From disaster to renewed optimism, the Port of Tvøroyri is back on track after a year in the dark, again expecting economic growth—with a new, rebuilt pelagic processing plant and a refocused strategy on cruise tourism.

NO ONE could have foreseen the unfortunate turn of events in June 2017 when, in a matter of hours, the economic outlook for the Port of Tvøroyri along with the surrounding community took a nosedive into the unknown. The optimism that had followed the opening of the Varðin Pelagic freezing plant a few years ago, was all of a sudden being replaced by a palpable sense of doubt and uncertainty. This because of a fire that ravaged the town’s largest employer, wiping out more than 150 jobs and the primary source of revenue for the port and the entire municipality.

The word came out quickly, however, that Varðin Pelagic intended to rebuild the processing plant and restart production as soon as possible. A year later optimism, albeit somewhat tempered by natural cautiousness, has slowly but surely returned to Tvøroyri, as the facility has indeed been built anew and is now in the final stages of completion.

According to Port Director Jón Bogi Guttesen, the new production plant is expected to commence business by August or thereabouts, completely rebuilt and in the process made more refined and modern than before.

“Despite the disaster that happened, this entire development remains an overwhelmingly positive story,” Mr. Guttesen noted. “We’re pleased that the Varðin Pelagic management acted quickly and decisively to inform that the factory would be rebuilt. Ever since the fire, the port has of course been affected by the reconstruction effort including the initial removal of debris and old parts. As for shipping activities, we have had to adapt to the situation at the port to steer clear of disrupting the clean-up process and the following construction work. As one of many stakeholders, Port of Tvøroyri is looking very much forward to seeing production resumed at Varðin Pelagic, along with all the daily activities that go with it. All the while, our focus continues to be centered on offering the best value and service for our customers.”

Thus Tvøroyri is again poised to reclaim its place as a key Faroese hub for not merely the pelagic fish business but also the whitefish trade, with a leading expertise in seafood processing. Two whitefish producers, Delta Seafood and TG Seafood, respectively, are based out of the Port of Tvøroyri, with the former focused on salted products and the latter on fresh and frozen. Both factories have a long tradition of working closely together, with several vessels ensuring a steady stream of raw fish supply.

The anticipated resumption of processing at Varðin Pelagic is expected to bring back frequent port calls by pelagic fishing vessels arriving to land their catch as well as reefer ships to accommodate shipments of frozen produce for export markets.

As an added bonus, more frequent calls by cargo vessels will make it much more convenient for local businesses to import or export goods.

“SOLID FOUNDATION”

However, it’s not all about fish. The Port of Tvøroyri has been proactively pursuing a new strategy to attract more attention from cruise ship operators. Preparations and tests have been ongoing for a while with the strategy partly implemented in 2017 and its further rollout ongoing.

According to Mr. Guttesen the plan is not to lure the largest cruise liners to the port, as ships that carry up to, say 800 passengers, would be a maximum to accommodate at Tvøroyri for all practical reasons. Instead, somewhat smaller cruise ships are considered more suitable for the port and, indeed, for the island of Suðuroy.

“Our approach to cruise tourism is a realistic, down-to-earth one,” Mr. Guttesen said. “The Port of Tvøroyri, along with local partners, is backing this effort based on experiences from 2016 with smaller cruise ships carrying around 400 passengers, and associated tests have yielded good results. We consider it vital not to overstretch the capacity and capabilities of the hinterland—the local population, service providers and everyone involved need to be able to provide the best services and the best experience for the guests.”

“To sum it up, we’re optimistic and we’ll keep developing in various departments to improve our offerings,” Mr. Guttesen added. “For example, one project will create quite an increase in the water supply and enable us to provide certified clean water to all operators in the main harbor area. Generally speaking, the port has a solid foundation and we’re ready to take on the renewed growth in business activities that’s expected in the months and years ahead.”