

## **Weather delays 2012 drilling campaign, but results keep coming**

A long awaited weather window during November resulted in the highest level of well starts throughout 2011, but that didn't last and December saw a deterioration that resulted in just two E&A starts, both of those sidetracking from rigs already on station. The year's tally closed at a provisional 50 E&A starts; 30 spuds and 16 sidetracks with the number of spuds evenly split between exploration and appraisal wells. 13 of the 16 sidetracks noted were from appraisal wells. 2 re-spuds and 2 re-entries make up the balance.

128 development/production wells are provisionally noted for 2011, including 69 initial wells and 55 sidetracks, 4 re-spuds or re-entries constituting the remainder. Apache's Forties Field stands out as the "most drilled field" of 2011. 20 development/production drilling programmes are currently ongoing, covering 17 fields and utilising a mix of platform-based facilities and mobile rigs.

Just 6 mobile units are active on E&A wells on the UKCS; 2 exploration and 4 appraisal wells, two of which commenced in December, although poor weather conditions mean that the 2012 E&A drilling season is yet to get started and a number of units remain on standby waiting on weather to move.

In the West of Shetland area just one mobile unit – the Stena Carron drillship – is active, on Chevron's Well 213/28-1 on the Aberlour Prospect.

In the Northern North Sea two semisubmersibles remain on location; the Sedco 714 on Total's 3/14a-19Z Ardbeg sidetrack and Awilco's WilHunter on MPX's Well 3/3b-13 appraising the Orlando Discovery and significantly delayed by poor weather conditions.

Two wells are active in the Central North Sea. When conditions allow, that number should rise notably. Operations continue on BG's long-running and sidetracked Jackdaw appraisal, Well 30/2a-8Z and on Maersk's Culzean appraisal Well 22/25a-11.

During December operations were completed on EnCore's 14/30a-5 Tudor Rose appraisal (P&A Oil), EnQuest's 21/13a-5 Crathes/Moon appraisal (P&A Oil), Antrim's 21/29d-11Z (Suspended) on the Eocene Erne Prospect, Nexen's 39/1b-3 (not thought a success) on the Jurassic Edgware Prospect, BG's 22/15-4 (P&A Oil) on the Palaeocene Esperanza Prospect and GDF SUEZ' Faraday Prospect Well 30/1a-11 - understood to have encountered H/C's in the deep HPHT objective.

In the Southern North Sea one well is currently drilling; Wintershall's Wingate Field appraisal, Well 44/24b-A2Z (a.k.a #8Z) with the jack-up Ensco 80. The pilot hole (A2) is thought to have been successful and was P&A during December ahead of the current sidetrack commencing. Wingate came on stream in mid-October 2011.

Current indications suggest 2012 levels – when new drilling gets underway – will outstrip 2011. The rig market has tightened though and operators looking to translate further plans into action may find drilling units hard obtain.

Despite the depressed activity levels in 2011, our upcoming analysis will show that, at least on a technical level, discoveries were made during the year and success rates might show a hike.

The second phase of 26th Round awards (late December 2011) it is noted, has added 5 firm wells and 2 contingent wells to our forecast well pool.