling by 21.1% to 5.247 million passengers compared with 6.649 million in 2024. On an adjusted basis, reflecting route changes, the decrease was 4.4%. The comparison was affected by the sale of the Oslo-Frederikshavn-Copenhagen route at the end of October 2024, the exit from Tarifa-Tanger Ville in early May 2025, and the addition of Jersey routes from the end of March 2025.

This Month's News

JANTAR UNITY enters service on Swinoujscie-Trelleborg route

POLSCA Baltic Ferries' brand-new JANTAR UNITY entered service on the Swinoujscie-Trelleborg route with the 20:30 sailing from the Polish port on 20 January. The 48,627gt LNG dual-fuel hybrid ro-pax ferry had been named three days earlier in Szczecin, the inland port where the headquarters of Unity Line partners Polska Żegluga Morska (PZM – Polsteam) and EuroAfrica are located. Representing the first vessel delivered under Poland's long-running, state-backed ferry renewal programme, the 195.56m long and 31.57m beam JANTAR UNITY has capacity for 4,100 trailer lanemetres and 400 passengers.

It is understood that the three-ship contract at Remontowa Shiprepair Yard came with a hefty price tag, and has since been marred by financial difficulties that have delayed construction. As a result, the keel of the third ship in the series has yet to be laid, with its delivery now pushed back to late 2028 or early 2029. Polskie Promy, the State Treasury-backed company behind the newbuild programme, still holds an option for a fourth vessel, subject to funding and market conditions.

Although the second ferry was initially expected to be introduced by Polferries, it will instead be delivered as Unity Line's BURSZTYN UNITY during the second half of the year. As POLSCA Baltic Ferries brings together the Unity Line partners PZM and EuroAfrica with Polferries (Polska Żegluga Bałtycka (PZB)), operations of the former competitors, PZM and PZB, both owned by the State Treasury, are effectively merged to strengthen their competitive position, not least against TT-Line, Finnlines, and Stena Line.

The three newbuilds are owned by Polskie Promy and bareboat chartered to Unity Line, which is responsible for both technical and crew management, with the ships time chartered to POLSCA Baltic Ferries. LNG for JANTAR UNITY is bunkered in Swinoujscie under a long-term contract with ORLEN, sourced via the port's LNG terminal.

Unity Line offers up to three roundtrips per day on the freight-heavy Swinoujscie-Trelleborg route, with JANTAR UNITY replacing GRYF, a 1990-built, freight-oriented ro-pax with a capacity of 1,800 lanemetres and 180 passengers. JANTAR UNITY joined EuroAfrica's Visentini Mk I-class EPSILON and the Viamare-class COPERNICUS on the route, carrying 158 trucks, nine passenger cars, and 161 passengers, 147 of whom were commercial drivers, on its maiden trip to Trelleborg.

GSI delivers GNV's second LNG dual-fuel ro-pax, GNV AURORA

GNV has taken delivery of GNV AURORA from Guangzhou Shipyard International (GSI), completing the first tranche of four ro-pax newbuilds



Photo: GNV

Following the delivery of GNV AURORA, GNV is halfway through its ro-pax newbuild programme, with four further ro-pax ferries of a different design on order at GSI.

DFDS names Michael Hansen as next CEO as French unit sees leadership change

DFDS has appointed Michael Hansen as its next President & CEO, with effect from no later than 1 July 2026. Hansen, currently President & CEO of Hempel, will succeed Torben Carlsen, who announced in November that he would step down. DFDS said the appointment was intended to bring new perspectives as the group worked to lift financial performance and progress its ongoing operational transition.

Hansen brings extensive leadership experience from shipping, transport, and industrial businesses. Before joining Hempel in 2017, where he later led a strategic turnaround, he spent almost two decades with A.P. Moller - Maersk, including roles as CEO of Seago Line and as Global Head of Sales at Maersk Line. Carlsen will remain in post until the handover to ensure continuity during a period marked by restructuring efforts and pressure on parts of DFDS' ferry and logistics operations.

Separately, DFDS has also implemented a management change at its French headquarters in Dieppe, where Étienne Melliani has left his role as Managing Director of DFDS France to join CMA CGM Group subsidiary La Mérédionale. Melliani succeeds interim CEO Damien Mazaudier, who has moved into the role of La Mérédionale's chairman while remaining CEO of CMA CGM Air Cargo. At DFDS France, Melliani has been succeeded by Rémi Liger-Belair, formerly a senior executive within CMA CGM Group, who took up the role in January and will also act as route director for the Dieppe-Newhaven service.

ordered by MSC Group for charter to its Genoa-based ferry subsidiary. The handover follows the earlier deliveries of GNV POLARIS, GNV ORION, and GNV VIRGO, with GNV AURORA the second LNG dual-fuel vessel in the GNV fleet after GNV VIRGO.

With a length of 218.00m and a 29.60m beam, the 52,907gt GNV AURORA has a capacity of 1,785 passengers, with 416 passenger cabins for an equivalent of 1,654 berths. Due to the twin Type C LNG tanks, the 283.7-lanemetre lower hold has been sacrificed, reducing the capacity to 2,770 trailer lanemetres.

GNV AURORA is due to enter service on the Genoa-Palermo motorway of the sea, joining GNV VIRGO and replacing GNV ORION, which is set to be cascaded to the Naples-Palermo service. There it will operate opposite GNV POLARIS, the lead ship in the series currently undergoing a cabin block retrofit in China. The work will align its cabin capacity with that of its sister ships, delivered with an additional aft cabin block integrated into the superstructure from the outset.

The delivery of GNV AURORA marks the completion of the initial four-ship programme at GSI, with MSC Group having already followed up with orders for a second tranche of four ro-pax ferries. These vessels will be based on an evolved version of the MOBY FANTASY platform, offering increased trailer and CEU capacity, a higher number of cabins, and further-refined passenger arrangements compared with the first series.

THE BALTIC WHALE named ahead of still-pending introduction

Scandlines has named its long-delayed newbuild freight-oriented double-ender THE BALTIC WHALE ahead of its still-pending entry into service on the Rødby-Puttgarden route. The 147.4m long, 24.4m wide battery hybrid-electric ferry was named by Lykke Friis, Director of Think Tank Europe, at Rødbyhavn on 7 January.

Despite its early October delivery from Türkiye's Cemre Shipyard and arrival in Danish waters a few weeks later, THE BALTIC WHALE has yet to enter commercial service. Following its initial call at Rødbyhavn, the vessel spent an extended period at Orskov Yard in Frederikshavn before returning to Rødby in mid-December.

Launched as FUTURA but renamed THE BALTIC WHALE ahead of delivery, the ferry has remained sidelined as Scandlines has stayed tight-lipped on the reasons behind the prolonged pre-service phase. Entry into service is now expected later this month. Ordered in November 2021 and delayed by supply-chain disruption and the 2023 earthquake in Türkiye, the EUR 80 million ferry is designed for fully electric operation using a 10.1 MWh battery system, supported by rapid port charging at both ends of the Fehmarn Belt. It is the first ferry on the Fehmarn Belt

Ro-Pax Ferry News

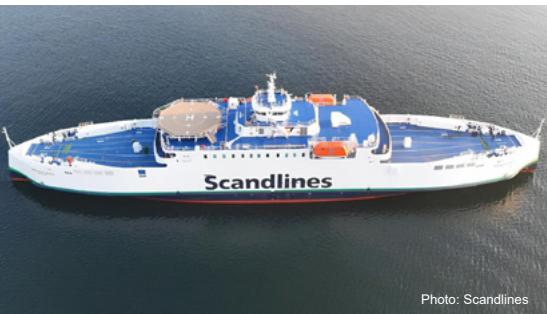


Photo: Scandlines

Despite having arrived from its Turkish builders in October 2025, Scandlines has yet to introduce THE BALTIC WHALE on the Rødby-Puttgarden route.



Photo: Wasaline

With its 12.6 MWh energy storage system, Wasaline's AURORA BOTNIA is the world's largest hybrid ferry by battery capacity.

Tersan Shipyard launches RISVÆR

Tersan Shipyard has launched RISVÆR, the second of four battery hybrid-electric double-ended ferries in the LMG 60 DEH II-class designed by LMG Marin. Like sister ship SØHOLMEN and the still-to-be-launched KVITVÆR and SJØNA, the 84.5m long and 15.0m wide vessels are intended for operation in Nordland county, serving the Stokkvågen-Lovund and Stokkvågen-Træna routes.

The 250-person (including crew) and 60-CEU RISVÆR will be equipped with an 8 MWh battery system, enabling emission-free operation, with diesel-electric machinery providing backup and operational flexibility. Final outfitting of the class will be undertaken by Tersan Havyard in Norway. All four vessels are scheduled to enter service from February 2027, when Norled will take over the ten-year concession from Boreal Sjø.

with twin freight decks, offering a total capacity of 1,200 lanemetres, and is intended to replace the 1981-built KRONPRINS FREDERIK.

THE BALTIC WHALE is not the only Scandlines vessel affected by delays. The conversion of the 1997-built sister ships DEUTSCHLAND and SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN to plug-in battery-hybrid operation at BLRT Western Shipyard in Klaipeda is also taking longer than initially announced. The EUR 31 million conversion programme will see each vessel fitted with a new 5 MWh battery system, supplementing their existing hybrid installations, but the work was originally expected to be completed early this year. However, DEUTSCHLAND has yet to return from the yard, where it arrived in late August last year, and was initially to be followed by SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN in December.

AURORA BOTNIA back in service following major battery upgrade

Wasaline's 2021-built LNG dual-fuel hybrid ro-pax ferry AURORA BOTNIA has returned to service across the Kvarken following the completion of a major battery upgrade that lifts onboard energy storage from 2.2 MWh to 12.6 MWh. The installation represents the largest battery capacity yet deployed on a ro-pax vessel in commercial operation and forms part of the technical concept defined when the ship was ordered.

The battery upgrade was executed within the BLRT Repair Yards network, with the installation of AYK Energy's lithium iron phosphate batteries carried out at the group's Tallinn facility. Separately, AURORA BOTNIA underwent drydocking at BLRT's Turku Repair Yard in Naantali, where routine maintenance was completed alongside five-year class surveys by DNV.

The ship's return to service follows a solid operating year for Wasaline in 2025, during which passenger numbers rose by 2.6% to 259,769 despite its absence from the Vaasa-Umeå route in the last week of December. Freight volumes softened in line with wider regional economic conditions, while turnover increased to EUR 28.8 million.

Looking ahead, AURORA BOTNIA's enhanced battery capacity also feeds into structural changes around the single-ferry operator, as Wasaline is awaiting final municipal and regulatory approvals for its takeover by Stena Line. Under the agreed framework, the Wasaline brand and operating model will be retained, with AURORA BOTNIA continuing to serve under Finnish flag on a ten-year charter, with the option to either extend the charter for a further ten years or purchase the vessel, while benefiting from integration into Stena Line's Baltic Sea network.

TYRFING finally enters service one year late

Samsølinjen's brand-new battery hybrid-electric double-ender TYRFING has finally entered service on the Ballen-Kalundborg route. TYRFING first

Ro-Pax Ferry News

Viking Line posts record cargo volumes in 2025 as biogas use increases

Viking Line carried a record volume of freight in 2025, reaching 139,484 cargo units, an increase of almost 4% compared with the previous year. Passenger numbers across the Mariehamn-headquartered group's five-vessel ro-pax fleet reached 4,608,573, down 0.8% year on year, while the company strengthened its position on the Helsinki-Mariehamn-Stockholm route, where volumes rose 12% to 808,787 passengers and market share increased to 47%.

Traffic between Helsinki and Tallinn totalled 1,823,917 passengers during the year, while the Turku-Åland-Stockholm service carried 1,944,798 passengers. Viking Line also reported continued growth on BIRKA GOTLAND, the 50:50 jointly owned Viking Line and Rederi AB Gotland (Gotlandsbolaget) cruise ship, which primarily operates 21-hour Stockholm-Mariehamn round cruises. In its first full year under the new joint ownership, passenger numbers on BIRKA GOTLAND rose by 30% to 570,513. Across the fleet, Viking Line transported 509,634 passenger cars in 2025.

On the environmental side, Viking Line increased its use of biogas tenfold to around 6,000 tonnes during the year, cutting greenhouse gas emissions by more than 60,000 tonnes and extending fossil-free transport options to both passenger and freight customers. The company has also continued to develop its HELIOS concept for a fully electric ro-pax ferry for the Helsinki-Tallinn route, a project that has moved rapidly from concept stage towards a technically and operationally realistic proposition, with the potential to support an electric shipping corridor across the Gulf of Finland in the early 2030s.



The vintage REGULA is set to remain in service for TS Laevad until at least 31 December 2028, and possibly until 31 March 2029.

arrived in Denmark in late November 2025 following its delivery voyage from Cemre Shipyard, where it was built as the second of two sister vessels, with sister ship NERTHUS covering the Ballen-Kalundborg route pending TYRFING's introduction.

Following its arrival in Danish waters, the 116.8m long and 18.2m wide TYRFING spent more than a month at Petersen & Sørensen Motorværksted in Svendborg for its final preparations, considerably longer than the 14-day yard stay originally announced. The extended period at the yard resulted in further delays to TYRFING's debut on the Danish domestic route.



Photo: Marko Stampehl

Initially set to enter service in January 2025 when ordered by parent Molslinjen in August 2022, the 600-passenger and 180-CEU capacity (or a combination of up to 20 trucks and 66 CEUs) TYRFING has now enabled NERTHUS to move to Alslien's Bøjden-Fynshav route, replacing the 1984-built FRIGG SYDFYEN. The latter has been laid up in Faaborg, joining FYNSHAV, which has reportedly been sold to Italy's Medmar (see separate newsmagazine on p. 17-18).

Estonia extends use of ageing REGULA as replacement ferry through 2028

Estonia's Ministry of Regional Development and Agriculture and TS Laevad have agreed to amend the public service contract covering ferry services on the Virtsu-Kuivastu and Rohuküla-Heltermaa routes, allowing the ro-pax ferry REGULA to remain in service as a replacement vessel until at least the end of 2028. TS Laevad, which is wholly owned by Port of Tallinn, has operated the island ferry services since 1 October 2016 and secured a continuation of the concession in April 2024 under a new seven-year contract starting on 1 October 2026.

The agreement provides for TS Laevad to operate four of its own ferries alongside one additional state-owned vessel. If that vessel is not delivered by the start of the new concession period, the operator is required to provide a replacement. An amendment signed on 13 January

Ro-Pax Ferry News

Torghatten Midt awarded seven-year Alstenfjord ferry concession

Torghatten Midt has been awarded a seven-year ferry concession by Nordland County Council for services across the Alstenfjord, covering the Sandnessjøen-Bjørn (Dønna)-Løkta and Søvik-Austbø-Flostad (Herøy)-Brasøy routes. The contract runs from 1 February 2027 to 2034 and has a total value of NOK 1.6 billion (EUR 140 million), making it Torghatten's third-largest contract by value.

According to the county council, the increase in operating costs compared with the current contract amounts to around NOK 800 million (EUR 70 million) over the seven-year period, with part of the cost increase expected to be offset through government compensation.

The tender covers an annual production of around 250,000km and requires four ferries, each with capacity for at least 70 CEUs or eight large truck combinations, supported by a reserve vessel for 60 CEUs. The specification also includes requirements aimed at improving regularity and operability in exposed waters. Nordland County Council selected a route option that adds two additional daily sailings, citing increased industrial activity and freight demand, particularly linked to fish processing on Herøy.

The two routes are currently operated by Norled, which has held the concession since 1 January 2023. The local economies are heavily dependent on reliable ferry links for aquaculture, fisheries, agriculture, tourism, and public services.

2026 confirms that REGULA will fulfil that role between October 2026 and December 2028, undertaking up to 800 sailings per year, with an option to extend the arrangement by three months until 31 March 2029. While formally designated as a replacement vessel, REGULA will in practice also add capacity and operational flexibility, particularly during peak periods.

Built by Meyer Werft for the Helsingborg-Helsingør shuttle in 1971 and rebuilt in 1985, REGULA is the oldest vessel in TS Laevad's fleet, which is composed of four 2016/17-built double-enders, one of which, TÖLL, was converted to hybrid propulsion in 2020. The single-ended REGULA entered Estonian service in May 1997 and has primarily acted as a supplementary ferry in recent years. The decision to extend REGULA's deployment reflects continued uncertainty around the introduction of a new state-owned double-ended replacement ferry, with the planned battery hybrid-electric newbuild project yet to progress to a final construction contract.

Remontowa Shipbuilding lands another order from Torghatten

Torghatten Midt's recently awarded seven-year Alstenfjord ferry concession (see *related news in the left column*) has led to the order of a diesel-electric hybrid double-ender with a capacity of 249 passengers, 85 CEUs, and up to six trucks at Remontowa Shipbuilding.

The newbuild, yard number B622, designed by The Norwegian Ship Design Company and based on its NSD85CFd platform, is intended to serve both Dønna and Herøy when delivered during the second quarter of 2028. Unlike most newbuilds for Norwegian fjord services, the vessel's primary energy source will be four biodiesel-powered gensets, supported by a small battery pack using peak shaving. Propulsion will be provided by two azimuthing thrusters driven by permanent magnet electric motors.

The ship will be future-proofed for full-electric operation, when the initial air-cooled battery system will be replaced by water-cooled batteries with almost 15 times greater capacity, subject to the availability of onshore power supply (OPS) infrastructure and operational conditions.

As the tenth ferry to be built by the Polish shipbuilder for Torghatten, the latest contract marks a further strengthening of the business relationship between Remontowa Shipbuilding and Torghatten Group, which started in 2011. The ninth ship, the 63.65m long and 15.50m beam BJARKØY, is nearing completion and is due for delivery later this quarter. The platform follows The Norwegian Ship Design Company's NSD 50CFd design and will be introduced on the Stornes-Bjørnerå route.



Illustration: The Norwegian Ship Design Company

The tenth ferry to be built by Remontowa Shipbuilding for Torghatten will be based on The Norwegian Ship Design Company's NSD85CFd platform.

Ro-Pax Ferry News



The 95-passenger and 28-CEU SEILAND has an aluminium catamaran hull shape.



ISLE OF ISLAY is the first of four Islay-class 'major vessels' for Caledonian MacBrayne service.

VIKING GRACE returns from EUR 7 million overhaul

On 29 January, following a three-week dry-docking at BLRT's Turku Repair Yard in Naantali, Viking Line's 2013-built LNG dual-fuel ro-pax cruise ferry VIKING GRACE was reintroduced on the company's Turku-Långnäs-Stockholm overnight service, returning via Mariehamn during the day, while VIKING GLORY operates in the opposite direction.

Besides routine technical maintenance, work was also carried out below the waterline, including servicing of rudders, propeller shaft systems, and bow thrusters. Interiors and public spaces were partially refurbished as part of the EUR 7 million work package. The large tax-free shop received a new look, parts of the Archipelago Spa were refurbished, as were stairwells and sections of the Vogue nightclub.

Oma Baatbyggeri launches hybrid battery-electric SEILAND

A sister ship to VARGSUND, delivered by Oma Baatbyggeri in early December and subsequently introduced on Torghatten Nord's Klokkarøy-Kjerringholmen route, the Stord-based shipbuilder launched sister ship SEILAND on 23 January. The hybrid battery-electric double-ender is to be introduced on the Korsfjord-Nyvoll route in Finnmark, Norway's northernmost province.

Due to replace the 1993-built, 644gt FYKAN on the 15-minute crossing later this quarter, the 49.3m long and 13m beam SEILAND has an aluminium catamaran hull shape, with a capacity of 95 passengers and either 28 CEUs or a mixed load of 18 CEUs and one truck on the open vehicle deck.

Cemre Shipyard delivers first of four CMAL Islay-class ro-pax ferries, ISLE OF ISLAY

On 15 January, ISLE OF ISLAY was handed over to Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) following a delivery ceremony at Cemre Shipyard in Yalova. The 94.80m long and 18.70m beam ro-pax is the first of four Islay-class ferries being built at the Turkish yard and will serve the Islay routes, supporting the onward connection to Feolin on Jura via Port Askaig.

Designed to strengthen capacity on some of the busiest routes in Caledonian MacBrayne's Clyde and Hebrides network, ISLE OF ISLAY has a capacity of 450 passengers, 107 CEUs with the hoistable car decks lowered, or alternatively 275 trailer lane metres, equivalent to 14 trucks. ISLE OF ISLAY and its sister ships, the concept design of which was provided by naValue, with LMG Marin responsible for the basic design, are equipped with a hybrid diesel-electric propulsion system incorporating four Wärtsilä gensets, 1.1 MWh batteries, and Voith Schneider propulsion units, providing enhanced manoeuvrability and control in constrained harbour environments.

ISLE OF ISLAY will be joined later this year by its sister ship LOCH INDAAL, which will also operate the Islay services from Kennacraig to Port Askaig and Port Ellen, respectively. Construction is continuing on two further sister ships, LOCHMOR and CLAYMORE, which are intended for the triangular Uig-Tarbert-Lochmaddy Little Minch routes. Together, the four-ship programme is intended to provide a significant uplift in capacity and resilience across CMAL's 'major vessel' fleet.

Strait of Gibraltar ferry traffic posts solid growth

Port of Algeciras consolidated its position as Spain's main ro-pax hub on the Strait of Gibraltar in 2025, with growth recorded across passenger,

Ro-Pax Ferry News



Photo: Philippe Holthof

Ferry traffic continued to grow on the Algeciras-Tanger Med and Tarifa-Tanger Ville routes in 2025.

PATRIA SEAWAYS continues its drydock cover for Stena Line

DFDS' reserve ro-pax ferry, the 1,800-lanemetre and 250-passenger-capacity PATRIA SEAWAYS, will continue serving as Stena Line's drydock cover ro-pax ferry under its four-month time charter with the Swedish ferry operator.

On finishing on the Gothenburg-Kiel route on 9 February, as reported last month, the 1991-built ro-pax will position to the Gdynia-Karlskrona route, where it will operate for a fortnight, followed by a spell on the Travemünde-Liepaja route, deputising for the Visentini Mk I-class STENA FLAVIA. Due to its limited passenger capacity, it will operate in freight-only mode on the route.

From mid-March until 27 March, PATRIA SEAWAYS will provide drydock cover for STENA DANICA on the Gothenburg-Frederikshavn route. It will return to the Sweden-Denmark service after the Easter break, when STENA JUTLANDICA is drydocked, starting on 13 April and running until 29 April.



Photo: Christian Costa

Following the December purchase of JANAS from SAS Shipping Agencies, the 2002-built ro-pax is joining GNV as GNV ALTAIR.

tourist vehicle, and heavy goods vehicle (HGV) segments. Total passenger traffic across the three main corridors, i.e. Algeciras-Tanger Med, Algeciras-Ceuta, and Tarifa-Tanger Ville, increased by 6.69% year on year to 6,353,315, led by the Algeciras-Tanger Med service, which handled 2,835,698 passengers, up 5.91%.

Passenger traffic on the Algeciras-Ceuta route rose by 2.75% to 1,996,062 passengers, while the Tarifa-Tanger Ville service posted the strongest growth, increasing by 13.99% to 1,521,555 passengers. Tourist vehicle and freight flows followed a similar upward trend, with the former increasing by 6.28% to 1,409,173, with the Algeciras-Tanger Med route accounting for 701,326 vehicles, up 5.99%, and Tarifa-Tanger Ville rising by 17.36% to 212,909 units.

HGV traffic across the Strait reached 527,087 units, a 4.23% increase, driven primarily by Algeciras-Tanger Med, which grew by 4.73% to 494,059 units, while volumes on the Algeciras-Ceuta corridor declined slightly to 32,817. The figures underline the growing weight of ro-ro and ro-pax traffic in Algeciras' overall activity, supporting medium-term expectations of further increases in truck and passenger throughput on Europe-Africa ferry routes, with HGV throughput expected to reach 800,000 units in a few years from now.

Moby Group's JANAS joins GNV as GNV ALTAIR

Following SAS Shipping Agencies Services' successful December 2025 en-bloc acquisition at auction of five ro-pax ferries from Moby Group, JANAS has been integrated into the GNV fleet as GNV ALTAIR. The 2,700-passenger, 832-lanemetre plus 232-CEU capacity ro-pax is undergoing a refit to bring it up to GNV standards ahead of its introduction on GNV's twice-weekly Sète-Algeria service later this month.

First announced in April last year as a summer-only service operated by a single vessel and inaugurated in early June, the weekly services from Sète to Algiers and Béjaïa respectively have since become a year-round proposition, with GNV ALTAIR set to replace GNV ALLEGRA. The latter will briefly deputise for the Sète-Algeria mainstay FANTASTIC ahead of GNV ALTAIR's 21 February introduction. With 319 cabins for over 1,400 passengers and 620 CEUs, including a lower car deck, GNV ALTAIR is a strong fit for the passenger-oriented Sète-Algeria trade.

GNV ALTAIR is part of a three-ship series built at Fincantieri's Castellammare di Stabia and Sestri Ponente facilities for Tirrenia, with the 35,736gt GNV ALTAIR delivered by the Genoese shipyard in April 2002. An enlarged version of the platform followed, with the upper car deck raised to a full-height freight deck. The first vessel in this two-ship 'Mk II' series was delivered as Tirrenia's NURAGHES in 2004, followed by sister ship SHARDEN in 2005. This pair today operates as GNV SIRIO and GNV AURIGA following their 2024 acquisition for EUR 109 million by MSC Group from Moby Group, in a move aimed at reducing the latter's debts.

Ro-Pax Ferry News

CAPU ROSSU returns from sea trials

Stena RoRo's 13th Stena E-Flexer-class vessel under construction at China Merchants Industry Weihai Shipyard, the LNG dual-fuel hybrid-capable CAPU ROSSU, has successfully completed its sea trials and is expected to be delivered in late March, after which it will be handed over to Corsica Linea for the company's lifeline services from Marseille to Bastia and Ajaccio.

With a length of 202.90m and a 27.80m beam, the 1,026-passenger and 2,505-trailer-lanemetre CAPU ROSSU shares the hull dimensions of the tenth ro-pax in the Stena E-Flexer series, ALA'SUINU, but has been customised to Corsica Linea's requirements. This includes a fully covered fo'c'sle protecting the mooring equipment on Deck 5, as the vessel will operate in stern-only loading mode, albeit being future-proofed for double-deck drive-through operations.

As previously reported, besides JANAS, sister ships ATHARA and MOBY ALE DUE, ex-BITHIA, were also snapped up in conjunction with the auction, as SAS Shipping Agencies Services likewise acquired MOBY WONDER and MOBY AKI in the EUR 229.9 million purchase deal, intended to repay a EUR 243 million loan provided by MSC Group to Moby Group. As agreed, the latter two ships are bareboat chartered back to Moby Group for a period of 15 years. MOBY ALE DUE has been laid up in Piombino since early November, while ATHARA for the time being continues to operate the Genoa-Porto Torres public service contract on behalf of Moby Group. However, like JANAS, ATHARA and MOBY ALE DUE are also expected to be taken on charter by GNV from SAS Shipping Agencies Services.

Fred. Olsen Express introduces BUENAVISTA EXPRESS on Peninsula-Canaries route

Following a 3.5-month overhaul and refurbishment, including a prolonged drydocking at Navantia Ferrol, the 2001-built BUENAVISTA EXPRESS has entered service on the joint Baleària-Fred. Olsen Express Huelva-Santa Cruz de Tenerife-Las Palmas de Gran Canaria route on 25 January, replacing Baleària's Visentini Mk I-class SICLIA. BUENAVISTA EXPRESS' inaugural sailing was initially scheduled for 24 January but was postponed by a day due to Storm Ingrid.

Purchased as Armas Trasmediterránea Group's FORTUNY in late September 2025, BUENAVISTA EXPRESS has a capacity of 1,250 passengers, 747 of whom can be accommodated in 203 cabins, and 1,809 trailer lanemetres on three decks, including a tanktop deck. Up to three weekly sailings are offered, with the second ship on the route being Baleària's Visentini Mk I-class LNG dual-fuel MARIE CURIE.

The joint Baleària-Fred. Olsen Express mainland Spain-Canaries service started under the Canary Bridge Seaways banner in November 2018. However, the joint venture may come to an end when Baleària obtains the green light from Spain's National Commission for Markets and Competition (CNMC) for the takeover of a large part of Armas Trasmediterránea Group. The latter operates its own twice-weekly ro-pax service from Cádiz to the Canaries under a public service contract, which ends on 30 June 2026. It also operates the dedicated ro-ro VILLA DE TAZACORTE on a weekly rotation from Cádiz to Gran Canaria, Tenerife, and La Palma.

Spain's competition authority extends Phase II scrutiny to DFDS-Armas Trasmediterránea Group asset deal

Following its decision to open a Phase II investigation into Baleària's proposed acquisition of Armas Trasmediterránea Group's assets, as reported in last month's issue of AXSRoRo, Spain's National Commission for Markets and Competition (CNMC) has now moved DFDS' planned purchase of selected Armas Trasmediterránea Group assets in the Strait of Gibraltar to an in-depth review.



The former FORTUNY of Armas Trasmediterránea Group now operates as BUENAVISTA EXPRESS on Fred. Olsen Express' Peninsula-Canaries route.

Ro-Pax Ferry News

Sicilian Region exercises option to build sister ship of COSTANZA I DI SICILIA at Fincantieri Palermo

The Sicilian Region has exercised its option with Fincantieri Palermo for a sister ship of the 14,500gt EU Class A ro-pax ferry COSTANZA I DI SICILIA, now nearing completion at the yard. Although hailed as a '100% made in Sicily' project, the 138.4m long and 25.0m wide platform has been designed by Trieste-headquartered NAOS Ship and Boat Design.

The 962-passenger and 200-CEU capacity LNG dual-fuel hybrid COSTANZA I DI SICILIA is due for delivery from Fincantieri Palermo this summer and is expected to be taken on charter by Caronte & Tourist, whose public service contract for ferry connections between mainland Sicily and the Aeolian, Egadi, Ustica, and Pantelleria Islands was recently extended without tender for a further two years, until 1 November 2027.

The Sicilian Region's decision to exercise its option for a sister ship of COSTANZA I DI SICILIA comes at a time when Caronte & Tourist is under fire from island communities, as Aeolian Islands hoteliers in particular have complained about the operator's frequent fleet changes, claiming that the employment of unsuitable tonnage penalises both island residents and tourists.



Following the purchase of STENA VISION, MEGA EXPRESS FIVE has exited the Corsica Ferries fleet, becoming a floatel for Bridgemans Services Group.

The transaction, notified to the CNMC in December 2025, concerns the Algeciras-Tanger Med and Algeciras-Ceuta operations, where both operators are active. As part of the take-over deal, DFDS would acquire the 2004-built ro-pax VOLCAN DE TAMASITE and the Incat 96m wave piercing catamaran VILLA DE AGAETE, with the latter being the sole vessel operated by Armas Trasmediterránea Group on the Algeciras-Ceuta corridor.



Photo: Philippe Holthof

The authority notes that the DFDS transaction is the fourth to arise from the disposal of Armas Trasmediterránea Group assets and overlaps geographically with one of Baleària's Phase II cases. On the Algeciras-Tanger Med route, the combined effect of the two transactions would see Armas Trasmediterránea Group exit the market and reduce the number of operators from four to three (DFDS, Baleària, and Africa Morocco Link (AML)).

In the Algeciras-Ceuta market, the proposed acquisition would cut the number of operators from three to two. The authority also flagged concerns over the service obligation character of the Algeciras-Ceuta public route, with only DFDS and Baleària left as potential bidders in future tenders.

Bridgemans Services Group adds Corsica Ferries' MEGA EXPRESS FIVE to its expanding floatel fleet

Already operating the former Baltic ro-pax cruise ferries STENA SAGA and ISABELLE as SAGA X and ISABELLE X, respectively, Canada's Bridgemans Services Group has further expanded its floatel fleet through the acquisition of Corsica Ferries' MEGA EXPRESS FIVE, which became surplus to requirements following the company's recent acquisition of MEGA SERENA, the former STENA VISION.

Built by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries as Marine Express' PHOENIX EXPRESS in 1993, MEGA EXPRESS FIVE was totally rebuilt following its September 2006 acquisition by Corsica Ferries, with the upper level of the upper vehicle deck becoming a fixed deck with passenger cabins, increasing the number of passenger cabins to 275. Permanently withdrawn from ferry operations in September last year, MEGA EXPRESS FIVE will mobilise to its first project as MEGA X this spring.

Ro-Pax Ferry News

Steel cutting marks start of GNV's first next-generation ro-pax

Mid-January steel cutting at Guangzhou Shipyard International (GSI) marked the start of production for the first of four large ro-pax ferries ordered by MSC Group for its subsidiary GNV. Representing a departure from the four-ship GNV POLARIS platform, the new series is a derivative of MOBY FANTASY and MOBY LEGACY, currently the Mediterranean's largest ro-pax ferries, but adapted to GNV's operational and commercial requirements.

The 237.00m long and 33.00m beam newbuild will have capacity for about 3,500 lane-metres, somewhat lower than MOBY FANTASY but representing an almost 800-lanemetre increase versus GNV VIRGO and GNV AURORA, the LNG dual-fuel iterations of the GNV POLARIS platform. Passenger capacity stands at 2,500, with 527 passenger cabins, a 25% increase on GNV VIRGO/AURORA.

While retaining the overall dimensions of the MOBY FANTASY platform, the design has been reworked, with LNG dual-fuel propulsion specified from the outset and changes to the general arrangement to reflect a stronger focus on passenger comfort alongside high-volume freight capability.

The first ship in this new series is due for delivery in March 2028, with the three sister ships following at six-month intervals through September 2029. The first two ships are expected to be introduced on GNV's Genoa-Palermo motorway of the sea, replacing GNV VIRGO and GNV AURORA, which will then be cascaded elsewhere in the GNV network.



End of the road for the 1993-built KALLISTE.

Since its arrival at Naples in December last year, it has been prepared for its new role, with the 275 passenger cabins upgraded and the public spaces adapted for marine workforce use, including a fully equipped gym, office spaces, recreation areas, and the main vehicle deck configured for the storage of client-related cargo. The upper car deck could theoretically be fitted with additional cabin accommodation at a later stage, as the number of cabins is significantly lower than on SAGA X and ISABELLE X, which have 624 and 652 cabins respectively and are typically arranged for single-occupancy use.

La Méditerranée's KALLISTE sold for recycling

Laid up in Marseille for the past four months following the completion of its seasonal twice-weekly Marseille-Nador service in mid-September 2025, and having subsequently briefly deputised on other routes in the company's network, La Méditerranée has sold its 1993-built KALLISTE to Turkish breakers.

The sale has drawn opposition from the CGT, a major French maritime trade union, which has warned that it may call on crew members to strike if KALLISTE proceeds to recycling in Türkiye. Ironically, as recently as last year, when KALLISTE became surplus to requirements and La Méditerranée intended to deploy the ro-pax on a Toulon-Bastia-Livorno route before ultimately deciding to launch Marseille-Nador instead, the same union opposed the move on the grounds that it conflicted with the public service model.

Completed by Finnyards, today's Rauma Marine Constructions (RMC), the freight-oriented ro-pax had a capacity of 500 passengers and 2,340 trailer lane-metres, initially serving the Marseille-Bastia route. As La Méditerranée has been playing second fiddle since the current public service contract started on 1 January 2023, operating only two ro-pax ferries as part of the public service obligation, KALLISTE more or less became surplus to requirements.

The CMA CGM subsidiary attempted to deploy the vessel on new routes, yet in vain, as the seasonal Marseille-Nador service, which La Méditerranée opened in June last year, will also not be repeated this year, probably due to tough competition from GNV, which operates from Sète. The exit of KALLISTE from the La Méditerranée fleet reduces the number of ships to three, serving Marseille-Ajaccio, Marseille-Porto-Vecchio, and Marseille-Tanger Med, for which La Méditerranée introduced the 1992-built MASSALIA, the former NORMANDIE of Brittany Ferries, in June last year.

Although KALLISTE is not the newest ro-pax, it is nonetheless somewhat surprising to see it end on the beach, as it would probably have suited other routes in the Mediterranean, Black Sea, or Red Sea, and might arguably even have been a better fit for the Trinidad & Tobago inter-island service than the recently chartered BLUE WAVE HARMONY. However, with the vessel's class having recently not been renewed, KALLISTE will be towed to Türkiye rather than making the voyage under its own power.



Photo: Philippe Holthof

GNV's 1990-built GNV ATLAS has arrived at the Turkish Black Sea port of Filyos for a six-month charter as a logistics support vessel.

Interferry calls for freeze on maritime ETS at 70%

Interferry, the global trade association for the ferry industry, has called on the EU to freeze the further implementation of the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) for maritime transport, after the surrendering obligation increased to 100% from 1 January 2026. The association argues that the move places operators of ro-pax and short-sea ro-ro tonnage at a competitive disadvantage, particularly after the European Council's decision to postpone the inclusion of road transport in a parallel ETS, weakening the EU's long-standing objective of shifting traffic from road to sea.

Interferry estimates that the ferry sector is now contributing around EUR 1 billion per year under the EU ETS, effectively taxing intra-EU transport while offering limited visibility on how the revenues are being used. It is calling for the surrendering obligation to be frozen at the 70% level applied in 2025 until either a global greenhouse gas pricing mechanism is adopted by the IMO or road transport is included in the EU ETS, and for a significant share of the funds collected to be earmarked for maritime decarbonisation, including e-fuels and port electrification.

With two new 'Bastia-max' LNG dual-fuel hybrid ro-pax ferries currently under construction at China Merchants Industry Weihai Shipyard, ALBANOVA and AZURA, set to join the La Méridionale fleet next year, a further disposal of older tonnage remains possible.

GNV ATLAS chartered as Sakarya Gas Field logistics support vessel

Halfway through its eight-ship newbuild programme, GNV has chartered out GNV ATLAS as a logistics support vessel for a period of six months. The move coincides with the delivery of GNV AURORA, the fourth and final ro-pax ferry of the first tranche from Guangzhou Shipyard International (GSI). Lead ship GNV POLARIS is still in China undergoing a cabin block retrofit, with all four new ro-pax ferries due to be in service by the summer season. In parallel, former Moby Group tonnage is joining the fleet, with GNV ALTAIR the first unit to enter service later this month (*see separate newspiece on p. 13-14*).

GNV ATLAS, which has some 330 passenger cabins, berthed at the port of Filyos, Türkiye, on 28 January and is expected to remain there in its role as a logistics support vessel for the Black Sea's Sakarya Gas Field until late July. No longer part of GNV's core ro-pax fleet, the 1990-built ro-pax is one of three vessels currently chartered out by the company, with the passenger-oriented RHAPSODY and GNV AZZURRA also on charter as accommodation vessels. The latter previously served in the same role in Filyos in 2023.

Molslinjen's FYNSHAV reportedly sold to Medmar

Laid up for sale in Faaborg since early September 2025 following the successful introduction of the double-ended battery hybrid-electric ferry NERTHUS, Molslinjen's 3,380gt FYNSHAV, built as KYHOLM by Frederikshavn's Ørskov Stålskibsværft in 1998, has reportedly been sold to Medmar, the Bay of Naples ferry company that serves the islands of Procida and Ischia on a year-round basis from the mainland port of Pozzuoli and, from April through to October, also from Naples.

While Medmar added MEDMAR GIORGIA, the ex-ODIN of Åland-based J&L Shipping, to its fleet in mid-2024, the compact 1982-built ro-pax has not replaced the 1967-built landing craft-type TOURIST FERRY BOAT TERZO as initially planned, and has since remained laid up in Naples. A sister ship to MEDMAR GIORGIA, the 1984-built FRIGG SYDFYEN, also became surplus following the introduction of TYRFING and the cascading of sister ship NERTHUS onto Alslinjen's Bøjden-Fynshav route, but Molslinjen appears to have opted to dispose of FYNSHAV first.

Under Molslinjen ownership, the 69.20m long and 14.80m beam FYNSHAV had a capacity of 450 passengers, with room for 92 CEUs with the hoistable decks lowered or 168 trailer lanemetres. The fully enclosed single vehicle

AKKA returns to Baltic following termination of Superfast Ferries charter

With the pending termination of its one-year time charter to Attica Group's Superfast Ferries, TT-Line's 2,613-lanemetre and 744-passenger-capacity AKKA will be reintroduced in the TT-Line network later this month.

AKKA will make its last Venice-Igoumenitsa-Patras sailing under Superfast Ferries charter with the 12:00 departure from Venice on 4 February. From 5 February, the twice-weekly Patras-Igoumenitsa-Venice route will be operated by LEFKA ORI. In periods when a third weekly roundtrip is offered, SUPERFAST III, the former OLYMPIC CHAMPION of ANEK Lines, will make a weekly roundtrip, alternating with a weekly Patras-Igoumenitsa-Ancona roundtrip.



Photo: Stefan Verberckmoes

Besides two newbuilds, the Maltese government will also invest in the upgrade and life extension of the three existing Ċirkewwa-Mġarr double-enders.

deck has both bow and stern access. Twin MAN B&W main engines give a service speed of 14.5 knots. It is understood that Læsø Municipality had also shown interest in FYNSHAV, although no deal materialised.

Malta announces newbuild ferry programme for Gozo shuttle

The Maltese government has revealed plans to embark on a newbuild ferry programme aimed at strengthening long-term connectivity between Malta and Gozo. Under the EUR 130 million fleet renewal plan, two purpose-designed ro-pax ferries are set to be ordered alongside a phased upgrading and life extension of Gozo Channel's three existing Ċirkewwa-Mġarr double-enders, TA' PINU, built by Malta Shipbuilding in 2000, and its somewhat younger sister ships GAUDOS and MALITA.

Following an efficiency study launched in late 2023, the plan calls for a fleet of four ro-pax ferries in service by 2029, supported by a dedicated freight ro-ro vessel. An international naval architecture consultancy is about to be appointed to draw up vessel specifications for the newbuilds, the first of which will have a 250-CEU capacity, intended for peak demand. A second, smaller newbuild with a 75-CEU capacity for off-peak operations will allow capacity to be better matched to traffic patterns. The costly, long-running charter of the 1987-built Superflex-class NIKOLAOS, which has supplemented the fleet since June 2019, is to be terminated as part of the fleet renewal programme.

In parallel, a dedicated cargo ship is to be introduced to handle freight movements between Malta Freeport, Grand Harbour in Valletta, and Gozo, with the aim of diverting 12-metre heavy goods vehicles away from Ċirkewwa and easing pressure on the country's road network. This new freight-only service, aimed at taking some 11,000 trucks off the road, will operate twice daily, increasing to four return trips during peak times. To accommodate the new fleet set-up, port infrastructure in Mġarr, Gozo, will need to be adapted, a cost not included in the EUR 130 million fleet modernisation budget.

DALMACIJA becomes Jadrolinija's sole ro-pax on Croatia-Italy routes

Jadrolinija has permanently withdrawn its 1973-built MARKO POLO from international services to Italy, leaving flagship DALMACIJA as the company's sole ro-pax ferry on cross-Adriatic routes. MARKO POLO has primarily served Italy since its 1989 acquisition from Stena Line. Due to the ship's age, Jadrolinija decided to no longer operate MARKO POLO on international services, with the 10,154gt ro-pax redeployed in Jadrolinija's domestic network in the Split archipelago, reducing overall ro-pax capacity on international links.

Ro-Pax Ferry News

A new Greece-Egypt ro-pax service in the making?

Port of Patras Authority has signed an MoU with Egypt's Pan Marine Group to explore the potential launch of a direct ro-pax service between Patras and Egypt. The initiative comes against the backdrop of an existing ro-ro link, as DFDS has been operating a Trieste-Patras-Damietta ro-ro service since November 2024, although intermediate calls at Patras are not always on a weekly basis.

Pan Marine Group's involvement is notable given its active role as DFDS' terminal and wider Egyptian partner for the Damietta operation, meaning it is already indirectly linked to the existing ro-ro service. Pan Marine Group only recently entered the ro-pax segment with the introduction of the Visentini Mk I-class PAN LILY on the Safaga-Port of NEOM route under the Mena Line banner. With a ro-ro connection between Greece and Egypt already offered, the extent to which a passenger element could be commercially sustained on the Patras-Egypt corridor remains to be seen.

Wira Jaya Logitama Lines adds WIRA QAILA to Sunda Strait fleet

Wira Jaya Logitama Lines has introduced the 5,266gt WIRA QAILA on the busy Merak-Bakauheni shuttle service, connecting Indonesia's islands of Java and Sumatra. Completed by China's Linhai Huipu Shipbuilding, a prolific builder of small and mid-size ferry tonnage, the 120.2m long and 22.6m beam WIRA QAILA has a capacity of 608 passengers, with access to the main vehicle deck via single stern and bow ramps.

Although stern side-loading ramps for upper deck handling are available in both ports, they currently do not fit the newbuild. The vessel is also equipped with a pair of fixed ramps connecting the main and upper deck, one inclined towards the bow and the other towards the stern, enabling bidirectional vehicle flow. With a 4.2m clear height, small trucks and vans can be stowed on the upper vehicle deck.

Acquired in 2024 from Fjord Line, where it operated as OSLOFJORD on the Sandefjord-Strömstad route until its closure in late October 2023, the 1993-built DALMACIJA will operate year-round on the Split-Ancona route, supplemented by Dubrovnik-Bari and Split-Bari sailings during the peak summer months. For several consecutive years, Jadrolinija also operated a Bar-Bari summer-only service on behalf of Barska Plovidba (Montenegro Lines) as an extension of its Dubrovnik-Bari route, an initiative that will not be repeated this summer.

Originally built by Fosen Mekaniske Verksted as Fjord Line's BERGEN for Norway-Denmark service, DALMACIJA was rebuilt from stem to stern in Finland ahead of its June 2014 introduction as a day ferry on the Sandefjord-Strömstad route. Given the nature of this cross-Oslofjord service, all passenger cabins were removed, and Jadrolinija continues to operate the vessel without cabins, instead offering a premium lounge with comfortable reclining seats, which are in high demand.



Photo: Jadrolinija

During the peak summer period, DALMACIJA will rotate between Ancona and Bari, with a schedule combining overnight and daytime sailings, reflecting a consolidated approach to international ro-pax operations. Alongside DALMACIJA's expanded role, Jadrolinija will operate the passenger-only high-speed craft JELENA between Zadar and Ancona on a seasonal basis. Jadrolinija told AXSRoRo that the revised fleet deployment would be reviewed after the summer season, with conclusions to be drawn on the next steps.

Jadrolinija has also recently taken a further step towards longer-term fleet renewal, issuing a EUR 200,000 tender for the design of a new double-ended ferry platform that will form the basis for a series of three newbuilds with a capacity of up to 650 passengers and 125 CEUs. The move marks a departure from the operator's recent reliance on second-hand tonnage and signals a renewed focus on newbuilds since the introduction of a double-ender quartet built by Uljanik in 2014.

Ro-Pax Ferry News



Illustration: OSK Design

The shape of things to come for CTN: a 210m long ro-pax with a capacity of 3,000 passengers, 730 CEUs, or 170 trucks on two vehicle decks.

ABB selected to supply integrated power and propulsion package for BC Ferries' New Major Vessels

ABB has been selected to supply the integrated power, propulsion, and control package for BC Ferries' four New Major Vessels (NMVs) ordered at China Merchants Industry Weihai Shipyard in May last year. The diesel-battery hybrid double-enders form part of BC Ferries' long-term fleet renewal programme and are intended to replace four end-of-life vessels, QUEEN OF ALBERNI, QUEEN OF COQUITLAM, QUEEN OF COWICHAN, and QUEEN OF NEW WESTMINSTER, operating on the operator's busiest routes across the Strait of Georgia.

Each 172m long NMV will be equipped with ABB's gearless Azipod electric propulsion and Onboard DC Grid power distribution system, forming the backbone of a hybrid-electric configuration designed to reduce emissions and underwater radiated noise. Each vessel will be fitted with battery systems of up to 70 MWh, enabling efficient hybrid operation and supporting a future transition to fully electric, zero-emission service. Shore charging capability rated above 60MW has been specified to allow full-electric operation with short port turnaround times.

Designed by LMG Marin, the NMVs will accommodate 2,100 passengers and 360 automobile equivalents (AEQs). Construction of the first vessel is scheduled to begin in autumn 2026, with delivery from 2029 and all four ships expected to be in service by summer 2031.

OSK Design releases concept details for CTN's next-generation ro-pax

Compagnie Tunisienne de Navigation (CTN) has taken a further step towards renewing its ro-pax fleet, with OSK Design having recently released the concept design and first technical particulars of the next-generation vessel planned for operation under the Tunisia Ferries brand. The 210m long ro-pax is intended for services linking Tunis with Barcelona, Genoa, and Marseille.

The design provides capacity for 3,000 passengers, all accommodated in cabins, alongside space for 730 CEUs or 170 trucks on two full-length fixed vehicle decks. A 24-knot service speed has been specified, with propulsion based on a diesel-electric plant powered by dual-fuel diesel-methanol gensets, supplying electricity to azimuth thrusters, a configuration combining enhanced manoeuvrability with low vibration levels, increasing passenger comfort. A battery pack has been specified for peak-shaving, spinning reserve, and zero-emission port operations.

The publication of the concept design paves the way for CTN to progress towards a public tender for construction. The new ro-pax is expected to replace the 1999-built CARTHAGE and operate alongside the 2012-built TANIT, supporting a fleet of dedicated freighters. Interestingly, the newbuild will not be equipped with conventional heavy lifeboats and their associated two-deck-high recesses, but instead with Viking Life-Saving Equipment's LifeCraft evacuation system, freeing up deck space that can instead be used for cabins or public spaces.

Japan's Ministry of Defense reshapes ferry fleet

Japan's Ministry of Defense has completed the latest phase of its renewal of the small ferry fleet used for the rapid deployment of troops and equipment, with replacement ro-pax ferries having entered service following the conclusion of ten-year charter arrangements for two ferries at the end of 2025.

The 1996-built HAKUO, formerly SUZURAN of Shin Nihonkai Ferry, and the 2008-built 112m Incat wave piercing catamaran NATCHAN WORLD had been employed for domestic contingency and disaster-response roles under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) transport-use arrangement with the Ministry. They have now been replaced by Tsugaru Kaikyo Ferry's 2020-built BLUE LUMINOUS, renamed NATCHAN NEO, and Shin Nihonkai Ferry's 2004-built HAMANASU, both taken on long-term charter.

The fleet renewal marks the first step in a broader expansion programme, with the Ministry expected to increase the number of chartered vessels to as many as eight, potentially including pure ro-ro tonnage, amid heightened regional tensions and a growing operational focus on areas such as the Ryukyu Islands. The release of NATCHAN WORLD

Kegoya Dock-built STARLITE RESILIENCE joins Starlite Ferries for new Philippine coastal MoS

Starlite Ferries, a subsidiary of Chelsea Logistics, is about to introduce the 3,078gt STARLITE RESILIENCE, recently delivered by Japan's Kegoya Dock, on a new multi-stop Roxas (Mindoro), Caticlan, Odiongan, Batangas, Romblon, Magdiwang, and Culasi rotation.

The 67.60m long and 15.30m beam ro-pax has a capacity of 618 passengers and is powered by a pair of diesel engines with a combined output of 2,740 kW at 900 rpm. Ahead of its introduction, it was named on 15 January at Batangas on the Isle of Luzon, home to Starlite Ferries' headquarters.

LITE FERRY TWENTY launched as keel of LITE FERRY TWENTY ONE is laid

Lite Shipping Corporation is further rejuvenating its Lite Ferries fleet of coastal ro-pax ferries, with the 90m open-deck, drive-through LITE FERRY TWENTY recently launched by Ningbo Shenghao Ship Engineering. The Chinese yard has previously built several ferries for the Philippine ferry operator, the largest and most recent being the 2024-built sister ships LITE FERRY TEN and LITE FERRY TWELVE. Meanwhile, Ningbo Shenghao Ship Engineering has also laid the keel of the smaller, 55m long LITE FERRY TWENTY ONE.

from government service clears the way for its previously announced introduction into the Seajets fleet as TERA JET 3, where it will join sister ship NATCHAN RERA, already operating as TERA JET 2.

Compact ro-pax TRISHA KERSTIN 3 sinks in southern Philippines, 42 dead

Aleson Shipping Lines' 621gt, 1995-built TRISHA KERSTIN 3 sank off Baluk-Baluk Island, Basilan province, part of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, in the early hours of 26 January while en route from Zamboanga City to Jolo, Sulu, in the southern Philippines. The 47.9m long and 12m beam, 352-passenger ro-pax, which had a single semi-open vehicle deck, capsized around 02:00 in adverse conditions, prompting a large-scale search and rescue operation led by the Philippine Coast Guard.

According to Philippine Coast Guard updates cited by local media, additional bodies were recovered several days after the sinking, bringing the provisional death toll to 42. Authorities have stated that 316 passengers and crew were rescued. Those confirmed dead include the vessel's captain and several crew members. Officials have also acknowledged that the combined number of survivors and fatalities does not fully reconcile with earlier estimates of the number of people on board, with verification of passenger and crew figures continuing as part of the investigation. The cause of the casualty remains under examination, with weather conditions among the factors being assessed.

In response to the incident, the Philippine Department of Transportation ordered the immediate suspension of all passenger operations by Aleson Shipping Lines, pending a 10-day fleet-wide safety audit to be carried out by the Maritime Industry Authority in cooperation with the Philippine Coast Guard. Philippine authorities have since indicated that the operator could face the suspension or revocation of its operating licence under the country's franchise framework. The move follows a history of safety concerns involving the operator, including a fatal accident in 2023, and forms part of a broader review of safety compliance across the Philippine domestic ferry sector.

Bidding opens for replacement of Alaska ferry TUSTUMENA

The Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) has opened bidding for the long-planned replacement of the 1964-built, 4,529gt TUSTUMENA, following the award of federal funding in 2024 under the US Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration Ferry Grant Program. The project is backed by USD 177.5 million allocated to the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, including USD 106.5 million specifically earmarked for replacing TUSTUMENA,

Ro-Pax Ferry News

Aznar Shipping introduces newbuild on Danao Drydock-Pingag Isabel route

Philippine coastal ferry operator Aznar Shipping has recently taken delivery of the Zhejiang Zhenxing Shipbuilding-built ALEXANDER AZNAR 1, a 72.0m long and 15.0m beam drive-through, landing craft-type ro-pax ferry. The 2,179gt and 1,195dwt vessel has a capacity of 340 passengers. It will be introduced on Aznar Shipping's Danao Drydock (Cebu)-Pingag Isabel (Leyte) route.

which serves routes in the Gulf of Alaska linking Southcentral Alaska, Kodiak Island, and Southwest Alaska.



Illustration: Alaska Marine Highway System

The Tustumena Replacement Vessel (TRV) has been designed by Glosten as an ocean-capable ro-pax ferry, with a length of 100.6m and a 15-knot service speed. The diesel-electric vessel is intended to carry 250 passengers, with 124 berths. The vehicle deck, accessed via the stern and port and starboard side doors connecting to a vehicle elevator, has a capacity of 14 vans plus 26 CEUs or 58 CEUs. To comply with the Jones Act, the ferry will be built in the US, a requirement that has contributed to the long lead time and high cost associated with replacing one of the Alaska Marine Highway System's oldest vessels.

Maayo Shipping launches MARTIN 10 at its own shipyard

Maayo Shipping, a small Philippine ferry operator active in the Visayas and connecting the islands of Negros, Cebu, and Siquijor, has launched MARTIN 10 at its own shipyard in Tampi, a barangay in San Jose, Negros Oriental Province. Like other ships in the Maayo Shipping fleet, MARTIN 10 is a landing craft-type ro-pax with a bow ramp, but with a forward accommodation block rather than the more typical aft arrangement. MARTIN 10 is understood to be the first locally built ro-pax vessel to be constructed at the company's own shipyard.



Illustration: Stena RoRo

The 3,400-lanemetre, three-deck configuration of the new Stena C-Flexer 200 class allows containers to be stacked three high on the weather deck.

LISMORE terminates DFDS charter, starts P&O Ferries charter

Siem Shipping's 4,076-lanemetre Flensburg-er-class LISMORE has terminated its charter to DFDS and has been replaced on the Pendik-Trieste-Patras route by Leomar's 3,322-lanemetre HAFNIA SEA, following the termination of its charter to Transfennica (see also separate newspiece on p. 24-25).

Before taking up its long-term time charter to P&O Ferries, already announced by the DP World subsidiary in conjunction with the late August 2024 long-term time charter of sister ship LONGSTONE, LISMORE underwent an overhaul at Tuzla.

It is expected that LISMORE will join LONGSTONE on P&O Ferries' Tilbury-Zeebrugge route. The 2,040-lanemetre NORBAY left the route last month to provide drydock cover on the Hull-Europoort (Rotterdam) route, before being laid up in the latter port.

The introduction of LISMORE represents a significant capacity increase in P&O Ferries' North Sea network. It is understood that the 1994-built NORBAY will exit the fleet. Its sister ship, DP WORLD EXPRESS, the ex-NORBANK, was recently introduced on DP World's Mina Rashid-Umm Qasr route.

Stena RoRo pushes button for two C-Flexer 200 ro-ros, keeps four options

Following the letter of intent (LoI) signed in mid-October last year with China Merchants Industry Weihai Shipyard, for two mid-size ro-ros plus four one-vessel options, Stena RoRo has signed a firm order for the first two ships in the so-called Stena C-Flexer 200 series. The design has been developed by Stena RoRo together with NAOS Ship and Boat Design, the Trieste-headquartered naval architecture consultancy renowned for its fuel-efficient ro-pax and ro-ro platforms, including the long-running Visentini series.

With a length of 200m, a 31m beam – equivalent to up to nine lanes – and a 7.5m draft, the Stena C-Flexer 200 platform has a capacity of either 3,400 or 4,750 lanemetres, depending on whether it is configured with three or four decks. In its three-deck, 3,400-lanemetre configuration, the design allows containers to be stacked three high on the weather deck, abaft the forward accommodation block. With a free height of 7.2m, containers can be double stacked on Mafis or cassettes on the main vehicle deck. The lower deck has a 5.0m free height, while the forward covered vehicle deck space on the upper deck has a 7.0m free height.

The first pair, due for delivery in March and June 2029 respectively, has been ordered on speculation, but Stena RoRo confirmed to AXS RoRo that it had opted for the 3,400-lanemetre three-deck configuration. The order follows a careful study of the short-sea ro-ro market, in which Stena RoRo identified a lack of tonnage in the mid-size segment.

The flexibility of the 21-knot Stena C-Flexer 200 class is also reflected in the propulsion plant, which features twin methanol-ready main engines and a scalable battery-hybrid system, with the possibility of operating entirely on battery power in the future. Stena RoRo therefore hails the ships as "built for today, designed for tomorrow".

The double order further strengthens the partnership between Stena RoRo and the Weihai shipbuilder, which began in 2016 with the order of the first Stena E-Flexer ro-paxes. Ten years on, 12 E-Flexers have been delivered, with the 13th – CAPU ROSSU – due to be handed over shortly and two more under construction for Attica Group charter. Last year, two NewMax-class ro-ros were built for Stena Line, with the next step now taken. When exercised, the options will be delivered at three-month intervals after the June 2029 delivery of C-Flexer number two.

CLdN adds weekly lo-lo service to supplement Zeebrugge-Rotterdam-Leixões ro-ro service

Already operating a twice-weekly Zeebrugge-Rotterdam-Leixões (Porto) ro-ro service with the 4,949-lanemetre LNG dual-fuel H5 Mk II-class FAUSTINE and SERAPHINE, CLdN has added a third weekly Benelux-Portugal sailing, operated by the lo-lo FINE SCHEPERS. First taken on

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Photo: CLdN

With the charter of RIKE J for the Benelux-Ireland connection, CLdN has added a lo-lo element to its Leixões service, handled at its Distriport terminal in Rotterdam.

Rite Agency and MarineNav partner on intra-Middle East ro-ro service

In early January, Egypt-based Rite Agency and Dubai-headquartered MarineNav Shipping launched a new intra-Middle East ro-ro service. The rotation connects Port Tawfik (Suez) with Jebel Ali, Jeddah, and Djibouti, targeting regional movements of rolling and project cargo.

The new service is operated by the 1,225-lanemetre Bazias-class ro-ro AL FOLK. Built at Galatz Shipyard as BALDER SUND in 1983, it has a 6.26m clear-height main deck, enabling the carriage of high & heavy rolling cargo as well as double-stacked containers. MarineNav Shipping is responsible for the commercial side of the service, while Rite Agency acts as agent in Egypt, supporting the service's Port Tawfik calls and regional cargo intake.



Following the termination of its charter to Stena Line, BORE SONG has rejoined Transfennica's Baltic network, replacing HAFNIA SEA, which has moved to the Med.

charter by CLdN from HS Schiffahrts Group in conjunction with the May 2025 start of a new Zeebrugge-Dublin-Cork lo-lo service, the 803-TEU FINE SCHEPERS has been replaced on the Benelux-Ireland connection by the larger, 1,208-TEU RIKE J.

In Rotterdam, the new lo-lo service is handled at CLdN's Distriport facility, located just opposite its ro-ro terminal. Distriport was added to CLdN's port activity portfolio in 2024, when the short-sea ro-ro operator also re-entered the lo-lo segment with the chartered 974-TEU sister ships PAVO J and ANDROMEDA J, which remain on charter from German tonnage provider Jüngerhaus.

CLdN now operates four chartered lo-lo vessels, while it has six 1,127-TEU lo-lo ships on order at HD Hyundai Mipo, with the first of the series due for delivery in January 2027 and its sister ships to follow at monthly intervals. With the recent charter of the Jüngerhaus-owned RIKE J, delivered by Jiangsu Dajin Heavy Industry in late October 2025, CLdN has effectively further increased its lo-lo footprint in Ireland, while at the same time also expanding capacity on the Portugal route.

According to broker sources, CLdN will also charter HERA, a sister ship of RIKE J. Part of an 18-ship series built to an SMB Naval Architects' SMB Enviro Feeder 1100 design, the 155.00m long and 24.50m wide vessel class has been optimised for the carriage of 45 ft pallet-wide units. Like RIKE J, HERA was delivered in late October, with the Hans Peter Wegener-owned lo-lo currently on its way from Port Klang to the Algerian port of Skikda.

Transfennica charters BORE SONG as HAFNIA SEA leaves fleet, starts DFDS charter

Stena Line's 21-month time charter of BORE SONG has been terminated, with the 2,863-lanemetre ro-ro taken on charter by Transfennica once again, joining sister ship BORE SEA on the Lübeck and Travemünde-Hanko-Paldiski route. BORE SONG replaces the 3,322-lanemetre, Leomar-owned HAFNIA SEA, which has meanwhile been taken on charter by DFDS and introduced on the Pendik-Patras-Trieste route, replacing the 4,076-lanemetre LISMORE, the charter of which has recently terminated (*see also separate newsmagazine on p. 23*).

Ahead of BORE SONG leaving the Birkenhead (Liverpool)-Dublin route, Stena Line had introduced the 1,710-lanemetre STENA HIBERNIA as a second vessel, increasing frequency to up to two sailings per day. This was temporarily reduced until STENA HIBERNIA's sister ship, STENA SCOTIA, was cascaded to the Irish Sea's Central Corridor following the 23 January introduction of the Stena NewMax-class STENA CONNECTA on the Heysham-Belfast route (*see also separate newsmagazine on p. 25*).

While HAFNIA SEA has left the fleet, Transfennica has extended the charter of sister ship CORONA SEA by 12 months. The charter of BORE

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Photo: Crowded Space Drones

Following the introduction of STENA CONNECTA, Stena Line has completed its NewMax-class new-build programme on the Belfast-Heysham route.

Brittany Ferries temporarily reinstates twice-weekly Poole-Bilbao ro-ro service

Brittany Ferries has temporarily reinstated its twice-weekly Poole-Bilbao ro-ro service following the suspension of the Cherbourg-Mouguerre (Bayonne) rail freight corridor. The freight-only Poole-Bilbao route had been discontinued in late summer 2025 after the launch of Brittany Ferries' 970 km piggyback rail service, which absorbed part of the company's UK-Iberian freight flows previously carried by sea.

In conjunction with the withdrawal, the time charter of MN PELICAN, which had served the route since 2016, was terminated, with the 1,690-lanemetre ro-ro recently sold to Norwest Ship Management and renamed LINK NEPTUNE (*see also separate newsmagazine on this page*).

The Poole-Bilbao route has now temporarily been reopened after the derailment of a Brittany Ferries intermodal train with 34 trailers on 11 January forced the closure of the Cherbourg-Mouguerre (Bayonne) rail connection for several weeks. To maintain freight capacity during the disruption, Brittany Ferries has withdrawn the 1,265-lanemetre ro-pax COMMODORE CLIPPER from the Cherbourg-Poole route, which has been suspended until mid-February, when rail operations are due to resume. COMMODORE CLIPPER will then continue serving Cherbourg-Poole until late March, when BARFLEUR will be reintroduced, operating a daily return sailing.

SONG comes at a time when Transfennica's PLYCA is available to the Dutch Ministry of Defence on an on-call basis, while sister ship TRICA will be taken on permanent charter by the Dutch MOD from 30 May. Both Transfennica and tonnage provider Bore are controlled by Spliethoff.

Stena Line introduces second Stena NewMax-class on Heysham-Belfast route

Stena Line's second Stena NewMax-class vessel for its Heysham-Belfast freight-only route, STENA CONNECTA, arrived in Belfast from its builders, China Merchants Industry Weihai Shipyard, on 19 January, exactly two months after its handover. The 2,848-lanemetre ro-ro was subsequently introduced on the Heysham-Belfast route, replacing the 1996-built, 1,692-lanemetre STENA SCOTIA, which was cascaded to Stena Line's Birkenhead (Liverpool)-Dublin route, replacing the chartered BORE SONG and joining former Heysham-Belfast fleetmate STENA HIBERNIA on the route (*see also separate newsmagazine on p. 24-25*).

With a length of 147.0m, a beam of 26.3m, and a design draft of 5.2m, the four-deck Stena NewMax-class, designed by NAOS Ship and Boat Design, is also a Heysham-max ro-ro, being five metres longer than what was previously the length benchmark for Heysham. STENA CONNECTA's and STENA FUTURA's twin Wärtsilä 9L32 multi-fuel main engines, each with an output of 5,220 kW at 750 rpm, are capable of running on methanol and also have an ammonia-ready [D] class notation from DNV. The 100 kWh battery pack is small, but space has been reserved to upgrade to 9 MWh once battery charging infrastructure is in place.

Stena has been evaluating wind directions on a yearly basis across several of its routes, with wind conditions and direction on the Heysham-Belfast route deemed optimal for the use of wind power. While STENA FUTURA was delivered as 'rotor sail-ready', with rotor sail foundations in place, STENA CONNECTA is the first vessel in the Stena Line fleet fitted with twin Norsepower Flettner rotor sails.

The introduction of STENA CONNECTA and STENA FUTURA has increased Stena Line's capacity on the Heysham-Belfast route by over 65%.

Norwest Ship Management purchases MN PELICAN from Compagnie Maritime Nantaise

Following several months of lay-up in Bilbao, Sogestran Group-controlled Compagnie Maritime Nantaise has sold its 1,690-lanemetre scrubber-equipped MN PELICAN to Norwest Ship Management. MN PELICAN had been taken on time charter by Brittany Ferries in early 2016, when the French ferry operator opened its twice-weekly Poole-Bilbao ro-ro service.

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Photo: Norwest Ship Management

After a period of lay-up in Bilbao, Compagnie Maritime Nantaise's 1999-built MN PELICAN was sold to Norwest Ship Management and renamed LINK NEPTUNE.



Photo: Marc Ottini

Stena Line recorded its strongest freight growth on the Belfast-Birkenhead (Liverpool) route, where STENA FORWARDER supplements two Stena E-Flexers.

Fu'an Pengyuan Shipbuilding delivers FAJAR BAHARI X to Fajar Bahari Nusantara

Indonesian inter-island ro-ro operator Fajar Bahari Nusantara has taken delivery of the 11,606gt FAJAR BAHARI X from China's Fu'an Pengyuan Shipbuilding. The side-loading ro-ro follows the design of the sister ships FAJAR BAHARI VIII and FAJAR BAHARI IX, built by CSSC's Guangxi Shipbuilding in 2024.

Based on a design from Tianjin Desay Marine Engineering, the 109.0m long and 22.6m beam FAJAR BAHARI X has a 6.4m design draft, with four vehicle decks – the upper two of which are for light vehicles – connected via fixed ramps. Access to the main deck is via ramps on either side.

With the inauguration of its Cherbourg-Mouguerre (Bayonne) piggyback rail service, connected to its ferry services to and from Cherbourg, including Poole-Cherbourg, Brittany Ferries discontinued the charter, with MN PELICAN making its last sailing from Poole to Bilbao on 31 August 2025, after which the 1999-built ro-ro was laid up in the Spanish port.

MN PELICAN was handed over to its new Norwegian owners in Le Havre, where it was renamed LINK NEPTUNE under Norwegian registry. It joins a fleet of 11 ro-ros and sto-ros, primarily engaged in a liner service linking Sundalsøra, Årdalstangen, Husøy, Høyanger, and Fredrikstad in Norway with Lysekil (Sweden), Hundested (Denmark), and Swinoujscie (Poland).

Stena Line posts record freight volumes on Belfast routes

Stena Line recorded its highest-ever freight volumes on its three Belfast routes in 2025, with traffic rising by 1.0% year-on-year to almost 600,000 freight units shipped to and from Cairnryan, Birkenhead (Liverpool), and Heysham.

The record year coincided with Stena Line marking 30 years of operations from Belfast following its move from Larne in 1995. Growth was strongest on the Belfast-Birkenhead (Liverpool) route, where volumes exceeded 270,000 freight units, while the Belfast-Heysham service also recorded its highest volumes of the past five years, with Stena Line anticipating further growth on the route on the back of the introduction of its two Stena NewMax-class ro-ros.

Baleària's HATAY expected to debut on Algeciras-Ceuta route

Although Marítima Peregari has Godby Shipping's 1,425-lanemetre AURORA on time charter until at least March, on the back of the Ceuta-Algeciras garbage contract connecting the Spanish exclave with the mainland up to four times weekly, Baleària is expected to introduce the 756-lanemetre HATAY on the route.

The 1979-built HATAY, purchased from Turkish interests last year and completely overhauled at INDUNAVAL-VATAMA Burriana Shipyard, first arrived in Ceuta in mid-November 2025. It was laid up for more than two months, but is understood to be set to start making daily roundtrips shortly, with departures from Ceuta at 10:45 and return sailings at 17:30.

Baleària also operates the 800-passenger and 304-trailer-lanemetre or 150-CEU ro-pax PASSIO PER FORMENTERA and a ro-pax high-speed catamaran on the route, while both DFDS and Armas Trasmediterránea Group operate high-speed craft. The latter's Incat 96m wave-piercing catamaran VILLA DE AGAETE is set to be integrated into the DFDS fleet, providing DFDS obtains

Short-Sea Ro-Ro News

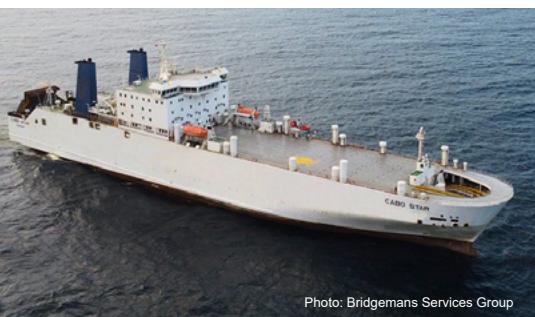


Photo: Bridgemans Services Group

Recently sold by Bridgemans Services Group following the termination of its charter to NIDCO, the former CABO STAR is heading for Piraeus.

Gruppo Grendi to introduce monthly Marina di Carrara-Djen Djen ro-ro service

Following successful test calls with the Visentini-class ro-ro GRENDI FUTURA, Gruppo Grendi is set to introduce a monthly ro-ro connection between Marina di Carrara and Djen Djen in Algeria. The service is being launched in co-operation with Dario Perioli Group, an Italian third-party logistics operator (3PL), and its long-term partner CNAN Med. It will cater for rolling and unitised cargo to and from Algeria.

According to the parties involved, the initial operational phase was positively received by the market, paving the way for the start of a structured and recurring liner offering. The introduction of monthly Djen Djen calls builds on Gruppo Grendi's existing North African network and follows the extension of its ro-ro cooperation with Maersk, which already covers indirect mainland Italy-Radès services via Cagliari and includes Djen Djen in its scope.



Due for delivery from Cantiere Navale Visentini in June, yard number 235 will join Gruppo Grendi's network as GRENDI HORIZON.

the green light from Spain's competition authority to take over part of Armas Trasmediterránea Group's Gibraltar Strait activities.

Seajets to add ro-ro to the mix?

For several months, Marios Iliopoulos-controlled Seajets, best known for its Greek domestic high-speed ferry operations, has been associated with the purchase of the 2,100-lanemetre and 130-passenger/driver CABO STAR from Bridgemans Services Group. The charter of the 1988-built ro-ro to Trinidad & Tobago's National Infrastructure Development Company Limited (NIDCO), which first commenced in the summer of 2017, terminated last month, with CABO STAR due to be replaced by BLUE WAVE HARMONY on the Port of Spain (Trinidad)-Scarborough (Tobago) interisland service (*see also AXSRoRo January 2026 newsletter, p. 29*).

CABO STAR has since been renamed CABO and left Port of Spain for Curaçao on 14 January. Following a brief stay in Willemstad, it departed for Piraeus on 31 January, as Greek maritime media have meanwhile reported the purchase by Seajets, speculating that the ro-ro will be introduced on a Greek domestic route.

Dedicated ro-ro ferries form a critical part of Greece's island supply infrastructure, transporting trailers and goods that ro-pax ferries cannot carry, including fuel tanker trailers, hazardous cargo units, and livestock. These ro-ro services typically operate from Keratsini (Piraeus), with Creta Cargo Lines and Blue Star Ferries being the main carriers. Blue Star Ferries entered the segment as recently as 2019, initially with a single vessel, and now operates two ro-ros. The market also includes one-ship operators such as Ainaftis and Aigialis, the latter operating the vintage KAPETAN CHRISTOS.

It is expected that Seajets may also tap into this market, potentially operating its latest acquisition from Alexandroupolis, as it continues to expand its footprint in the Greek domestic ferry market through a steadily growing high-speed fleet, alongside an increasing presence in conventional tonnage.

Next Visentini ro-ro for Gruppo Grendi to be named GRENDI HORIZON

Gruppo Grendi has revealed the name of the fifth ro-ro set to join its expanding fleet, which connects the Italian mainland port of Marina di Carrara with Olbia and Cagliari in Sardinia, as well as onward connections to Radès and Djen Djen.

As reported in last month's AXSRoRo newsletter, the 3,008-lanemetre ro-ro, to be taken on a five-year time charter from Visemar di Navigazione, is due for delivery from Cantiere Navale Visentini in June. Known as yard number 235, the 203.4m long and 26.2m wide ro-ro will be named GRENDI HORIZON.

GSI delivers third and final 8,600-CEU PCTC to HMM

South Korea's HMM, which returned to the PCTC segment with the September 2025 introduction of the LNG dual-fuel GLOVIS TITAN, followed by GLOVIS TOPAZ in October 2025, last month added GLOVIS TWILIGHT as the third and final ship in this 8,600-CEU series to its fleet.

The three 77,770gt PCTCs, built by Guangzhou Shipyard International (GSI), have been taken on long-term charter by Hyundai Glovis. The platform follows SDARI's standard 7,000-CEU design, with a length of 199.9m and a 38.0m beam, yet thanks to the insertion of two additional car decks, intake has increased to 8,600 CEUs. Four decks are strengthened for high & heavy cargo, with five liftable decks.

GSI earlier completed three sister ships of the GLOVIS TITAN series, which had been ordered by H-LINE Shipping against long-term HMM charters.

YUAN HE KOU joins ever-expanding COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers fleet

Guangzhou Shipyard International (GSI) has delivered yet another PCTC in a long series of standard SDARI-designed 7,000-CEU PCTCs. The 68,266gt, 199.9m long and 38.0m beam YUAN HE KOU is operated by COSCO Shipping Specialized Carriers subsidiary Guangzhou Yuanhai Automobile Shipping and has been introduced on the China-Mediterranean corridor, carrying brands such as Chery Automobile, BYD, Geely, and King Long on its maiden voyage from Taicang and Xiamen.

The LNG dual-fuel, 12-deck YUAN HE KOU boasts solar panels installed on the top deck, expected to generate 560 MWh per year and believed to save 105 tonnes of fuel.

Grimaldi Group takes delivery of fifth 9,241-CEU SWS-built PCTC, GRANDE MANILA

Grimaldi Group has taken delivery of GRANDE MANILA, the fifth vessel in its seven-ship, 9,241-CEU PCTC series built by Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding (SWS). The 199.90m long and 38.0m wide PCTC forms part of the Neapolitan group's ongoing fleet expansion in the PCTC segment, with 17 PCTCs of two different designs ordered in 2022/23. The newbuild's name reflects Grimaldi Group's growing footprint in Southeast and East Asia, where it now offers a twice-monthly Yokohama-Taicang-Laem Chabang-Batangas service.



Photo: Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding

The 77,463gt GRANDE MANILA has 14 vehicle decks, including four liftable decks and four decks allowing for the stowage of vehicles up to 6.5m high and 250 tonnes. Conventionally fuelled, the PCTC is equipped with a low-consumption Everlence B&W (formerly MAN B&W) 7S60ME-C10.6-HPSCR main engine and a range of efficiency measures, while also carrying an ammonia-ready class notation and cold ironing capability.

GRANDE TIANJIN, GRANDE AUCKLAND, GRANDE MELBOURNE, and GRANDE ISTANBUL are the earlier delivered sister ships in the SWS series, with delivery of the final two vessels approaching fast, as GRANDE SEOUL recently completed its sea trials, while GRANDE TOKYO was floated out on 28 January.

Intesa Sanpaolo backs three new Grimaldi PCTCs with EUR 162.3 million green loan

Following earlier bank-backed financings secured for the Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding (SWS)-built, 9,241-CEU capacity GRANDE TIANJIN and GRANDE MELBOURNE, Grimaldi Group has put further funding in place for its ambitious PCTC newbuilding programme, with Intesa Sanpaolo finalising a EUR 162.3 million green loan for Grimaldi Euromed.

Deep-Sea Ro-Ro News

Sallaum Lines relocates headquarters to Limassol

Lebanese Sallaum Lines has relocated its headquarters from Sarnen in Switzerland to Limassol, a move intended to strengthen the company's positioning within the European maritime sector and bring it closer to key markets, regulators, and industry stakeholders.

The relocation comes as the PCTC operator progresses through a growth phase, with two of six new LNG dual-fuel PCTCs already delivered and a major investment under way at its ro-ro terminal in Antwerp, supporting both fleet renewal and expanded operational capacity.



Photo: Longkou CIMC Raffles Offshore

NOCC ADRIATIC is part of a four-ship series, with NOCC KATTEGAT and NOCC SKAGERAK to follow next year.



Photo: Etienne Verberckmoes

Grimaldi Group's 7,600-CEU, Yangfan-built GRANDE TEXAS will inaugurate a new monthly Río de la Plata service, with calls at Montevideo and Zárate.

The latest financing supports the acquisition of three next-generation PCTCs under construction at China Merchants Heavy Industry (Jiangsu) – GRANDE EGITTO, GRANDE PACIFICO, and GRANDE OCEANIA – all scheduled for delivery in 2026 and forming part of the Neapolitan group's wider 17-ship PCTC series ordered between 2022 and 2023 at a total cost exceeding USD 1.6 billion.

The Intesa Sanpaolo transaction follows a EUR 57 million, 10-year loan from the Milan branch of Bank of China for GRANDE MELBOURNE, delivered in October 2025, as well as a EUR 50 million financing from Crédit Agricole Italia for sister ship GRANDE TIANJIN, delivered in August 2025 – the lead ship in the seven-ship SWS series. GRANDE EGITTO, GRANDE PACIFICO, and GRANDE OCEANIA are part of five enlarged or Mk II iterations of the ammonia-ready hybrid KNUD E. HANSEN-designed PCTCs with a capacity of 9,800 CEUs.

NOCC takes delivery of second of four standard SDARI-designed PCTCs from Longkou CIMC Raffles Offshore

Longkou CIMC Raffles Offshore on 20 January delivered NOCC ADRIATIC 70 days ahead of schedule to Norwegian tonnage provider Norwegian Car Carriers (NOCC). The 199.9m long and 38.0m beam platform follows a standard SDARI design, with 12 vehicle decks, four of which are liftable, for a total capacity of 7,000 CEUs.

The LNG dual-fuel NOCC ADRIATIC follows NOCC PACIFIC, delivered in November 2025, and precedes NOCC KATTEGAT and NOCC SKAGERAK, due next year. The latter vessel was ordered as recently as December last year, representing one of the few PCTCs ordered in the past year. The series also carries an ammonia-ready class notation from DNV.

Grimaldi Group to launch Asia-Río de la Plata ro-ro and project cargo service

As new-generation PCTCs enter its expanding deep-sea fleet, Grimaldi Group is set to introduce a new monthly ro-ro and project cargo service linking Asia with the Río de la Plata region, with Montevideo serving as the transhipment hub for Asunción, Paraguay. The service is scheduled to commence with a sailing from Taicang on 17 February, offering a direct maritime connection between China and the southern Atlantic coast of South America.

The rotation will include direct calls at Montevideo and Zárate, with the service to be inaugurated by the 2021 Yangfan-built GRANDE TEXAS. The vessel has a capacity of 7,600 CEUs across 12 decks, or a combination of 5,400 lanemetres with the liftable decks hoisted and 2,737 CEUs. To maintain a monthly frequency, GRANDE TEXAS is expected to be joined by a second PCTC in March.

Deep-Sea Ro-Ro News



Photo: Imabari Shipbuilding

UNDINE HIGHWAY forms part of a PCTC series with 12 decks and a capacity of just over 7,000 CEUs.

Ro-lo MINI STAR sinks off Libya following cargo shift in gale-force conditions

The ro-lo MINI STAR sank on the night of 18 to 19 January off the coast of eastern Libya after encountering severe weather that led to cargo shift, loss of stability, and eventual abandonment. The 6,284gt MINI STAR was en route from Augusta, Sicily to Sidon, Lebanon, carrying a mixed cargo including second-hand trucks loaded as deck cargo, heavy machinery, and marble. According to local authorities, the vessel experienced a loss of power during the incident. All 11 crew members were safely evacuated and later transferred to Malta.

Built in 1983 by Husumer Schiffswerft as CONDOCK III, and briefly registered in France in 1999 as PENHIR with Compagnie morbihanaise et nantaise de navigation (today's Compagnie Maritime Nantaise, CMN), the 107.2m long and 19.6m beam MINI STAR had a capacity of 430 lanemetres, or 156 TEUs below deck and 228 TEUs on the weather deck abaft the forward accommodation.

The casualty follows a poor recent safety record for the vessel. In December 2025, MINI STAR was detained by Paris MoU Port State Control in Marina di Carrara, where inspectors recorded eight deficiencies serious enough to warrant detention. These included inoperative lifesaving and emergency systems, deficiencies in navigation equipment, damaged cargo access points, and shortcomings in crew training and familiarisation. The vessel was detained on 19 December and was not released until 8 January, less than two weeks before its sinking, having departed Marina di Carrara for Augusta on 11 January.

UNDINE HIGHWAY introduced on "K" Line's Asia-Europe service

Part of a long series of 7,000+ CEU PCTCs, Imabari Shipbuilding's Marugame yard last month delivered the 199.93m long and 38.00m beam UNDINE HIGHWAY to "K" Line, which has since introduced the 77,650gt PCTC on its Asia-Europe service.

With 12 vehicle decks, UNDINE HIGHWAY has a capacity of 7,054 CEUs. Propulsion is provided by a single Everlence B&W (formerly MAN B&W) 6S60ME-C10.5-GI-EGRBP LNG dual-fuel main engine, rated at 12,500 kW, giving a service speed of 18.2 knots.

GLOBAL FUJI floated out as CMI Weihai Shipyard lays keel of GLOBAL PATAGONIA

With lead ship GLOBAL ACONCAGUA delivered by China Merchants Industry Weihai Shipyard in November last year, to be followed by sister ship GLOBAL FUJI in early spring, the third ship in the series, GLOBAL KILIMANJARO, was floated out on 8 January, with the keel of the fourth and final ship in Global Auto Carriers' (GAC) four-ship series laid the day after.

GAC – established by former Gram Car Carriers shareholders – remains a Gram Car Carriers spin-off under MSC Group/SAS Shipping Agencies Services ownership and, like Gram Car Carriers, is a tonnage provider that will control a four-ship fleet following completion of the newbuild programme at China Merchants Industry Weihai Shipyard. The four sister ships are standard LNG dual-fuel, SDARI-designed 7,000-CEU platforms.

World's largest PCTC floated out at GSI

The first of 14 10,800-CEU PCTCs, GLOVIS LEADER, under construction at Guangzhou Shipyard International (GSI) for Hyundai Glovis operation, was floated out on 21 January. When delivered later this year, the 230m long and 40m beam GLOVIS LEADER will temporarily hold the accolade of the world's largest PCTC by CEU capacity.

The LNG dual-fuel platform, designed by SDARI, has 14 decks, five of which are liftable. GLOVIS LEADER is being built for HMM, which has re-entered the PCTC segment, for charter to Hyundai Glovis. It forms part of a 22-unit series, with Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding (SWS) constructing eight sister ships for Seaspan Corporation, also to be chartered out to Hyundai Glovis.



Photo: Arab Bridge Maritime

Seajets already operates three 100m Fincantieri MDV1200 monohulls, with a 95m Fincantieri MDV1200 platform now added to the fleet.

Seajets adds yet another hand-me-down to its ro-pax high-speed fleet

Marios Iliopoulos-controlled Seajets continues to expand its ro-pax high-speed fleet, with the latest acquisition being Arab Bridge Maritime's (AB Maritime) 95m Fincantieri MDV 1200 monohull QUEEN NEFERTITI. However, it is understood that the 1997-built craft may not see active service in Greece and could instead be used for cannibalisation purposes, although this has not been confirmed.

Built by Fincantieri's Riva Trigoso shipyard and completed at its Muggiano facility for Italy's Ocean Bridge Investments, PEGASUS TWO formed part of a three-ship order, of which the third vessel in the series was never built. QUEEN NEFERTITI has since reached Greece and arrived as FERTITI at Agios Konstantinos on 26 January.

Prior to its early 2007 purchase by AB Maritime, the 3,971gt high-speed monohull operated as TALLINK AUTOEXPRESS 3 on Tallink's Tallinn-Helsinki route, following earlier charter spells.

As built, PEGASUS TWO had a capacity of 580 passengers and 173 CEUs on its single, stern-accessed vehicle deck. The exterior of Fincantieri's MDV 1200-class was styled by Pininfarina, with four 100m iterations of the platform built for the late James Sherwood's Sea Containers, while options for two further vessels of the same class were never exercised. Seajets already operates three ferries in the 100m series: SUPERRUNNER JET, SPEEDRUNNER JET, and SPEEDRUNNER JET 2.

FRS' ALGECIRAS JET returns to Europe amid sale rumours

FRS' JumboCat 60m high-speed catamaran ALGECIRAS JET has returned to Europe and arrived in Dordrecht in mid-January. The 428-passenger and 52-CEU capacity craft was introduced as RUBY EXPRESS for FRS' French Caribbean subsidiary, FRS Express des îles, in July 2024 but failed to meet financial expectations. Following its withdrawal from service, the vessel was laid up in Castries, Saint Lucia and has since reverted to its former name, ALGECIRAS JET.

Market sources suggest the craft may be available for sale, with ALGECIRAS JET now the only ro-pax high-speed ferry remaining in the FRS fleet following last year's sale of the Incat 91m wave piercing catamaran SKÅNE JET and the Incat 96m wave piercer PONIENTE JET to Seajets, where they became EUROCHAMPION JET 2 and GIGA JET, respectively.

The 35-knot ALGECIRAS JET was not part of DFDS' takeover of FRS' Gibraltar Strait operations, which did include its sister ship CEUTA JET, alongside the Incat 85m wave piercing catamaran LEVANTE JET and the Incat 86m wave piercer TARIFA JET.



Five ro-pax high-speed craft have left the FRS fleet following the sale of its Strait operations and the closure of its Sassnitz-Trelleborg route, leaving only ALGECIRAS JET.



Photo: Stena Line

Stena Line has further strengthened its presence in Latvia through the acquisition of Terrabalt, taking over ro-ro, bulk, and general cargo operations in Liepaja.

Wallenius Wilhelmsen starts operating GIART

Wallenius Wilhelmsen has begun operating the Gothenburg International Auto & RoRo Terminal (GIART) under a 12-year agreement with the Port of Gothenburg. GIART provides full ro-ro and terminal handling services and includes two berths, 288,000m² of terminal space, rail connections, and PDI facilities. The terminal will support both deep-sea and short-sea traffic, with phased upgrades planned over the contract period.

Bremerhaven connects PCTCs to shore power

Bremerhaven has begun supplying green shore power to PCTCs. Eastern Pacific Shipping's LAKE SHIRASAGI, on charter to EUKOR Car Carriers, was the first PCTC to connect to the grid while discharging and loading around 2,000 vehicles on 19 January.

Stena Line completes Terrabalt acquisition in Liepaja

Stena Line has completed its acquisition of Latvian terminal operator Terrabalt, taking over ro-ro, bulk, and general cargo operations in Liepaja following approval from competition authorities. The terminal, located within the Liepaja Special Economic Zone, has been renamed Stena Line Ports Liepajas SEZ, giving the Swedish group full ownership of a key logistics asset in Latvia's third-largest port.

The transaction builds on Stena Line's existing presence in Liepaja, where it operates a six-times-weekly Liepaja-Travemünde ro-pax service with the Visentini Mk I-class STENA FLAVIA and STENA HORIZON, and follows its earlier acquisition of port operations in Ventspils. Stena Line plans to develop and modernise the terminal over time.

PSA Singapore and MOL to establish ro-ro terminal joint venture

PSA Singapore and Mitsui O.S.K. Lines (MOL) have agreed to form a joint venture to establish a ro-ro terminal in Singapore, subject to regulatory approval. The partners expect the terminal to be operational in the first half of this year, adding dedicated ro-ro capacity at Southeast Asia's largest automotive transhipment hub.

Under the arrangement, MOL will secure long-term terminal capacity for its ro-ro services, while PSA will contribute its experience as a terminal operator to manage day-to-day operations. Beyond terminal handling, the two companies plan to cooperate on operational optimisation, digital systems, and sustainability-related initiatives linked to vehicle logistics.

Former Scheldt Tunnel dock in Zeebrugge cleared for new deep-sea ro-ro dock

Works to dismantle Zeebrugge's temporary construction dock used for building tunnel sections for the new Antwerp Scheldt Tunnel are progressing, clearing the site for a new ro-ro dock connected to Wallenius Wilhelmsen's existing Orcelle Terminal. The construction dock, used to assemble and handle prefabricated tunnel elements, measured around 1km in length and 200m in width, while a 900m pre-built quay will remain as part of the permanent port infrastructure.

The cleared area will form a 12m deep ro-ro dock between the Verbindingsdok and the Boudewijnkanaal, with two PCTC berths scheduled to be available in the first half of 2027. In parallel, a 400m long quay is under construction along the Verbindingsdok, while parts of the former tunnel construction site will be redeveloped into additional terminal space for 8,000 cars.

Financial Results

P&O Ferries posted GBP 99 million loss in 2024 as revenues declined

P&O Ferries reported a loss before tax of GBP 99.0 million in 2024, compared with a GBP 91.4 million loss the prior year, according to accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024. Revenue fell to GBP 875.3 million from GBP 960.5 million in 2023, reflecting weaker freight volumes and lower passenger numbers. The group recorded an operating loss of GBP 53.9 million, an improvement on the GBP 58.9 million loss in 2023, while the net loss for the year widened slightly to GBP 98.2 million.

Freight volumes declined to 1.25 million units in 2024, down from 1.33 million units a year earlier, while passenger numbers fell to 4.38 million from 4.59 million. Car volumes increased slightly to 903,000 units, compared with 890,000 in 2023. The accounts confirm that the business remains reliant on financial support from its ultimate parent, Dubai-registered Dubai Ferries Holding FZE, part of DP World, to continue as a going concern, with intra-group borrowings rising to GBP 449 million by year-end, up from GBP 295 million a year earlier.

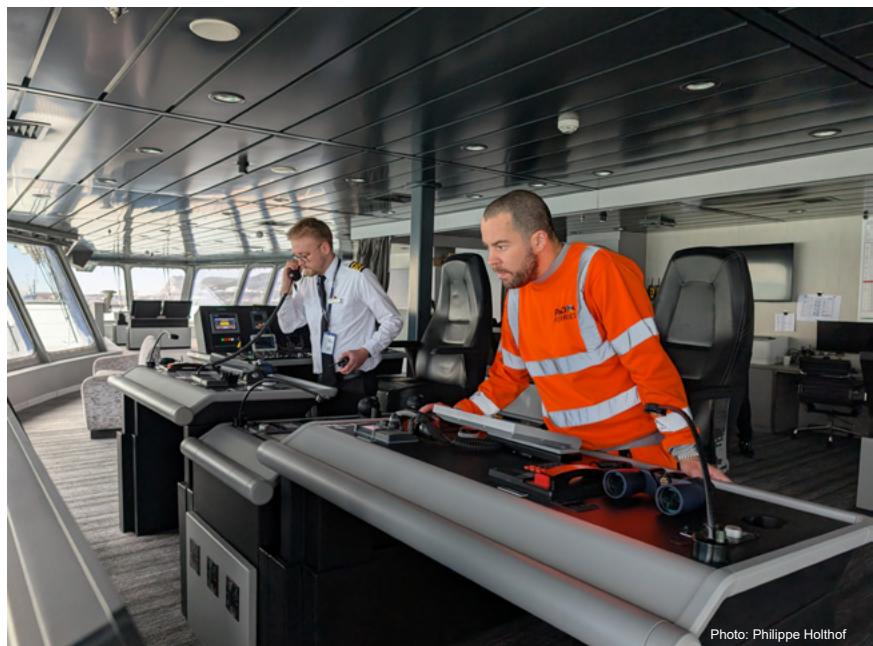


Photo: Philippe Holthof