

Hopes rising for fuel-saving sails



Bunker savings of some \$2,000 per operating day are claimed to be possible with Beluga's kite.

Bremen-based Beluga Shipping says it is targeting potential fuel savings of around \$2,000 per operating day when it ramps up wind power on its hybrid multipurpose (MPP)/project cargoship Beluga SkySails (built 2008).

The vessel recently completed its maiden double-transatlantic crossing following delivery from the Volharding Shipyard.

The auxiliary SkySails kite system is claimed to have harnessed up to five tonnes of power in force-five winds, some 20% of the main engine power, during repeated usage spanning a few minutes to eight hours.

If the system could be used around the clock, it would represent savings of around 2.5 tonnes of fuel, or more than \$1,000 per operating day, says Beluga.

Although the first kite deployed reportedly ran into problems, the owner is upbeat about the system after the 9,500-dwt Beluga SkySails arrived safely at Mo-I-Rana, Norway, after a nearly two-month round-voyage that started on 22 January in Bremen, Germany.

The 11,952-nautical-mile journey via Venezuela and the US used a 160-square-metre towing kite, which will be replaced after the 12-month testing programme with a 320-square-metre unit.

Beluga is talking about potential bunker savings then of \$2,000 per operating day, although much depends on the route and conditions.

It is intended to scale up to 600-square-metre kites on a pair of larger P-series Beluga ships of 20,000 dwt currently under construction.

The Beluga SkySails subsequent voyage involves transporting a wind-energy plant between Spain and the US. Much of its maiden voyage was used calibrating and adjusting the auxiliary wind system.

The computer-controlled installation is understood to have cost around EUR 500,000 (\$788,439). The Beluga SkySails bow has also been strengthened.

Testing is being co-funded by the European Union's LIFE programme.

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