

Vysotsk continues expansion

The Vysotsk terminal situated on Vysotsk island in the Gulf of Finland handles steam coal exported from the Kuzbass region. The Baltic Sea terminal's throughputs increased by 25pc to 696,200t in the first quarter of 2011 from a year earlier after a large-scale upgrade programme, which was completed in December 2010. The upgrade opens new market outlets for its customers and raises its competitiveness with rival Baltic ports. Vysotsk hopes to increase its coal operations, but also wants to diversify its cargo base because of coal market uncertainty. The port, which is independent from cargo holders, prefers to remain multipurpose rather than focus on specific types of cargo, giving its strategy much-needed flexibility.

Vysotsk plans to reach throughputs of 4.5mn t this year. "This year, the contracted volumes are still below that level, but we have agreed with our clients that they will cover the capacities," Vysotsk director-general Vadim Pavlov tells *Argus*. The stevedoring group has two main clients, exporting steam coal from the Kyrgayskaya and Kolmogorovskaya-2 mines.

Upgrade

Russian sea port agency Rosmorport executed dredging at the berths, increasing the maximum vessel draught to 11.9m from 9.3m. The increased depths allow the port to accommodate vessels of up to 45,000t compared with 20,000t previously.

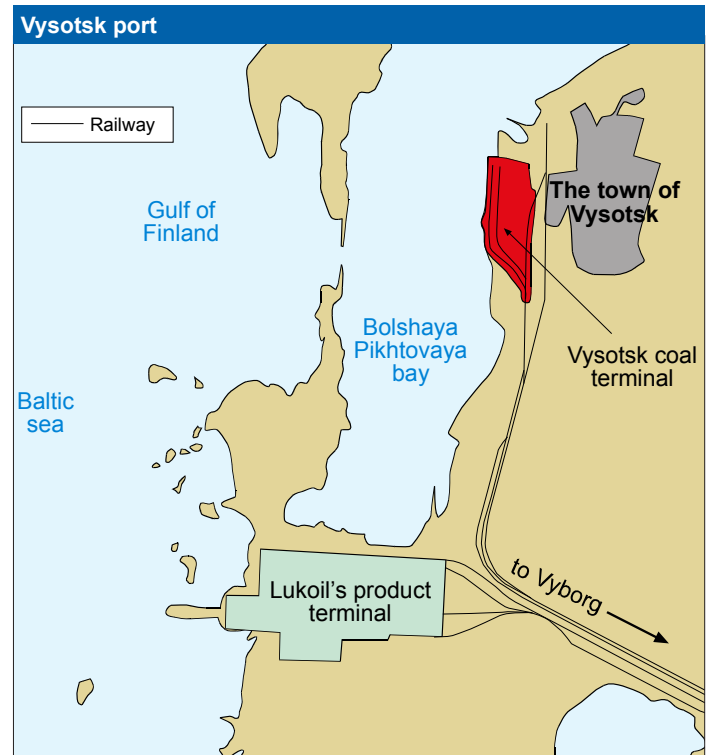
The port declared the new draught in December last year, but the 2011 handling contracts had already been agreed at the old depth. "The clients have received new temporary navigating rules, and, as far as I know, are studying the possibility of using bigger vessels," Pavlov says. He declines to say when the port will start receiving larger vessels. "It may be in May, but may be in June or July. Let us sort out the hard ice situation, and then we will work with larger vessels," he says.

The port's ability to accommodate big vessels offers new market outlets for the port's clients — coal can now be exported to the UK, Spain and the Netherlands, on top of existing destinations Finland, Denmark and Germany.

Port infrastructure

The Vysotsk terminal has four berths adjacent to each other, and the quay is 681m long (see p6 layout). Three vessels of up to 230m in length, 36m in width and up to 45,000t each can be berthed at the port simultaneously.

A government programme to develop Russia's transport system in 2010-15 envisages building a 100m berth, which is expected to



be completed this year.

Dredging works completed last year were held under the same programme for 2008-10. Depths at the fourth berths — and at the unbuilt fifth one — increased to 12.7m.

Vysotsk throughputs declined while construction was under way. The stevedoring company has also purchased new equipment over the past three years, including two conveyors with magnetic cleaning systems, two Mantsinen-100 hydraulic manipulators, four Volvo mobile loading machines and four Sokol cranes produced by German company Kirow Ardelt.

The port now has 16 cranes with a cargo capacity ranging

Vysotsk port's key points	
Area	340,000m ²
Number of berths	4
Total length of berths	681m
Draught	11.9m
Storage	250,000t
Loading rate	8,000 t/d

Vysotsk port equipment	
Cranes	16
Hydraulic manipulators	4
Mobile loading machines	9
Locomotives	4
Coal cleaning machines	7

between 16t and 40t, four Mantsinen-100 manipulators and nine Volvo mobile loading machines. The port has seven conveyors with magnetic cleaning systems, with a capacity to handle 500 t/hour of coal. Vysotsk acquired two tugboats from Dutch company Damen. The tugboats are capable of operating in ice as thick as 70cm.

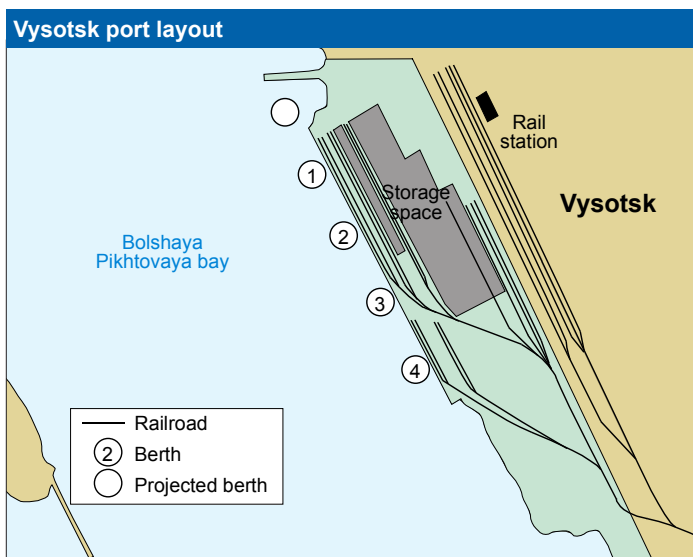
The port's covers an area of 34 hectares (340,000m²), of which storage capacity accounts for 22 hectares, including 15 hectares with concrete roofing. The port has a capacity to store 250,000t of dry bulk cargoes. The additional berth will require construction of a further 30,000t of storage capacity.

Vysotsk handles 211 railcars loaded with coal each day. These figure are set in a five-year agreement between state-owned Russian Railways (RZD) and the stevedoring company, which was signed in December last year. The port handled 176 railcars a day last year. The terminal has four locomotives to haul railcars from the Vysotsk export railway station to the port and also moves them within the port area. The railway tracks within the port have a combined length of 8.3km.

The Mantsinen-100 hydraulic manipulators discharge the coal from railcars in warm weather conditions in six minutes compared with 15-20 minutes for clamshell grabs. Over 70 railcars can be accommodated in the unloading area at any one time.

Alternative route

Vysotsk does not have any serious rail infrastructure problems. "It is difficult to judge the consequences of the launch of two more pairs of the Allegro high-speed passenger trains between St Petersburg and Helsinki, using mainly the same tracks as cargo trains to Vysotsk," Pavlov says. RZD has yet to implement plans to switch cargo traffic to alternative routes through the Karelia territory. Trains typically cross the route from Kuzbass to Vysotsk in 12 days, but can reduce this to eight or nine days if there is no rail congestion.



Port history

Vysotsk — formerly Trongzund — was first mentioned in 1640 as a Swedish customs point. It served as a preliminary stop-off point for the port of Vyborg for hundreds of years. Cargoes from Vyborg could be switched to bigger vessels from smaller ones at Vysotsk. Vysotsk served as Finland's largest timber harbour in the first quarter of the 20th century. It changed hands and shipped apatite from the Kola peninsula after the Second World War up to the 1960s. Vysotsk was restored in the 1980s as part of Vyborg, with new berths built and equipment installed. Vysotsk was registered as a separate port in 1995. The Vysotsk stevedoring company has been operating at the port since 2003.

Vysotsk is considering diversifying its cargo handling. "Talks with several companies are being held, but I will not reveal the details," Pavlov says. Vysotsk is a multipurpose port, so it can work with bulk and general cargoes.

Coal is considered an important cargo, but the port does not aim to become a specialized coal port. "We are not planning to build railcar dumpers in the port, but we cannot exclude this possibility at all. Everything will depend on the coal market situation," Pavlov says.

The port intends to continue upgrading its loading facilities. The terminal plans to acquire another hydraulic manipulator and replace the autoloader fleet. The purchase of other equipment is also under consideration, but a final decision will depend on talks with cargo holders, Pavlov says.

Vysotsk berths			
Berth	Cargo type	Length m	Depth m
1	General	140	12.7
2	General	164	12.7
3	General	164	12.7
4	General	213	12.7

