

Origin plans to drill two gas prospects off Auckland in late 2009

9 March 2009 - Origin Energy, which is operator of an enlarged Northland Basin exploration permit, plans to drill two wells offshore to the south west of Auckland towards the end of 2009.

Rob Willink, Origin Energy's executive general manager exploration, said Origin will drill the Korimako and Tarapunga prospects. Its former partner OMV has withdrawn from the permit effective 1 February 2009.

He said Origin was planning to use the Kan Tan IV semi-submersible rig likely towards the end of 2009. The rig comes to New Zealand and drills first for Australian Worldwide Exploration in the Tui oil field area and other permits it operates in offshore Taranaki.

The Korimako prospect south west of the Manakau Harbour entrance is a fault-dependent closure and has potential in Miocene and Eocene reservoirs which have the potential to contain 500 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas. The well will address the Miocene potential of the prospect.

Tarapunga is a Pliocene-aged turbidite play north of Todd Energy's Karewa gas discovery. Tarapunga has the potential to hold over 300 bcf of gas.

Both prospects which are in approximately 100 metre (m) deep ocean, are in PEP 38619 which is now almost doubled in size to 11,750 sq km with the expanded area covering much of the surrendered PEP 38618.

Mr Willink said the amalgamation of the permits will enable drilling of two wells in the area closer to shore while continuing exploration of the area in deep water.

There are several prospects in the former 38618 area.

"Our Piwakawaka Miocene fan lead and underlying Eocene Tangaroa Fm fan leads each have multi-TCF potential," he said.

Origin has recently completed a further seismic survey of the Piwakawaka prospect.

The two large formations lie in 1,000 m deep water and if matured to a drillable status would require a deepwater drill rig such as the one Origin says it would need to drill its Carrack-Caravel double prospect in similar depths off Dunedin.

Sources: Origin Energy and Lindsay Clark