

First oil from ACG platform

THE BP-led Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC) has started production from facilities at the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli (ACG) field in the Caspian Sea as part of its \$6 billion long-term plan to optimise output from the giant reservoir, writes *Kama Mustafayeva*.

Production started at the newly-completed West Chirag platform from well J05 at a rate of 3000 barrels per day. Output will increase to about 60,000 bpd through 2014 as five other wells, which are already drilled, come online.

Another eight pre-drilled wells will start pumping over the next two years. Further drilling will take place later in the decade.

The Chirag Oil Project (COP) was launched in 2010. More than \$4 billion has so far been spent.

"This major investment will contribute to optimising recovery from the ACG field," BP said.

The oil from J05 will be exported to the Sangachal terminal via a new in-field pipeline linked to an existing 30-inch subsea export pipeline.

"To date, the ACG field has produced over 2.3 billion barrels of oil and with future continual major investments in new technologies and facilities, like the one we have today started up, it will continue to produce as a world-class reservoir for many decades," said Gordon Birrell, BP's Regional President for Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.

The West Chirag platform was installed in a water depth of about 170 metres between the existing Chirag and Deepwater Gunashli platforms. The design oil capacity of the new platform is 183,000 bpd. The gas export capacity is 285 million cubic feet per day.

ACG participating interests are operator BP on 35.8%, Socar on 11.6%, Chevron on 11.3%, Inpex on 11%, Statoil on 8.6%, ExxonMobil on 8%, TPAO on 6.8%, Itochu on 4.3% and ONGC Videsh on 2.7%.

Buchan A evacuated

TALISMAN Sinopec Energy UK (TSEUK) has downmanned its Buchan Alpha installation UK North Sea for the third time since the start of December due to severe weather forecasts.

Production was shut down on 23 January and the removal of 75 workers was completed on 26 January, TSEUK confirmed.

Buchan A is not allowed to operate if waves are greater than 6.75 metres because of concerns about the structural integrity of the pentagonal-design platform.

"As per the installation's Safety Case, we began the planned procedure... as a result of severe weather forecasts and in advance of the sea state exceeding the stated level over the weekend," TSEUK said.

NORWAY



Giant in demand: Allseas' Pieter Schelte under construction at Daewoo

Photo: ALLSEAS

Peter Schelte to take on Talisman's giant Yme job

Allseas' twin-hull behemoth currently under construction at Daewoo in South Korea to remove topsides at Norwegian field, as partners work on new development plan for project

OLE KETIL HELGESEN
Stavanger

TALISMAN Energy has lined up the world's largest vessel, the twin-hull behemoth Pieter Schelte, to remove the Canadian operator's biggest headache — its condemned Yme jack-up production platform off Norway.

A company spokesperson said Talisman has informed the authorities that it plans to use Allseas' purpose-built installation and decommissioning vessel "during the summer of 2015".

She added that "it is the platform topsides that will be removed", but declined to reveal the budgeted cost of the operation.

The 382 metres long and 124 metres wide vessel is currently under construction at South Korean shipyard Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering.

Delivery is expected in the second half of 2014, and it should be ready for offshore operations by the end of the year.

However, sources suggest the Yme lifting work could turn out to be Pieter Schelte's maiden contract.

Allseas won a contract from Shell last year to use the Pieter Schelte for the removal of three large platform topsides on the Brent field in UK waters, with an option for a fourth, but that work

is scheduled to begin later in 2015 or 2016. Allseas declined to comment on the Yme contract with Talisman.

The Pieter Schelte is designed to significantly reduce the amount of offshore work associated with platform installation and decommissioning, given its ability to handle massive structures in single-lift operations.

For platform removal work, the legs of the topside support structure are cut before the vessel arrives on location, and further preparations are performed as required from the platform deck or using a support vessel.

Once complete, the horseshoe-shaped vessel is positioned around the targeted platform, hydraulic clamps mounted on eight horizontal lifting beams at the bow of the Pieter Schelte are slid into place, and the topsides are raised as the vessel ballasts up.

The Pieter Schelte has a nameplate topsides lifting capacity of 48,000 tonnes and a jacket lifting capacity of 25,000 tonnes.

Talisman's Yme project has been derailed by massive cost overruns and delays, and has generated huge losses for all the primary parties involved.

After numerous efforts to get the newbuild platform in working con-



Condemned: the Yme platform

Photo: TALISMAN

dition, the Yme licence partners and main contractor SBM Offshore agreed to remove the facility from the field, and it is earmarked for scrapping.

Talisman is now working on a new development plan based on another jack-up production platform on Yme.

It remains to be seen whether the partners will find profitability in development of the estimated 60 million to 70 million barrels of oil in the field.

"The business case for future development is based on using already-installed equipment — tank, caisson, subsea installations, pipelines, umbilical and wells," the Talisman spokesperson said.

"The Yme evaluation is still ongoing, which will lead to an

updated plan for development and operation. It is therefore too early to release any details on the alternative development solutions at this point, or the profitability."

Talisman is under much greater scrutiny than usual and is being forced to report on every milestone it reaches and decisions it takes on the revised Yme development scheme.

In a recent letter to the Norwegian Petroleum & Energy Ministry, Talisman wrote that sanctioning and concept selection of the Yme Future Development Project is planned within the first quarter of 2014, and that front-end engineering and design studies are to start immediately after concept selection, targeting completion by the end of this year.