



News release from Zulu Associates, Belgium based autonomous and zero emission vessel developer

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Belgian vessel innovator Zulu Associates releases latest designs for first zero emission short sea vessel featuring wind blades.

ZULU Associates, the Belgian zero emission vessel developer, with its subsidiary, Anglo Belgian Shipping Company Ltd, are revealing the concept design of their groundbreaking 200 TEU short sea container vessel, the ZULU MASS, featuring an auxiliary wind assistance system. This vessel is a larger seagoing development of the inland waterways 90 TEU X-Barge, currently under final construction design.

Zulu Associates CEO Antoon Van Coillie said the latest design of the Zulu Mass is produced by Dutch ship naval architects Conoship International.

“We’re delighted to be working with Conoship International who share our passion for innovation,” he said. “Working with Conoship we are challenging ourselves to build the most advanced and innovative vessel we can. As a result, apart of being fully electric and autonomous, we’re adding wind blades and examining wave foil propulsion. This is a very exciting time for short sea ship building where traditional concepts are being challenged, driving change and enabling new zero emission possibilities.”

Mr Van Coillie confirmed the designers are looking for the vessel to operate with modular energy containers using batteries and/or hydrogen based power systems to provide the prime energy sources. Discussions with providers of energy on a use basis are on-going in parallel with the design as this is an integral part of the vessel’s operation.

“Autonomy is still in its infancy but we want to show what is possible and support the process of regulation keeping pace with innovation,” he said. “As a result, the Zulu MASS is designed from the outset to be unmanned as a part of a Maritime Autonomy System, which will allow it to compete with fossil fueled or hybrid vessels.”

Mr Van Coillie said Zulu Associates are fully supporting the Belgian and other Government’s desires to see marine innovation put into action.

“Belgium is at the forefront of marine innovation, and has had a legal framework for pilot projects featuring unmanned vessels in the North Sea since July 2021,” he said. “That has given us the confidence to embrace and invest in the Zulu MASS where some in the industry were being much more cautious. Now, Belgium, the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands have signed a Memorandum of Understanding aiming to harmonise the procedures to obtain certification for an unmanned ship to sail between the four countries. This should result in a single request replacing the need of having to apply for two to more permits. We aim to seize the initiative of this opportunity and get the Zulu Mass in the water as a world first and industry trailblazer in 2025.”

For ZULU Associates and Conoship International
www.zulu-associates.com
www.conoship.com

For Belgian Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Justice and the North sea
maxim@teamjustitie.be