



Proudly South African power house launched in Durban

On 14 July 2010, Southern African Shipyards launched Tug *Pholela* – the first vessel of any size to be completely designed in South Africa. Named after a Drakensberg river, the 60 t bollard pull vessel will operate in the Durban harbour and is the fourth in a series of seven harbour tugs commissioned by the Transnet Port National Authorities (TNPA) for use in the Ports of Durban, Port Elizabeth, Ngqura and Richards Bay.

Tug *Pholela* was designed by Peter Volschenk, a long-standing affiliate of SA Shipyards with an established career in naval architecture. Similar to the other three



tugs already commissioned, *Pholela* was custom-made to extremely detailed specification and plans issued by the client TNPA.

Although being entirely indigenous in its design, Tug *Pholela* has been fitted out with the best of North European equipment, making it “virtually unbeatable” says Jurgen Cobarg, SAS’s General Manager of Ship Building. The Voith Schneider tug is powered by two 2380 KW MANL27/38 7 cylinder engines, enabling *Pholela* to reach top speeds of 12 knots and to handle the larger vessels now entering Durban’s expanded harbour.

The combination of Voith Schneider and MAN engines has proven vastly successful. In trials on the first tug commissioned by Transnet, *Shasa* exceeded the designed speed of 12 knots by a further 1.2 knots and beat the specified bollard pull by more than 10 tonnes.

Despite having a slightly smaller engine, the use of the MAN/Voith Schneider combination in Tug *Pholela* is expected to out-perform her specifications as well.

■ Jurgen Cobarg, SAS’s General Manager of Ship Building.

Suited for harbour usage

With full seagoing capabilities, the employment of Voith Schneider further enables *Pholela* to perform instantaneous movement without a mechanical delay.

This is ideal in a congested harbour environment such as the Durban port and has contributed to the excellent sea behaviour already displayed by the tug, sailing as stable and steady as “a duck in the water” as Cobarg describes.

The investment into excellence that *Pholela* represents, reflects the need for a general upgrade in harbour tugs across the board. “There is a strong demand for vessels of this quality,” explains Cobarg.

Despite providing the same robust services of the previous generation of tugs, “modern tug designs are aesthetically pleasant, very business like but at the same time they look and feel more elegant,” explains Cobarg.

For this reason, the engine room and bridge of *Pholela* are clean, efficient “digital masterpieces”, comprised of a multitude of touch screens and other digitally interfaced equipment. Siemens was the main electrical subcontractor for *Pholela*, following the company’s involvement in ship-building since the early 1970s. In turn, Siemens subcontracted all electronic work on Tug *Pholela* to Electrowave, while Grinaker Lta performed all cabling work.

The tug will be delivered to TNPA in September 2010. Following this, SA Shipyards will continue the launch of their last three tugs over the next six months: *Lotheni* in September, *Iphothwe* in January and *Lilani* in March.

The construction of these seven harbour tugs has provided SA Shipyards with an excellent platform to reinforce its status as a naval shipbuilder in Africa – an important move in light of the company’s ambitious plans to once again commence its naval shipbuilding activities.

Over and above the construction of *Pholela* and her six sisters, the company is currently pursuing more than R6 billion worth of further shipbuilding orders that are planned for South Africa within the next five years. These include patrol vessels for the South African Navy, tugs for the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) and a few more tugs for Transnet amongst other potential orders.

By Jodie Davies-Coleman