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

Shell UK

MERLIN FIELD

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 P296, granted a consent to Shell U.K Exploration and Production Limited to the getting of petroleum and the construction of installations in relation to the development of the Merlin Field. The consent for the Merlin Field took effect from 22/08/97 and shall last until 31/12/02.

Background

The project is located in the East Shetland Basin of the Northern North Sea, lying some 130 kilometres to the north-east of the Shetland Islands in a water depth of around 140 metres.

The Environmental Statement identified two significant impacts: discharges from drilling operations and laying of a 7 km pipeline. Discharges of rock fragments from well sections drilled with synthetic based mud (SBM) from drilling operations are likely to lead to de-oxygenation of sediments, causing localised impact on benthic organisms. This effect will be minimised through judicious use of SBM's. The second effect – pipe trenching – is considered significant because of the relatively large area affected (approximately 70 000m²). However, any detrimental impact is likely to be short term with recovery occurring relatively rapidly and re-colonisation of the affected zone within 1 year.

Recommendation

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