

The Snøhvit gas plant leaves Cadiz on its journey towards the Arctic Circle

Dragados Offshore completes one of the most revolutionary industrial engineering projects of the last few years

June 30, 2005. This morning the Snøhvit natural gas liquefying plant, built by Dragados Offshore at its facilities in Puerto Real (Cadiz) began a 5,000 km journey across the sea towards the island of Melkøya, in Norwegian territorial waters in the Barents Sea, north of the Arctic Circle.

With the delivery of the plant to the client, Statoil, the Norwegian state oil and gas company, the ACS Group company, included in the Industrial Services Division, is completing its most prominent project and one of the most complex and innovative works of engineering of the last few years—Dragados Offshore has dedicated around five million man hours of work to this project. The Norwegian company and its partners in the Snøhvit project have congratulated Dragados Offshore for the work carried out and the way it managed to weather the changes and difficulties that arose due to the innovative nature of the project.

In February 2003, Dragados Offshore was awarded the construction of this natural gas liquefying plant in Puerto Real (Cádiz), at a tender in which bids were submitted by the most prominent international companies in the sector. Snøhvit will be the first natural gas liquefying plant to be installed in Europe, as well as the first of its kind in the world to be built remotely from the place where it will be installed.

The plant built by the ACS Group company weighs 25,000 tons, it is 60 metres tall and has the size of nearly two football pitches. It consists of a substation, a compression area, a processing area, and an electric power generation zone, which is actually a thermal plant in its own right, because it will include five gas turbines.

On 27 June, the gas plant and the barge on which it was constructed were loaded, assisted by eight tow boats, on the deck of the 'Blue Marlin', a special ship that travelled to the Bay of Cadiz to transfer the plant to the Barents Sea. The ship was partially submerged so that the plant could be set on deck and, after having the ballast removed and being taken to port to fasten and prepare the cargo, today it shall begin its final journey to the small island of Melkøya. A place has already been prepared for the plant to be imbedded, weighted down and covered in concrete until it is fixed in place.

The 'Blue Marlin' is scheduled to arrive at the island, located opposite the Norwegian town of Hammerfest, the northernmost town on Earth, on 9 July. The ship will again be partially submerged so that the plant can be removed from deck by tow boats and then wait for the ocean tides to make the landing on the island take place. This operation should take place between 10 and 14 July.

Once the plant is in place and it is installed, the works will begin to connect it to Statoil's new gas deposits, which are around 140 kilometres away from the island, as well as to the deposits and the sea terminal that have been built, so that the gas can be loaded, after being liquefied at the plant, onto gas distribution ships for export purposes. The plant is scheduled to become operational in autumn 2006. The main destinations for the liquefied gas produced at the plant will be the United States and Spain.