

More jobs to go at Teesside's DeepOcean following oil and gas slowdown

2015-08-28 00:00:00 by DT_Amanda

Despite pruning jobs the subsea trenching firm said it was confident in winning offshore renewables work.

Further [job losses are expected](#) at the North East base of DeepOcean following continued slowdown in the oil and gas market.

The subsea engineering firm expects to shed up to 50 jobs in its offshore team, some of which are based out of its [Darlington](#) and Middlesbrough bases.

Technical operational jobs are at risk of redundancy and not management level positions, the company confirmed.

It follows a move earlier this year to axe 45 North East jobs in response to a major reorganisation of its global operations in light of falling world oil prices.

Chief executive officer Bart Heijermans told The Journal he was confident an increase in work was on the horizon and suggested there could be re-staffing as early as next year.

He said: "We really don't have enough offshore work at the moment to sustain our offshore team at its current size. This is about making some adjustments to that workforce so that we make sure we're a sustainable business.

"At the moment we're looking at up to about 50 redundancies, but it could be less than that. Some of those will be from the North East but we also have people in the Far East, including Thailand and Malaysia."

Amsterdam-headquartered DeepOcean cited a dearth of offshore work in the oil and gas sector as reason for the restructuring.

Despite some earlier reservations about the UK government's commitment to supporting UK content in the wind industry, Mr Heijermans said he was confident that some of that work would be replaced by contracts in renewables.

In July the firm secured a substantial deal to install cabling for the Belgian wind farm, Bligh Bank Phase II.

A team of DeepOcean engineers are conducting surveys of the location before trenching work goes ahead and design and supply of a cable protection system.

That activity is scheduled to start in the third and fourth quarters of 2016.

Mr Heijermans added: "We're looking at some really interesting projects in offshore wind, and existing contracts which are going to start in 2016.

"Hopefully we will be able to make some announcements in the next couple of months. Some of the projects that we expect to be awarded are offshore renewables schemes in the UK and Western Europe.

"There is very little oil and gas trenching happening at the moment, and we see all of the growth in offshore renewables. We'd hope that will present job creation opportunities in the North East.

“DeepOcean has invested heavily in some very attractive assets, including mechanical trenchers and ploughs, and I hope we hope that commitment will allow us to get work.

“You hear some people use the phrase “cutting the fat and not the muscle” – and that’s very much what we’re doing here. We won’t damage our ability to operate.”

A number of firms in the offshore industry have cut staff in the North East this year as the slump in the global oil price creates knock-on effects.

As well as DeepOcean’s two redundancy rounds, firms including MHWirth, Archer and Flexlife have cut staff while OGN on Tyneside issued around 200 redundancy notices to staff this week.

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