

Onshore training rig first of its kind in North-east Scotland



First Minister Alex Salmond (r) with Pat Sibille, Frank's International's UK managing director after the unveiling of the rig

The First Minister Alex Salmond has congratulated engineering and tubular installation specialists Frank's International for investing in the oil & gas industry's future by installing an onshore drilling rig at its Aberdeen office base.

The rig is the first of its kind in the North-east of Scotland that is solely dedicated to tubular installation technology training and the development of offshore mechanisation in the North Sea.

Mr Salmond officially unveiled the onshore drilling rig. He said: "This facility is yet another encouraging sign for the oil and gas industry here in the North-east and it is a credit to Frank's

International as clear evidence of its initiative and long-term view. I am delighted to launch this training facility which will help staff at Frank's International develop the skills and technologies that can drive the industry and keep safety at the fore.

"The skills and dedication of our professionals are crucial to our competitiveness and our ability to attract new investment. This excellent training facility will help us build the world-class skills required for the industry to thrive in Scotland and beyond."

It was the vision of Keith Mosing, chairman and chief executive officer of Frank's International, to establish a centre of excellence in the world market for safety, training, engineering, manufacturing and

the deployment of Frank's International technology. The 32m (105ft) rig has been commissioned as a major platform from which to provide 'hands-on' safety training for Frank's International offshore technicians as well as developing technology for improving well centre safety for tubular handling operations for export to the global oil & gas industry.

Pat Sibille, Frank's International's UK managing director, said the rig has been installed at the company's European headquarters in Altens as part of the company's contribution to an industry skills initiative which will see investment in its own workforce development to ensure the long-term future of UK Continental Shelf operations. The Aberdeen base of Frank's International will be utilised as a leading centre for global training excellence. The company, which operates offices, plants and service centres in more than 40 countries worldwide, will use the facility to strengthen the training experience of its offshore workers, and will look to roll the use of the facility out to other companies in the New Year.

Mr Sibille said: "In the long-term, we see the rig as a huge investment for Scotland's future, both for its people and economic prosperity. We are proud to participate in addressing the global skills shortage in the oil & gas industry by investing long-term in a local facility, which offers young people the opportunity to enhance their practical skills and exposure to technology before going offshore.

"The facility also enables our research and development (R&D) innovations to grow because we can test new equipment on the facility. In effect, we can bring advanced technology, which has been 'tried and tested', to the market at the same time as demonstrating our world-class capabilities from our Aberdeen platform. This is of great long-term benefit to the people of the North-east."

With the growth of Frank's Scottish-based R&D engineering group producing a broad range of tubular technology solutions for the UK and international drilling and completions sectors, the rig will be a focal point from which to present engineering, design and manufacturing to the global marketplace.

A 309m (1, 013ft) well was drilled at Frank's International's Altens site in advance of the impressive National T20 rig being raised this month, to much local interest. Nicknamed the 'Big Yin' because it featured in the 1986 movie "Water" starring Billy Connolly, the onshore training rig is expected to be fully operational early next year ■