

LCT welcomes MSC's neo panamax vessel into Tilbury

Posted: 2016-08-16



PRESS RELEASE

LONDON CONTAINER TERMINAL WELCOMES THE FIRST NEO-PANAMAX VESSEL INTO TILBURY

London Container Terminal in Tilbury, along with the Port of London Authority (PLA), welcomed the inaugural call of MSC's neo-panama vessel to the Thames this week following her transit of the newly enlarged Panama Canal.

The MSC operated vessel, *Sofia Celeste*, has a capacity of over 8,800 TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units) and is the first in a new class of vessels deployed on a reconfigured service connecting the West Coast of South America, East Coast of North America and Northwest Europe. The vessel is the first to call into the UK after having transited the new Panama Canal.

LCT is the UK's largest reefer container terminal and one of the most efficient UK ports for handling containers. This new service from MSC into LCT comes as a direct result of the opening of the Panama Canal Expansion in June this year (2016) which now allows larger vessels to transit the famous waterway.

Commenting on the new service, **Ross McKissock, Head of Commercial from London Container Terminal** said: *“It is very exciting for us all here at LCT to see neo panamax class vessels in our port this weekend. The MSC Sofia Celeste marks a step change in connectivity for Tilbury’s customers offering much improved links to the growing S. American and Transatlantic market allied with access to Europe’s largest portside chill store which NFT opened at the port this year.”*

Natasha Griffin, Commercial Import General Manager for MSC, said: *“Following the recent opening of the expanded Panama Canal, we have created this new service for our customers. It allows larger vessels to transit the canal, directly linking the US and South America with Europe. We are delighted to have called into London Container Terminal, following the vessel’s first voyage through the Canal, and we look forward to further developing services of this kind in the future.”*

Captain Bob Baker, Port of London Authority (PLA) Chief Harbour Master said: *“It is excellent to see this ship arrive in the Thames – underlining our shared commitment with London Container Terminal to continue to grow trade and new business opportunities. The PLA continues to provide the modern pilotage and Vessel Traffic Service to ensure the efficient arrival of ships into this busy port.”*

The *MSC Sofia Celeste* was completed in 2014 and has an on-board capacity of 8,819 TEU’s, of which 1,462 can be used with refrigerated container plugs for transporting perishable cargo. The ship is the first to trade on MSC’s newly redesigned South America West Coast-USA-Northwest Continent service line, which makes stops in Chile, Peru, Ecuador and the Bahamas, Philadelphia and then Rotterdam.

16 August 2016

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Further information/images:

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Notes to Editors:

About The Port of Tilbury - the major Port to London and the South East

The Port of Tilbury is London's major port, providing fast, modern distribution services for the benefit of the south east of England and beyond. A dynamic and diverse port handling the full range of cargoes with specialist expertise in the handling of paper and forest products, containers & Ro Ro, grain and bulk commodities and construction and building materials.

Tilbury's strategic location makes it the natural point for distribution with 18 million people living within 75 miles. Serving the UK's market, the port offers customers excellent transport links to and from the capital and across the South East where over 50% of the population live and work.

The Port is a diverse multi-modal hub, covering over 1100 acres and is well positioned to access the M25 orbital motorway and the rest of the UK's national motorway network. In addition, there are direct rail connections within the Port, with access to the whole of the UK and dedicated barge facilities.

London Container Terminal (LCT) provides a unique combination of European Short Sea and Deep Sea services at the same facility. As the UK's third largest container terminal, Tilbury handles over half a million containers per year.

The London Construction Link (LCL) is a collaboration between the Port of Tilbury and S. Walsh, one of the leading construction solutions companies in London. The partnership is seeking to relieve congestion on the capital's roads, with associated cycling safety and CO2 benefits, through promoting greater use of construction consolidation and the use of the river for construction projects on or near the Thames. LCL builds upon the Tilbury's pedigree as the logistics and distribution hub for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and S. Walsh's success as the largest marine operator on the Thames. LCL is supported by British Cycling.

www.forthports.co.uk / www.londoncontainerterminal.com / www.londondistributionpark.com @forthports

About MSC

MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company S.A. is a privately owned global shipping company founded in 1970 by Gianluigi Aponte. As one of the world's leading container shipping lines, MSC operates 480 offices across 150 countries worldwide with over 60,000 employees. With access to an integrated network of road, rail and sea transport resources which stretches across the globe, the company prides itself on delivering global service with local knowledge. MSC's shipping line sails on more than 200 trade routes, calling at over 315 ports. For more information visit: www.msc.com