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Open for business: major steps forward at Falköping dryport site

The development of a new dryport at Falköping has taken a massive step forward with the completion of rail links and the opening of a brand new forest products terminal.

The creation and expansion of Skaraborg Logistic Center is the key vision of the Swedish partners who are leading the European Union Dryport project; the new facility could ultimately cover 70 hectares and serve as a dryport/railport for the Port of Gothenburg and other regional harbours.

This month (January) the partners are celebrating two milestones:

- Stora Enso has opened its brand new, purpose-built forest products terminal adjacent to the dryport site; the Swedish forest products giant is using the facility as a very significant hub, bringing in timber by rail from western Sweden and then delivering it to its paper mills and plant in mid-Sweden. The finished paper is later exported, much of it through the Port of Gothenburg.
- The dryport site now has direct rail links to the Swedish main railway network and all other basic infrastructure is in place; once rail signalling works are completed in the next few months, this opens up major opportunities for rail-linked dryport and logistics activities at the Skaraborg facility.

“We have nearly completed our infrastructure investments and the new forest products terminal is the first established operation within our new logistics area,” says Leif Bigsten, manager for strategic development for the municipality of Falköping.

“Now we have the basic infrastructure in place, we can take the next step, actively selling new area, and working to attract new companies to the site. Of course, the Stora Enso establishment is essential in showing other potential customers the possibilities.”

Falköping is working closely with the region of Västra Götaland, the lead partner in Dryport, to develop the Skaraborg site.

The first phase, which could accommodate up to 60,000 sq m of warehousing and terminal buildings, is ready and work has already started on the second phase, which could be ready within six to eight months.

“We are seeing interest and have had contact with several companies already, including other paper/forest products operators; if they do decide to come to Falköping, we will need to have the

new phase ready sooner than we might have expected,” says Leif Bigsten. “We are seeing a lot more interest now in using rail and in using Falköping, and we need to be prepared.”

The Skaraborg project had scarcely begun when the world plunged into economic crisis, and a slowdown was inevitable. But the signs are now very positive, he says: “It is a new start.”

The Dryport partners will be promoting the facility at Munich logistics fair in May, where they expect to meet many companies and businesses with interest in Skaraborg Logistic Center.

They are also watching closely as the Port of Gothenburg moves ahead with the privatisation of its main terminals. The ro-ro terminal has already been taken over by a joint venture of DFDS and Cobelfret, and this year concessions are being submitted for the container terminal.

“We see this as a real opportunity,” says Leif Bigsten. “We hope that the private company taking over operation of this terminal will see the business opportunities of using the dryport in their system. We believe that this could be a great possibility for us.”

Note to editors:

“Dryport – a modal shift in practice” is a three-year public/private sector project set up with Interreg IVB North Sea Region funding to examine the way in which hinterland intermodal freight transport hubs can best operate to cope with current and future traffic flows and the challenges of port congestion.

The project was launched in Gothenburg in September 2008. Partners work individually on their own projects and together at workshops, seminars and port visits.

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