



Friday – 22nd March
9.00 – 10.40 – Room A

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN FRONTIER AND MATURE AREAS

WADDENZEE CASE IN NL

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Abstract:

The Wadden Sea area is a unique wetlands area of great ecological importance. The area is also very popular with tourists. It has recently (2009) been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Gas production in the Wadden Sea area has always been a sensitive and political issue. Since the mid eighties the NAM (Shell operated 50/50 JV with ExxonMobil) has operated the Ameland field from a location in the dunes on the Ameland island. Further development plans however met with fierce resistance from environmental groups and from local residents. The national government even imposed a 10-year moratorium on further drilling and development of gas from this area. A comprehensive stakeholder engagement process focussing on the common goal of ecosystem improvements in the end lead to a lifting of the moratorium. As a result gas is now produced from under the Waddensea area from 3 new locations on the main land bordering the Wadden Sea (using horizontal drilling techniques). Strict monitoring programmes are regularly reviewed with a wide group of stakeholders. And clear acceptability criteria have been defined, which, if exceeded can lead to reduced gas production ('hand on the tap' principle).

The presentation will share the main lessons learned from the initial phase (when a moratorium was imposed) and from the later phase in which broad political support for the production of more Waddengas was obtained.