



Press release

Le Havre (France)
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The Wood Up tower relies on river transportation during its construction

In order to obtain supplies of wood for the construction site where the 17-floor Wood Up tower is being built in the 13th arrondissement of Paris, REI Habitat, a property developer specialising in French wood construction, has been making use of river transport. Wishing to bring prefabricated wood components right into the heart of the capital site in complete safety and with no environmental harms, HAROPA PORT, the VNF (French Waterways Authority) and SOGESTRAN LOGISTICS have been working alongside POULINGUE, a company, to implement two innovative solutions based around containers and a self-discharging pontoon barge.



Caption: transfer by SOGESTRAN LOGISTICS's Zulu barge of wood components for the Wood Up tower under construction in Tolbiac. Credit: © HAROPA PORT – Nautilus. [HR pictures on this link](#)

Construction of the Wood Up tower began in July 2022. The tower is a project led by property developer REI Habitat and designed by LAN Architectures, and it will be 50 metres high with 17 floors, 14 in wood, and house 132 apartments along with a communal kitchen garden, a deck for socialising on the top floor and a lounge space on the eighth floor. Once its construction is finished just next door to the Pont National bridge, the Wood Up tower will be one of the world's tallest wood towers. In 2021 it was acquired by Gecina, a listed real estate firm.

For the transportation of the building materials to the worksite, Normandy construction firm POULINGUE CONSTRUCTION, a specialist in wood structures, opted, along with its partners, to use the river. This decision was in line with their intention to reduce the project's carbon footprint. The building's beechwood columns, sourced in Normandy's forests, were carried on the Seine to a location near the worksite. In all, 14 deliveries were organised.

Operations to bring such oversized materials into the heart of the capital city made use of two innovative

solutions implemented in recent months by SOGESTRANS LOGISTICS in collaboration with the VNF and HAROPA PORT:

Two FlexiMalle FM40' containers. FlexiMalle containers are latest-generation models designed and developed by SOGESTRAN LOGISTICS. Their reduced weight of 2.1 tonnes (approximately half the weight of similar transportation units) and a carrying capacity of 7 tonnes, plus a flexible structure (the sides are moveable and can be folded down), make them a novel solution for river transportation of high-volume cargo, and in particular for carrying prefabricated wood components.

With its flexibility and compatibility with the specific constraints of multimodal transport, the Fleximalle has confirmed its economic value for the development of river logistics, particularly in urban areas.

For the Wood Up project, two FM40' FlexiMalles were used to meet the delivery schedule for the construction site, with each FlexiMalle capable of taking 24 beechwood columns on two levels. The river logistics was based around regular container services between Le Havre and Gennevilliers followed by transport from Gennevilliers to the worksite, after being picked up by a self-discharging barge operated by SOGESTRAN LOGISTICS through its subsidiary BLUE LINE LOGISTICS.

An innovative, virtuous river-based solution

This turnkey, 100% river-based logistics solution offers numerous advantages: reduced CO2 emissions and fewer environmental harms for Paris area residents, along with greater safety, speed and just-in-time delivery, plus the competitive performance of the river logistics chain (secure in-port buffer stocks and flexibility), and improved goods traceability, the whole system also being aligned with a short supply chain philosophy applied here to the French wood industry.

The logistics chain is straightforward: the beechwood columns are packed in FlexiMalle containers at POULINGUE's production site. The containers then go by road to Rouen port for loading on a daily river transport service operating between the ports of Rouen and Gennevilliers. At Gennevilliers, the FlexiMalle containers are transhipped to a ZULU self-propelled barge, a self-discharging barge platform, for transport into central Paris. The ZULU barge then docks at Tolbiac port where the beechwood columns are loaded for final-kilometre delivery on to a heavy goods vehicle that runs on LNG.

Keeping to schedule

The first delivery by FlexiMalle took place in July 2022 at Tolbiac quay (13th arrondissement in Paris), with the ZULU barge discharging its cargo using a crane from the barge deck to a truck bed. The 14th and final delivery was completed on 31 March 2023.

"River transport is the logistics of the future, especially for our construction sites in central Paris. We are preparing for the future by starting today to reduce our transport-related CO2 emissions and anticipating the future imposition of regulatory controls on access to Paris city centre, which will be a constraint for our worksites over the coming years." **Victor Fraboulet, Project Manager at POULINGUE.**

"From the outset, the VNF (French Waterways Authority) has supported the wood industry's emergence in the construction sector. Rapidly and logically, river transportation and the wood industry have identified the value of working together, aware of their individual contributions to improving the carbon balance of building works and the obvious advantages of collaboration. This flagship operation is yet another illustration of that fact." **Juliette Duszynski, head of the VNF department for waterway development in the Seine and downstream Loire basin.**

"Wood is one of the Seine's important industries from both the maritime and river standpoints. HAROPA PORT supports its development: it is destined to expand to meet growing demand for biobased materials in cities and local regions." **Olivier Ferrand, HAROPA PORT's director of port flows and industries.**

"The Seine is part of the identity of the 13th arrondissement. Our goal of linking the river to the city is now very much a practical reality and will become even more so in the future. It is central to the "Paris Rive Gauche" project and is also at the cutting edge of multistorey wood frame construction. Given this, carrying wood supplies via the Seine has self-evident ecological advantages, providing a demonstration that will lead on to further deployment to meet the goals and issues surrounding decarbonisation." **Jérôme Coumet, Mayor of the 13th arrondissement and Chair of SEMAPA.**

About HAROPA PORT

The ports of Le Havre, Rouen and Paris form the “major Seine Axis river and sea port authority”. As the fourth largest North European port complex, HAROPA PORT has connections to every continent based on an international maritime offering in the very first rank (calls at nearly 600 ports). It serves a very extensive hinterland centred on the Seine Valley and the Paris region, together constituting France’s biggest consumer catchment area. From Le Havre to Paris, the port complex can point to 2.5m sq. m. of logistics warehousing currently in service and over 1m sq. m. of available warehousing space. HAROPA PORT provides a transport and logistics system capable of proposing holistic, end-to-end and decarbonised service offerings. It generates annual maritime and river traffic of nearly 110m tonnes, representing approximately 160,000 jobs.

About POULINGUE

POULINGUE Construction is a company in the Poulingue Group, a construction business located in Normandy, France. Our company has been working with wood for 70 years now and over time has developed the capacity to execute complex projects and large-scale operations for customers in both public and private sectors.

We are committed to protecting the environment and we innovate to reduce the carbon footprint of our activities using new designs such as wood/straw construction, river transportation and materials reuse.

About SOGESTRAN LOGISTICS

SOGESTRAN LOGISTICS are experts in transport solutions using French and European navigable waterways. Through its integrated engineering design department and subsidiary BLUE LINE LOGISTICS, the owner of its barges, our group has developed river-based urban distribution solutions that are innovative and competitive for final-kilometre delivery using craft that have been specifically designed (in terms of size, cargo-carrying capacity and propulsion) to operate on quays in urban settings (self-discharging crane, ease of handling).

SOGESTRAN LOGISTICS is helping define, quantify and optimise the societal and environmental balances made possible by this ecological mode of transport, one that forms part of the objectives of public policy on mobility and transport organisation.

About the VNF (French Waterways Authority)

Staffed by over 4,000 personnel at the service of river mobility, Voies Navigables de France maintains, operates and develops Europe’s biggest network of navigable waterways: 6,700km of rivers, canals and canalised rivers, 4,000 engineering structures (locks, dams, canal bridges, etc.) and 40,000 hectares of publicly owned land on rivers and canals.

The VNF’s missions involve meeting three major expectations expressed by society:

- It creates the right conditions for developing freight transport.
- It assists the development of regional facilities and tourism.
- It manages hydraulic resources, guaranteeing the safety of river and canal engineering structures and the various uses for water, as well as combating flooding and severe water shortages.

About REI Habitat

REI Habitat is a property developer specialising in multistorey wood frame buildings and the development of urban solutions with major social and environmental components. Its positioning is unique, including as it does a holistic and highly committed approach to the entire chain of city building, French wood construction, forest protection, materials reuse and new forms of residential living. Having been convinced of the value of the project proposed by REI Habitat, AXA Investment Managers acquired equity in REI Habitat in October 2020. REI Habitat now has the goal of becoming a key actor in low-carbon construction, setting a target of 400,000 sq. m. of wood-based construction either completed or ongoing by 2027, which equates to 120,000 tonnes CO2 not emitted.

About SEMAPA

SEMAPA (Société d’Étude, de Maîtrise d’Ouvrage et d’Aménagement Parisienne / Paris Design, Project Management and Property Development Company) is a publicly owned local property development firm. As an operating entity for the Paris city authority (92% shareholding) and Paris regional government authority (8% shareholding), SEMAPA is responsible for urban development projects and construction management roles across the Paris region. It is currently tasked with seven urban projects in the capital’s 12th, 13th and 20th arrondissements.

[Click here to download HD visuals and “HAROPA PORT in brief”](#)



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