

Zeppelin zip

Germany's Zeppelin Power Systems has teamed up with vessel wind power venture Skysails in a bid to promote its towing kite propulsion system.

It has taken a stake in SkySails which has pilot trials ongoing on two vessels of Beluga Shipping and Wessels Reederei.



Investment group Oltmann, which has been involved in arranging finance for SkySails, is said to have initiated the partnership which will be called Zeppelin SkySails Service-und Vertriebsges.

The move is in preparation for SkySails's formal market entry. Series production is scheduled to begin in 2009 with capacity claimed to be already booked one year ahead.

Although the system has its critics, SkySails claims that its towing kites can yield average fuel savings of between 10% and 35% depending on wind conditions. Between 60,000 and 100,000 existing vessels have potential to be refitted, it is said.

Zeppelin says it will use its sales and service network to market jointly diesel-wind hybrid power systems, including maintenance and service.

The parent Zeppelin Group, whose origins stretch back to airship pioneer Ferdinand Count Zeppelin, has been sales and service partner of US-based diesel engine manufacturer Caterpillar for more than 50 years. It employs 6,500 people globally.

Zeppelin Power Systems handles sales and service of MaK and Caterpillar marine and other engines.

Meanwhile, Wartsila has licensed the production of its RTA and RT-flex low-speed engines to China's CSSC-MES Diesel Co (CMD).

Production will be at CMD's factory in Shanghai, focusing on engines of 60 cm cylinder bore and larger.

CMD president Shuhei Mizuhara says signing of the agreement will ensure CMD becomes a leading ship equipment supplier to the Chinese shipbuilding industry.

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