

# The New Operators - An Independent State of Mind

## Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

**Aberdeen Evening Meeting: Wednesday 20th March 2019**

A total of 84 people attended our March evening event. 'An Independent State of Mind' panel discussion invited representatives from the new breed of North Sea Operators to answer a variety of questions relevant to an oil and gas industry just starting to climb out of the longest downturn in its history.

John Woods, Chief Operating Officer of i3 Energy; Colin Percival, Technical Director of Parkmead Group; Shona Campbell, Project Manager for Neptune Energy and Guy Sharman, SURF Manager for Alpha Petroleum, fielded questions from the SUT existing members and the audience, with Callum Falconer, CEO of DundeeCom as Chair for the evening.



Callum started proceedings by asking about how the industry could move the needle on productivity and development costs. Amongst our panellists replies, power generation, project execution speed, behavioural change and small-pool clusters all featured.

Subsequent questions touched upon decommissioning liabilities, including the difficult issue of how to prepare for the as-yet unknowable politics of the future, and access to infrastructure for independents, where majors operating the host platform differ in business culture and margins from the independents.

At several points the panellists were in accord on topics such as the skills shortfall and attracting new recruits to the industry. The de-carbonisation of energy, environmental reputation and the divestment movement have combined to create an image problem which the industry struggles to counter in order to attract job applicants, yet the panel were united that the North Sea was still a growth area with a future. At other times there was a little good-natured disagreement, for example on genuinely new ways to do business between Operator and Contractor, or whether consolidation amongst the Tier-1 contractors was a good or bad thing.

As is often the case, there were more questions than we had time for, particularly from our audience. All four panellists remained busy during the networking buffet afterwards, answering further questions there hadn't been time for in the auditorium.