

Project to promote and preserve the history of the UK oil and gas industry launched in Aberdeen

Former UK energy minister Brian Wilson told a conference in Aberdeen today (March 8) that a project to create an archive of the UK offshore oil and gas industry was essential in the interests of future generations.

The audience at the one-day event to hear details of the project, called Capturing the Energy, were also told by Mr Wilson that the achievements of the industry deserved to be remembered and celebrated.

A number of organisations, including Scottish Enterprise Grampian, the University of Aberdeen and major oil firms including TOTAL, are taking part in the scheme with hopes of creating a permanent base in the city for documents and artefacts dating back over the 40 years since the industry was founded and also into the future.

Mr Wilson chaired the event at the University of Aberdeen, with the message to those present: “The North Sea oil and gas industry represents one of the most remarkable success stories in the history of Scotland and the UK. The technical achievements of the past 30 years are awesome and deserve to be remembered, celebrated and learned from.

“There is a vast body of knowledge within the companies and public sector organisations which have been actively involved in the development of the North Sea. A project which brings this information together in a coherent way, for the interest of this and future generations, is both essential and overdue.

“Capturing the Energy will also create a powerful vehicle for recognising the immense contribution that has been made by all of those who have worked within the industry, both onshore and offshore. Often, they have had to work at the frontiers of knowledge and in the most challenging of physical conditions. They deserve to be recognised and remembered.”

The idea evolved from a scheme to ensure the survival of records relating to the TOTAL-operated Frigg Gas field, which supplied up to a third of the UK’s gas and ceased operations in 2004 after 27 years. It then grew in scope to try to capture the broader history of the UK offshore oil and gas industry.

The aim is to encourage wider recognition of the huge importance of the offshore oil and gas industry to the UK by promoting the retention of the most significant records relating to the industry and enhancing future research programmes. It is hoped that achieving these aims will also attract new blood into the industry.



Those behind the project point to the fact the UK offshore oil and gas industry is among the most heavily-regulated in the world and, as a result, retains detailed, well-managed records.

They hope many of the industry's main players will make provision for keeping the most important records as their operations evolve, ensuring that they can be safely stored in a central archive and made available both for current research, and for future generations.

The aim of the conference was to set targets for the project and discuss how to involve the industry.



Alan Cameron, convener of Business Archives Council of Scotland, chaired one of the morning sessions at the MacRobert Lecture Theatre, King's College. He told the gathering: "North Sea oil and gas has been with Britain as a fact of life for nearly 40 years. However, because it is an offshore and regional industry, its impact on the public consciousness has been very limited".

"It is certainly the most significant new industry in the UK which is continually operating at the frontiers of technical and scientific achievement. In a number of ways it has profoundly altered the business scene within Scotland."

He added that better education of the public was one of the over-riding factors behind the project: "There are some misconceptions about the longevity of the oil and gas industry in the UK but, as anyone who is associated with the industry will tell you, it offers at least another 40 years of exceptional opportunity, secure employment and unparalleled economic impact. Widespread and frequent communication of this very positive message will greatly assist the process of attracting gifted and talented people into all segments of this incredible industry".

Jean-Pierre Hurel, in charge of TOTAL's Frigg cessation project in Stavanger, told delegates how the documentation project has become part of the decommissioning process.

Two Norwegian delegates, who have worked on 'Ekofisk', a pioneering project supported by ConocoPhillips, detailed their experiences through their work for National Archives of Norway and the Norwegian Petroleum Museum in Stavanger. Jennifer Crow, Scottish Enterprise Grampian chief executive, said: "The oil and gas industry has shaped the north-east and played a major role in the UK and global economies. Many of the advances made here are now being put to use around the world and it is important we remember the role we have played.

"This project is a way of doing that with the blessing and full co-operation of the industry."

Professor Christopher Gane, Vice Principal, Library and Information Systems, University of Aberdeen, said: "The University of Aberdeen is delighted to be working with all the partners involved in this project towards ensuring that all the records are preserved.

"It is our aim to ensure that the records are made available to researchers on a local, national and international level.

"I also think that the longer-term importance of this project is to secure these records as a major research and archival resource for the North East of Scotland."

Dr Miles Oglethorpe, manager of Architecture and Industry at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, who is heavily involved in the project, also spoke at the seminar, describing Capturing the Energy as a brilliant opportunity.

As well as Scottish Enterprise Grampian, TOTAL, the University of Aberdeen and RCAHMS, the other project partners are Aberdeen City Council, the DTI, UKOOA, BP, Shell and BACS.

Capturing the Energy Recording the UK Offshore Oil & Gas Industry

Wednesday, 8 March 2006

MacRobert Lecture Theatre, King's College,
University of Aberdeen, 9.00am-4.30pm

The Conference Day in detail:

- 9.00am** **Registration and refreshments**
- 9.20am** **Welcome by Professor C Duncan Rice, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Aberdeen**
- 9.30am** **Setting the Scene**
- Chair: The Rt Hon Brian Wilson** (former UK Energy Minister)
Birth of industry: **Geoff Dart** (Director, Corporate Law & Governance, dti)
Impact of the industry: **Jim Rae** (Consultant, m3)
Key events and the related data mountain: **Alex Kemp** (Schlumberger Professor of Petroleum Economics, University of Aberdeen)
- 11-11.30am** Coffee
- 11.30am** **The Norwegian Experience: Ekofisk and Frigg**
- Chair: Alan Cameron** (Convenor, Business Archives Council of Scotland)
Harald Tonnesen (Norwegian Petroleum Museum, Stavanger)
Torkel Thime (Norwegian National Archives)
Jean Pierre Hurel (TOTAL E&P Norge, Director Cessation Project Frigg & MCP-O1)
- 1.00pm** **Lunch** (to coincide with films and displays)
- 2.00pm** **The Challenge Ahead: Practical Issues, Research Potential, Access**
- Chair: Professor Christopher Gane** (Vice Principal, Library and Information Services, University of Aberdeen)
Andy Halliwell (General Manager North Sea Technical Services, ConocoPhillips)
Hugo Manson (Research Fellow, Lives in the Oil Industry Oral History Project, University of Aberdeen)
Dr Miles Oglethorpe (Manager, Architecture & Industry, RCAHMS)
Lesley Richmond (Director of Archive Services, University of Glasgow)
- 3.00pm** **Plenary Session: Next steps**
- Chair: Professor John R Hume** (University of Glasgow, and Chairman of RCAHMS). Structured discussion led by a panel of session chairs, focusing on questions and issues that have arisen during the day, and aimed at shaping a future for the project.
- 4.00pm** **Conference Closes:** concluding remarks (The Rt Hon Brian Wilson)

Followed by a drinks reception