

NewLead eyes expansion after settling with Ironridge

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Greek operator adds modern bitumen tankers to owned fleet

NEWLEAD Holdings has reached a "full and final" settlement with investor Ironridge Global, a fund that it had previously described as its chief tormentor, as it appears to be taking further steps to expand its fleet.

The Greece-based company saw its share price rise by 75% on Tuesday in the wake of the announcement, albeit only to \$0.035 per share.

NewLead's stock has been trading on the over-the-counter market after the company de-listed from Nasdaq over the summer.

Under the deal with Ironridge, arbitration proceedings between the parties have been discontinued, and a share subscription agreement in force since March 4, as well as other related transaction documents, including preference shares and promissory notes, have all been terminated and cancelled.

Earlier this year Ironridge had agreed to pay \$25m to NewLead, but only 10% of this was eventually paid as relations between the two sides soured.

Although the announcement by NewLead was very carefully-worded, Lloyd's List understands that both sides have agreed to drop all claims against each other without compensation being paid by either side.

Sources close to NewLead affirmed that the company views the settlement as "very positive", clearing the way for it to approach new investors with a growing fleet.

Michael Zolotas-led NewLead underwent an epic restructuring before last year setting about a diversification into commodities and an effort to rebuild its shipping business.

This year has seen the company take delivery of three eco-type handysize bulkers, all built in 2012-2013.

Now NewLead appears to have acquired five modern bitumen tankers to lift its owned fleet to 10 vessels. In addition it manages one third party tanker, the 13 year-old 19,831 dwt Gema.

The company's owned fleet list has been updated with five modern chemical tanker/asphalt carriers all built between 2008 and 2010.

They range in size up to the *Captain Nikolas I*, at 5,887 dwt, which is on charter until the second quarter of 2015.

The other four bitumen tankers are listed as trading in the spot market.

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