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Oldenburger|Fritom: “BREEAM-NL is the standard”

As an innovative and global logistics service provider in the Northern Netherlands, Oldenburger|Fritom has distinguished itself on several fronts in recent years. Not only in the field of logistics, but also in the way in which sustainability is structurally anchored in the business operations. In an interview with CEO René Dale and Albert Medendorp, project manager and member of the management team, it becomes clear that the sustainable course is not a side project, but a conscious, strategic choice.

Oldenburger|Fritom’s ambition to play a pioneering role began in 2017, the year in which the company celebrated its 100th anniversary. That year, the management set a clear goal on the horizon: they wanted to build a new distribution center that would be truly distinctive – not a standard built distribution center like others have. Sustainability had to be the starting point. This ambition led in 2019 to a distribution center and offices with BREEAM Outstanding certification, the highest possible rating. The project proved to be an intensive learning process for both Oldenburger|Fritom and the construction partners involved. With a rating of 97.3 percent, an exceptional result was realized.

Learning and growing with BREEAM-NL

The first positive experience with BREEAM was reason to set the bar high in subsequent phases. “From that moment on, we decided: everything we build or renovate in the field of real estate, we base on BREEAM standards. And we always aim for the highest possible”, Dale explains.

Phase 2 started in 2024: a new distribution center, opposite the distribution center of phase 1. "It was a tightly scheduled construction period", says Medendorp. The negotiations started in January and the first pile was driven in May. The building was put into operation at the beginning of 2025. Here too, the aim was to achieve a BREEAM Outstanding certification. The grand opening took place in April 2025 and the certification is currently being completed. Medendorp: "We expect to achieve a score between 94 and 96 percent according to the latest BREEAM standard. This is a high score, especially considering the stricter requirements compared to previous years."

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Existing warehouse to Outstanding level

Perhaps the most telling example of Oldenburger|Fritom's sustainable ambition is phase 3: the redevelopment of an existing warehouse that was built in the 1990s. Medendorp: "In our opinion, this project adds the most value. Transforming an existing building to a level that meets the latest BREEAM In-Use Outstanding standards requires a lot of time, knowledge and commitment."

Virtually everything has been considered: having all gas connections disconnected, the use of solar panels, systems for leak detection and leak prevention, and numerous other sustainability measures. "The minimum score was not an option for us. The explicit goal was to also show what is possible with existing buildings. Not just for the certificate, but as an expression of who we want to be as an organization."

Broadly supported within the organization

What is striking is that the sustainability ambition is broadly supported within Oldenburger|Fritom. Dale: "It is not merely a project that only management is involved in or a sustainability team. Everyone within our organization is involved. From the quality manager to the colleagues on the shop floor – BREEAM has become part of our daily work." This broad involvement contributes to the success.

"For us, sustainability is not just a moral choice," Dale continues. "It also helps us in our positioning towards customers. More and more customers are looking for partners who take sustainability seriously. In that sense, it is also a marketing strategy tool. We invest significantly more in sustainable buildings than in traditional logistics real estate development, but it pays off."

People-oriented company culture

In addition to sustainability, good employment practices are also central to the organization. Oldenburger|Fritom has a striking number of long-term employment contracts. Some employees have been working there for forty years. Dale: "That has everything to do with our people-oriented company culture. We continuously invest in the development of our employees and their vitality, which contributes to high job satisfaction." Oldenburger|Fritom gives a lot of attention to training, guidance and personal growth. Medendorp: "For example, we have a company fitness program, we encourage participation in training courses and organize regular evaluations. We not only want to be a company where people like to work at, but also where they can develop themselves (continuous improvement)." According to Dale, this is essential, especially in a tight labor market. "People make the difference. You can have the most sustainable buildings, but without committed and well-trained colleagues you will get nowhere."

Oldenburger|Fritom has recently become a partner of the Dutch Green Building Council. A conscious choice, according to Medendorp. "As a logistics service provider, we are a unique player within the DGBC partner network. This is exactly why the partnership has a lot of added value for us, including also the knowledge sharing and the training courses. We hope to further develop our leading position in the sustainable built environment." Dale also sees advantages: "We want to learn from other organizations and, at the same time, share our own knowledge and experience. DGBC offers an excellent platform for this. And let's be honest: as an entrepreneur you also want to be visible in a network that has sustainability as a spearhead."

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