

US GULF

Stampede ahead of schedule

Tension-leg platform for standalone **US Gulf project** is making strides as **Hess** remains confident of **first oil in 2018**

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HESSE is confident that its Stampede tension-leg platform project in the deep-water Gulf of Mexico off the US is on target — even a little ahead of target — as the company works towards first oil in 2018.

The US independent credits close collaboration with contractors such as Kiewit Offshore Services and Heerema Marine Contractors as crucial in staying on track so far.

“We are slightly ahead of schedule,” project director Stephen Whitaker told an industry event in Houston, saying early involvement with vendors was important. “That’s made a big difference to us as we have gone through.”

Stampede, sanctioned in 2014, is one of just a handful of standalone US Gulf projects sustaining the local industry amid the oil-price downturn.

The wet-tree TLP is set to be moored in the Green Canyon area to produce from the Pony and Knotty Head discoveries, a lower Miocene resource estimated at between 300 million and 350 million barrels.

The development is about 115 miles (184 kilometres) off Louisiana in about 3500 feet of water.

The facility will have capacity for 80,000 barrels of oil and 40 million cubic of feet natural gas per day.

The specifications also include capability for 100,000 barrels per day of water injection and down-hole gas lift technology.

Hess operates with a 25% interest, while US supermajor Chevron, Norway’s Statoil and CNOOC Ltd-owned Nexen own 25% each.

The progress will be closely watched given that Stampede will be the first US Gulf TLP installation since Chevron suffered a major setback last year at its Big Foot project amid forceful loop currents, which have long been a feature of the Gulf of Mexico but for reasons unknown have seen increased intensity in recent years.

At Big Foot, rough ocean conditions caused the failure of buoyancy modules that were holding the crucial mooring tendons in place ahead of platform installation.

As a result some tendons were irreparably damaged, putting back first oil to 2018.

The setback has already had an impact on Stampede — Hess had to place an order with Gulf Marine Fabricators to build a set of buoyancy cans because it had initially



Progress: fabrication of the TLP for Hess’ Stampede project (top) and Subsea 7’s pipelay vessel Seven Oceans (bottom)

Photos: HESS/SUBSEA 7

planned to reuse the Big Foot units, Whitaker revealed.

Chevron and Statoil are partners on both TLPs and are helping to apply lessons learned, he said.

“That’s a combination of how we’re handling the tendons and operationally having plans should there be problems,” Whitaker added.

Strategies include both close monitoring of the conditions, such as keeping an eye on specific eddies, and learning to work amid the setbacks.

For instance, Hess completed pile installation in 12 days in late 2015, during which remotely operated vehicles worked in two to three knots of current.

Part of mitigating that risk with its contractor included having backup ROVs contracted in the

event of a problem, but ultimately the units managed the work.

Meanwhile, the platform facility itself is coming together. The massive hull recently arrived in Ingleside, Texas after a long journey from Samsung Heavy Industries in South Korea, which completed the hull in June in collaboration with fellow contractor Modec.

Work is continuing at Kiewit to assemble topsides modules ahead of integration work.

Together, the hull and topsides are to be about 38,000 tonnes.

FMC Technologies is providing subsea trees, while Intecsea and Subsea 7 are working on subsea umbilicals, risers and flowlines, with installation work due to advance later this year. The Seven

Oceans pipelay vessel is due to arrive in the Gulf in the coming weeks for a range of jobs including Stampede.

The Diamond drillship Ocean BlackLion has finished drilling the first production well and will return to complete it at a later date. Results from that well were as expected, Whitaker said.

Sister unit Ocean BlackRhino will join the campaign in early 2017.

Stampede is planned to include six producer wells and four injector wells with the reservoir depth at around 30,000 feet. Hess has also looked ahead to future production, leaving steel catenary riser porches available for future tie-ins.

Hess is also applying lessons

learned from the start-up of its other recent operated development at the Tubular Bells field, which achieved first oil in 2014.

A key factor there was the importance of not just construction and delivery but achieving a smooth transition to operations once the taps are turned on. Hess aims to tackle this challenge by drawing operations staff closer to the project team as well as employing training methods like simulators.

Hess also aims to be particularly vigilant on the cost side, especially given that the project was sanctioned before oil took its precipitous plunge.

At this stage, Whitaker said, “value erosion is really easy”.