

[Home](#) | [Environment](#) | [Index](#)

Consents given under the Petroleum Act 1998 and Reviews under the Assessment of Environmental Effects Regulations 1999

BG plc

BLOCK 22/5-b

Pursuant to Regulation 5(8) of the above Regulations, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry gives notice that, being content that the requirements of the above Regulations have been satisfied, a consent has been granted to BG plc to the getting of petroleum and the drilling of an exploration well in Block 22/5-b (hereafter referred to as "the project") subject to BG plc conducting operations in respect of the project in accordance with the relevant environmental statement.

Background

The North West Seymour appraisal well was drilled according to the project description in the Environmental Statement. However, the well discovered commercial quantities of oil and gas, although the Environmental Statement had only considered the possibility of discovering exploitable reserves of gas.

The discovery of oil has changed the plans for connecting North West Seymour to the production facilities on the Armada platform. It does not require changes to the process equipment of the Armada platform, as the predicted rate of produced oil can be processed by Armada's existing systems. However, a gas lift line needs to be installed as well as the planned production flowline and the umbilical. A larger rock berm also needs to be constructed on the seabed to cover both lines and the umbilical and afford sufficient protection to them.

The current proposal is to install all the lines in one operation in September 2005, and to commission them between September and November 2005. The expected duration of the installation works has increased. The DSV will spend 12 days laying the pipelines and umbilical and 7 days supporting work to tie them in.

Sensitivities

The original environmental statement identified a range of potential environmental hazards and outlines proposed mitigation measures, including:

- Flaring
- Discharge of drilling mud, completion fluid and hydrotest fluid
- Discharge of drilled cuttings
- Seabed disturbance
- Noise disturbance
- Conservation areas
- Interactions with other sea users
- Transboundary impacts
- Cumulative impacts

As a result of discovering oil, BG assessed the environmental risk from a spill of crude oil which showed that this type of incident would have a low significant impact. The Oil Spill Contingency Plan for Armada will be revised to reflect its changed status as an oil and gas processing platform.

Also, the quantification of the potential impacts connected with the rock berm has been revised and the emissions as a result of the pipeline installation are slightly increased. These have been assessed and neither will cause a significant impact.

Mitigation measures are in place to ensure that impacts are kept to a minimum.

Recommendation

Overall the environmental statement is satisfactory and adequately assesses the potential environmental impacts of the proposed operation. It is recommended that consent is given to the project.

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[Top of page](#)