

ALLSEAS

Setting the Standard



Dynamism, inventiveness, rapid progress and a no-nonsense attitude are the distinguishing features of the Swiss-based Allseas Group. The company has developed into a major player in offshore pipelay and subsea construction worldwide, operating six specialised vessels, which were all designed in-house. With corporate headquarters in Châtel-Saint-Denis (Switzerland), this

relatively young company has offices in Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, USA, Australia, Portugal and the UK. <P>

Allseas was originally founded as Subsea Engineering in 1985, headed by Edward Heerema. Shortly afterwards, the small company with 15 employees changed its name to Allseas and started the development of the concept of pipelaying using dynamic positioning (DP), resulting in the launch of the Lorelay, the first pipelay vessel in the world that was able to install pipelines using DP.

Fleet Expansion

Since the launch of the Lorelay in 1986, the fleet has expanded gradually with the DP pipelay vessels Solitaire and Audacia (Figure 1) and the shallow-water pipelay barge Tog Mor. Currently, Allseas operates six specialised vessels, which were all designed in-house. These vessels are supported by four dedicated survey vessels and a trenching support vessel. Along with the fleet, the offices and staff have grown. The company currently employs over 2,000 people in the engineering and project offices and onboard the vessels, providing worldwide support to clients from the conceptual design stage to engineering, procurement, installation and commissioning.

In-house Capability

Allseas has been performing survey activities onboard pipelay vessels in-house since the late 1990s. Survey and remotely operated vehicle (ROV) activities onboard the supporting vessels, however, have only recently been transferred towards the company's managed and operated services. Until 2006, most of the survey and ROV services were subcontracted to specialist companies. Since 2006, major investments have been made to provide these supporting services from within the organisation. This has given Allseas access to the latest solutions, resulting in tailored support of its operations.

Strategic Decision

Global developments in the offshore industry showed an increase in scale and scope of the companies previously providing dedicated specialist services. As a consequence of the increase in scope, service providers became part-competitors whereas the increase in scale caused a bias towards confection solutions with slow implementation of technology ("what we have is what you get"). Both were unfavourable for Allseas, the company that had always strived to work at the forefront of technology in its own speciality. In 2006 it was, therefore, decided to acquire seven Schilling ultra-heavy-duty work-class ROVs and complement these with the latest survey technology (Figure 2). The survey spreads comprise Eiva, Sonardyne and Visualsoft software, and Reson multi-beams amongst others.

Innovative Techniques

As with the ROV technology, survey hardware and software was acquired to meet tomorrow's requirements onboard all ROV survey vessels. The spreads are configured to Norwegian standards, which are globally perceived as the strictest in offshore surveying. The use of the latest survey equipment facilitates innovative survey techniques for installation support in both deep-water field development and work in challenging conditions, where tailor-made survey solutions are to be developed in co-operation with hardware and software manufacturers. An example is an alternative means for pipeline touchdown monitoring, which uses a vessel-mounted RESON 7125 multi-beam system with customised software varying swath width, and beams that are condensed and focussed on the pipeline. The observed pipeline position is automatically transferred to the pipelay vessel via a custom-made routine in Eiva software.

Opportunities

The main goal of Allseas' survey and ROV investments is to optimise the support to offshore installation operations, and to continue to set the standards in the industry and develop new techniques and applications wherever necessary. Only people with imagination and a 'can-do' attitude, who believe that if you can dream it, you can do it, can make this possible.

