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Brussels promotes LNG bunkers for the Baltic

A EUROPEAN Union funded project promoting liquefied natural gas as a marine fuel, Magalog, is looking at the feasibility of improving an LNG bunker supply chain in the North Sea and Baltic Sea areas, writes Craig Eason.

The €1.2m (\$1.75m) project is backed by Gasnor, the Norwegian gas supply company, the local authorities in the port cities of Lubeck, Germany, and Swinoujscie, Poland, the Norwegian research institute Marintek and the environmental lobby group The Baltic Energy Forum.

Jorg Straussler, Magalog project manager and the initiator of the project, believes it is one of the most challenging projects in a long time.

"We strongly believe there is the case for LNG as a fuel in these sulphur emission restriction areas," he said "However, we have a chicken and egg problem. The LNG bunker terminals need to be in place before the ship owners will invest in LNG propulsion."

The project is looking at the feasibility of a small scale LNG bunker supply within six areas in the Baltic and eastern part of the North Sea, including Stockholm, Goteborg and Helsinki. The project is also set to examine the demand side, to identify

which vessels would be more likely to utilise LNG fuel. The likely candidates will be vessels which operate exclusively in the SECA regions: ferries and ro-ro vessels, offshore support vessels, coastguard vessels and other state run vessels.

The challenge is then to convince ship-owners to turn to LNG as a dedicated marine fuel.

The benefits of using LNG are well documented, with virtually no particulate or sulphur oxide emissions, and a dramatic reduction in NOx production.

The engines makers Wärtsilä and MAN Diesel are both promoting their dual fuel marine engines, although the majority of their sales currently appear to be for LNG carriers. However, there are a handful of vessels in service using LNG as a fuel. Norwegian ferry company Fjord1 currently operates an LNG-powered double ended ferry, *Bergensford*, while the Norwegian shipowner Eidesvik launched an LNG-fuelled offshore support vessel, *Viking Energy*, in 2003.

The Magalog co-ordinator, The Baltic Energy Forum, is planning a conference on energy efficiency, which will look at all aspects of vessel power, in Lubeck next year.