

Editorial

The tide obeys neither Prince nor Crown, twice a day it goes up and down". This is a translation of an old, Dutch proverb, and no doubt most sea-bordering languages will have a similar one. Viking warrior Canute (Knud) the Great, who became king of England, Norway, Denmark and Sweden, was also aware of the unstoppable rhythm of the tides. To teach his obsequious courtiers that even he had his limitations, he had his throne carried to the seashore, sat upon it whilst the tide came in and commanded the waves to advance no further, declaiming, "let all men know how empty and worthless is the power of kings..."

Sailing a yacht in NW Scottish waters this northern-hemisphere "summer", tidal rhythm and its accompanying currents governed plans for my voyage, demonstrating again the great potential for this predictable source of renewable energy. It may contribute significantly to meeting the twin challenges of climate change and security of supply. Marine-renewable energy, both generated by tidal stream and by waves, not only produces very low-carbon, environmentally friendly and sustainable energy but also works for our business. For example, it will require spatial planning, as it can affect the present use of the sea. Baseline information will be needed for environmental-impact – assessments, planning and installation of devices or creating artificial tidal lagoons, electricity cables etc.

The skills and experience of our industry will be used to build the new marine-energy industry on, as King Canute recognised, a predictable source of energy. As long as we have our systems in order, the moon and sun will govern the tides and take care of the rest. Besides tidal streams there are ocean currents. Out at sea or walking along the beach, look out for evidence of this in the form of bath toys: ducks, turtles, frogs and beavers. A container ship lost 25,000-plus of them in mid-Pacific in 1992. They have since been spotted on the West Coast of America, Alaska, Siberia, Japan and Iceland. And according to OSCURS (Ocean Surface Current Simulator) some may be washed ashore on the coasts of Western Europe in 2007. Distributor and collectors are apparently willing to pay considerable sums for these "toys with a story" (1). Both toys and "scientific beer drinking" (see Hydro International, June 2006) are examples of "measuring" ocean currents by drift. Yes, I too am aware of the high-tech solutions for measuring ocean currents (we have given space to this and will continue to do so) but this flotsam is attracting public attention and offers a unique opportunity to talk about our profession. By way of balance, this issue contains technical, theme-related articles.

The product survey in this issue covers ECDIS-ECS+ systems. In relation to this survey it is relevant to note that discussions in International Maritime Organization (IMO) safety of navigation sub-committee meetings at the end of July failed to produce any firm decisions on whether electronic chart display information systems (ECDIS) should be mandatory fitments on SOLAS-vessels.

Enjoy reading,

Leeke van der Poel, leeke.van.der.poel@reedbusiness.nl