

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

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

### **Lundin Britain Limited**

#### **Ridgewood Exploration Well 12/17b**

##### **Synopsis**

- The drilling of a single vertical well to a total depth of 2,903m below the seabed.
- The well will be drilled in a series of sections using WBM in the upper sections and possibly OBM in the lower sections.
- Drilling is estimated to last 36 days.
- No well test is planned, but if hydrocarbons are found, well testing may be undertaken, which will increase the operational time by 60 days to 96 days.
- In addition, if hydrocarbons are found, a Vertical Seismic Profile (VSP) survey may be carried out.

##### **Key Environmental Sensitivities**

- Low to moderate shipping activity (4-5 vessels per day);
- Low to moderate fishing activity;
- Fish spawning area for herring, cod (peak February and March), haddock (peak February to April), whiting, saith (peak January and February) and plaice (peak January and February);
- Nursery area for herring, haddock, whiting and saithe;
- Seabird vulnerability is very high throughout the year, except for December where vulnerability is classified as high;
- Cetacean numbers are low to high, however most sightings occur during the summer months, out with the proposed drilling schedule;
- MOD exercise areas are present in Block 12/17;
- Annex I Habitats: project is not in the vicinity of any dSAC designated for Offshore Natura 2000 habitat;
- Annex II Species: Harbour porpoise and bottlenose dolphin. Project is approximately 75km north-east of the Moray Firth dSAC, designated for its population of Bottlenose Dolphins.

### **Habitats and Birds Directive potential issues:**

The proposed well is approximately 75km north-east of the Moray Firth dSAC boundary, where the primary reason for the areas designation is its resident population of bottlenose dolphins. The proposed project involves drilling operations and potential VSP operations. However it is unlikely that impacts will be significant due to the short duration of operations, the time of year and the mitigation measures put in place.

### **Issues requiring further investigation:**

Recommendation for consent was issued. JNCC recommended that Lundin review the results of surveys undertaken in April 2007 to ensure conclusions drawn in the ES with respect to the benthic environment are accurate. This has been completed and conclusions drawn in the ES were accurate.

### **Additional Information Requests**

BERR requested further information regarding consultation with the MOD with respect to exercise areas in the vicinity of the proposed well, as well as some very minor clarifications. Lundin provided the additional information requested on the 26th October 2007. All issues were considered satisfactorily amended and clarified.

### **Identification of Significant Impacts:**

No significant impacts identified.

### **Consultees:**

- JNCC
- CEFAS

Public Consultation: No comments were received within the 28 day period.

### **Conclusion:**

An environmental statement was submitted to cover the proposed exploration well, which considered the potential implications of the project. Following consultation with the statutory consultees and the provision of additional information for clarification purposes from Lundin Britain Limited on 26 October 2007, BERR 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 and further

information received it was advised that project consent be given.

Approval date: 29 October 2007

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[Top of page](#)