

for the cans to slide into the holes, bending the legs and preventing the rig being located precisely where it was needed to be.



THE ROWAN GORILLA V. The rig is about to enter the water alongside the Elgin WHP, with the Vidar Viking on the tow. Picture: Crew of the Island Pride.

The precise location was yet another challenge which needed to be faced. Modern jack-ups are capable of extending their cantilevers over the decks of platforms, and can skid the drilling package laterally to access the drilling slots. In order to maximize this capability at Franklin, the rig was required to be 10 metres from the structure and to be located with a tolerance of less than one metre in any direction, and with a heading within one degree of the ideal.

If all this was not enough there was concern with the soil layers at Franklin, since rigs on previous visits had tended to slide in one direction or another during elevation and preloading.

In order that the possible movement towards the WHP would be prevented, the clients required that the bow moorings should be laid by anchor-handlers. This in itself was a complex operation requiring mid point buoyancy to ensure that the wires cleared the subsea architecture. The Rowan Gorilla V Operations Manual demanded that the vessels involved should have a bollard pull of at least 150 tonnes, this being the required power for one vessel to keep the rig stationary when afloat in wind speeds of 40 knots.

The first team of vessels, because there was to be more than one over the duration of the move, consisted of the ME303 Northern Chaser, the KMAR808 Balder Viking and the tug Stevns Ocean. The tug was required because the port aft corner of the rig was close to the main Elgin platform, restricting the movement of any vessel on that corner. The ships sailed from Aberdeen in the evening of 17th March and