

5 Disposal after operations cease



The Ekofisk Tank before and after operation cease



Figure 5.1 To be removed: the Frigg field drilling and production platform, DP2
(Source: TOTAL E&P NORGE AS)

Petroleum activities only borrow the sea, and all phases of oil and gas activities must respect the environment and other marine users. When petroleum activity has ceased, everything must be cleared and removed.

To date, the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy (MPE) has approved more than 10 decommissioning plans. In most cases it was decided that abandoned facilities were to be removed and taken ashore. e.g. Odin, Nordøst Frigg, Øst Frigg and Lille-Frigg. The two most recent approvals are those for Ekofisk I and Frigg. Removal of the installations in the Frigg field and parts of the Ekofisk field is planned to start during 2005. Permission was also given, following consideration of the decommissioning plans for Ekofisk I and Frigg, to leave in place the Ekofisk Tank and its protection wall, as well as the concrete substructure TCP2 at the Frigg field.

The regulations

Both national and international regulations apply to the disposal of an installation on the Norwegian continental shelf.

Disposal or decommissioning of facilities is regulated by the 1996 Petroleum Act. Disposal of facilities is governed, in addition to the Petroleum Act, by Norway's obligations under the OSPAR Convention (Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the NorthEast Atlantic). OSPAR Decision 98/3 on the Disposal of Disused Offshore Installations, which came into force on 9 February 1999, lays down guidelines for the various disposal methods that are acceptable for various types of marine installations. This decision does not cover pipelines, parts of an installation that are under the seabed and concrete anchor foundations that do

not present an obstacle to fisheries.

The decision means that it is prohibited to dump, or leave in place, wholly or partially disused offshore installations in the marine environment. Derogation from the prohibition may be granted for individual installations, or parts of installations, if an overall assessment of the case in question shows that there are strong grounds for disposal at sea.

If derogation from the OSPAR decision concerning disposal ashore is applied for, a consultative process must be carried out in the OSPAR system. The appropriate authorities in the individual countries make the final decision and grant an exemption. There are a number of conditions that must be met if permission is granted. Up to now, Norway has granted two exemptions to the OSPAR decision concerning disposal ashore. As mentioned, permission has been granted to leave in place the Ekofisk Tank and its protection wall, as well as the concrete substructure TCP2, at the Frigg field.

The guidelines laid down in Report to the Storting No. 47 (1999–2000) "Decommissioning of redundant pipelines and cables" apply to pipelines and cables. As a general rule, pipelines and cables may be left in place when they do not obstruct, or present a safety risk for, bottom fishing, as compared with costs of burial, covering or removal.

Decommissioning plans

A principal provision of the legislation requires licensees to submit a decommissioning plan to the Ministry two to five years before a licence expires or is surrendered, or the use of a facility is terminated permanently.

The decommissioning plan must consist of two main parts, a disposal plan and an impact assessment.

The disposal plan is assessed by the MPE and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (safety aspects). The MPE coordinates the public hearing of the impact assessment.

The MPE prepares a draft Royal Decree, which is submitted to the government, based on the impact assessment and feedback from the public hearing, as well as on the disposal plan and its assessment. Applications for derogation from the OSPAR decision concerning disposal ashore must be put before the Storting.

Liability

If a decision for non-removal is made, the legislation states that the licensees are liable for any damage or hindrance resulting deliberately, or negligently, from the installation remaining in place. The licensees and the state may agree that future maintenance and liability can be transferred to the state, in return for an agreed financial compensation.



