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

Mobil

BLOCK 214/4-EA

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 P967, granted a consent to Mobil North Sea Limited to the getting of petroleum and the construction of installations in relation to the development of an Exploration Well 214/4-EA, (hereafter referred to as "the project") subject to Mobil conducting operations in respect of the project in accordance with the relevant environmental statement. Consent for the well was given on 28 September 1998.

Background

Mobil North Sea Limited submitted this Environmental Statement in support of plans to drill an exploration well in Tranche 61, Block 214/4 using a semi-submersible rig. The rig will be in place for approximately 100 days from late September or early October and there may be well testing before the well is suspended or abandoned. The drilling location lies some 120 km north west of the Shetland Islands on the slope of the Faroe-Shetland deepwater channel, in a water depth of approximately 1600m.

It is intended that all sections of the well are drilled using Water Based Muds (WBM). The top hole sections will be drilled with seawater as drilling fluid and rock cuttings discharged directly to the sea. When drilling subsequent sections, drilling fluids/cuttings will be returned to the rig and separated in the solids control system before discharge of the cuttings. Should problems occur with the use of WBMs, Oil Based Muds (OBM) may be used. If so, all OBM contaminated cuttings will be returned to shore for reuse/recycling.

Environmental Sensitivities

The region is important as an over wintering site for the herbivorous copepod *Celanus finmarchicus* an important source of food for many species of fish. Seabird populations are particularly vulnerable after the breeding season in June to September.

Recommendation

This is a reasonable Environment Statement that reflects Mobil's commitment to using WBMs and their "ship to shore" of oil contaminated cuttings in situations where SBMs or OBMs are necessary. Some of the sensitivity information is from Mobil funded research.

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