

At the core of the matter

Core Values - Core Legacy - Core Workout - Core Assets - Core Beliefs – Core Blimey!

In this newsletter, I'd like to update you on some Petroleum Group (PG) activities aimed at trying to save some of our North Sea heritage.

In 2013 the PG chaired a working group including representatives from the then DECC, BGS and other key stakeholders linked to North Sea E&P. The group's objective was to seek ways to conserve redundant core (and all associated rock and fluids data gathered while drilling) deemed excess to requirements and flagged for disposal by the licensee. My understanding is the 2013 group had a positive impact by advising DECC on amendments to the Petroleum Operations Notice (PON) 9, which outlines the regulatory requirements and licensee reporting obligations regarding offshore well and seismic data. PON 9 specifies that a licensee is required to retain core for a minimum period of 5 years, after which they must give the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) 6 months' notice if they intend to dispose of it. This gives the opportunity for material to be sent to BGS to complete or replenish their collection. If core is not needed by BGS then "the licensee is free to dispose of the core as they see fit". PON9 does state that OGA and other stakeholders (the Geological society of London, the PESGB and Oil & Gas UK) strongly encourage licensees to offer surplus material to UK universities, museums, schools and colleges before disposal takes place. But there is no obligation to do so!

The PG has become aware that considerable quantities of core are going to landfill. Archival cost saving by operators and the increasing number of fields being decommissioned are thought to be the underlying drivers. The concerns of the working group back in 2013 mirror the same concerns the PG has today; we strongly believe there is further scope to re-home these cores that have an intrinsic value reflecting exploration and development efforts in the North Sea, and the discovery of oil and gas in reservoirs are the backbone of our industry. So this year PG has re-newed communication with OGA suggesting it is time to set up a new working group to review and refresh the PON9 and ensure all efforts are exhausted by the licensees before core is disposed of.

Another initiative between the PG and PESGB is taking place now. Some of our members may be aware that recently PESGB has taken direct action and has found temporary storage for a collection of unwanted cores from a variety of classic North Sea fields (e. g. Dunlin, Durward – Dauntless, Audrey and Ganymede to name a few). In line with one of PESGB's key objectives of 'Outreach and Charity', they are seeking to distribute this core to academic institutions involved in STEM, from primary level to university, and to individuals who simply have a desire to own a piece of North Sea history.

A recent tweet by a member of the PG Committee regarding the PESGB initiative attracted overwhelming interest from universities in the UK, Europe and as far afield as Egypt and the USA. In response to this PG and PESGB have decided to collaborate in preparing a number of 'Exploration Boxes', as illustrated below. Each box contains a piece of core from the classical source, reservoir and seal rocks in the North Sea with accompanying maps and description of the petroleum system. We believe these boxes offer a unique teaching resource. If you are interested in adopting one of these geological wonders or providing assistance with authoring the accompanying maps and descriptions

please contact Henk Kombrink, Aberdeen Director PESGB at: Henk.Kombrink@lr.org, who is the mastermind behind this initiative.

The Petroleum Group Committee is eager help licensees recognise the value of North Sea core to other stakeholders, and to hopefully to reverse the trend to dispose of core. The primary mechanism must be through the regulatory processes, and here there may be scope to review and enhance those processes and to ensure licensees adhere to them. The potential recipients of these cores are wide-reaching and their value has longevity even after fields are long abandoned.



Speaker gifts

