Recently, Royal IHC took the bold step to build trailing suction hopper dredgers (TSHDs) for stock. The step may break down economic barriers for customers that carry out smaller dredging works. They often operate a few IHC Beaver® cutter suction dredgers (CSDs) – also available from stock – or are entrants to the market. If TSHD operations are required from such contractors, vessel financing and delivery problems can be solved by purchasing or chartering vessels from stock. However, the ultra-short delivery time may also be a big advantage for larger dredging companies.
The Easydredge® will come in three sizes, viz. the Easydredge® 1600, 2700 and 3700 (the numbers referring to the hopper capacity). Each model can be executed as either an Easydredge® Port Special, Easydredge® World Dredging, or Easydredge® Marine Aggregates. These distinctions clearly indicate the operations for which they are intended and the appropriate equipment package. More details will be revealed in later issues of IHC Insight.

The vessel currently under construction for stock is an Easydredge® 2700 (figure 1). It will be supplied with a World Dredging package, which includes bottom doors, a bow coupling and a suction pipe suited for a dredging depth of 25m. This makes her suitable for a wide range of tasks, from the maintenance of ports and channels to land reclamation.

The construction is being carried out by IHC partner MTG Dolphin’s shipyard (figures 2-3), while IHC delivers the design and all major components. The launch is scheduled before the end of 2014, with the delivery set for next summer.

The competitively priced Easydredge® should not be associated with the figurative meaning of the word ‘cheap’. On the contrary, she is BV classified for unrestricted navigation and dredging up to 20 miles off shore with unattended machinery space. The dredging installation is of IHC quality, and the navigation and control equipment comply with the operational requirements. She can be navigated by either one or two operators, thanks to an ergonomic control console and simple touchscreen control. The electric and hydraulic installations are basic and reliable.

Competitive pricing has been achieved by thorough standardisation throughout the whole range. Preferred suppliers have embraced this principle. Components have been rationalised, and are interchangeable and repeatedly used over all vessels – such as the bottom doors and their mechanism – while IHC Beaver pumps also serve the purpose of some Easydredge® types. This means that the standardisation of the vessel benefits from the whole of IHC’s product portfolio (figure 4). No cabling is required on the suction pipe. Propellers, dredge pumps, jet pumps and the four-channel bow thruster are directly diesel-driven.

Consequently, not only is it a competitively priced vessel, but also a very straightforward dredger, easily understandable for the operators and technical staff. It may be a slight exaggeration, but if a person can understand a diesel engine, and basic electrics and hydraulics, he can maintain an Easydredge®.

Notwithstanding the standardisation, rationalisation and ‘keep it simple’ approach, every Easydredge® is fit for the operations it was designed for. To accommodate future extensions, space, stability and buoyancy have been reserved for standard options, such as jet water on the draghead, spud poles or TDS (Tonnes of Dry Solids) measurement, as well as customer-specific options. Such extensions can be added in the construction stage, but also afterwards, during the lifetime of the vessel, when dictated by particular operations. Flexibility and standardisation are the keywords, not rigidity.

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Conclusion

By launching the Easydredge® IHC is able to supply any type of TSHD, from the smallest standardised and mid-range IHC Beagle®, to large vessels following customer specification. With the first stock TSHD being operational in around eight months, customers can knock on the door and have the ship to start operations immediately. There are more options. For example, she can also be chartered for one-off dredging jobs, or may function as the ‘forerunner’ while another dredger, which fits the customer’s wishes, is purchased and under construction. This means that the dredging company can still make money, while the actual asset is being built. Not simply building a ship, but solving an economic problem – that is the innovation, materialised in Easydredge®.