

Larsen has a natural approach to energy consulting

Outdoors enthusiast and sportsman draws on **offshore engineering experience** to help companies **deliver projects** and **manage risk**

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MARTIN Larsen, the 53-year old founder and managing director of EPCConsult Energies, has a passion for engineering, earning his stripes on Shell's challenging Malampaya project off the Philippines — a country that, along with Oman, he admires for its natural beauty.

Born in a small town outside Copenhagen, the majority of his education took place in Denmark, including six months at a "cultural" school which focused on sport, but also involved a year's stint in the US.

Speaking to Upstream at his offices in Vauxhall, just a few minutes' walk from the M15 offices on the banks of River Thames, Larsen says: "I actually wanted to be an Air Force pilot and then I wanted to become an architect. But it became quickly clear to me that engineering was in my blood."

So, no surprises that he studied engineering for his initial degree before securing a master's in offshore structural engineering from the Technical University of Denmark in Lyngby, north of Copenhagen, spending four months in Glasgow.

Larsen says he was "always fascinated by large structures and how they could resist their environment" so, appropriately, his masters' thesis focused on upheaval buckling of buried marine pipelines.

"I prepared a software prediction tool and built a full-scale model at Strathclyde University to study the impact of the seabed on buckled pipelines. This had not been done before," Larsen says.

On the back of this novel piece of work, he was offered a job with Bureau Veritas in Paris, where he was employed as a software development engineer for marine vessels, focused on ship stability and strength.

A year later, he joined Bouygues Offshore (now Saipem), working on the structural design of jacket-based platforms for Africa and the Adriatic, mainly for Chevron and Elf (now Total), before joining

Shell International in 1993. It was at Shell that he really cut his teeth, initially working in the Netherlands on a deep-water pipeline repair system and then in Oman on pipeline engineering, integrity management and conceptual engineering.

Later, Larsen returned to Holland and joined the groundbreaking Malampaya development team.

"It was the most exciting project in Shell and I was really fighting to get into it," he says.

He succeeded and was made senior pipeline engineer and appointed Shell's representative at lead contractor JP Kenny's office outside London.

"I had a brilliant time on a fantastic project," recalls Larsen, highlighting a litany of technical challenges that had to be overcome: high pressure, high temperature, exotic steel gas export pipeline, an undulating seabed, deep water, corals, volcanoes, fault lines, cyclones, pearl farms and an offshore terminal.

In 2000, he decided to move on to fresh pastures and started EPCConsult with a partner.

Improved solutions

Larsen and his partner in the technical consultancy thought oil companies could benefit from improved solutions to challenges such as hydrate management, risk assessment and production optimisation.

However, by 2009 the relationship started to founder, so the company was restructured. Larsen — who has received management training at Insead — continued at the helm.

In recent years, building on its experience in project delivery, risk assessment, asset integrity, energy optimisation and modelling, the company added renewable energy clients, including Centrica and Orsted, to the company's core oil and gas customer base.

EPCConsult now has clients in places such as Los Angeles, Lima, Seoul and Kuala Lumpur, with tentative plans to open new offices.

While he enjoys travelling outside the UK, Larsen does not "find



Competitive nature: EPCConsult Energies managing director Martin Larsen Photo: EPCCONSULT

many cities more exciting than London". However, he is quick to point out that he cannot get enough of the natural world.

"I love the outdoors — nature is the ultimate. I get a lot of energy from enjoying nature."

Larsen is also an avid bird-watcher, with one of his "twitching" highlights seeing a golden eagle trying to catch a fox.

"I loved the Philippines for its natural beauty — I had never done diving in such a beautiful environment before."

He also sings the praises of Oman with its mountains, deserts and beaches.

Larsen, who says he is "defi-

nately competitive", has also not lost touch with his sporting roots.

"I am very much into sport. I swim, I run, I go to the gym regularly and play a bit of tennis as well."

Together with his daughter, he completed the Craggy Island triathlon on Scotland's west coast, while an EPCConsult team have done the London triathlon.

Any company triathlon also raises money for charities such as Unicef, The Children's Society, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Alzheimer's Society.

A favourite course is at Blenheim Palace just outside Oxford, although next year will see him in

his native Denmark for another three-event competition.

Larsen also cycles to work and, like many on two wheels, despairs about car, van and truck drivers in London, which has seen many cyclists die on its roads in recent years.

"You have to assume car drivers are a bunch of idiots in order to survive," he says.

While retirement is clearly some years away, Larsen says: "It's recently come to me... that I would like to be part-time adviser to industry and maybe a farmer. Why not? My grandparents were farmers. It would be close to nature."

