Royal Launch for Balmoral Subsea Test Facility

HRH The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay, has officially opened the Balmoral Offshore Engineering (BOE) subsea test facility in Aberdeen, UK. BOE, an Aberdeen-based provider of deepwater buoyancy, insulation and elastomer products, welcomed His Royal Highness and more than 100 guests to the Balmoral Subsea Test Centre to celebrate the conclusion of its two-year £20 million investment project.

Since January 2016 the new building has been taking shape at Balmoral HQ and now covers the area of more than six tennis courts rising to 18m in height with craneage capacity of up to 40 tonnes. The company had to blast through some 15m of Aberdeen's famed granite sub-strata to accommodate the new underground pressure test vessels.

Jim Milne CBE, chairman and managing director of Balmoral, personally took charge of the project and said at the launch: "I am immensely proud of the facility and am hugely grateful to my colleagues and subcontractors who have worked extremely hard to create this facility in what is our 38th year of operations."

"I think you will agree the centre represents a remarkable feat of engineering – even more so when you consider it was completed within two years.

Deepwater projects around the world

"Balmoral products, all of which are designed, manufactured and tested here in Aberdeen, can be found on every significant deepwater project around the world – from the Gulf of Mexico to South America, West Africa and, closer to home, West of Shetland and the Norwegian sector of the North Sea," Milne continued.

"In these highly risk-averse days the requirement for product testing is ever-increasing, the size of products is ever-increasing and the demand for just-in-time delivery is the norm."

"Relying on third party test houses would put us in a very uncompetitive situation, that's why we carry out as many processes as we can in-house – from product concept to material development, testing and realisation. That's what separates us from the rest of the market.

"We are here to celebrate what I believe is an outstanding and enduring addition to Aberdeen's reputation as a key player in the energy sector and one of the United Kingdom's most innovative cities."

Subsea equipment testing

The new facility offers a wide range of procedures including hydrostatic, mechanical and laboratory trials providing the industry with a comprehensive resource for all types of subsea equipment testing. New and upgraded vessels simulate conditions to water depths equivalent of 7000msw, 23,100ftsw. Most of the vessels are installed underground meaning access is at ground level making handling much easier and safer.

Bespoke software has been created to allow full test traceability and real-time observation from anywhere in the world. This level of monitoring is a first for the industry and informs clients if current testing is running successfully or not. Predominantly used for in-house testing and development work the centre is also available to customers spanning the energy, defence, oceanographic and academic sectors.