

Interesting times for  
Contract Managers  
in offshore



# Index

05

Helping to build  
the largest  
offshore wind  
farm in the world

## News

04 News

## Expertise

05 Theme

14 My job, my passion

## Projects

15 Offshore Wind

16 Civil &amp; Industry

## Culture

20 HSE

21 Sustainability

22 Young talent

## passion

Magazine of Smulders

### Smulders

Hoge Mauw 200  
2370 Arendonk, België  
Tel: +32 14 408 102

**Publication Manager** Raf Iemants

**Coordinator** Britt Weckx

**Editorial staff** Katrien De Vocht,  
Britt Weckx

### With the cooperation of:

Lieven Van Hileghem, Alan Evans,  
Johan Bellen, Carla Wellens,  
Tim Balcaen, Geert Boutsen,  
Rick Mertens, Ton van der Hagen,  
Jacek Kuchta

### Photos

Smulders, Manora Logistics,  
Crossing Zebra

### Design

Pixeo, digitale raadgevers

### Printed by

Drukkerij Gewa



# Extraordinary times. We toughen up and we carry on.



**Our order book is still quite full and projects are running at full speed. We are proud of our team. The fact is that the period ahead will be one of alertness, tackling challenges and managing risks.**

The war in Ukraine is worrying us. It affects us deeply on a human level - we have 120 Ukrainian employees working in our group. In the meantime, we have provided shelter and support to some 20 families in Poland. Specific relief actions are to follow soon.

The economic and political impact is also quite significant. Costs are rising, everything is becoming more expensive. As a result, orders risk being cancelled. Unfortunately, there's no way to predict this. It is a matter of conjecture, where we look at our political leaders who have to take action. The availability of basic materials is also a serious concern. Without steel, there's not much we can do. Our people are working proactively and the purchasing department is doing everything possible to place orders on time.

In the meantime, it is full speed ahead at Dogger Bank Wind Farm. Phase A is well advanced and we are starting phase B. Dogger Bank C will start next year. In the end, we will proudly say that we have

realised a project the size of all the wind farms in Belgium combined. If we look at the substations, we have certainly taken some steps forward. From a steel construction point of view, all goes well. On the other hand, we are 'bridging' roads and waterways again in Leverkusen, Darmstadt and Zaventem.

As for HSE, there have been no major incidents recently, only a few minor ones. We must continue to play it 100% safe. We want to be extra vigilant. Together we can do it. The same applies to our leadership model, which we are also critically evaluating. We are investigating how to make our organisation future-proof. With the necessary self-reflection, resilience and continuous efforts, we are building tomorrow.

On behalf of the entire management,

**Raf Iemants**

Managing Director Smulders



# News

## Smulders, a company with a heart of gold



In the summer of last year, the region around Prayon, Belgium was hit hard by floods. Earlier this year, some Smulders colleagues, together with employees of other companies from the Kempen region, volunteers and students of the technical school PT2O, put the finishing touches to the reconstruction of the sports hall in Prayon.

The situation in Ukraine does not leave us unaffected either. At the moment, we are accommodating many families of Ukrainian employees in a hotel in Poland. Our colleagues at Spomasz also collected a lot of material for these and other families.

In Belgium, we are committed to creating short-term job opportunities for Ukrainian refugees in cooperation with the VDAB. For now, we already employ 2 Ukrainian refugees.

## On the agenda for this year:

- 27-30 September  
WindEnergy Hamburg
- 29-30 November  
Offshore Energy Exhibition & Conference

## Spectacular open day in Hoboken and Poland!

We organised some spectacular open days at our facilities in Hoboken and Poland!

In Hoboken, we had a track at height in our dry dock, a kids jump and a sky view.

In Polen, colleagues organised guided tours through the production facilities and lots of fun activities for young and old!



# Theme

## Helping to build the largest offshore wind farm in the world

**Project**  
Dogger Bank Wind Farm

**Customer**  
Dogger Bank Wind Farm is a joint venture between SSE Renewables (40%), Equinor (40%) and Eni Plenitude (20%). SSE Renewables is lead operator for the development and construction of Dogger Bank wind farm. Equinor will be lead operator for the duration of the wind farm's operational phase.

**Project production windows**  
A: March 2021 - November 2022 (95 foundations)  
B: January 2022 - November 2023 (95 foundations)  
C: February 2023 - December 2024 (87 foundations)

**Assignment**  
277 monopiles and transition pieces

**Steel**  
390 ktons (monopiles+ transition pieces)

**Item weight**  
550 tons

**Combined power**  
3.6 GW

**Dogger Bank, a grand name for a magnificent offshore wind farm. Weights, diameters, turbines: everything is 'huge' with the honourable purpose of providing 3.6 GW of green energy to 6 million British households. It's going to be impressive off the Yorkshire coast. Meanwhile, the production halls at Smulders are buzzing with activity – let's take a moment to measure the healthy stress at the site.**



## Meet the Project Assistants

### Michiel De Jaeger:

technical contact person (engineering topics), supervision Smulders Projects & deputy PM.

### Frederic Peeters:

subcontractors, river fastening for safe transport via pontoons, daily monitoring.

### Marie Richtsteiger:

external working platform, electrical package & supervision Willems



Production of secondary steel at Spomasz

## 277 foundations for Dogger Bank

Dogger Bank Wind Farm is being developed in 3 phases: Dogger Bank A, Dogger Bank B and Dogger Bank C. A and B were awarded to the Sif-Smulders consortium in November 2020, the contract for phase C was signed at the end of 2021. On the planning: 277 foundations, each consisting of a monopile (MP) and transition piece (TP). A serial production line, where phases A-B-C more or less succeed each other. For C, however, we will have to wait for 'Approved For Construction' status until February 2023.

Lieven Van Hileghem, Senior Project Manager: "Our partner Sif is responsible for the fabrication and delivery of MPs and primary steel for the TPs, as well as the storage of all foundation components at the Maasvlakte 2 terminal in Rotterdam. We produce the secondary steel and fully equip the TPs – assembling, coating and testing. Quite a challenge when it comes to planning and distribution among our branches. We couldn't do it without our dedicated team."

### The 5Ps

The project team has already come a long way. Phase A, for example, includes 95 foundations and the first delivery of TPs to the Maasvlakte took place in April 2022. The plan after that was: deliver at a rate of 3 TPs per week. Spomasz – where the secondary steel is manufactured – is a few weeks ahead of Balen and Hoboken and will already be immersed in Dogger Bank B at the time of publication. It's quite a challenge keeping an overview of these different phases and the interaction between our production sites.

Frederic: "Planning is key. And Lieven has made sure the 5 Ps are perfectly known. Proper planning prevents poor performance, and he is absolutely right. Good preparation has helped us overcome many potential problems. Every day, our team follows up on the planning: what happens with drawings, suppliers, purchases, etc. This was and is quite challenging."

Michiel: "Take the design. This was provided by the customer and we assisted where possible. Together with engineering and production, we made a feasibility analysis of the preliminary design. We have tried to make the design more 'mature'. In a way that it continued to meet the requirements, but that it could also be technically realised. B is a 95% copy of A and, if possible, we want to extend that to C as well."

### SUPER era

The waves can be famously powerful. Dogger Bank is the first project where SUPER foundations are used with extra reinforcement. Until now, the diameter of a TP was up to 6 or 6.50 m. The

**" The current success of the project is due to the entire Smulders team and their open communication. And we want to continue doing this. Full speed ahead."**



Load-out of the platforms at Willems



foundations we are making this time have an 8 m diameter, which has a direct impact on the weight. Whereas our biggest TPs used to weight 300 to 350 tons, the unit weight has now gone up to 550 tons. This also means that we are working at the limit of the Titan gantry crane used to lift the piles, which is one of the largest cranes in Western Europe. “We have entered the era of supersized foundations and we are already making plans for a crane that can exceed 1,000 tons. Because it doesn’t stop after Dogger Bank”, says Lieven.

With such superlative and unique projects, we also come up against the limits of our production halls. Good preparation and a lot of flexibility within our group help here, too. For example, what do you do when you have to make a platform with multiple levels?

#### Nice to haves

Our operations for Dogger Bank last longer than what we are used on a single project. There are also more eyes involved in terms of

contract management, quantity surveying and project document control. As long as TPs are not completely ready and offshore, design preferences may change. Nice to haves will always be there. At Smulders, we take care of that very much. It is always quite complex to implement later additions everywhere in the process and that therefore a whole change management story is involved. It also involves new purchases. It works both ways and sometimes it is necessary.

Lieven: “Recently, we had installed the first internal handrails. But when you held them, they did not feel strong and secure. We invited the customer and explained that an upgrade was necessary. Through collaboration and with our expertise in fabrication and the competence of the client design team a solution was quickly identified and implemented. Such a change is pure necessity, and we were allowed to make it – again this is due to good communication and a positive working relationship. ”

#### Cadence in balance

The state of affairs: there are not many complaints from the production yards. The majority of production drawings and materials are there on time. Production is running smoothly. Good to see what a rock-solid preparation can do. In principle, the last TPs from Dogger Bank A will be transported to the Maasvlakte in early November, immediately followed by the delivery of the TPs from Dogger Bank B, due to end in August 2023. After a short break, Dogger Bank C goes into production. It will be completed in 2024.

“We keep the cadence going, the workstations are synchronised, and the colleagues motivated”, concludes Lieven. “The current success of the project is due to the entire Smulders team and their open communication. We attach great importance to talking. Our emails are usually accompanied by a phone call or visit. And we want to continue doing this. Full speed ahead.” ■

Marie: “It is the first time we had to provide a double deck on the external working platform (EWP), i.e. a ring platform around the TP with an extra level as a landing area. We have adapted the production facility at Willems and created special teams to handle the final assembly and electrical installation entirely in Balen. Then onto the pontoon and conveniently over the water to Hoboken.”

**“ We have entered the era of supersized foundations.”**

#### Good to know

##### Why 87 foundations for Dogger Bank C, and not the original 110?

Because 13 MW wind turbines will be installed on A and B and initially also on C. However, 14 MW wind turbines will now be installed on Dogger Bank C. The capacity of the wind farm will be the same, but C will require fewer foundations due to larger capacity turbines. The combined capacity of 3.6 GW is more than the nuclear power plants Doel 1, 2, and 4 together (2.8 GW).

##### What if foundations get even bigger?

With Dogger Bank, we have noticed that our production halls are limited in size. Our painters are currently working literally and figuratively against the roof of the Titan Hall. For example, the Albert Hall in Hoboken was designed 10 years ago to build large jackets and now we are preparing it to produce ever larger TPs. Our facilities are being made fully future-proof.

##### Will Dogger Bank only produce energy when A, B and C are completely finished?

No, the project will reach its first power milestone in 2023.

##### Do you remember the Beatrice Offshore Wind Farm in 2016-2017?

For that project, we built 28 full jacket foundations and 18 additional soil sections a few years ago, also commissioned by SSE Renewables and already with Michiel as a young, starting assistant in our team. It was the start of his offshore career at Smulders. “Flying up and down to Newcastle often and having a good pint in the spare time. We can do it here too, of course.” - Lieven laughs.



## Interview

# Alan Evans

Marine Package Manager  
@ SSE Renewables –  
Dogger Bank Wind Farm

**SSE Renewables and its joint venture partners Equinor and Eni Plenitude are currently building the largest offshore wind farm ever, Dogger Bank. And let's be honest: the developers have gathered the best partners to do the job. A cooperation that grows stronger every day. Alan Evans on the progress of production, tackling challenges, confidence and growth.**

**Nice to meet you. Marine Package Manager on Dogger Bank, seems to be a fundamental role?**

"Nice to meet you too. To the world, we are Dogger Bank, and within that project, I do my job to the best of my ability. I manage everything related to the foundations for Dogger Bank phases A, B and C. From design and production to transport, installation, cables and scour. I have been on board at SSE Renewables for 15 years now and I have had 8 different positions within the company. Engineering, change project management, package management... these experiences serve me and the project team well. Considering that a wind farm stands on solid foundations, you could indeed call my role fundamental. But it does not stop there: the topside and the platform are other indispensable packages. They do not fall under my authority."



**Back to how the cooperation with Smulders started. What was your experience?**

"We have to go back several years, in fact, to when the 277 foundations were awarded. The Sif-Smulders consortium really had the best credentials. The budget is always a factor, but you don't want to take any risks in such a megaproject and you go with partners with a proven track record. We had previously worked together with Smulders, so we knew what to expect: a quality product and a successful cooperation based on trust and experience."

**The largest offshore wind farm in the world. What should we remember above all?**

"The innovative technology and the size, I would say. Innovative technology is the thread throughout the wind farm. Innovation in construction, equipment, transport with specially built vessels... never seen before. And everything is super-sized, we push the boundaries to what is maximally feasible. We obviously want to continue to grow in the future, that's also an important aspect for Smulders. We

**"We sometimes make adjustments to the design based on manufacturability feedback and you handle that constructively. The Smulders project team is strong in planning, communication and finding solutions."**

know that you are growing in parallel and are just as groundbreaking. That's really fascinating to see. Just remember that we are currently very satisfied with the smooth progress on Smulders' side."

**Positive story, nice. I'm sure there are some challenges too?**

"The challenges are more related to transportation and the new vessel that is being built for Dogger Bank A. The vessel is delayed but the teams worked hard to ensure we have a suitable alternative for load-out on schedule this Summer. Cabling, commissioning and start-up are tightly planned and it has been confirmed to us that this planning is still feasible. Another challenge is the commodity price and the availability of materials – as a Project Manager you have no control over that. No matter how well you have planned, some inventiveness and flexibility are required."

**Flexible switching and thinking. Do you feel this is also a match with Smulders?**

"Yes, this shows in your solution orientation. We provided the design and you reviewed it from a production point of view. If this results in a better product, we are happy to take that advice. The same goes in both directions. Keeping the design for Dogger Bank A, B and C consistent would be an ideal position, but lessons learned should always be implemented in some way. We sometimes make adjustments to the design based on manufacturability feedback and you handle

that constructively. Your project team is strong in planning, communication and finding solutions. It was great to catch up live recently during our working visit to your sites in Hoboken and Balen."

**Joint efforts for a greener world. How do you see the impact of Dogger Bank?**

"Dogger Bank is an important sign for our regions and the world to make every effort to achieve a carbon-neutral society. Smulders and all subcontractors are contributing to this. After that, it will then be a matter of finding the right balance. Where to build additional offshore wind farms, how big, grid infrastructure availability. What about intermittent supply, battery and pumped storage power plants? Many lines of thought."

**Finally... I'm quite curious to know what your next working week will be like?**

"Negotiating and following up on the vessels, so that we can be faithful to the follow-up planning, first of all for Dogger Bank A. Preparing everything for the construction at sea. But first I get to enjoy some holidays on a nice beach for a few days."

**Thank you for your view of the facts, Alan. Have a nice holiday and good luck for the times ahead.**





The first delivery  
of TPs took place  
in April 2022.



## My job, my passion

**Interview with  
Johan Bellen  
Maintenance Foreman  
at Willems**

# Mechanics everywhere

**You can expect our foremen to have a good deal of mechanical knowledge, to know how to motivate a technical team and to always find a way out of problems. A description that also typifies Johan Bellen, Maintenance Foreman at Willems in Balen and under the spell of rallying.**

### **When did you come on board and in what role?**

"That was about three years ago. I had the same job at an overhaul company and brought with me my experience in maintenance and electromechanics. My assessment must have been good, otherwise I would not be sitting here now. Keeping the machinery running and all kinds of maintenance tasks: really my thing."

### **Maintenance, seems like a very varied job??**

"Right, no two hours are the same. You never know in advance what can happen. I would even call it exciting. We maintain the machines, but also lighting, heating, plumbing, etc. In Balen, we have several maintenance people, including warehouse operators, an external handyman and external electrician, colleagues from automation and an

employee from another department who helps out when necessary. If something is broken, we respond quickly. Avoiding downtime of machines and production is our mission."

### **Solving technical problems is one thing. What about preventive maintenance?**

"Preventive maintenance has to be stepped up, to put it in maintenance terms. We don't always have time for it with the current staff. The biggest challenge is the age of some of the machines. Finding matching spare parts is not always easy."

### **How do you try to tackle that as a foreman?**

"Just thinking in terms of solutions and priorities. Work planning often includes extra time for bottlenecks such as machine breakdowns during production. That gives us room, but not too much. For example, the blasting result produced by the blasting machine was no longer 100% a while back. We had a week to replace the blades and in the meantime we seized the opportunity for major maintenance, which includes greasing and tightening the chains, and checking the hydraulics."

### **What if more is needed to keep the machines running?**

"Then we talk about investments to innovate and the management commits itself to this. A few years ago, for example, we invested in a new plasma table to burn shapes into sheets, as well as in a wireframe robot for steel cutting operations. These and other investments also help us to work more sustainably and safely."

### **What are you most proud of?**

"The team and our performance. Everyone is doing their job and knows what they are here for. When you see how we prepare a production hall down to the last detail for a project to contribute to smooth production, then I am hugely proud of our work. For example, Hall B for the start-up of Dogger Bank (277 TPs) was completely renovated, automated and equipped for the needs of the project. The times are still exciting and I have a lot of ambition for the future."

### **What do you do when you are not at the site in Balen?**

**" Mechanics are the thread that runs through my life. Whether at Willems or in my spare time. Let it run."**

"I am mostly involved in rally, which is my greatest passion. My wife no longer objects now that the children are getting older. Although this is something from way back. I started riding 23 years ago with my mate who had started rallying and I was his mechanic. That is how I got into it: first autocross, then rallycross and then rally. After an 8-year break, I recently started riding again. Rally really gets to you."

### **How exactly do we have to see this?**

"Autocross is what you do in the field. Rallycross is on a closed circuit and rallying is what you probably know from television: racing on paved and unpaved, often narrow, public roads. Adrenaline to the max."

### **Isn't it dangerous?**

"That depends on how fast you go and how good your steering skills are. Rally pilots are protected by a safety cage, bucket seat and 6-point harness. There is always a co-pilot with them who has to give good instructions. That's how I feel safe in my 'Historic car' Opel Manta, even though I reach a top speed of 195 km/h."

### **Have you won any prizes?**

"I do 3 or 4 rallies a year and it is more for fun. Let's say I am participating for the honour. In March I raced in Hainaut, but my car still had some teething problems. The brake line broke. The car has since been repaired and is almost ready for the next event."

### **At least you can keep tinkering on your rally car, isn't that fun?**

"That's how I see it. Mechanics are the thread that runs through my life. Whether at Willems or in my spare time. Let it run." ■



## Offshore Wind

It's very busy at the yard of our joint venture partner EQUANS in Hoboken where we're currently working on 4 substations! The jacket foundations for these substations are being built at the yard of Heerema in Vlissingen.



In the beginning of May, the offshore substation for TenneT's Hollandse Kust (noord) offshore wind farm was successfully moved out of the assembly hall of EQUANS in Hoboken. Sail away and installation is scheduled for this summer.



Also the second substation we're building for TenneT for the Hollandse Kust (West alpha) offshore wind farm, is currently under construction in Hoboken. Construction will be ready in the spring of 2023.



Early June, the load out of the substation topside and jacket for the French offshore wind farm Saint-Brieuc took place. The topside and jacket left the yard Hoboken and Vlissingen later that month.

## Smulders wins secondary steel contract for Gode Wind 3 and Borkum Riffgrund 3

Smulders will fabricate and supply the secondary steel elements for the 23 TP-less foundations and 1 Offshore Substation foundation for Gode Wind 3 and the 83 TP-less foundations for Borkum Riffgrund 3. We will supply the boatlandings, external ladders, suspended internal cages (SIP-units) and the anode cages.

Production will take place at our Polish facilities.

## Sif- Smulders Joint Venture signs Contract with EnBW

Smulders, in joint venture with Sif, will manufacture 64 Transition Pieces for the EnBW He Dreiht offshore wind project. Production starts in March 2023 at our yard in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. The last load out is scheduled for April 2024. The transition pieces are up to 30 meters high and close to 8.5 meters in diameter.

## Civil & Industry



Henneaulaan

## We are building the bridges of tomorrow

Apart from our offshore projects, we also have some exciting bridge projects.

We're currently building 2 bridges in corten steel at the Henneaulaan in Zaventem. During the night from 25 to 26 June, the first (of two) brand-new corten steel bridges was placed right next to the existing bridge on Hector Henneaulaan.

We also have 2 projects in Germany. In Darmstadt, the Südrampe is as good as ready, as well as the Nordrampe. Various bridge parts will be put in their final position this summer. The last bridge will be ready in the first half of 2023.

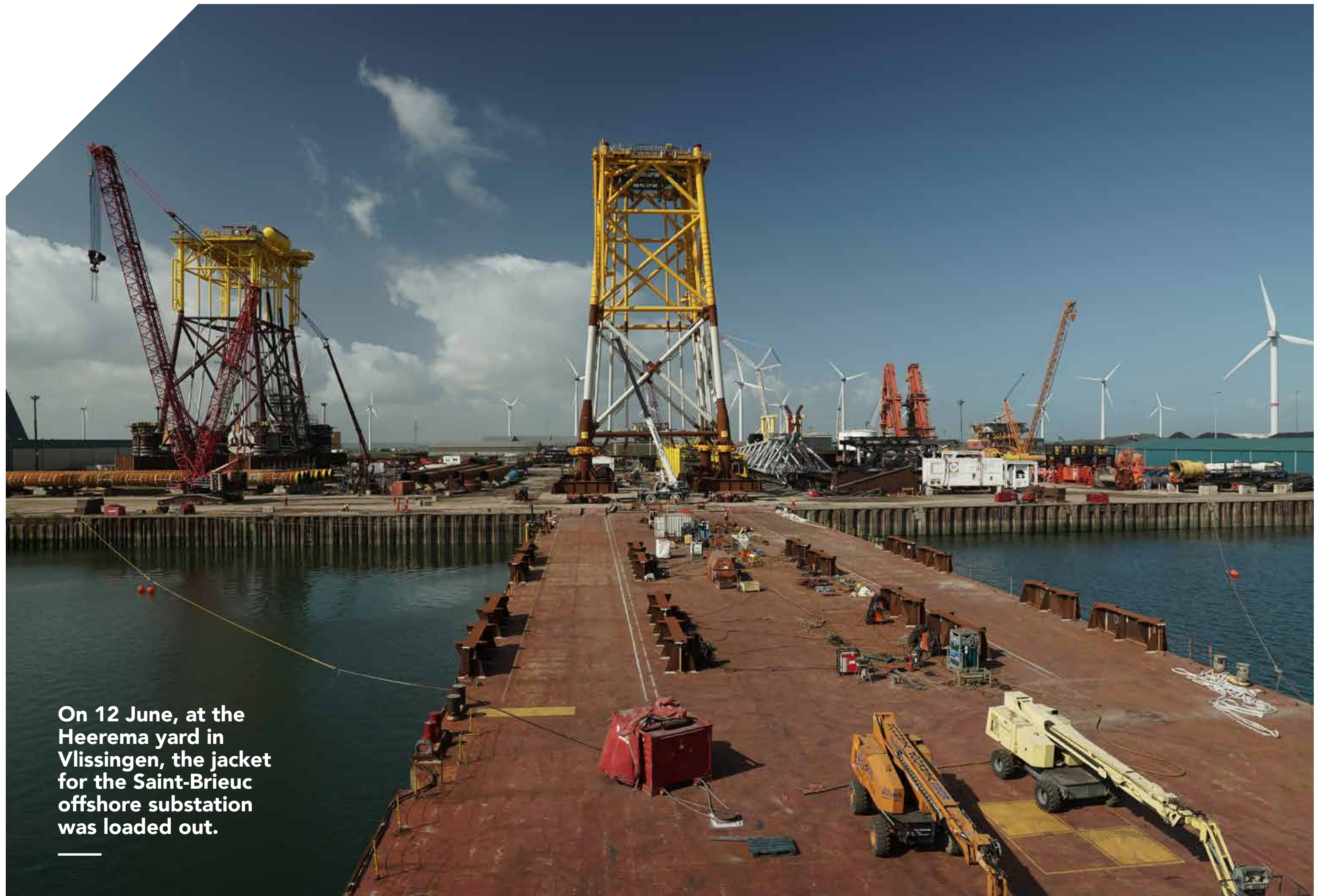
For the new Rheinbrücke in Leverkusen, lemans is responsible for the production and delivery of 3,425 tons steel. Almost half of the bridge parts were already delivered at the yard.

Eiffage Métal is currently building the bridge across the Seine between Saint-Denis and L'Île-Saint-Denis as part of the Olympic village for Paris 2024. Smulders supplies the steel bridge parts. Transport of the final parts is scheduled for July.



Darmstadt





On 12 June, at the Heerema yard in Vlissingen, the jacket for the Saint-Brieuc offshore substation was loaded out.

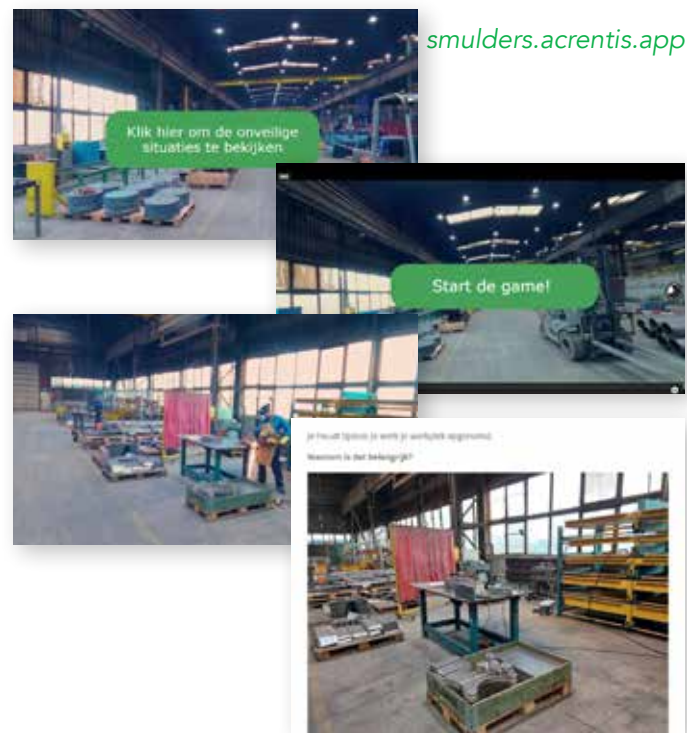


# Training with impact

More interaction for more safety. With this in mind, several initiatives were launched last year that will continue in 2022. Real-life cases taken from life@Smulders, with valuable input from the shop floor – that is the best motivator. And we indeed expect an impact.

## Boosting leadership

One of these initiatives is about presenting with impact. An analysis of the B-SAFE tours and talks with our foremen/supervisors show that the information from the toolbox meetings does not always stick. How can we solve this? We should maybe make it all a bit more interactive. And how can you handle this as a foreman/supervisor? During a training course, our front-line managers are now given concrete tools, especially communication tips, that they can use both at home and within their teams. Win-win for everyone. We organise these training courses in all our branches.



## This is what the participants say about a recent training course on presentation techniques for toolbox meetings...

- "I feel better at work as well as in my private life now. It's how you say something that does it."
- "It is one of the better courses I have ever taken."
- "Open questioning and body language, it really helps!"

## Safety game resumed

After the success of the interactive games in 2019, we are reviving this initiative with another partner and – after two years of silence – we are now building a new module. Our Zary colleagues had the honour to kick it off.

What is this interactive game again? On the basis of a 360° picture with good/bad situations in the employee's own workplace, we can check if the employee can make the right assessment and learn from it. At the end, there is an extra review round to explain wrong answers. The e-learning will be available in 8 languages and every employee of our production sites will have access.

Start the game & have fun while learning! ■

# Sustainable business is more than reducing CO<sub>2</sub>

Everyone talks about the aim of becoming CO<sub>2</sub> neutral and many of our initiatives are also related to this engagement. That's definitely a good thing, but we would almost forget that, apart from the CO<sub>2</sub>, our business is also sustainable in other ways, and that we are rewarded for it!

## GOLD by EcoVadis

We were recently granted GOLD status by EcoVadis, an independent rating agency and one of the largest and most reliable providers of sustainability ratings worldwide. On an annual basis, the organisation evaluates social practices, environmental actions, ethical policies and the implementation of sustainable purchasing criteria in companies. More than 80,000 companies have been screened by EcoVadis, including Smulders's recent assessment. It turns out that we are in the top 5% and therefore we score a gold medal.

## HEROES for the LOCALS & for UKRAINE

We have seen social engagement all around us in recent months. Making a difference to people and society, both locally and further away, is what we are all about. Every little helps.

- **Container units for Chiro youth movement**  
During the storm in February, a tree fell on the premises of Chiro Zwaneven Oud-Turnhout (Belgium). The verdict: no longer fit for use. In order to bridge the period until the construction of the new building, Smulders is now making an old modular site canteen available.

## Help Ukraine

In recent months, we have organised actions at our offices in Poland to help the families of Ukrainian employees. In the meantime, we have been able to provide temporary shelter in a hotel for 39 families. We also collected relief goods, and a company car was taken from Balen to Poland to be used there.

## To be granted a sustainability medal, you have to achieve these scores:

- **Platinum**  
top 1% (algemene score tussen 75 en 100)
- **Goud**  
top 5% (algemene score tussen 67 en 74)
- **Zilver**  
top 25% (algemene score tussen 56 en 66)
- **Brons**  
top 50% (algemene score tussen 47 en 55)





## Young talent

# Interview with Rick Mertens & Geert Boutsen

Contract Managers  
Smulders

**A Master of Law or legal experience does not necessarily mean you have to work at the bar. If you want it a little more challenging and international, you should definitely enter the business world. Or better still: the offshore industry. Preferably at Smulders, where a dynamic role as Contract Manager awaits you. This is what happened to Rick Mertens and Geert Boutsen. These young men found their dream job and this is why.**



The job of our Contract Managers starts right after the contract is signed. A matter of legal support for project implementation and monitoring contractual obligations in the best possible way. Quite serious business and anything but boring.

### Diplomacy at its best

Rick and Geert: "Of course we do a lot of analysing and anticipate on possible contract deviations, but a Contract Manager does much more than that. We contribute strategic insights, we look after the commercial interests of the group and we see to it that each party - the company, the client, subcontractors - respects all the agreements made. It is also about building a relationship of trust with the customer, so that our position is not challenged legally or commercially. Call us modern diplomats, if you like. We give lots of advice to our Project

Managers, we keep talking to the customer and solve any differences of opinion or other issues pragmatically. Bring matters before the court? Preferably not. Everyone benefits from a project that is completed according to the highest quality standards and ... on time."

### No back office function at all

The Contract Managers depend on the progress of a project and are jointly responsible for a successful end result. They are not in an ivory tower, and communicate with all the different parties. If something goes wrong, our Engineers and Project Managers rely on Geert and Rick to subtly relay their technical case, with a commercial touch, to the customer. Doing this requires an eye for detail and stress resistance. As a Contract Manager, you are as close as you can be to the project team. This can be in Hoboken, in Arendonk or elsewhere.

Geert: "At Smulders you are not hidden away in the back office. You get the opportunity to step into the limelight, where you are given freedom and the chance to participate in strategic meetings. A visit to the customer is worth its weight in gold. A proactive approach will take you the furthest. Say what you have to say and make your mark. Learning is in your own hands, there are plenty of opportunities. For example, later this year I'm going to our yard in Newcastle to see the production of a project up close - I'm sure I'll be learning quite some technical stuff there."

Rick: "When you start working here, you are sure to receive adequate coaching as well, as Geert and I experienced during our induction period at the end of 2019. There is a very open atmosphere and the collegiality is enormous. You can ask anything, there is a lot of expertise within the group. Little by little you are set free, it is a natural process. In a previous job I worked as a tax consultant, Geert comes from the legal profession. Our analytical skills are also quite useful in our current job and we are very eager to learn. A high degree of independence is a must.

**"Contract Managers are like diplomats. We keep talking and looking for pragmatic solutions."**

Rick and I each work on a different project, while there is a certain level of cross-pollination and we report to our manager every 2 weeks."

### Eager to win

Rick and Geert's contractual game is far from over. The duo is driven by their winning mentality and customer focus - typical Smulders. There is the 'unpredictability' factor and this is what keeps the job of Contract Manager extremely interesting. Every day brings something different. No matter how complex, there is a solution for every problem.

Geert: "We have a nice and solid job. Work hard, play hard. So yes: we still have time for sports and recreation, for our friends or for a cosy chat with colleagues between drinks (also teamwork!). We are at the beginning of our careers and things are looking good. We contribute to a green future."

Rick: "The demand for renewable energy is exploding. The wind industry is booming. We are really proud that there is a great deal of knowledge in this field in Europe and within Smulders. Certainty all round, and we are given every opportunity to grow further. Interesting times for us and also for new (young) talent. Because we are looking for plenty of additional Contract Managers to strengthen our team." ■



