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

Conoco NORTH WEST BELL 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 Licence P25, granted a consent to Conoco (U.K.) Limited to the getting of petroleum and the construction of installations in relation to the development of the Bell Field. The consent for the Bell field took effect from 28/01/99 and shall last until 30/09/01.

Background

Conoco (U.K.) Limited plan to drill a new well (49/22 - NW Bell) in the North West Bell Field. The new well will be directionally drilled from a site close to the existing Callisto South Well (49/22 - 6) in about 35m water. The new well will then be connected by means of jumpers to well 49/22 - 6 and the produced gas exported via the existing Callisto - Ganymede pipeline. The final choice of drilling contractor has not yet been made. Drilling is expected to begin in early January 1999, using a jack-up rig, water-based muds and to last about 90 days.

Drilling and Well Completion

Drilling

The 36" section will be drilled with seawater and the 189 tonnes of cuttings discharged directly to the seabed. The other sections will be drilled with WBM, the mud recirculated and the cuttings separated, processed and discharged overboard. Should it be necessary to use LTOBM, total containment measures will be used and the cuttings disposed onshore

Drilling Statistics using Water-based Muds

Hole Diameter	Casing Diameter	TVD (m)	MD (m)	Estimated Cuttings Wt (t)
36"	30"	122	122	189
17.5"	13.325"	1,097	1,124	448
12.25"	9.625"	2,241	3,359	505
8.5"	7"	2,686	4,535	128
6"		2,702	5,428	48
Total				1,318
	TVD True vertical depth		MD Measured depth	

Well Testing/Completion

No well testing is planned but clean up of the well will take place before production. This is expected to last for 36 hours, with a flow period of 18 hours and an expected flow rate of approximately 80 mmscf/d with associated condensate. All gas and condensate produced during clean up will be flared over a short period, using "green burners" for maximum efficiency and to minimise drop-out over the sea. Emissions summarised.

Abandonment

The well will be abandoned by plugging it with cement and mechanically cutting the casing about 10 feet below the sea bed. An assessment on whether or not to remove or stabilise any cuttings pile will be taken in the light of existing regulations and best practice at the time. Consideration of environmental studies is to be given at this time.

Environmental Sensitivities and Impacts

The activities associated with the proposed development are not expected to pose any risks to the viability of individual species or habitats or to the socio-economic activities taking place in the area concerned, provided all the proposed safeguards are enacted. These are considered to be sufficient to mitigate environmental risk during both routine and non-routine operations.

There are no fish breeding grounds of major significance in the area. The large number of designated protected sites along the nearest coastline to the site (70km to 130km away) reflect the conservation value of this area, which is important for seabirds, seals, shellfisheries and tourism. Seabirds have been identified as highly vulnerable to oil spills during the breeding season (April to June) and when moulting in late summer.

A specific Oil Spill Contingency Plan is being prepared for the NW Bell development, and Conoco are members of OSRL Ltd, Southampton.

Recommendation

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