Production stand-by of the Loppersum clusters for Security of Supply (waakvlam)

1 Background to the Capacity of the 5 Loppersum Clusters

Due to the historic development of the field, the cluster density is lower in the North of the field than in the South. At the same time, the reservoir thickness is increasing towards the North. This combination of low cluster density with high reservoir thickness (and good reservoir quality) make the Loppersum clusters among the most prolific in the field: together they provide some 30% of the total production capacity in the field.

For this capacity to be reliably and instantaneously available within stipulated gas quality requirements production clusters have to be maintained in a stand-by modus requiring a minimum production rate. This was also addressed in the interim judgement by the State Council on 14 April 2015, Figure 1. Small volumes of gas are allowed to be extracted from these clusters, solely to keep these open with a fast response time, so that they can meet exceptionally high demand for gas during cold spells or in case of problems and upsets in the gas supply or distribution system delivering the gas to the customer.

The Minister of Economic Affairs has adopted this State Council ruling in his decision making (e.g. Instemmingsbesluit Winningsplan Groningen 2016, Article 3.1)

De voorzieningenrechter van de Afdeling bestuursrechtspraak van de Raad van State:

I. bepaalt bij wijze van voorlopige voorziening dat gaswinning uit de clusters in en rond Loppersum ('t Zandt, Overschild, De Paauwen, Ten Post en Leermens), anders dan de hoeveelheid die nodig is om de clusters open te houden, uitsluitend is toegestaan als in de andere clusters dan wel regio's de daarvoor geldende productieplafonds nagenoeg zijn bereikt en uitsluitend indien dat vanuit een oogpunt van leveringszekerheid noodzakelijk is;

Figure 1 Article I from the 14/4/2015 State Council ruling.

NAM has made the following effort to minimize the produced volume by lowering the minimum required production rate in stand-by modus of the LOPPZ¹ clusters:

- Process control modification to maintain process equipment in its operational envelope in order to deliver gas according to the "Regeling van de Minister van Economische Zaken van 11 juli 2014, nr. WJZ/13196684, tot vaststelling van regels voor de gaskwaliteit (Regeling gaskwaliteit)".
- The compressors are running in recycling modus in order to allow for low flowrates. Compressed gas is looped back to the compressor inlet to keep the machine running in its operating envelope.
- Operational procedures were established to
 - guarantee reliability of LOPPZ clusters
 - relate the number of LOPPZ cluster running in stand-by to the expected chance of high demand (more clusters stand-by in low temperature conditions).

¹ The LOPPZ or Loppersum clusters constitute of Leermens, **O**verschild, De Paauwen, Ten Post and 't Zandt

Result of above mentioned operational adjustments led to an actual annual produced volume in 2016² (with the relatively warm winter) below 1.0 Bcm.

An example of the LOPPZ security-of-supply provision in action occurred on 27/3/2015, when there was a major electrical power outage in North-Holland. As a result, the facilities in Den Helder were shut-in. Here the gas from offshore production is brought into the Dutch gas distribution network. At the call-off from GTS, the LOPPZ clusters were immediately brought into production³, see Figure 2.



Figure 2 Ramp-up of LOPPZ clusters upon electricity power outage (Leermens cluster was not in production)

2 Technical lower bound for producing a location

The physical lower bound of production from a cluster in the Groningen field is zero; in principle, all production locations can be stopped producing. However, when a cluster has been stopped completely, the start-up period can be several hours up to several days, depending on the duration of the stop, the ambient temperature and the number of locations that are required to start producing at a certain production flow.

When a production cluster is required to be in a standby situation, to be able to ramp up quickly, the production cluster will need at least to be producing at a technical minimum flow. Figure 3 gives a schematic representation of the main components making up a production cluster. In a steady operation all components run within a certain pressure and temperature domain. The minimum rate of a production cluster depends on the ambient temperature: the colder it gets, the higher the required minimum flow to achieve a stable operating window across all system components. Currently, the lower bound of the flow is defined by the flow to prevent hydrates in an air cooler in the Low Temperature Separation (LTS) train, which is 1 mln Nm³/d. However, at this flow rate the energy

² In gas year 2015-2016

³ Note that the detailed split by cluster shows the following:

[•] NAM was able to ramp-up the hot stand-by clusters virtually immediately (within 5 minutes from 2-3 mln m3/d stand-by rate to 4-8 mln m3/d), while meeting the gas quality requirements.

[•] The Overschild/OVS cluster had been shut-in for 25 hours prior to the power outage, and was fortunately still relatively warm. NAM managed to start ramping-up the cluster only 30 minutes after the event, and within the next 30 minutes managed to ramp-up to 8 mln m3/d, while meeting the gas quality requirements.

efficiency is relatively low as well as the ramp-up speed is relatively slow. Based on these two considerations, the technical operational minimum flow is in practice 2 mln Nm³/d for the non-LOPPZ locations and 1 mln Nm³/d for the five LOPPZ locations.

When the ambient temperature drops below zero degrees Celsius, the minimum flow is defined by the flow to prevent freezing problems in the WACO system⁴. This technical minimum flow per location varies with the ambient temperature. When it is expected that the temperature drops below 0 degrees Celsius, the minimum flow for that day is in practice 3 mln Nm³/d. At minus 10 degrees Celsius, the min flow is increased to 4 mln Nm³/d. Table 1 shows the figures for minimum flow for a location when in stand by operating modus.

Ambient temperature T [degree Celsius]	Min Flow per location [mln Nm³/d]	
T > 0	2 (LOPPZ: 1)	
0 > T > -10	3	
-10 > T > -20	4	
-20 > T	5	_



Minimum required flow per location per ambient temperature regime.

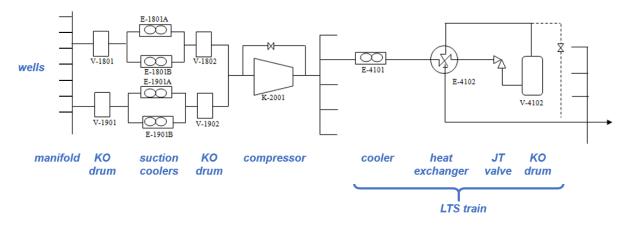
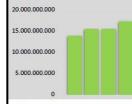


Figure 3 Simplified process diagram for the gas stream on a Groningen production cluster. Liquids are separated and collected from the Knock-Out drums.

⁴ As part of the processing steps to bring the produced gas to spec for custody transfer, liquids (Water and Condensate) are separated from the produced gas.

GASPRODUCTIE Sh **REGIO LOPPERSUM** NAM WAT IS DE ONDERGRENS OM DE CLUSTERS **BESCHIKBAAR TE HOUDEN VOOR LEVERINGSZEKERHEID?** miljoen kuub. Om een cluster stationair in bedrijf te kunnen houden is er een minimale kunnen springen. Een cluster dat stationair in stand-by staat kan binnen een half uur ingezet

PRODUCTIE LOPPERSUM-CLUSTERS 2010-2016



In maart 2015 werd Noord-Holland getroffen door een grote stroomstoring. In Den Helder, waar het op zee gewonnen aardgas aan land komt, werd gaslevering stil gelegd. Op afroep van Gasunie Transport Services werd 'Loppersum' ingezet om voldoende gas beschikbaar te hebben voor gebruik.

HOE ZET NAM DE LOPPERSUM CLUSTERS IN?

In 2016 is er in totaal circa 1 miljard kuub aardgas in de regio Loppersum geproduceerd. Dit is geen extra productie, het maakt deel uit van 24 miljard kuub aardgas die NAM uit het Groningen-veld mag produceren. NAM heeft er geen extra financieel voordeel van, het beschikbaar houden van de clusters brengt immers ook kosten met zich mee, maar draagt uiteindelijk wel bij aan de leveringszekerheid.

NAM heeft dagelijks twee van de vijf clusters in bedrijf om snel bij te kunnen springen. Voor een cluster is minimaal 1 miljoen kuub per dag vereist om in een stationaire staat stand-by te staan. Eenmaal per maand worden alle clusters 8 uur lang, op 6 miljoen kuub per cluster, in bedrijf genomen om de beschikbaarheid en integriteit te kunnen testen.

Bij temperaturen onder het vriespunt worden alle clusters op minimale flow in bedrijf genomen om bevriezing van delen van het productiesysteem te voorkomen en de volledige capaciteit direct beschikbaar te hebben. In een gemiddeld jaar vraagt deze inzet een productie van 1 miljard m3.

De clusters zijn ontworpen met een maximale capaciteit van ca. 25 miljoen kuub (per cluster, per dag), de gemiddelde capaciteit bedroeg ca. 10 tot 12

'flow' aan aardgas vereist in de installaties. Het ontwerp van de cluster geeft een minimale flow van 3 miljoen kuub aan, NAM heeft in 2015 en 2016 die flow door technische en operationele maatregelen terug weten te brengen van 3 miljoen naar 1 miljoen kuub. Lager dan deze ondergrens kan een cluster niet stationair gehouden worden en zal deze niet beschikbaar zijn om bij te

worden om 10 miljoen kuub aardgas bij te dragen aan de leveringszekerheid.



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