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

### **Focus Energy**

#### **Exploration Well 204/17**

An Environmental Statement (ES) was received on 10 January 2003. The proposed well is a single Exploration Well situated in Block 204/17 in the Atlantic Margin Region, in the Faroe-Shetland Channel, approximately 150 Km west of Shetland, adjacent to the UK/Faeroes median line. The well is intended to investigate if hydrocarbons are present at the well location, and it is expected that if hydrocarbons are discovered, they will be oil rather than gas. Water depth at the proposed location is 983 metres and the drilling is scheduled to commence in March 2003, for a period of 54 days. The well is likely to be drilled from a drillship using a slim hole design that will minimise time on location and drilling discharges. On completion of drilling the well will be abandoned or suspended. No well test is planned although it is likely one will be applied for at a later date if significant hydrocarbons are identified.

#### **Environmental Sensitivities:**

Five areas were covered in depth in the ES: -

- Drill mud and cuttings discharges
- Underwater noise generation
- Atmospheric emission
- Hydrocarbon spills
- Other issues

These risks have been assessed in detail, including running deterministic and stochastic modelling for oil spill predictions and a base line seabed survey. Prevention measures and mitigation procedures have been put in place to minimise any potential impacts. Cumulative effects were considered negligible and the only potentially significant transboundary impact would be from a large oil spill. Sea bird vulnerability during the proposed drilling period is moderate to low and no particular fish spawning sensitivities have been identified. The ES does not identify any habitats or concentrations of species

that are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or could be considered in the future that are likely to be affected by the proposed exploration well.

**Conclusion:**

An environmental statement was submitted to cover the proposed well, which considered the potential implications of the project. Following consultation with the statutory consultees, we are satisfied that this project is unlikely to have a significant impact on the receiving environment, including any habitats and species protected under relevant conservation legislation.

**Recommendation:**

Based on the information presented in the ES it was advised that project consent be given on the 4 March 2003.

Webmaster: [Danny Stocker](#)

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