

**Benbecula (154/1-A) Exploration Well  
ES Web Comments**

ES Title: **Exploration Well 154/1-A (North Benbecula)**  
Operator: **Shell (UK) Limited**  
ES Report No: **W/2754/2005**  
ES Date: **September 2005**  
Block Nos: **154/1-A**  
Development Type: **Single Exploration Well**

**Synopsis:**

The proposed Victory Exploration Well is situated in Block 154/1-A, 93 km north-west of the Isle of Lewis. It is predicted that the reservoir target will contain gas although there is uncertainty as to whether there may also be some oil present.

Drilling operations are planned to commence in early February 2006. It is proposed to drill a single vertical well using Seawater with Bentonite for 42" and 26" top hole sections, followed by water-based mud (WBM) for the lower hole sections. A total of 689 tonnes of cuttings will be discharged to sea. After completion of the drilling operations the well will be tested and either plugged and suspended or abandoned depending upon results.

A well test is most likely to be a combination of the closed chamber and DST with flow rates in the order of 50mmscf gas/day for 36hrs.

The Environmental Statement adequately addresses the existing environment including Annex 1 Habitats under the Habitats Directive.

The EIA identified the following impacts that were considered potentially significant and required further investigation:-

- Underwater noise disturbance
- Discharge of mud and cuttings
- Atmospheric emissions from well testing and flaring
- Accidental hydrocarbon spill

The ES considered these points in detail and where appropriate included evidence from other oil and gas wells.

Shell presented an outline of their environmental Management System within the ES.

**Public Consultation**

We received a letter expressing concern of this exploration well during the public notice period from the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Society who commented on the level of detail surrounding the presence of marine mammals in the area and the potential impact from noise. A response addressing the concerns raised was made and no further comments were received.

**Consultees:**

**JNCC:-** JNCC is content for the well to proceed and conclude that this proposed operation would not significantly impact any habitat that may in future be designated as a cSAC.

**FRS:-** FRS recommends consent for this well.

**Recommendation:**

Based on the information presented in the environmental statement it is recommended that well consent should be granted.