

LNG Unlimited

LNG JOURNAL PUBLICATION

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Chart Industries posts successes in LNG and space on Howden merger

The \$4.4 billion acquisition of UK engineering firm Howden closed early
LNG News Editor

Chart Industries Inc., the LNG equipment-maker and industrial gas technology company, has received a first-quarter 2023 boost as orders increased following its \$4.4 billion acquisition of UK engineering firm Howden with both new branches of the company contributing and synergies already emerging.

Chart, based in Atlanta, Georgia, is a leading global player in the LNG and clean energy sectors while the now merged Howden manufactures highly engineered fans, compressors, rotary heat exchangers, steam turbines and other air and gas-handling products.

Heat exchangers

Chart's new first-quarter LNG orders included one for air cooled heat ex-



Three space exploration customers placed orders in 2023

changers and an ethylene tank for the Semptra Infrastructure Port Arthur LNG export project being built in Texas by US energy and civil engineering company Bechtel.

Chart has just given an update on the merger with a presentation to investors called "Cooler Together". It included a run-down of gains already made with orders in the LNG, space and compressor sectors.

"We have achieved \$31.5 millions of annualized cost synergies since we closed on the Howden acquisi-

tion on March 17, 2023, ahead of the original schedule," stated Chart.

"There are discussions with Big LNG EPC looking at a heat recovery project at an existing facility which could use both Chart and Howden equipment," Chart added.

"An air separation equipment customer was also requesting to utilise the combined Howden and Chart resources in Europe and the US to support their turbo-expanders," Chart explained.

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TOWAGE



US energy and LNG outlook hit by natural gas pipeline maintenance but inventories higher

LNG News Editor

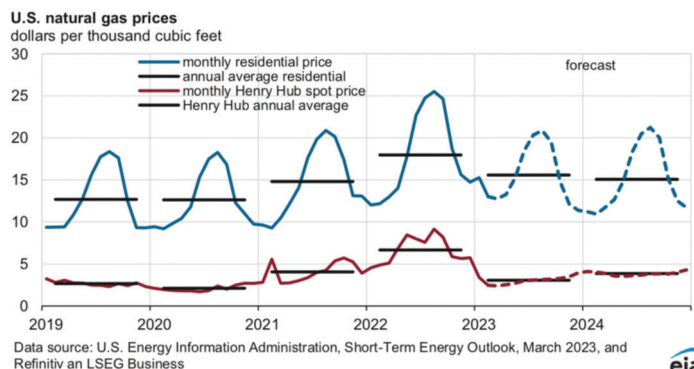
The US Government expects liquefied natural gas exports to increase in 2023 and 2024 but in the short term during April and May there would be slight declines in the nation's natural gas output because of pipeline maintenance.

US LNG gross exports are still forecast to remain on track and amount to 12.1 billion cubic feet per day in 2023, rising to 12.7 Bcf per day in 2024.

Flat output

"We expect relatively flat US natural gas production, rising demand for feed gas from Freeport LNG as the export terminal returns to full operations, and increased natural gas consumption in the electric power sector to raise natural gas prices through the summer," said the US Energy Information Administration in its Short-Term Energy Outlook.

"We forecast the Henry Hub price to average slightly more than \$3.00 per million British thermal units in the third quarter of 2023," added the EIA.



Benchmark natural gas price forecasts through to 2026

The agency also forecasts slight declines in US natural gas production in April and May because of pipeline maintenance in West Texas and the Northeast, with US production averaging 100.6 Bcf per day for the remainder of 2023.

The EIA expects the benchmark Henry Hub natural gas spot price to average \$2.65 per MMBtu for the second quarter of 2023, unchanged from the first quarter average.

"Natural gas prices typically decrease in the Spring as more moderate temperatures reduce demand for natural gas for space heating," the report explained.

"However, a Spring-like pattern

emerged early this year, reducing natural gas consumption in the first two months of the year compared with both year-ago levels and the five-year average, reducing natural gas prices," it added.

The EIA noted that dry natural gas production averaged 101.6 Bcf per day in the first quarter of 2023, an increase of 1.4 percent on the fourth quarter of 2022.

"Moderate weather in the first quarter created no major production disruptions due to freeze-offs," said the report.

"Associated natural gas production from the Permian Basin and production from the Haynesville region, which established new

records in early 2023, contributed to rising US natural gas production in the first quarter," the EIA said.

The agency stated that in its forecast natural gas production would average 100.9 Bcf per day for 2023, which would be 3 percent more than in 2022.

"However, if production were to increase by more than our forecast, it could put downward pressure on natural gas prices.

Alternatively, if declines are more than in our forecast, it would likely lead to higher prices, other factors equal," the report said.

"Cooler summer weather than we forecast would reduce consumption, increase storage and put downward pressure on prices," warned the EIA.

Injection season

The report said that at the end of March, which is considered to be the end of the US storage withdrawal season (November-March), it was estimated that working natural gas in storage reached 1,856 Bcf, or 19 percent more than the five-year (2018-2022) average.

Cheniere issues message on LNG markets, growth and contracts for 2023 and out to 2050

Cheniere Energy, the largest US liquefied natural gas exporter with its two plants at Corpus Christi in Texas and Sabine Pass in Louisiana, said that it had signed long-term contracts for 180 million tonnes of LNG and issued an upbeat message on markets, expansions and delivery.

Cheniere said in its annual report sent to investors that the 180MT had accrued in 2022 and part of the aggregate total of contracts extended out to 2050.

Long term

"In 2022 alone, we signed over 10 MTPA of long-term contracts representing an aggregate of over

180MT of LNG, with over 40 million tonnes extending through 2050," said Cheniere.

"These contracts include free-on-board, delivered ex-ship and Integrated Production Marketing (IPM) agreements with counterparties that include North American producers, Asian and European end-use utilities, as well as global portfolio players," the report added.

The Houston, Texas-based liquefaction and export company named some of its diverse list of buyers including PetroChina, Norway's Equinor, French utility Engie, ARC Resources of Canada, EOG Resources of the US, POSCO Interna-

tional of South Korea, PTT of Thailand and US major Chevron Corp.

The report recalled that 638 LNG cargoes were delivered in 2022 and noted that 72 percent of them were discharged at European ports.

Cheniere stated in the report that its expansion projects were on schedule to increase production and berthing facilities.

The company said that after the Sabine Pass liquefaction Train 6 was completed in 2022, along with a third berth, the 20 MTPA Sabine expansion project was put into the pre-filing process with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The Corpus Christi expansion, called Stage 3, saw its final invest-

ment decision taken in June 2022 and two more mid-scale Trains, known as Train 8 and Train 9, were in the pre-filing process with the FERC.

Cheniere told shareholders that while 2021 showcased the power of the Cheniere platform, 2022 demonstrated its reliability during a critical time in energy markets across the globe.

"As the second-largest LNG operator in the world, we have produced over 2,650 cargoes since inception, which have been delivered to 39 different countries and regions around the world," the report said.

India sets natural gas cap for prices

LNG importer India is expected to encourage increased domestic natural gas demand in the months ahead after the Government introduced a gas prices cap for two years to help boost the economy in sectors such as the fertilizer industry, refining and petrochemicals.

The Indian Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said that gas prices had been capped at the equivalent of \$6.5 per million British thermal units for two years through March 2025.

The price revision was part of new guidelines approved by the Government and which pave the way for gas prices in India to be linked to global crude prices.

Analysts said the additional cost subsidising domestic gas could be offset against India's surging purchases of Russian crude oil at much lower price.

A statement said that the revised domestic gas prices came into effect on April 8 at midnight.

The capped gas prices will also apply to city-gas customers and compressed natural gas (CNG) users in the transportation sector.

Statements from several major gas suppliers such as units of Gas Authority of India (GAIL) said they had cut the costs of CNG and cooking gas supplied by pipelines to households.

GAIL Gas has reduced city-gas prices in all of the states and geographical areas in which it operates.

The prices are now between 52.50 rupees (US\$0.65) per standard cubic metre from 51.50 rupees per standard cubic metre.

LNG buyers JERA and Kogas to cooperate on trading and swaps

LNG News Editor

JERA Co. Inc., the largest Japanese liquefied natural gas buyer, and Korea Gas Corp. (Kogas), its counterpart in South Korea, have signed an accord to cooperate in the LNG business.

JERA said the deal was in the form of a memorandum of understanding and will involve studying future opportunities.

Procurement

JERA, which buys around 35 million tonnes per annum of LNG, is Japan's biggest fossil-fuel electricity generator being owned jointly by Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) and Chubu Electric, the two largest power companies.

JERA currently oversees the operations and provides fuel for a total of 26 power plants in Japan and imports LNG into 11 of Japan's network of 37 terminals.

State-owned Kogas, the nation's main gas utility is based in the Korean city of Daegu, and controls four out of seven of the South Korean LNG import terminals.



Kogas operates five terminal including Incheon LNG

Under this MOU, JERA and Kogas aim to discuss opportunities for collaboration covering LNG swaps, trading, ship optimization and market view exchanges.

Kogas was previously the sole importer of LNG into Korea, though has now been joined by several other companies, the first being a unit of steel-maker POSCO International.

Two other companies, GS Energy and SK E&S, were then given permission in Korea to import LNG.

The terminals at Gwangyang and Boryeong are used by the other companies while Kogas controls the facilities at Incheon, Pyeongtaek, Samcheok and Tongyeong. The terminal at Jeju is

jointly controlled with Korea Electric Power Corp.

Market changes

"Russia's invasion of Ukraine has created a severe energy environment, such as the reduction of pipeline gas supply to Europe, and the uncertainty regarding global energy supply is drastically increasing," said a joint statement.

Analysts note that since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the global market has focused on energy security, particularly the 27-nation European Union where LNG importing nations have pledged to cooperate on LNG with joint cargo and volume purchases.

Koreans may boost LNG as Busan N-reactor taken offline

South Korea, the third-largest Asian liquefied natural gas importer, may be seeking more short-term cargoes after temporarily suspending one of its nuclear reactors on April 9 for safety reasons.

A statement from Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Co. (KHNP) said that the No. 2 reactor at the Kori Nuclear Power Plant, located at the port of Busan, about 325 kilometres (202 miles) southeast of the capital Seoul, was halted on April 8 upon the expiry of its 40-year permission to operate.

The Kori-2 unit began commercial operations in April 1983 as the country's third nuclear reactor.

Currently, South Korea operates 18 out of its 25 nuclear reac-

tors and this closure takes it down to 17.

The shutdown comes at a time when the Korean Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy has plans to also cut coal-fired power generation by around half (from 42 percent to 22 percent) through 2030.

The new Government of Yoon Suk Yeol had reversed the previous government's nuclear phase-out policy and has been working to expand nuclear power generation to 30 percent of the country's total by 2030, with the figure for 2021 coming to 27.4 percent.

South Korea's LNG imports had risen to an annual 47 million tonnes and plans to have more nuclear power to replace higher-

priced LNG have now been affected by the Kori-2 plant closure.

The largest LNG suppliers to South Korea are Qatar and Australia with around 11 MTPA of cargoes each followed by the US and Oman.

South Korea sources all of its gas from LNG imports more about 55 percent is used to generate electricity with 16 percent used as chemical feedstock or a source of heat and 26 percent allocated to the commercial and residential gas sectors.

The company responsible for the Kori-2 nuclear reactor is Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Co. (KHNP).



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A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Jill Evanko.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Libya gas start-up

The National Oil Corporation (NOC) of Libya, a former LNG exporter, has announced that the Mellitah Oil and Gas Company, among whose shareholders is Italy's Eni, had succeeded in returning a Mediterranean offshore natural gas well to production. The Libyan company said that the No. CW04 gas well located near the Sabrata offshore platform over Libya's Bahr Al-Salam field was producing gas flows. The well had been out of service since 28 January 2021 due to technical problems. The NOC said that the current production of the well is about 37 million cubic feet per day of gas.

Danish gas use falls

Demark, one of the few European Union members in north-west Europe without LNG import infrastructure, said the nation's consumption of natural gas fell by 29 percent last year and contributed to overall energy consumption falling by 1.5 percent as the nation improved its energy self-sufficiency. Gross energy consumption, corrected for fuel consumption linked to net electricity imports and climate, fell in 2022 by 2.7 percent.

GasLog merger agreed

GasLog Ltd and GasLog Partners LP have entered into a definitive merger agreement with GasLog acquiring all the outstanding common units of the Partnership. GasLog is also acquiring the common units of the Partnership not already owned by GasLog for \$8.65 in cash per common unit. The transaction is expected to close by the end of the third quarter of 2023. GasLog's current consolidated fleet consists of 38 LNG carriers with 33 on the water, four under construction and one vessel undergoing conversion into a floating storage and regasification unit.

QatarEnergy agrees to accept Chinese major Sinopec as new shareholder in North Field East expansion project

LNG News Editor

China Petroleum and Chemical Corp., the Chinese major known as Sinopec, has agreed to take a stake in the North Field East (NFE) liquefied natural gas project in Qatar, one of two huge expansion joint ventures now under way in the Arabian Gulf state.

Sinopec had already signed a cargo supply deal with QatarEnergy in November 2022 to receive 4 million tonnes per annum of cargoes from Qatar's Ras Laffan plant from 2026.

Investment

With a total investment of \$28.75 billion, the NFE project is projected to increase Qatar's annual LNG export volume from 77 million tonnes per annum to 110 million tonnes.

Sinopec signed an equity participation agreement with QatarEnergy to take 1.25 percent of the shares in the NFE joint venture.

Sinopec Chairman Ma Yongsheng and QatarEnergy President and Chief Executive Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi signed the agreement on April 13 in the Qatar capital Doha.

"QatarEnergy, a world-leading LNG producer, is one of Sinopec's most important partners, the co-operation between the two companies will further strengthen the optimization of China's energy consumption pattern and improve the security, stability, and reliability of clean energy supply," said Sinopec Chairman Ma.

"With the solid foundation of our partnership, we hope to explore new LNG collaboration opportunities and expand new grounds for cooperation to achieve

حفل توقيع اتفاقية شراكة في مشروع حقل الشمال الشرقي North Field East Partnership Agreement Signing Ceremony

Doha, Qatar
12 April 2023

الدوحة، قطر
١٢ أبريل ٢٠٢٣



Sinopec's Chairman Ma and QatarEnergy's CEO Al-Kaabi

mutual benefit and win-win progress," added Ma.

Two expansions

Qatar has two expansion projects and as well as the NFE venture there is also the North Field South (NFS) project and when both are completed Qatar's production will surge to 126 MTPA from the current 77 MTPA.

"The People's Republic of China is a major driver of the global energy markets as well as being one of the most important gas markets in the world and is a key market for Qatari energy products," said QatarEnergy CEO Al-Kaabi.

"This event underscores QatarEnergy's commitment to deepening its relationships with key LNG consumers, while prioritizing long-term strategic partnerships and alignment with world class partners from China, represented by Sinopec," he added.

"I would like to thank the working teams in QatarEnergy and Sinopec for their dedicated work to reach this important agreement," stated Al-Kaabi.

QatarEnergy had already selected French major TotalEnergies as well as Shell and ExxonMobil as shareholders for the NFE project.

The NFE and NFS ventures are

tapping the massive North Field gas basin covering more than 6,000 square kilometres and with an estimated 900 trillion standard cubic feet of recoverable reserves.

The upstream part of the project is currently being developed in the North Field and comprises five platforms, 50 wells and gas pipelines to the onshore Ras Laffan processing facility.

Qatar's portion of the North Field has turned it into a global leader in gas supply.

The other portion of the Gulf gas basin is owned by Iran and the Iranians call their part the South Pars field.

Australian supplies

Sinopec's biggest current LNG supply agreement is with the Australia-Pacific LNG project in Queensland in Australia operated by ConocoPhillips.

APLNG came on stream in 2016 and has two liquefaction Trains with total nameplate capacity of around 9 MTPA and with about 7 MTPA going to Sinopec.

China was the world No. 1 LNG importer in 2021, receiving over 79 MTPA of LNG cargoes, but was overtaken again by the previous No. 1 Japan in 2022.

Sinopec is one of the three leading importers of LNG to China along with the other two majors being China National Petroleum Corp., with its Hong Kong-listed arm known as PetroChina, and China National Offshore Oil Corp.

The People's Republic of China is a major driver of the global energy markets ... and is a key market for Qatari energy products

- QatarEnergy CEO Al-Kaabi

Vopak takes stake in Eemshaven floating LNG terminal but pulls out of Hong Kong project

LNG News Editor

Royal Vopak of the Netherlands, the world's leading independent tank storage company and LNG terminals shareholder, said it aimed to take a 50 percent stake in the floating LNG project at the Dutch port of Eemshaven though was pulling out of an LNG terminal venture in Hong Kong.

Vopak said it had agreed to acquire a 50 percent stake in the Eemshaven project from Dutch utility Gasunie.

"This transaction will be subject to a number of conditions, including the approval from the competition authorities. The transaction is targeted to be completed at the latest by 1 October 2023," Vopak said.

The EemsEnergyTerminal is an LNG import terminal located in the seaport of the province of Groningen.

"Gasunie developed this new floating LNG terminal in the Eemshaven area in response to gas supply insecurities and a desire to reduce the dependency on Russian gas," Vopak explained.

Vopak has additionally decided to no longer pursue the acquisition of a 49.99 percent stake in a floating storage and regasification unit



'MOL FSRU Challenger' will change name to 'Bauhinia Spirit'

(FSRU) owned by Japanese shipping company Mitsui Osk Lines and deployed in Hong Kong.

FSRU plans

"Vopak has been working with MOL for developing and commissioning the Hong Kong FSRU LNG terminal, and Vopak has contributed much to the establishment of a reliable system for the operation and maintenance of the terminal," Vopak stated.

"Although the commercial start is expected later this year, the delay of the project has resulted in reduced attractiveness and made Vopak decide not to make use of the share right," it added.

The FSRU for Hong Kong is the "MOL FSRU Challenger" and its

name will be changed to the "Bauhinia Spirit".

Vopak said it would remain involved in the commissioning of the terminal and would continue to provide support to the operation of the terminal as required.

The Eemshaven LNG facility has been operational since September 2022 and has a regasification capacity of 8 billion cubic metres per year.

It comprises two FSRUs, the "Energos Igloo" and an FSRU barge built in China for Belgian shipping company Exmar.

Vopak said that the partners would explore ways of increasing capacity further.

Vopak and Gasunie are also partners in the main Dutch LNG

import terminal, the onshore Gate facility at the port of Rotterdam.

Dutch security

"This agreement highlights the commitment of Gasunie and Vopak to jointly develop and operate open access LNG infrastructure in the Netherlands and to contribute to the energy security of Europe," the statement added.

Ulco Vermeulen, director of business development at Gasunie, said he was pleased with Vopak's decision to become a co-shareholder in EemsEnergyTerminal.

"By pooling our knowledge and experience we will offer a unique and reliable LNG import solution," Vermeulen added.

Walter Moone, president New Energies and LNG at Vopak, said he was keen to build on the existing successful partnership with Gasunie.

"This fits very well with Vopak's strategy to grow in LNG infrastructure and accelerate towards new energies," Moone explained.

"We are proud to develop and operate reliable and open access infrastructure as this plays an important role both in the security of energy as well as in the energy transition," added Moone.

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China gas imports increase in March

Chinese natural gas imports by pipeline and as liquefied natural gas increased by more than 11 percent in March, though were still lower for the first quarter compared with 2022.

China received 8.86 million tonnes of natural gas in March by pipeline and ship which was 11.2 percent more than in March 2022.

The main LNG suppliers in early 2023 were Australia, Qatar, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Yamal plant in Arctic Russia.

Crude oil imports by China in March jumped 22.5 percent from a year earlier to 52.3MT, or about 12.3 million barrels per day, according to data from the Chinese General Administration of Customs.

China's first-quarter imports of oil declined by 8.1 percent to 127.85MT.

The nation's natural gas imports by pipeline and LNG were still lower in the first quarter by 3.6 percent versus the same three months in 2022.

The Chinese imported 26.74MT of natural gas in the first quarter versus 27.73MT in the same period of last year.

China receives varying volumes of pipeline gas mainly through links from the former Asian republics of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, as well as from Russia as part of Gazprom's "Power of Siberia" project.

Russian natural gas company Gazprom said it had halted supplies to China through the "Power of Siberia" pipeline in late March for a week of maintenance work.

Tellurian signs deal to raise \$1Bln for sale and lease-back of plant site

LNG News Editor

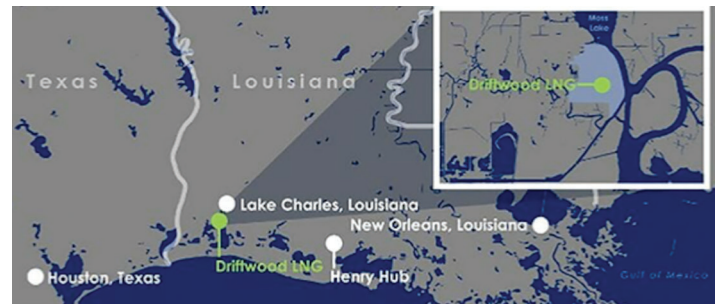
Tellurian Inc. has signed an accord to sell the site of the proposed Driftwood liquefied natural gas plant in Lake Charles in Louisiana to a New York-based institutional investor.

Tellurian said in a stock exchange filing that the sale and lease back deal has been the subject of a binding letter of intent for the 800 acres of land owned by Tellurian's subsidiary, Driftwood LNG LLC.

Investment firm

The agreement with the unnamed investment firm with \$120 billion in assets under management will see Tellurian receiving \$1 billion for the land and a lease.

"It will consist of the sale by Driftwood LNG and purchase by a special purpose entity to be formed by the investor of Driftwood LNG's interests in the property for \$1.0Bln pursuant to a purchase and sale



Driftwood LNG construction site is West of the Henry Hub

agreement," said Tellurian.

On the closing of the transaction a 40-year lease of the property from the purchaser to Driftwood LNG will be signed in the form of a master lease.

The terms of the master lease will include, among other requirements, a capitalization rate of 8.75 percent and annual rent escalators of 3.00 percent as well as a requirement that Driftwood LNG posts a letter of credit equal to 12 months of rent.

There is also a requirement that the equity investors in Driftwood LNG become joint and contingent

guarantors of the master lease.

"The master lease contingent guarantors are also required to hold an investment grade rating of BBB or higher or attain an equivalent shadow credit rating, or be otherwise acceptable to the purchaser," noted Tellurian in its filing.

The Houston-based company is quoted on the American list of the New York Stock Exchange.

The accord contemplates that the parties will use "commercially reasonable efforts" to finalize the purchase agreement and master lease on or before July 14, 2023.

Russia's Novatek boosts sales including LNG to the EU states

Novatek, the Russian natural gas company and operator of the Yamal LNG export plant and developer of Arctic LNG II currently still under threat from Western sanctions imposed because of the Ukraine invasion, has reported operating data for the first quarter of 2023 as it continued to supply cargoes to the European Union.

Novatek's first-quarter 2023 total natural gas sales volumes to the end of March, including LNG, aggregated to 22.33 billion cubic metres, representing an increase of 5.2 percent compared with the corresponding volumes in the first quarter 2022.

LNG sales

"The natural gas volumes sold in the Russian Federation were 19.36 Bcm, which is practically equal to

the prior year period, whereas LNG volumes sold on international markets amounted to 2.97 Bcm, representing a growth of 60.0 percent," stated Novatek.

LNG shipments to the EU have amounted to around 12 per month in 2023, according to shipping data.

The large climb in the first quarter versus the same three months of 2022 appears to stem from the fact that in the immediate aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine there was confusion in the market regarding Russian LNG vessels and many delivery delays occurred.

Cargoes from the Yamal plant in the Russian Arctic are still being unloaded in EU nations with the UK being the only LNG importer in northwest Europe to formally ban LNG from Russia.

The main EU destinations for Russian LNG are Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Spain.

Novatek said its overall hydrocarbon production in the first quarter to the end of March totalled 163.0 million barrels of oil equivalent, including 20.88 Bcm of natural gas and 3.1 million tons of liquids (gas condensate and oil), resulting in an increase in total hydrocarbons production by 3.0 million boe, or 1.8 percent, compared with the first three months of 2022.

Preliminary petroleum product sales volumes of the Ust-Luga complex aggregated 1.6MT, including 0.9MT of naphtha, 0.3MT of jet fuel and 0.4MT of fuel oil and gasoil.

Novatek added that it sold 0.6MT of crude oil and 0.8MT of stable gas condensate.



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Japan Bank for International Cooperation backs UK-Germany interconnector between LNG sites

LNG News Editor

Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) has signed loan agreements underwriting project financing amounting to over US\$2.3 billion for a power interconnector between UK and German LNG import locations to also help guarantee against any future natural gas and LNG shortages.

Japanese financial backing has come because of the involvement of Japanese LNG importer Kansai Electric Power Co. (KEPCO) and Tokyo Electric Power Co., whose LNG procurement is handled by JERA Co. Inc.

The UK-Germany power interconnector project will link the Isle of Grain in Kent, where National Grid plc runs the LNG import terminal, and Wilhelmshaven in Germany and also involves global investment firms Meridiam and Allianz Capital Partners.

The NeuConnect project as it is called will become one of the world's largest interconnectors with land and subsea cables forming an "invisible energy highway" to connect two of Europe's largest energy markets for the first time.

The loan accords already total £1.069 billion (\$1.32Bln) for the



Power project links Isle of Grain in Kent to Wilhelmshaven

UK section of the project and €910 million (\$992M) for the German side.

Specifications

The NeuConnect project will comprise a high voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission system that will link the eastern region of the UK and Northern Germany with a subsea cable of a total length of around 720 kilometres (448 miles) and a capacity of 1,400 megawatts.

The system will be operated for a duration of 25 years and Japanese utility and LNG importer Kansai Electric has been involved in the development of the venture since 2018 as a shareholder of the

project companies.

NeuConnect was also the first project under a memorandum of understanding signed between JBIC with the European Investment Bank, a lending unit of the 27-nation European Union.

The NeuConnect power interconnector will link the Isle of Grain on the Medway River in Kent to Wilhelmshaven, where new German floating LNG facilities have already been established.

However, NeuConnect was conceived several years before the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent cut-off of Gazprom's pipeline natural gas flows to Germany via the Nord

Stream pipelines.

Construction of the NeuConnect project had also been held up by several issues including the Covid-19 pandemic but things were back on track, the project construction has started and a completion date is set for 2028.

Analysts note that the interconnector venture has become an even more important strategic project because of geopolitical events and tighter energy markets.

"European countries have made a lot of effort to strengthen and expand interconnectors to make the most of the valuable power and share it when it is in excess," explained JBIC spokeswoman Okabe Mai.

Mai, who is an executive in the New Energy and Power Finance Department at JBIC, said that KEPCO had asked for JBIC's financial support and the Japanese government-agency was pleased to oblige.

Technology

"Partly because this would be the first overseas interconnector project involving a Japanese power company, KEPCO asked if JBIC could assist them as a lender," she added.

Warren Buffett causes jump in Japanese stocks after interview on Japan trading house stakes

US investor Warren Buffett, whose Berkshire Hathaway group has a stake in the Cove Point LNG export plant in Maryland and a growing stake in US exploration and production company, Occidental Petroleum, revealed that he had stakes in Japan's five main trading houses with their widespread energy assets and intended to buy more Japanese shares.

Buffett said in an interview with Japan's Nikkei financial publication that he was considering additional investment in Japanese stocks and said he already held stakes of up to

7.4 percent stake in each of the five main Japanese conglomerates.

The big five, known in Japanese as "sogo shosha", are Mitsubishi Corp., Mitsui & Co, Itochu Corp., Marubeni Corp. and Sumitomo Corp.

Buffett said he intended to increase his Japanese holdings and after the interview was published shares in the five companies listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange increased by at least 2.5 percent.

Buffett told Nikkei that he was planning to meet with the trading houses later in the week to have discussions about their businesses

and "emphasize our support" for them.

LNG interests

Mitsui has very wide LNG interests in nations like Australia as does Mitsubishi, whose LNG assets also include a stake in the new LNG Canada plant being constructed in British Columbia.

"As of the end of 2022, Berkshire's stock investments were valued at \$309 billion, most of it in US stocks. But more recently, he has signalled his intent to look for investment opportunities over-

seas," said the Nikkei introduction to the interview.

The Nikkei report noted that Buffett's last trip to Japan was in August 2011, during which he visited a maker of metal-cutting tools, called Tungaloy, based in Iwaki in Fukushima Prefecture.

Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway has also recently expanded its investments in companies such as Occidental Petroleum.

Buffett, known as the "Oracle of Omaha", took his stake in Occidental to over 20 percent in 2022.