



Refit for country's oldest gasfield

Operators seek to extend Kapuni's life

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One of the biggest drilling rigs seen in New Zealand has arrived in Taranaki, and will soon begin a drilling campaign aimed at extending the life of the country's oldest gasfield.

The brand-new Chinese-built rig arrived in more than 300 pieces aboard the ship MCP Linz which berthed at Port Taranaki on Friday, and all the components are now being unloaded and transported to a site at the Kapuni field for assembly and commissioning.

This assembly job is expected to take several weeks, and drilling won't start until the second quarter of the year.

But when the drilling does begin, it promises to be a spectacular sight.

The rig will sit about 50 metres tall, weigh more than 2300 tonnes, and will have the ability to drill to 5000 metres underground – twice as deep as Mt Taranaki is high – which will be the greatest depths ever drilled by a land-based rig in New Zealand.

This new rig is also unusual because it is one of only a few in the world to have a lift, which will allow operators to move equipment on to the 9m-high drilling floor without using a winch, which will reduce noise and enhance safety.

It will also use new drilling technology which will involve electronic control of the drill bit's rotation.

The rig – known as Rig 43 – will be operated by the Chuanqing Drilling Engineering Company which competed against 19 other companies worldwide to secure the \$40 million Kapuni contract. The company is a subsidiary of the China National Petroleum Company which has a strong working relationship with Shell China.

While Chuanqing will operate the rig, about two-thirds of the 50-person workforce required for the project will be recruited in Taranaki, said Shell Todd Oil Services general manager Rob Jager yesterday.

“As well as potentially helping to further extend the life of the Kapuni field, the project will benefit the regional economy by creating opportunities for local contractors and suppliers.”

For example Hooker Pacific is transporting the rig from Port Taranaki to Kapuni, Titan Cranes Ltd involved in the rig lifting plan, JLE Electrical and Wells Instrument and Electrical are providing the electricians, Fitzroy Engineering will be involved in rig compliance and maintenance, and Programmed Integrated Workforce is recruiting the drilling crew, camp and catering staff.

Kapuni was discovered in 1959 and began commercial production 10 years later.

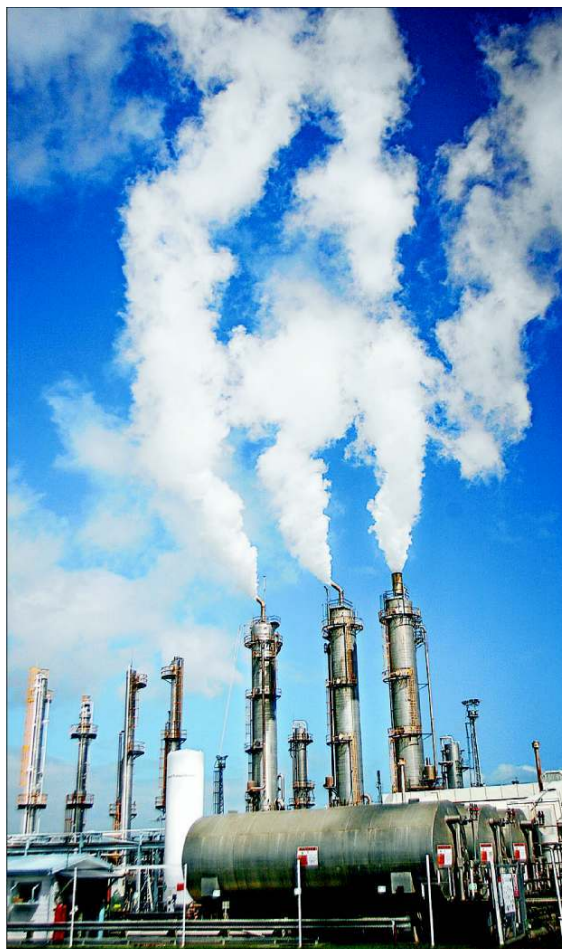
The aim of the new drilling project was the extend the life of the veteran field, said Mr Jager.

“The project will involve drilling two new wells and ‘working over’ one existing well, over about a 10-month period,” he said.





Standing tall: A mock-up of what the rig will look like.



Go gas: Owners of the veteran Kapuni gas field are hoping that a new \$40 million drilling project will result in more gas supplied to the field's production station.
Photo: THOMAS BUSBY/FAIRFAX NZ