

**Apache North Sea Limited.  
Maule Field Development  
Environmental Statement Summary**

**To:** Sarah Pritchard

**From:** Sarah Dacre

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010

<b>ES Title:</b>	Maule Field Development
<b>Operator:</b>	Apache North Sea Limited
<b>Consultants:</b>	RPS Energy HSE and Risk Management
<b>Field Group (DECC):</b>	Aberdeen
<b>ES Report No:</b>	D/4067/2009
<b>ES Date:</b>	December 2009
<b>Block Nos:</b>	21/10
<b>Development Type:</b>	3 production wells from the Forties Alpha platform

**Project Description**

The project comprises:

- Development of the Maule Field in Blocks 21/10 in the Central North Sea. The proposed development will include:
- the drilling of 3+ production wells from the Forties Alpha (FA) platform, where each well is anticipated to deliver 5-8,000 barrels of oil per day and recover 234 MMscf of gas;
- production of these at the Forties Alpha platform, where the expected field life is 6 years;
- the first well is planned to be drilled in Q1 2010, with first oil expected to be Q2 2010.

**Environmental Sensitivities**

The EIA identified the following environmental sensitivities:

- FA has an established 500m exclusion zone and the development of the Maule Field does not require additional support vessels and therefore there will be no additional impact on shipping;
- Low fishing activity;
- Fish spawning area for Norway pout (peak in February and March), lemon sole, *Nephrops* (peak April to June);
- Seabird vulnerability is very high in September to November and high in July and August;
- Low numbers of cetaceans have been recorded;
- Annex I Habitats: Site surveys did not identify any potential Annex I habitats within the vicinity of the proposed project.
- Annex I Species: No Annex I species have been recorded in the vicinity of the proposed operations.
- Annex II Species: harbour porpoise have been sighted in the vicinity of Blocks 21/10 in low numbers between May and October.
- Protected sites: The proposed operations are located over 170km away from the nearest coastal protected site and 140km from the Braemar Pockmark pSAC, the nearest offshore protected site.

## Key Potential Environmental Impacts

The following potential impacts and mitigation were addressed in the EIA:

- Obstacles to other marine activities during operations – the Maule development wells will be drilled from the FA platform. A 500m exclusion zone already exists and no additional obstacles to other marine activities will occur.
- Seabed disturbance – As a result of the proposed development and associated activities there will be a disturbance to the seabed through:
  - (iii) *Mud and cuttings discharge* – It is estimated that each of the development wells will generate a maximum total of 680 tonnes of cuttings, with 143 tonnes discharged to sea. The remaining cuttings will be re-injected to a donor well. Drilling has been on-going at FA since the mid 1970's and there is a cuttings pile in-situ and any cuttings generated from the Maule field will settle on the existing cuttings pile. Effects over the years include the colonisation of seabed fauna which is different from the unaffected surrounding area and it is unlikely that the deposition of cuttings from the Maule wells will change this.
- Noise – the noise expected to be generated from drilling operations is 163dB and this will not exceed the behavioural response threshold. Any impacts on cetaceans will be negligible, particularly given the low level of cetacean activity within the vicinity of the area at the time of operations and the localised, temporary nature of the drilling operations.
- Atmospheric emissions – diesel usage is not expected to increase as a result of the Maule Field development. The anticipated additional gas production at FA as a result of production will be accommodated using the ullage available at FA. The increase in production equates to ~0.1 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> for each tonne of oil produced.
- Marine discharges – the only foreseeable discharges are associated with the proposed drilling of the Maule wells and the production phase at the FA is the use/discharge of drilling fluids, well clean-up chemicals and produced water. All chemicals are CEFAS registered and are not considered to be significantly harmful to the environment. An additional PWRI well is scheduled for 2010 and any produced water from the Maule Field will be re-injected.
- Accidental events – A number of control measures will be in place to minimise the risk of accidental events such as bunkering, well monitoring, BOP and well control training. In addition, an Oil Pollution Emergency Plan (OPEP) and an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) will be prepared and submitted.
- Cumulative Impacts – The area of the Maule development has been subject to and continues to be subject to development, including drilling operations. There are no cumulative impact issues associated with the Maule development.

**Public Consultation:** No comments were received as a result of the public consultation.

### Consultee(s):

The statutory consultees for this project were JNCC and Marine Scotland. The following comments were made:

**JNCC:** It was advised that more recent survey data should have been used for the purposes of the ES. Recommendation for approval.

**MS:** Baseline characteristics at the Forties field are relatively well known and the data provided was considered adequate for the assessment made. Recommendation for approval was made.

**Further Information:** A few minor clarifications were sought from Apache, as well as clarification on production figures.

Apache provided the additional information requested and provision of more up-to-date survey data will be within subsequent applications. Survey work will be completed in 2010.

**Conclusion(s):**

Following consultation and the provision of the additional information on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010, DECC and its consultees are satisfied that the development of the Maule Field is not likely to have a significant impact on the receiving environment, including any sites or species protected under the Habitats Regulations.

**Recommendation(s):**

**On the basis of the information presented within the ES and advice from consultees it is recommended that the ES should be approved.**

Sarah Pritchard.....  
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08/02/2010.....  
**Date**