Further step taken towards Rough's return to gas storage to help ease energy crisis

A vital survey to understand the ability of the huge Rough gas storage facility to resume operations has been completed.

The asset – capable of holding 100 billion cubic feet of gas – almost double the existing infrastructure, is being readied for a return to help ease concerns through the energy crisis.

Vital supplies can be held during the winter to ensure it is there when demand peaks. Having been mothballed in 2017 by owner Centrica due to the associated costs and market dynamics, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the emerging Humber hydrogen production industry led to a rethink – with reuse and repurposing now top of the agenda with a £1.6 billion plan first revealed last summer.

Read more: Brigg Power Station to become Centrica battery storage plant

Buckinghamshire's Sterling Thermal Technology were brought in to survey it, reporting back to Centrica on what repairs and replacements are required.

It followed the North Sea Transition Authority granting the required approvals and consents to restart use, with the operation controlled from Easington.

The direct pipeline from Norway hits the UK there, as well as the recently made operational Tolmount field, with increased importance on the assets following the sabotage of the continental Europe-serving Nord Stream pipeline, and the ongoing tensions between European countries and Vladimir Putin's regime.

Chris Webb, senior design and applications engineer with Sterling, told how the offshore platform presents a variety of challenges, with the increased likelihood of saltwater corrosion of equipment.

Chris Webb, senior design and applications engineer with Sterling Thermal Technology, on site at Rough.
(Image: Sterling TT)

He said: “It has been a pleasure helping our client reinstate the Rough platform to support the UK energy crisis.”

He carried out an external inspection to identify the oil coolers against the original drawings, looking for “any physical damage or environmental corrosion that may have occurred during the 37 years in operation and the five to six years of downtime”.

Mr Webb also completed a dimensional survey to confirm the size of the coolers for a like-for-like replacement within the existing footprint.

A spokesperson for Centrica said they were impressed with the company’s ability to mobilise personnel at short notice, to conduct this important site visit. The importance of replacing the heat exchanger within the existing footprint, was stressed.. “The structural modification cost and time saved as a result is priceless,” the spokesperson added.

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