



PORTLAND MARKET REPORT

“ENERGY NEVER SLEEPS”

May update

Over the Easter holidays, Portland and 3 mini-Portlands took a trip from Hull over to Rotterdam for a short break in the Netherlands. Not for us the beauties of the tulip fields, the stunning architecture of Amsterdam or the world-class art museums. No sir, clearly our priority was to explore Rotterdam's Europoort!

To travel the 40km from the mouth of the Rhine (Nieuwe Mass) to the centre of Rotterdam is akin to visiting some kind of industrial wonderland and really has to be seen to be believed - no written description can ever do justice to the sheer scale of economic activity. Here is Europe's largest container port, cheek by jowl with oil processing, steel works, power stations and every possible mode of transport going. As you drive inland, sometimes it feels that there are more barges travelling down the Rhine than there are vehicles on the road. Add to that the freight trains that pass every 5 minutes, every type of truck you could dream of, more wind turbines than you can shake a stick at, and you have one of the most exciting, vibrant industrial areas anywhere on the world.

At the absolute core of all this industrious activity is Rotterdam's oil and petrochemical industry. The city on its own has more refineries than the whole of the UK and as you drive along the main drag into the city, you are accosted left and right by these cathedrals of oil processing. In addition to the refineries, there are almost 40 chemical plants (manufacturing over 20% of Europe's total chemical production) and with the development of alternative fuels, there are now several new biofuels and biomass processing plants complementing the old school oil industries.

From its inception as a "Chamber" of the Dutch East India Company, Rotterdam has always been about international trade, so indigenous production only actually tells a small part of the city's story. In fact, it is the import and export side of Rotterdam that contributes to its long-held status as the largest port in Europe and 3rd largest port in the world (Shanghai holds the title for global



No 1, followed by Singapore). In 2018, a total of 470m tonnes of product was moved in and out of Rotterdam, via 30,000 sea-going vessel movements (that's over 80 ships a day!). 15% of this total volume is bulk movements (so circa 70m tonnes of coal, biomass, ore and grain) and 35% was container traffic (around 40,000 containers loaded and unloaded every day).

The remainder of the volume is liquid cargo (oil and oil related products) and to cater for this, the Port of Rotterdam has an incredible 23bn litres of oil storage capacity. This means that approximately 2,000 oil storage tanks stretch out as far as the eye can see and if the oil is not being stored ready for export around the world, it is awaiting import inland. Much imported volume travels by rail or truck, but by far the most common form of movement from Rotterdam is by inland waterway. There are circa 80,000 oil barge movements in Rotterdam per annum, of which about 20% serve the port itself, with the remainder heading into the heart of Europe via the river Rhine.

The magnitude of operations is not only mind boggling, but also a testimony to man's invention and innovation. Team Portland (Junior Division) were understandably keen to get on with the more standard Dutch tourist fare of bikes, canals and pancakes, but the industry and energy of Rotterdam Port truly makes it a modern wonder of the world. And as most Rotterdammers are keen to point out, it was their city, rather than Amsterdam that made the Netherlands the global economic powerhouse that it is today, and the port's

continued success is fundamental to Holland's high standard of living and unsurpassed prosperity.

Numerous post-industrial communities around the developed world will testify that the transition from old to new industry is a painful process, often leaving long-term social scars. Just go and visit the old ship-building towns of the North-East or the mining villages of South Wales to see what happens when old-school manual jobs disappear, with no adequate replacement or provision for new employment. In contrast, the Port of Rotterdam directly supports almost 400,000 jobs, many of which are highly paid, skilled labouring positions. That is an achievement that few developed cities can match and helps generate the kind of balanced economy that sets the Netherlands apart from most of Europe. Will the green energy revolution provide as many jobs for Rotterdam as the current state of affairs? Just one more massive challenge for the politicians of today as they come under pressure to move away from fossil fuels. If only it was as simple as just reducing CO2 emissions...

For more pricing information, see page 58

Portland Fuel Price Protection
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