

Coastlink conference to raise temperature

by Mike Wackett

The logo for Coastlink, featuring the word "Coastlink" in a bold, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several horizontal lines of varying lengths, creating a sense of depth and movement, resembling a ship's hull or a coastline.

Aside from the 'Rotterdam Rules' symposium and the G20 summit this week, the annual Coastlink shortsea shipping conference being hosted by the French port of Dunkirk on Thursday and Friday is set for a lively debate.

One of the key issues - and certain to encourage fierce controversy - is a paper to be delivered by Samskip Logistics', general manager, Aad Kooland, entitled: *Do inland ports like Hamburg and Antwerp have a long-term future?*

Kooland suggests that with the advent of 14,000TEU container vessels, the problems of sailing these mega-ships on inland waterways such as the River Elbe [Hamburg] and the River Scheldt [Antwerp] will be a continuous drain on European taxpayers with the need for constant dredging necessary to keep the ports in operation.

Contentiously, the executive proposes that ports such as Hamburg, Antwerp and Amsterdam should leave the handling of bigger vessels to naturally advantaged ports such as Bremerhaven, Rotterdam and Zeebrugge.

Moreover, Kooland is concerned that there is a public safety issue involved, in that constant dredging could result in catastrophic flooding.

The first round bell is eagerly anticipated!