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

BP

CLAIR FIELD

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, he has, pursuant to Licences P165, P168, P169 & P170, granted a consent to BP Exploration Operating Company Limited to the getting of petroleum and the construction of installations in relation to the development of the Clair field. The consent for the Clair field took effect from 30/11/01 and shall last until 31/12/08.

Background

BP Exploration intends to develop the Clair field (UKCS Block 206/8), which lies 75 km west of Shetland in approximately 140 m of water. The Environmental Statement covers the Phase I of the development of the field.

The Clair Phase 1 Development will comprise a single steel jacket and associated topside facilities including drilling facilities. Full processing of both crude and gas will occur offshore. Oil will be exported from the platform via a pipeline to the Sullom Voe terminal in Shetland. Gas will be used for platform fuel purposes with the two possible options currently being explored for the handling of surplus gas being export to the Magnus West of Shetland line or re-injection of the gas into the Clair reservoir. The proposed project involves the drilling of 24 wells, of which 15 will produce oil and gas, 8 will be water injectors and 1 drill cuttings reinjection well. The wells will be drilled with Water Based mud (WBM) and where required the lower sections with an organic phase fluid (OPF), possibly oil based mud (OBM). The WBM mud contaminated cuttings will be discharged to sea and the OPF contaminated cuttings will be re-injected.

A comprehensive description of the environment was provided in the ES with further detailed information presented in a document found in the accompanying CD-ROM.

Environmental Sensitivities and Impacts

The main environmental impacts potentially resulting from operational aspects of the project were identified as follows;

- Platform presence
- Discharges to sea – drill cuttings, produced water, drainage and chemicals.
- Underwater noise
- Atmospheric emissions – flaring and power generation emissions
- Waste
- Pipeline issues – fishing interaction and offshore and inshore habitat issues

Each of these impacts was extensively discussed in the relevant section of the Environmental Statement. BP clearly identified the efforts made to remove or significantly reduce the impact. Where this was not possible detailed attention was given to the definition of the residual issue and the methods to be used to mitigate the impact.

- Platform presence – normal industry wide practice and procedure for platform presence including consultation with other users (e.g. fishermen) and the marking on charts of platform location.
- Discharges to sea – Top-hole drill cuttings will be discharged to sea with lower well section cuttings

re-injected. Produced water will be re-injected with a goal of 98% re-injection. The drainage system will ensure total containment and treatment of all fluids prior to discharge. Underwater noise – BP commissioned a team of international experts to undertake a detailed appraisal on underwater noise. The findings of this study indicated that overall noise would not be a significant issue for the Clair development.

- Atmospheric emissions – With reference to flaring BP have committed to reduce flaring by the removal of routine flaring (with the exception of purges and vents). As far as power generation emissions BP have selected low NOx turbines. With regard to carbon emissions BP have conducted energy efficiency studies, which demonstrate that the design is energy efficient e.g., use of waste heat from turbines to provide heat for the processing of fluids.
- Waste – A waste management system will be developed with targets set aimed at reducing waste at source
- Pipeline issues – Extensive consultation has been undertaken and BP have committed to continue this exercise during installation and operation. No offshore habitats likely to be designated for Habitats Directive purposes were identified during extensive surveys for the pipeline route. With re to inshore habitats an appropriate assessment was undertaken for the Yell Sound Coast candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC). The assessment concluded that there would be no adverse effect on the cSAC's integrity.

With reference to non-routine events oil spill was identified as the major concern. BP has taken steps when designing the platform to minimise risk of spills e.g. by minimising valves and flanges. An Oil Spill Contingency Plan (OSCP) will be submitted for approval under the Merchant Shipping Regulations prior to first production. Both cumulative and transboundary impacts were identified and discussed in the Environmental Statement.

Overall no significant environmental impact was identified. No consultee had any objection to consent being granted.

Recommendation

Overall the environmental statement is satisfactory and adequately assesses the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development. Recommend that consent be given.