

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-4980U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1189268



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment & Decommissioning

SHELL U.K. LIMITED  
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LONDON  
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Registered No.: 00140141

Date: 11th February 2022

Department for Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy

AB1 Building  
Crimon Place  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1BJ

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[www.gov.uk/beis](http://www.gov.uk/beis)  
[bst@beis.gov.uk](mailto:bst@beis.gov.uk)

Dear Sir / Madam

**THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION, UNLOADING  
AND STORAGE (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS  
2020  
WELL 30/14a- 30/14a-E - PLANNED WELL  
EDINBURGH EXPLORATION WELL**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference DR/2216/0 (Version 2), dated 4th February 2022 has been issued under regulation 6 of the above Regulations. The screening direction notice, and any relevant conditions and comments are attached. A copy of this screening direction will be forwarded to the application consultees, the Oil and Gas Authority and published on the gov.uk website.

If you have any queries in relation to this screening direction or the attachments, please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] or email the Environmental Management Team at [bst@beis.gov.uk](mailto:bst@beis.gov.uk).

Yours faithfully



**THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION, UNLOADING  
AND STORAGE (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS  
2020**

**SCREENING DIRECTION CONFIRMING THAT AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
ASSESSMENT IS NOT REQUIRED**

**WELL 30/14a- 30/14a-E - PLANNED WELL  
EDINBURGH EXPLORATION WELL**

**DR/2216/0 (Version 2)**

Whereas SHELL U.K. LIMITED has made an application dated 4th February 2022, under The Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2020, and whereas the Secretary of State has considered the application and is satisfied that the project is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment; in exercise of the powers available under regulation 6, the Secretary of State hereby directs that the application for consent in respect of the project need not be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment, provided that the project is carried out as described in the application for the screening direction and in accordance with the conditions specified in the attached schedule.

In giving a screening direction under regulation 6 of the above Regulations, the Secretary of State accordingly gives his agreement to the Oil and Gas Authority to the grant of consent for the project as detailed in the application, WONS/13417/0/IDA/1.

Effective Date: 11th February 2022



## **THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION, UNLOADING AND STORAGE (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2020**

### **SCHEDULE OF SCREENING DIRECTION CONDITIONS**

The grant of this screening direction is conditional upon the screening direction holder complying with the following conditions.

#### **1 Screening direction validity**

The screening direction shall be valid from 11 February 2022 until 31 October 2022.

#### **2 Commencement and completion of the project**

The holder of the screening direction must notify the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (hereinafter called the 'Department') of commencement and completion of the project within two days:

- a) of commencement of the project and
- b) of completion of the project.

Notification should be sent by email to the Environmental Management Team Mailbox: [bst@beis.gov.uk](mailto:bst@beis.gov.uk)

#### **3 Prevention of pollution**

The holder of the screening direction must ensure that appropriate measures are taken to minimise discharges, emissions and waste, in particular through the appropriate use of technology; and to ensure that necessary measures are taken to prevent incidents affecting the environment or, where they occur, to limit their consequences in relation to the environment.

#### **4 Inspections**

Should the Department consider it necessary or expedient for an inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to investigate whether the conditions of the screening direction are being complied with, the holder of the screening direction shall afford the inspector with such facilities and assistance as the inspector considers necessary to exercise the powers conferred by the regulations. The holder of the screening direction shall additionally ensure that copies (electronic or paper) of the screening direction and any other relevant documents are available for inspection by the inspector at:

- a) the premises of the holder of the screening direction; and
- b) the facilities undertaking the project covered by the screening direction.



## **5 Check monitoring**

Should the Department consider it necessary or expedient to undertake an independent monitoring programme to assess the impact of the project covered by the screening direction, the screening direction holder shall afford the Department with such facilities and assistance as the Department considers necessary to undertake the work.

## **6 Atmospheric emissions returns**

Following completion of the project covered by the screening direction, the holder of the screening direction shall report all relevant atmospheric emissions, such as combustion emissions, extended well test emissions or flaring and venting emissions relating to a well test, using the appropriate Environmental Emissions Monitoring System (EEMS) reporting forms. In the case of atmospheric emissions relating to drilling projects undertaken from a fixed installation, they should be included in the annual EEMS reporting forms for the fixed installation.

## **7 Unauthorised deposits**

Following completion of the project covered by the screening direction, the holder of the screening direction shall recover any materials accidentally or temporarily deposited on the seabed, such as debris, temporary containers, structures or deposits, or scientific instruments, and shall return the materials to land. If it is not possible to recover any of these deposits, full details of the materials remaining on the seabed must be reported to the Department in accordance with the requirements of Petroleum Operations Notice No.2 (PON2).

## **8 Screening direction variation**

In the event that the holder of the screening direction proposes changes to any of the particulars detailed in the application for a screening direction, the holder must notify the Department immediately and submit an application for a post screening direction amendment. The post screening direction must be in place prior to the amended proposals taking effect.

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## COMMENTS ON THE APPLICATION FOR SCREENING DIRECTION

### Section 1

The attention of screening direction holders is drawn to the following provisions regarding The Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2020.

1) You are deemed to have satisfied yourself that there are no barriers, legal or otherwise, to the carrying out of the project covered by the screening direction. The issue of a screening direction does not absolve the screening direction holder from obtaining such authorisations, consents etc that may be required under any other legislation.

2) The Department would draw your attention to the following comments:

N/A

3) All communications relating to the screening direction should be addressed to:

bst@beis.gov.uk

or

Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment & Decommissioning  
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy  
AB1 Building  
Crimon Place  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1BJ

Tel [REDACTED]



## **SCHEDULE OF SCREENING DIRECTION DECISION REASONS**

The Secretary of State has decided that, based on the information provided, the project is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The main reasons for this decision are:

### **1) Decision reasons**

The following provides a summary of the assessments undertaken by OPRED to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required for this project.

It summarises the information considered, the potential impacts and sets out the main reasons for the decision made. In considering whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required or not, the following have been taken into account:

- a) the information provided by the developer;
- b) the matters listed in Schedule 5 of The Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage (Environmental Impact Regulations 2020) (the Regulations);
- c) the results of any preliminary verifications or assessments of the effects on the environment of the project; and
- d) any conditions that the Secretary of State may attach to the agreement to the grant of consent.

### **Characteristics of the Project**

Having regard to the matters identified at paragraphs 1(a) to (g) of Schedule 5 to the Regulations, the characteristics of the project are as follows.

- Drilling of the Edinburgh Exploration well consisting of 36", 26", 17.5", 12.25" and 8.5" sections.
- Completion of the well.
- Well clean up.
- Contingency side-track of 17.5", 12.25" and 8.5" sections.
- Contingency re-spud of 36" and 26" sections.
- Contingency well design change.
- Well logging.



- Plug and abandonment in all scenarios.

### Description of project

The drilling of the well will be facilitated by the jack up drill rig Valaris 122 and may take up to 136 days to complete. The project will be supported by tugs, supply vessels, an emergency support vessel and helicopter flights. The well will be drilled in five sections, using water-based mud (WBM) for the top two sections, with mud and associated cuttings discharged to sea. The lower sections will be drilled using low toxicity oil-based mud (LTOBM), with the mud and associated cuttings retained onboard the rig and shipped to shore. The well will be cleaned-up, with visibly clean fluids discharged to sea. In all cases the well will be plugged and abandoned following logging. Drilling is planned to begin in March 2022, and the screening direction covers the period February 2022 to 31 October 2022.

No significant cumulative interactions are foreseen with any other existing or approved projects.

There is not likely to be any significant impact of the project on population and human health.

There is no credible potential for a major accident or disaster to affect this project.

Any wastes associated with the project will be handled appropriately and no significant impacts are anticipated.

### **Location of the Project**

Having regard to the matters identified at paragraphs 2(a) to (c) of Schedule 5 to the Regulations, the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the project has been considered as follows.

The Edinburgh well location lies within a seaward licenced area within Quad/Block 30/14a, which has been licenced for the exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons. The project is located approximately 283 kilometres (km) east from the Northeast Scotland coastline and adjacent to the UK/Norwegian median line, in an area where water depth is approximately 71 metres (m). The predominant current in the location is dominated by the Atlantic flows moving southwards, with circulation variable in the centre.

The project location is not within any protected areas, with the closest, Fulmar Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) being approximately 6 km to the west. This site is designated for the conservation of ocean quahog and features broad scale habitats of subtidal sand, mud and mixed sediment. There are no other protected areas within 40km of the location.

Site-specific surveys identified the seabed as having a sediment type described as deep circalittoral sand, with a low gravel content. The benthic species identified,





correlated with expected assumptions and were more prevalent near or on cobbled and stony areas. The most observed benthic fauna included annelids, arthropods, molluscs, echinoderms, starfish, anemones, polychaetes, masked crabs, and hermit crabs.

The project works and timing will take place at a time when a number of fish species may be found to using the area as spawning, juvenile or nursery locations. Sightings of cetaceans are most common during the months of July to October. Seals are not expected to be seen at the remote location. Seabirds are most common in the area during the months of March and July when expected density is 10-20 individuals per square km. The project area is primarily used for demersal fishing, but with a very low historical effort. Shipping intensity at the project location is very low. The surrounding area comprises other oil and gas infrastructure within 24 km, with no telecommunications cables, marine aggregate sites or renewable energy locations in proximity.

Given the location of the project, the areas identified at paragraphs 2(c)(i), (iii), (iv), (vi), (vii) and (viii) of Schedule 5 are not likely to be affected by the project.

### **Type and characteristics of the potential impact**

In accordance with paragraph 3 of Schedule 5 to the Regulations, the likely significant effects of the project on the environment have been considered. Potential effects to the environment from the activities associated with the project were assessed, with focus on the predominant impacts resulting from physical presence from the rig / vessels, atmospheric emissions from drilling rig including vessel use and helicopter flights, planned discharges to sea from chemical use and discharge, seabed disturbance from siting the rig, and accidental events such as an oil release.

The drill rig has the potential to cause interference to other users of the sea, namely fishermen and vessel traffic, however the rig and support vessels will be located in a safety zone for the well. Its presence within the safety zone means only authorised vessels would be allowed within the 500 m radius of the well, therefore excluding other users of the sea. Given the very low importance of the fishing area and the very low vessel traffic, and that the drilling project is a temporary activity - the impact is deemed insignificant. An emergency response and rescue vessel will be on site continually to monitor for vessel traffic and provide alerts.

The area of seabed disturbance resulting from rig positioning is 0.00078km<sup>2</sup> and from the discharge of drill cuttings is less than 0.0331km. The main receptor impacted by seabed disturbance will be the benthic communities. Physical disturbance can cause mortality or displacement of benthic species in the impacted zone. Based on cuttings discharge modelling, deposition of cuttings with a thickness > 6.5 millimetres (mm) is not expected beyond 215 m from the drilling location. The temporary installation of the drill rig spud cans is not expected to result in significant changes to sediment properties and rapid recovery of faunal communities within the disturbed area may be expected through a combination of larval settlement and migration of animals from the adjacent seabed once the spud cans are removed.



Therefore, the impact on benthic communities will not be significant.

Offshore chemicals will be used and discharged during the drilling of the well. The use and discharge of the chemicals have been risk assessed and modelled in accordance with other regulatory requirements. The use and discharge modelling shows a low risk to the environment from the chemicals. Use and discharge of chemicals are not expected to have a significant impact on the environment. The discharge of WBM cuttings will result in some impacts to marine organisms resulting primarily from smothering and grain size change. The impact of drilling discharges on water quality and benthic fauna are predicted to be minimal as effects will be localised and short-lived. Moreover, given that recovery of the seabed and the associated benthic communities is likely to begin once drilling been completed, the environmental impact of the discharged cuttings, within the impacted area, can be considered insignificant.

Emissions to air will occur from combustion plant used on the rig and vessels. The quantity of carbon dioxide equivalent from the rig and vessels amounts to 0.14% of the 2018 total CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from offshore oil and gas activity. The environmental effects from emissions to air are not expected to have a significant impact on the environment. The impact of the vessel emissions will be mitigated by optimising vessel efficiency (i.e. minimising the number of vessels used and vessel trips required to achieve the construction deliverables) and hence minimising fuel use and avoiding the unnecessary operation of power generation / combustion equipment

There are no expected transboundary impacts as a result of the project.

If an unlikely and unplanned accidental release scenario from a well blow-out was realised, the expectation is that it could take 120 days before it is brought under control via drilling of a relief well. The total volume of oil that would be released from the Edinburgh well (Balmoral reservoir) has been estimated at 314,794.3 m<sup>3</sup>. Noting that the target reservoir is gas/condensate with a higher flow rate than the oil modelling undertaken with a total volume of condensate released estimated at 414,002.1 m<sup>3</sup>. Oil modelling has been undertaken because the Edinburgh well drills through an oil producing formation (Balmoral). Therefore, the reason for the use of the oil modelling is because the potential environmental impact is higher than that of gas/condensate which is less persistent in the environment.

The modelling suggests that oil would cross the UK/Norwegian, UK/Denmark, UK/German and UK/Dutch median lines in various seasons, with the potential to reach the shoreline of these countries in addition to Sweden. It is predicted that a major environmental incident may occur due to potential impacts on the Fulmar MCZ, with Norwegian conservation sites also potentially affected. Appropriate mitigation measures will be in place and an approved oil pollution management plan to manage potential hydrocarbon releases will be in place prior to activities being undertaken.

Taking all the above determinations into account, the Secretary of State has concluded that the project is not likely to have a significant impact on the environment.



## **2) Mitigation of significant effects**

The following are features of the project or measures envisaged that the developer has proposed to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment:

Not applicable.