

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM OFFSHORE SURVEY 09

Under the Sea and on the Water



Technical conference Offshore Survey 09 takes place at the National Oceanography Centre in Southampton (UK) on 1st–2 April. It is targeted at those in the ocean industry who are involved in oil and gas exploration, production, development and decommissioning; offshore energy renewables including wind and wave power generation; and ports and harbours. The conference is timed to

complement the at-sea technology demonstrations and exhibits of Ocean Business 2009, which will be held from 31 March to 2 April at the same venue, by looking at the major issues and practice of offshore survey in the international oil and gas industry. We spoke to Offshore Survey 09's chairman Alastair MacDonald to find out more about what will be on offer this year and why you should attend.



Offshore Survey 09 speakers represent international oil and gas majors, global contractors and service providers, government and also academic members of the hydrographic survey community. Their presentations will address key survey issues in the current oil and gas environment, including the impact of the dramatic swings in the oil price on future oil and gas projects; new developments in survey technologies and techniques; the

efficiencies of new technology to deliver faster and cheaper solutions to the challenges of going ever deeper to locate and exploit reserves; reviewing the effects of offshore developments on wildlife habitats; and reporting progress in the strategic recruitment and training of personnel to the offshore survey industry.

What are the themes for Offshore Survey 09?

The conference will focus on innovative applications that improve productivity and efficiency in hydrographic survey and marine geophysical investigation. It features two days of technical presentations from speakers who will look at the essential sciences and data management critical to offshore exploration and development projects. These will range from the first requirement of precise positioning to the acquisition and processing of geophysical data below the seabed, and to collecting information on the quality and movement of the seawater at offshore sites and the interaction of oil and gas developments with wildlife habitats. The thinking behind this is that the industry is no more immune to the effects of the global economic crisis than any other; this means that there have to be constant productivity and efficiency improvements. Offshore Survey 09 will showcase the best solutions available from over 200 exhibitors.

In what ways will Offshore Survey 09 differ from previous Offshore Survey events?

The event was set up to address market needs. It differs primarily in the sense that we have even more international players than ever before. What started out as a conference with a largely European focus has become a forum that is truly globally representative. What is also important is that we are bringing the offshore survey industry sector to the forefront through this event; in the past, industry players took part in larger, more general ocean technology conferences where the topic of offshore survey was somewhat lost.

What would you say to those who may be considering attending but remain undecided?

It may sound like a cliché, but the fact is that the conference and exhibition will provide a one-stop-shop to bring serious industry professionals right up to date with market prospects, the latest survey and investigation techniques, and real-world project experiences. As already mentioned, we have over 200 leading technology and service providers who will be showcasing their very latest capabilities. It is a must for anyone in the sector. I think this has been recognised by industry players as registration is already way ahead of what was expected.

Is the oil market situation leading to new developments in the offshore survey profession?

Absolutely, in the sense that technology and service providers are seeking to do more and better for little to no extra cost. It is no different to any other industry in that sense; people are looking for innovative applications that add value.

As chairman, can you predict a few highlights of the event?

I'll mention two. The first is sure to be the keynote address by John Westwood, chairman of Douglas-Westwood, which does strategy work, analysis and business research for the marine industries. A renowned consultant, he has over 30 years' experience in the energy industries and consults to organisations including government agencies in five countries, the European Commission's Energy Directorate and the United Arab Emirates. His research and market forecasts are always avidly dissected by the industry, so this is sure to be a very interesting address in which he looks at prospects for the global industry as a whole over the next few years.

Another anticipated highlight is the tremendous focus on training and careers in the industry. The fact is that human resources remain in short supply for us and we have an increasingly aging workforce. Technology may, to some extent, help to replace personnel, but recruitment and retention will be vital in the years ahead. There will be much discussion on offshore survey and marine investigation as scientific disciplines. Ocean Business will also be providing a dedicated training session aimed at attracting new recruits: Ocean Careers 09.

How will the conference and exhibition complement each other and the training session?

That is the best part - up to 90% of the technical presenters will also be exhibiting. This will give delegates the opportunity to talk to the presenters and learn more about the thinking behind their solutions. They will also be able to view the equipment and see first-hand what is on offer. It is really valuable as presentations are required to be succinct, whereas exhibitors will be able to chat at length with delegates on a more informal basis.

What are you hoping that Offshore Survey 09/Ocean Business 2009 will achieve?

We want to send out a positive message about the offshore survey and ocean business industries. Despite the economic downturn, demand for energy is not about to let up. That will require a lot of maintenance and repairs to existing equipment.

Recently, INTERGEO East was postponed as a result of the economic climate. Have you noticed similar things happening in the hydro business sector? What are the effects of the financial crisis on the hydrographic industry?

INTERGEO is huge, but it operates in slightly different sectors; these are highly influenced by local and national government expenditure, which itself is under pressure and is impacting on available spending. The hydro industry is far better protected. Again, with the ongoing demand for energy, I think we can expect to be less affected by the slump than other sectors. Offshore survey service providers will still be under pressure to deliver. It really boils down to global energy. Until recently, the Asian economies were booming and the demand for energy was growing exponentially every year. China has just begun to show a small slowdown. It is likely that there will be a slight downturn in the hydro sector, but there is nevertheless a huge amount of work available in production, repairs, maintenance and field enhancements. Having been in this industry for many years, I have seen recessions take hold every decade. My feeling is that the hydro sector will be shielded this time by ongoing high demand.