

FloaTec down to testing on Esemi

Model tests to kick-off initial development of semisub concept

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Houston

SINGAPOREAN shipyard giant Keppel will oversee the first batch of model tests of a dry-tree drilling and production semi-submersible concept for its FloaTec 50:50 joint venture with J Ray McDermott in a wave basin facility in Bulgaria.

After some unplanned scheduling delays the tests of the extendable draft semisub concept, or Esemi, are scheduled to start within a couple of weeks.

FloaTec's senior naval architect Chan Yang said Keppel is managing this phase of the Esemi development because it originated the design.

However, once the testing and engineering is complete FloaTec is expected to roll out the concept as the latest addition to its floater product line. On paper, Esemi is configured for a base case, more or less typical Gulf of Mexico deep-water field development in 4300 feet of water.

The semisub has eight top-tensioned production risers and one drilling riser with two steel catenary risers for oil and gas export.

Mooring is accomplished with four groups of combination chain and polyester rope, with three lines per group.

Yang told the Deep Offshore Technology conference in Houston this week that the numerical simulations indicate Esemi has "good motion characteristics enough to support the top-tensioned risers with dry-tree units".

The motion characteristics can be credited to a significant feature of Esemi: the second tier pontoon or STP, which helps control heave motions as opposed to a conventional semisub.

A future Esemi would almost certainly be built in Altamira, Mexico, where Keppel is planning to build a brand new shipyard next to J Ray McDermott's fabrication facility, which is already under development.

Although the design is relatively new it is derived from Keppel's considerable experience building semisub hulls for both drilling and production units.

FloaTec said the semisub concept is adapted from Keppel's KFels 8000 ring pontoon concept.



Testing time: OPE vice president of business development Nico Vandeworm

Photo: OPE

OPE goes back to the tank one last time

OPE is set to launch one more round of model tank tests of its floating Satellite Services Platform design at Marin's basin facilities next week in the Netherlands, writes Anthony Guegel.

The deep-water oil production and storage facility concept has seven to eight more months of engineering to have "everything defined" in detail, said OPE vice president of business development Nico Vandeworm.

By October 2008 the SSP should be ready for construction — provided there is a willing customer to order it. Previous tests at Marin indicate the SSP-320 version can withstand hurricane-force conditions in the Gulf of

Mexico with minimal pitch and roll motions, according to OPE.

WorleyParsons Sea Engineering has been undertaking the detailed hull design for OPE with Alliance Engineering tackling the topsides. J Ray McDermott has also been assisting with input regarding fabrication, Vandeworm indicated.

The patented SSP-320 design is specified for 1.25 million-barrel oil storage capacity and a production capacity of 80,000 barrels per day.

The SSP-320 is shaped like the bottom half of a sphere with a centre column jutting out beneath the hull for improved stability.

Tahiti spar set to hit the water

CHEVRON'S long-awaited Tahiti spar is scheduled to finally leave the Gulf Marine Fabricators' yard for installation offshore at the end of this month, writes Anthony Guegel.

As long as weather co-operates, Chevron is ready to moor the spar over the 500 million-barrel field in Green Canyon Block 641, about 304 kilometres south of New Orleans and in more than 4000 feet of water.

The Tahiti hull was finished and the deck was nearing final completion last summer when defective shackles were discovered, forcing the \$3.5 billion project to push back the date for first oil by a full year as Chevron awaited the delivery of replacement units.

Production is now expected to start in the second half of 2009.

Although Chevron never publicly named the contractor, the shackles were manufactured by Forges Le Beon in France under a sub-contract to the French prime hull contractor Technip.

Complicating Chevron's woes was the challenge of rescheduling the heavy-lift semi-submersible from Heerema, which has been in high demand.

The biggest job for which Chevron requires the vessel is the installation of the topsides, which consists of the production module, the utility module and the module support frame.

A spokesman for Chevron had previously indicated that the spar hull was due to be moved on location some time during the first quarter of 2008.

The Tahiti spar will have a production capacity of 125,000 barrels of oil and 70 million cubic feet of natural gas per day.

Chevron is operator of the Tahiti field with a 58% working with StatoilHydro on 25% and Total on 17%.

Acergy win at Panuke

ACERGY has landed a \$195 million contract to install umbilicals and flowlines at EnCana's Deep Panuke gas development off Nova Scotia, Canada.

Acergy beat off competition from Allseas, Helix Energy Solutions, J Ray McDermott, Single Buoy Moorings and Technip.

The contract covers the installation, burial and tie in of about 17 kilometres of eight-inch flowlines and umbilicals to four production wells as well as an acid gas disposal flowline.

These wells will be hooked up to a jack-up-based production unit supplied by SBM Offshore.

Deep Panuke is due on stream in 2010.

Icy weather cools down production at Horizon project

CANADIAN Natural Resources said that productivity at the Horizon oil sands project is lagging behind due to heavy winter weather even as cost overruns rise.

The company said cost overruns at the northern Alberta

project could run to as much as \$1.9 billion.

The delays have been linked to icy weather at the oil sands projects.

The company said that it achieved 90% completion of the Horizon Project by the end of last

year and that it remains on track for first oil in the third quarter of 2008.

"The remaining 10%, however, is in many ways the toughest as it is the most labour intensive portion of the Horizon project," said Real Doucet, Canadian Natural

Resources senior vice president for oil sands. He said January and early February experienced significant deterioration in labour productivity on the construction site because of colder than normal weather which "seriously curtailed activity."