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

Burlington Resources Ltd

Kelly Exploration Well 113/22

Background

Burlington Resources (Irish Sea) Ltd (BRIS) are planning to drill a single exploration well in Block 113/22 in the East Irish Sea. The well will be sited 21 km west of the Cumbrian coastline, 14 km East of The Isle of Man and 122 km from the UK-Ireland trans-boundary line. The well is required to determine the possible quantities of commercial gas in this prospect. and scheduled to be drilled and completed in August 2005. It is anticipated it will take approximately 26 days to drill and test the well.

The proposed well will be drilled vertically to approximately 1,495 metres, using Water Based Mud. The use of Low Toxicity Oil Based Mud is not planned or anticipated. It is anticipated that any hydrocarbons present will be in the form of dry gas and contain no hydrogen sulphide or mercaptans and low levels of condensate.

Should the exploration well encounter hydrocarbons, gas flow tests may be conducted. When drilling operations are complete the well will be plugged and abandoned and the seabed left clear.

The EIA identified the following impacts which were considered potentially significant;

- Physical presence of the rig and supply vessels
- Drilling discharges
- Hydrocarbon spills

The ES considered these points in detail. The presence of the rig was not considered to pose any disturbance to seabird colonies and the potential Special Protected Area in the Liverpool Bay area would not be affected. The operator undertook to ensure the passage of supply vessels would avoid concentrations of black scoter, passing to the North of Shell Flats where the main colonies would be sited. It is

expected that the bulk of the drill cuttings will be deposited in the immediate vicinity of the rig. The use of Low Toxicity Oil Based Mud (LTOBM) is not planned or anticipated so the use of Water Based Mud (WBM) reduces the possibility of hydrocarbon spills. In addition the fact that this is a potential gas well implies that crude oil discharges would be unlikely. We are satisfied that the ES addresses the impacts from the proposed development and overall no significant environmental impacts have been identified.

Recommendation

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

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