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**Lloyd's List**  
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**ACL to keep Liverpool calls for newbuildings that arrive next year**

*Jobs boost for Merseyside as carrier also concentrates all back office work in city*

**ATLANTIC Container line has chosen Liverpool as the UK port of call for its five newbuildings that will be delivered from next year.**

The transatlantic specialist already serves Liverpool but had considered both Southampton, where it was once headquartered, and Bristol as possible alternatives once its new ships enter service.

However, chief executive Andrew Abbott told Lloyd's List that ACL would remain in Liverpool, where it is also expanding its local presence and concentrating all back office activities in one place.

Liverpool was better suited for its ship calls because of the type of cargo its multipurpose vessels carry, said Mr Abbott. Customers tended to be clustered in the north of the country.

ACL, owned by Italy's Grimaldi group and headquartered in the US, has five of the largest ships of their type so far ordered under construction in China.

With container capacity of 3,800 teu, compared with 1,850 teu for the current ships in service, and 28,900 sq m of ro-ro space against 18,500 sq m at the moment, they will be much larger than ACL's G3 quintet.

However, they are designed to go through Liverpool's locks and will not be using the new berths under construction on the Mersey that will be able to handle post-panamax containerships.

ACL's decision to continue with its Liverpool calls keeps up strong links with the city. When ACL was set up as by six European lines in 1967, its UK shareholder was Liverpool-headquartered Cunard.

The line is also building its own office in Liverpool which should be completed by the end of next year, and has just taken on another 47 staff, all hired locally, bringing its total Merseyside workforce to 178.

That reflects a reorganisation of its back office operations, with all documentation, account payables, logistics and similar work handled in Liverpool

"One reason is that Liverpool has always scored highest on our productivity charts, whether in terms of bills of lading per hour or teu booked per person," said Mr Abbott.

Ship planning and hazardous cargo bookings are also managed in Liverpool.

Customer-facing activities will still continue at local level in the countries that ACL serves rather than be centralised.

The vote of confidence in Liverpool comes at a time when the city is preparing for the international Festival of Business this summer, which will include a number of maritime-related events.

Mr Abbott will be one of the panellists at an industry debate that Lloyd's List and Containerisation International will be hosting in June to discuss both the future of the port in a rapidly changing global landscape, and Liverpool as a maritime hub.

A number of global container lines have their UK agency operations in Liverpool, even if their ships do not call at the port, with the city's maritime roots seen as a big plus by employers.