

STAY MOVING, STAY AHEAD

LBC Rotterdam's terminal manager, Mathias Potvin, tells *Tank Storage Magazine* how the company is positioning itself ahead of the curve



➤ WITH A history stretching back to 1999, LBC Rotterdam (Netherlands) is in a prime location for the tank storage sector. With excellent connections via rail, road, sea – all modes of transport – and dedicated pipeline to local industry, it's the perfect location to lead in the energy transition.

NEVER STAND STILL

LBC Tank Terminals took over the site from Dow 25 years ago, and has been working to expand and improve the terminal ever since. With a current capacity of 180,000 m³, LBC's expansion plans aim to almost double this capacity.

Phase 2 of this four-phase project ended in 2021, which included the construction of a centralised loading bay for trucks and two additional loading positions at the jetty, one for barges and one for ships and barges, plus 70,000 m³ of storage capacity. With an extra 86,000 m³ and blocktrain loading facilities, the third phase is aimed at meeting increased client demand that LBC Rotterdam anticipates in the wake of the energy transition. 'In this sector, when you stand still, you fall behind,' says Mathias Potvin, terminal manager at LBC Rotterdam. 'We want to compete with the best. We

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see the market demanding more storage capacity. We have the land available, so we're seizing the opportunity to grow.'

On top of adding actual infrastructure at the terminal, LBC Rotterdam is looking at different products it can store and process. 'We're driving progress in the circular economy, working with plastics recycling, for example,' says Potvin. 'LBC also recently joined Chemical Recycling Europe (CRE) as an associate member.

'I personally believe that green hydrogen as energy source is the future. However, demand in Northwest Europe will exceed the supply of hydrogen through electrolysis from local, sustainable energy sources such as solar and wind. Hence, hydrogen needs to be carried from areas where an abundance of solar or wind power is available.'

'More broadly, LBC is looking at energy carriers – ammonia of course, but others too,' says Potvin. 'It's not only a question of transporting the energy, but we're also looking at how we can help store the energy. Can we use flow batteries, lithium

batteries, etc? We have the land to store those energies and the carriers.'

SUSTAINABILITY & NET ZERO

While the energy transition is a key challenge, many terminal companies will also have their own net zero targets to meet. LBC Tank Terminals is leading by example here, having achieved a 5-star GRESB rating and Platinum EcoVadis in 2023. The company has the ambition to become CO₂ net zero for scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030, which Potvin is confident they can achieve.

'We are reducing CO₂ emissions as much as possible,' he says. 'Without a challenge, there's no win. Our goal is to achieve net zero for scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030. One way we're already making changes is by turning our steam boilers to more efficient ones. Making efficiency improvements while expanding is a complex but valuable opportunity.'

Potvin also highlights a change from vapour recovery units. 'We switched from combustion of vapours to a cryogenic condenser unit. In addition to this switch, we are investing more in vapour balancing.'

The key challenge that Potvin highlights is the need for an alternative to natural gas. 'Electricity is one alternative, but grid capacity is a barrier to wide-spread electrification,' he says. 'The government will need to invest a lot to make it possible, but LBC is ready when the grid is.'

The other main alternative fuel is hydrogen. 'Maybe I'm indoctrinated into it,' jokes Potvin. 'I believe there will be a network of hydrogen in Rotterdam, but connecting to this might have a high cost. It's here where the industry needs to work together for a solution. Costs will reduce massively and the possibility of success is likely to be way higher.'

Potvin also highlights that security of supply is going to be key in reaching net zero. 'There needs to be a change in philosophy on fuel,' he says. 'Collectively, we need more steady consumption to prevent irregular spikes. A flat consumption will prevent this – and that's where energy storage comes in, to provide security of supply.'

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

When it comes to improving the wider environment, LBC Tank Terminals has a range of employee and community initiatives. Starting in 2024, for example, LBC is offering employees access to affordable electric vehicle charging at 20 stations located at the terminal.

LBC also sponsors different organisations, such as the Sophia Children's Hospital and initiatives to minimise the impact of terminals on the environment. For instance, LBC has a long-term partnership with Natuurpunt, the largest Belgian nature conservation organisation focused on raising public awareness and increasing the scope for preservation and development of nature.

All of LBC Tank Terminals' sites have studied their own impacts on biodiversity.



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'The impact of our terminals on biodiversity is limited, but we do make sure to mitigate potential damage and support different organisations helping the environment,' says Potvin. 'The team also participates in World Clean-Up day, so we offer both financial and voluntary support.'

ACHIEVING A 5-STAR GRESB RATING

The GRESB scale refers to the Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark. But it has evolved into a much larger benchmark over the year. Potvin explains: 'This benchmark is very important to infrastructure investors – which is crucial when we're looking for investment to drive the energy transition forward.'

While LBC Tank Terminals already has a Platinum EcoVadis rating, the 5-star GRESB achievement is another feather in the team's cap. 'Achieving a 5-star rating requires dedication and continuous

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improvement,' he says. 'To stay on that high level, the company needs to improve itself every year – and we are up for the challenge.'

Because it's not completely focused on tank terminals, GRESB can provide a more holistic view of green targets. 'It also helps predict what will come next in terms of regulations, as it is further ahead than other measures. GRESB and EcoVadis also help us to understand what will come next in terms of sustainability. This forward-looking approach helps us to fine-tune our strategy,' says Potvin. For example, now that LBC has made good headway in terms of carbon emissions, water usage is the next focus area. 'It's all about anticipating the challenge before the problem arises,' adds Potvin.

ENTICING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WORKERS

'In the drive to find more talent, we see more young people are looking at sustainability when it comes to choosing a company to work for,' says Potvin. While more experienced colleagues retire and

take their years of expertise with them, a dwindling workforce is a huge issue that the tank storage sector is dealing with. Potvin acknowledges the paramount value of solid onboarding and continuous development through high-level training: 'More important than having the perfect skillset is being enthusiastic about joining our team. Our focus is on building a workforce where passion for our values drives success, fostering a positive and collaborative environment.'

Part of this is being transparent about sustainability. 'We're an open book,' says Potvin. 'We feel it's our obligation to society and the community to report on our emissions and work towards proper sustainable goals. If you understand what your impact on society and the environment is, you can see the evolution over time.'

'I believe every terminal should be reporting their emissions and ESG to be open and honest,' he adds. 'Not only that, but also it's to help change the perception of the industry. The outside world may view the tank storage industry as a polluting industry, and we can change this view by reporting on ESG in an open and transparent way. The chemical products we store play an important role in our daily lives, in shaping markets and in helping make our future more sustainable.'

For more information:

Mathias Potvin will be speaking at StocExpo on 12 & 13 March at the Rotterdam Ahoy. Scan the QR code below to register.



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- 02 Mathias Potvin, terminal manager, LBC Rotterdam