

Capturing the Energy

The oil company Total E&P UK Ltd has been a key driver of a project to promote and preserve the history of the offshore UK oil and gas industry that it believes is essential in the interests of the country, the industry itself and to future generations.

In partnership with the University of Aberdeen's Library & Historic Collections, Capturing the Energy has created a permanent base at the University for documents and artefacts dating back over the 50 years since the industry was founded.

"The North Sea oil and gas industry represents one of the most remarkable success stories in the history of the UK. The technical achievements of the past 30 years are awesome and deserve to be remembered, celebrated and learned from." says Brian Wilson, former energy minister and CtE patron.

There is a vast body of knowledge within companies such as Total E&P and public sector organisations which have been actively involved in the development of the North Sea. Capturing the Energy, has created 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 working at the frontiers of technology and imagination, in the most challenging of physical conditions, the offshore oil and gas industry is truly heroic and worthy of recording.

Why is Total E&P involved? The idea evolved from a Norwegian scheme to ensure the survival of records relating to the Total-operated Frigg Gas field, which straddled the UK-Norway median line and supplied up to a third of the UK's gas; the field ceased production in 2004 after 27 years. The project then grew in scope to try to capture the broader history of the UK offshore oil and gas industry.

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. By keeping the most important records and ensuring they are safely stored in a central archive they can be made available both for current and future research, for authors, the press, reputational initiatives and especially for educational programmes with the aim of encouraging wider recognition of the huge importance of the offshore oil and gas industry to the UK.

It is hoped that achieving these aims will also attract new blood into the industry, one of the main reasons for Total's involvement and backing. There is a perception that the oil and gas industry is in decline in the UK sector, and that the industry therefore has a limited future. As a global centre of excellence, the UK industry can expect a very long future, helping the rest of the world to maximise recovery using skills honed in the UK.

In addition to Total E&P and the University of Aberdeen, Business Archives Council Scotland, Scottish Enterprise Grampian, Aberdeen City Council, Historic Scotland, the Department for Energy and Climate Change, BP, Shell, and ConocoPhillips are all project partners, making this a great example of public and private sector working together to support a crucial part of the local economy in this industry.

 www.capturing-the-energy.org.uk

 www.abdn.ac.uk/historic/energyarchive

