

First Gavia AUVs for Oil and Gas

An order has recently been placed by NCS Survey for two Gavia AUVs with a capital expenditure of GBP1.5m - one 500m-rated system and one 1,000m rated system. These systems are specifically aimed at the shallow water market and are understood to be the first Gavia AUVs to enter the Oil & Gas market as a service provided by a survey contractor.

In doing so, Hafmynd, the Icelandic manufacturers, has created a new line named the Gavia Offshore Surveyor. Delivery is expected in late September this year but NCS Survey have already secured a contract, which started in May and will use the demonstration system from Hafmynd for this project.

The Offshore Surveyor has numerous improvements and upgrades from the standard Gavia vehicles that enhance the operation and usability for commercial applications. Both NCS Survey systems will have a payload of a multi-beam echosounder (MBES), side-scan sonar, digital camera, Doppler velocity log (DVL), Kearfott T24 IMU, DGPS and sound velocity meter. In addition, each system will be fitted with a Seebyte SeeTrack module to allow the system to track linear features such as pipelines and trenches. The MBES is a Geoswath Plus 500kHz which has a swathe width of up to 190m. There are various SSS options for the vehicle but NCS Survey have opted for the unit that has been proved with the Seebyte module, a Marine Sonic Technology 900/1800kHz system.

The unit is modular, so is quick to configure. With a full payload, the NCS Survey system will be 2.7m long and 80kg. It can be launched from shore, a small inshore vessel such as a Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) or via crane from an offshore vessel - NCS Survey also has a programme to develop other solutions for launch and recovery, as well as R&D programme to further enhance the payload.

The two Gavia Offshore Surveyor vehicles will be used by NCS Survey for varying commercial services in the Oil & Gas market including pipeline inspection and bathymetric/side scan/photographic missions and marks the first purchase of a Gavia AUV by a survey contractor for commercial hire. The system are due for delivery early in Q4 of this year but initial commercial survey applications will commence in May 2009 with NCS Survey utilising an existing Hafmynd system for operation for a major energy company.