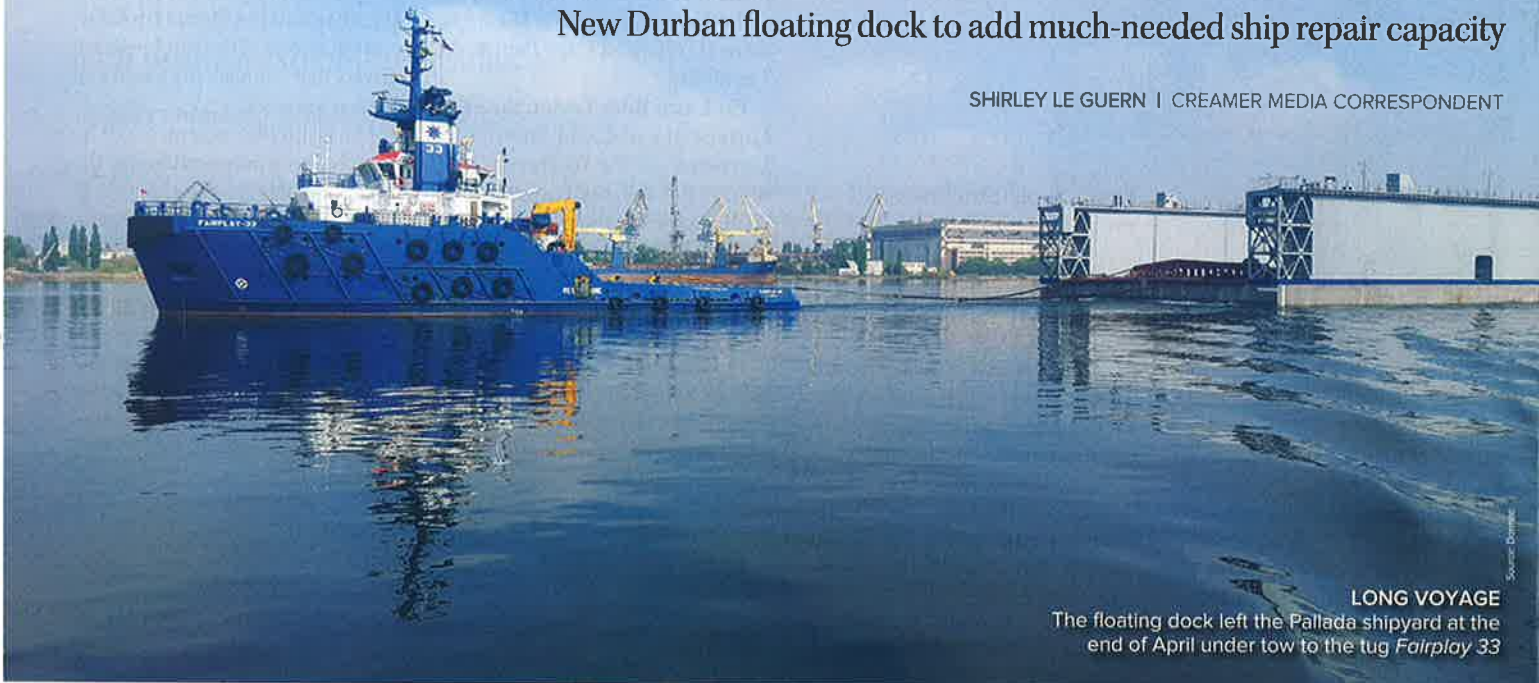


CAPACITY BUILDING

New Durban floating dock to add much-needed ship repair capacity

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LONG VOYAGE

The floating dock left the Pallada shipyard at the end of April under tow to the tug *Fairplay 33*

With an estimated 12 000 ships calling at South Africa's ports each year and over 30 000 vessels sailing along the South African coastline annually, the ship repair industry should theoretically be a thriving and growing industry. In reality, however, it is an opportunity that is largely being missed.

Durban's ship repair sector – worth an estimated R1-billion – is stagnating owing to a huge shortfall in ship repair facilities. The Transnet-owned floating dock has been out of commission for a number of years and the graving dock has underperformed owing to a lack of maintenance and repair. There has been little, if any, meaningful private-sector investment.

Internationally accredited marine engineering company Dormac, which is one of the largest ship repair users of the Durban graving dock, has been finding it difficult to remain competitive in the absence of world-class facilities. It says it has been turning away between four and seven vessels each month and estimates that the demand for ship repair at South Africa's busiest port exceeds supply sevenfold.

Whereas it was able to dock just six vessels in Durban over the past year, it serviced 20 in Cape Town – ten of these vessels, however, would have preferred to have been serviced in Durban. This reality formed the extremely strong business case for its biggest investment yet: the Dormac Dock 1, the new multimillion-rand composite floating dock that arrived in the Port of Durban on July 17.

Investment Case

Dormac MD Chris Sparg says the compelling case for an investment of this nature predates present-day frustrations. The company's original decision to invest in its own floating dock goes back at least 16 years to just after Dormac was created through the June 2000 merger between Dorbyl Marine Durban and Imac, part of Southey Holdings.

One of the causes of the delays was obtaining permission for this project from Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA). A breakthrough came in 2013 when Dormac was informed that, on presentation of a solid business case, a mature environmental impact assessment (which took two years to finalise) and an acceptable design, the project could go ahead.

"It was a significant step. We realised that if we didn't take it, we would never move forward," Sparg says.

Dormac changed its original plan from a graving dock to the recently arrived floating dock. Instead of infilling a space for the quay and dock, it elected to reclaim space for the quay from existing leased land. This change also made it possible to retain vital slipway infrastructure for repairs and new building.

Sparg says that, on receiving permission to go ahead, Dormac fast-tracked the project, starting with the purchase of the new dry dock from the Ukraine-based Pallada shipyard. What would have ordinarily taken around 24 months to complete has taken only eight months and Dormac has taken

delivery of the dry dock a month ahead of schedule.

The Dormac management team is extremely complimentary about the quality of the workmanship and the service received from Pallada, regarded by some as an unlikely supplier, given recent political tensions in the country.

Long Tow

The new floating dock left the Pallada shipyard at the end of April under tow to the tug *Fairplay 33*. Seventy-nine days and 8 800 miles later – with nine days spent sheltering in Saldanha Bay to escape the Cape weather – it arrived in Durban.

Unlike all other floating docks in South Africa and neighbouring Namibia, Dormac Dock 1 is brand new with the latest state-of-the-art technologies, which include two 7.5 t dock portal cranes, two high-voltage transformers, four ballast electric pumps, two fire service electric pumps and six capstans, each with a traction force of 8 t.

The new 155 m dock has a reinforced ferroconcrete pontoon measuring 139.5 m × 32.4 m with steel wing walls. It has a dock lifting capacity of 8 500 t and a total submersion depth of 11.8 m.

Its positioning alongside a specially designed and extremely strong quay has necessitated the excavation of 112 000 m³ of soil and the construction of 176 piles. It will be permanently attached to the new quayside by two accurately driven 32 m pylons on