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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Fortress for Neo Next+	2
Signs of optimism	8
OGRL draft legislation	9
Zeevonk work for DEME	16

CONTENTS

Rig market	2
Contracts	6
Decommissioning	7
Business report	8
Production	9
Politics	9
Drilling	10
Med/Africa briefing	13
Seismic	13
Oil price	14
Companies	14
Environment	15
Renewables	16
People	18
Conferences	19

Orcadian initiates assessment phase of Earlham power station project

Orcadian last week reported the start of the assessment phase for the development of the Earlham and Orwell gasfields, in wholly-owned UK southern basin licence P.2680, covering blocks 50/21a, 51/26, 49/25b and 49/30b. The company plans to prepare and submit a concept select report for the development.

The operator's currently preferred development scheme is based on an offshore power station equipped to capture carbon dioxide which would be reinjected into the Earlham reservoir to boost pressure and recovery. The high carbon dioxide content of Earlham gas, at 49%, makes conventional pipeline export unattractive.

Orcadian believes a complex with a wellhead platform providing support for two production wells and one carbon dioxide injection well, bridge-linked to a power station platform, with the power station then linked to a 200-MW data centre platform, is likely to be favoured in the concept select process.

The company believes the development of Earlham provides an opportunity to begin developing an offshore, islanded, low-carbon power generation grid and data centre project. It is establishing new company Earlham Gigagrid to progress the project.

Earlham has estimated reserves, on a proven and probable basis, of 114 Bcf of gas, with the redevelopment of the Orwell field expected to deliver a further 31 Bcf. Earlham was discovered in 1995 by Talisman and in 1996 BP drilled a high-angle appraisal and intended development well with a 1,559-metre section in the gas pay zone. However, a test programme was subsequently curtailed and the well abandoned because of the high CO₂ content in the gas.

The development and production of Earlham is expected to be relatively straightforward given the high-quality reservoir, with no well stimulation anticipated. Locating the power station offshore dispenses with high voltage transformers or ACDC converters, an electrical cable to shore, a CO₂ disposal pipeline and a natural gas export pipeline. *(Continued on page 2)*