

The View From... Aliaga, Turkey

Turkey shines out as green recycling pioneer

HMS Invincible deal reflects decades of rising standards



LIZ MCCARTHY

NESTLED halfway along Turkey's eastern coast between the busy shipping lanes that pass Canakkale to the north and the tourist holiday destination of Bodrum to the south, is the town of Aliaga.

The bay here is the home of the country's shipbreaking industry, where the maritime industry meets the sandy Turkish beach.

Attention has been cast upon this town and the Turkish ship recycling industry it represents in recent months, as the former UK military vessel *HMS Invincible* was auctioned off at the start of the year by the Ministry of Defence to breakers here.

Following months of paperwork and preparation, the ship arrived in Aliaga last week and Leyal Ship Dismantling & Recycling, which won the bid, is scheduled to start work on it over the next few days.

Although it is not the largest ship Leyal has bought (it has recycled ships twice the size), the sale of the vessel from the UK government to Turkey is representative of how the shipbreaking industry can benefit two economies.

"The reception has been positive in both the UK and Turkey," says Leyal's Dimitri Ayyatoglu. "It is a rewarding feeling to have invested throughout the years on upgrading facilities and infrastructure, as well as participating in discussions at the International Maritime Organization, and have our efforts recognised by the UK government.



Final voyage: *HMS Invincible* arriving at Leyal Ship Dismantling & Recycling.

"It's actually a good synergy that we can offer a significant amount of money to the UK government in times when there are budgetary constraints and at the same time they can be assured we will do a proper job recycling the vessel, safeguarding our workers and the environment."

Turkey is often the forgotten country in the ship recycling industry as the international media pay far more attention to beaching methods used in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, which are often perceived to be dirty and unsafe. China offers more green facilities than countries on the Indian subcontinent, yet it also has been portrayed negatively.

In comparison, Leyal and the Turkish ship recycling industry have received positive coverage this year.

Turkish ship recycling yards, as a whole, have vastly improved standards over the last 10-20 years, introducing features including government-regulated waste management facilities and a centralised specialist asbestos company that works for the

Turkish Ship Recyclers Association.

These investments and improvements have been used as an example by the IMO as to how other recycling yards around the world can upgrade facilities. Last year a delegation from Pakistan visited Turkey to learn how they could move the Indian subcontinent's industry closer towards guidelines introduced as part of adoption of the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships in 2009.

However, it is not just government ministries that are finding Turkey a more attractive option for ship recycling, as companies increasingly consider their corporate social responsibility when selling a ship for demolition.

As fleet development becomes a hotter topic within the shipping industry, Turkey is attracting greater attention.

"The volumes we were seeing up until the first four months of the year have shown to be bigger than those seen last year and the year before," says Mr Ayyatoglu. "So if

the trend continues for the rest of the year of depressed freight rates and a great number of newbuildings coming in, we expect that this is going to be a much busier year than 2010 and 2009, and is probably going to be one of the busiest years on record."

Is this due to the sheer volume of vessels being sold for scrap, however, or because demand for green facilities in line with IMO guidelines is increasing?

"It's a combination of both," he says. "More vessels are being offered for recycling, so we have a piece of the global pie and as the pie gets bigger, our slice of it becomes bigger.

"But at the same time I think people are becoming increasingly aware of their options for green recycling and options that are closer to home."

There are around 20 yards in operation in Turkey at present. Last year they recycled 237 vessels that totalled 420,000 ldt, well up on the 127 ships of 300,000 ldt that were sold to the East Mediterranean country in 2009.

These numbers also represent a significant rise on the 73 ships of 150,000 ldt sold to Turkey for demolition in 2008.

All this tonnage is melted at mills close by in Aliaga and formed into steel cubes that are most often exported to other European countries, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and processed for an infinite number of uses.

This reflects an argument shared by the ship recycling industry as a whole that dismantling vessels is more sustainable to the environment than sinking elderly tonnage at the bottom of the sea and creating new steel by depleting natural resources.

So with *HMS Invincible* estimated to be fully dismantled within six to eight months, in a year's time you could possibly be buying or using an object recycled from this famous UK aircraft carrier. ■

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