

Field Development

Norway nears 'breakthrough' in developing vast tight oil and gas reservoirs

Aker BP's chief executive says conditions are nearly in place to develop country's discovered tight oil and gas resources



Optimist: Karl Johnny Hersvik, chief executive of Aker BP (Photo: NTB/SCANPIX)

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Aker BP chief executive Karl Johnny Hersvik has put the spotlight on Norway's enormous undeveloped oil and gas resources in tight reservoirs, but their time is coming as technology and infrastructure capacity are improving.

Hersvik told delegates at the DNB Energy Conference in Oslo that the biggest untapped resource on the Norwegian continental shelf is tight reservoirs of about 1.5 billion barrels of oil, and maybe more, that are discovered but not produced.

“Why is it not produced? Well, the cost level has been too high. The infrastructure has been fully utilised. So it's been made no sense to actually do that. And it's (the resource) stuck close to our (production) facilities.”

He cited examples in the basement reservoir at the Edvard Grieg field, and the chalk reservoir at the Valhall field. He also referred to “a pretty interesting billion

barrel discovery made by Equinor back in the days close to the Skarv area”.

Hersvik said Aker BP, which is the largest pure-play oil and gas company in Norway, has been working on unlocking tight reservoirs for several years, and “we're getting close to our breakthrough” with the aid of certain technology improvements and even “deploying onshore methods to offshore environments”.

“So you're kind of doing three things at the same point in time. You're utilising the resources that you have inside the conventional reservoirs. You're diving into exploration and tie-backs, and you're trying to unlock new resources by deploying what's called capability-enhancing technology,” he added.

Great potential

Last December, the Norwegian Offshore Directorate said there were vast proven gas resources on the Norwegian shelf that were without development plans.

Much of this gas was located in tight reservoirs, which makes it difficult to produce because a tight reservoir has low permeability or flow, in other words, how well a porous material can transport liquid or gas.

The directorate said various forms of fracturing and multi-branch wells, and slim-hole technology, are the most relevant methods for recovering resources in tight reservoirs.

In addition, production from tight reservoirs is usually only profitable if the development is based on tie-backs to existing infrastructure.

The directorate said there were nearly 8.8 billion barrels of oil and nearly 1 Bcm of gas in tight reservoirs.

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