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

RWE Dea UK

Tees Exploration Well 42/27

Background

The proposed TEES Exploration Well will be situated in Block 42/27a in the Southern North Sea, approximately 23.5 km southeast of the nearest UK coastline at Flamborough Head and 168 km from the UK-Netherlands Median Line. Drilling operations are scheduled to commence between July and September 2007 and to run for approximately 100 days. It is planned that a single well will be drilled using only water based mud with approximately 730 tonnes of associated cuttings discharged to sea. Depending on whether hydrocarbons are encountered the well will either be tested over a two week period and then suspended pending future development or capped and abandoned in line with current guidance.

The EIA identified the following impacts which were considered potentially significant:-

Hydrocarbon spills

Drilling discharges

The ES considered these points in detail. The region surrounding Flamborough Head is of international importance to seabirds which could be vulnerable to oil spills. No oil based mud will be used in the drilling operations so a negative impact could only result from a discharge of diesel during bunkering operations and RWE Dea have mitigation measures in place to ensure safe operation. RWE Dea confirmed that fuel transfers would only be conducted using hoses equipped with a one-way safety valve system.

RWE Dea considered the impact of drilling discharges on spawning grounds and fisheries, and conducted a Herring Spawning Ground Survey (HSGS) which demonstrated that the potential for herring spawning in the area was low. The

impact on the surrounding benthic communities, and local seabed archaeology was assessed by modelling the depositional footprint of cuttings from the well. The model, together with data from other previously drilled wells in the area, indicated the impacts would be transitional and of low significance.

We are satisfied that the ES addresses the impacts from the proposed exploration well 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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