



HYDROGEN SUMMIT

Enabling the transition to a low-carbon energy system

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hydrogen.live.ft.com

SPEAKER SHOWCASE

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Panel: A new frontier – Is gold hydrogen set to be a major disruptor?

What recent industry developments in low-emission hydrogen are you most excited about and why?

The interest in natural hydrogen has grown exponentially, with media coverage, academic studies and recognition from governments, investors and independent agencies that it may have a considerable part to play in delivering net zero goals. The industry has been, up until recently, dominated by start-ups but this is changing as larger energy players are entering the fray, driven by the potential and enabled by the transfer of core competencies.

Notable geological organisations, such as the USGS, have published eye watering estimates for natural hydrogen generation and postulate that if even only a few percent were to be commercial, it could supply global energy demands indefinitely. If such commercial accumulations can be proven then the reserves can come to

market rapidly, requiring no water or storage, produced 24/7 using proven technology with a minimal facility footprint.

How critical do you view the role of policy and regulation in facilitating the expansion of the low-emission hydrogen industry, and what specific measures are essential?

Without timely legislation the exciting progress in natural hydrogen exploration may stall in many jurisdictions. The industry is currently driven by smaller players who are prepared to manage risks which are generally unacceptable to larger energy companies.

The considerable advantage which natural hydrogen has over man-made sources is that it can be developed for a break-even cost of less than €1 per kilogram. Consequently the industry does not require subsidies from governments, merely sensible policy



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and regulation which allow for operations to move forward in a timely manner. Furthermore, deposits can be developed with technologies proven over decades in the oil and gas industries such that legislation should be straightforward. In Europe, France and Poland are leading the way, with natural hydrogen included under the Mining and Hydrocarbon acts respectively.

How do you foresee the low-emission hydrogen market evolving in the next 5-10 years?

Legislation, if widely implemented, should facilitate the drilling of dozens of exploration wells for natural hydrogen during this timeframe. The industry would move to another level of activity if one of these wildcats proves up a sizable commercial accumulation, or if a major announces their entry into an existing project.

The US is leading the way, with legislation already in place to allow for natural hydrogen production, and has consequently attracted significant funding for exploration and research. A few countries with a history of petroleum production, such as Australia and the Philippines, have modified their Hydrocarbon laws to allow for natural hydrogen exploration. Europe, whilst having favourable geology for large natural hydrogen deposits, risks being left behind due to the slow pace of government action in developing legislation.

