

ACL blueprint for newbuild nears completion

Business

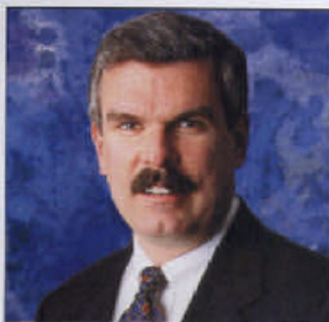
Atlantic Container Line (ACL) has moved further forward with its ground-breaking order for a new design of Con-ro vessel.

The US-headquartered carrier expects to finalise the exact design specification with four shipyards before the end of November.

In an exclusive interview with CI, Andy Abbott, ACL president and ceo, said: 'We are in the final stretch of finalising the specifications of the ships with the yards.

'A designer has come up with the plan for the vessels, and the yards have needed to modify the designs that they have been working on over the last few months. Now we have both come to an agreement on the design, we are all happy with it. After final approval, we will only be left with negotiating the price.'

Abbott was not able to name the yards working on building the ships which will be deployed in Grimaldi-



Andy Abbott: 'Unbelievable' eco vessels

owned ACL's transatlantic service, but was able to say that one is based in South Korea and three in China.

The five ships to be built are slated for delivery in 2014 and will completely replace ACL's current fleet of five multi-purpose ships offering a maximum container loading capacity of 3,100TEU.

Abbott said ACL was replacing the whole fleet as they date back to

1984/85. These will be scrapped or sold to the military.

Abbott said that the company would make an official announcement about the ships later this month [November], when the contract was signed, and added: 'They really will be the first ships of their type in the world, and will be used for carrying containers, auto and ro-ro; their layout is totally different. They are absolutely unbelievable in terms of fuel and green efficiency.'

He said that the new vessels would have to be the same length as the current vessels in order to fit into the lochs of Liverpool port.

The new ships also mean that ACL is likely to increase its slot swaps. Abbott said: 'We are probably going to have the possibility of more slots, whether that is with [current partner] Hapag-Lloyd or another partner. We will approach

Hapag-Lloyd about this first.'

Since 1984 ACL has swapped slots with Hapag-Lloyd, with each holding a weekly allocation of 500TEU.

Use of the new ships will also lead to other changes, with ACL planning to add the South Atlantic to its service. He said the ports under consideration were Charleston, Savannah and Jacksonville.

Abbott explained: 'There is a big car market eastbound there, in which brands such as BMW and Mercedes are situated, and there is also a big market for boats and forest products,

'At the moment, we have to pick and choose our containers to serve this market as we serve it through a swap slot with Hapag-Lloyd so have a small allocation and have to be very selective. But if we use our own ships, we won't have to be so selective.'

