people=positive™

Learning Portfolio

DTI Strategic Environmental Assessment

SEA 4 Stakeholder Workshop

Newton Hotel, Nairn

1st July 2003

Contents

Introduction and Summary

In 1999, the DTI began a sequence of sectoral SEAs of the implications of further licensing of the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) for oil and gas exploration and production. The first UK offshore Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA 1) was conducted in 1999/2000 in preparation for the 19th Licensing Round and covered the deep water area along the UK and Faroese boundary. Subsequent SEAs have been SEA 2 which covered the central spine of the North Sea with the majority of existing UK oil and gas fields (2001-2002) and SEA 3 which assessed the remaining parts of the southern North Sea (2002-2003). This SEA (SEA 4) is the fourth in the Department of Trade and Industry's Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process for potential further offshore licensing for oil and gas exploration. SEA 4 is now considering offshore areas of the UKCS to the North and West of Shetland and Orkney.

A stakeholder workshop meeting for SEA 4 was held in Nairn on 1 July 2003, facilitated by independent facilitators People=Positive™ on behalf of the DTI. A wide variety of potential stakeholders, drawn from UK and other regulators, government advisers, local authorities, other industry representatives, academics and NGOs were invited to the session. The workshop aimed to fulfil a variety of functions including:

- Updating stakeholders on SEA 4 progress and issues
- Gathering stakeholder input to and comments on the information and analysis on which SEA 4 will be based
- Seeking suggestions on ways to further improve future DTI SEAs of other areas of the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) prior to decisions on further large scale licensing.

The workshop commenced with introductions and discussion and agreement of the ground rules for the day. The working part of the day consisted of three sessions:

Session 1 – a series of short presentations covering

SEA 4 Process & Background

DTI Overview

Socio-economics

SEA 4 Environment

Session 2 – a series of short presentations covering

Oil & Gas - Sources of Effects & Controls

SEA 4 Progress update

Clarifications – the questions and responses were summarised and recorded on cards – see points for clarification later in this portfolio.

Session 3 –structured interactive group sessions to consider strategic issues for SEA 4, the information base and gaps and ways to further strengthen the SEA process. Discussion and issue capture was facilitated by four poster based information stations.

Station 1 - SEA 4 - Context and Background (

Station 2 - SEA 4 – Ecological and Physical Environment

Station 3 - SEA 4 - Human Environment

Station 4 - SEA 4 – Consideration of Implications of Licensing

Each station was attended by a facilitator and a member of the SEA assessment team. Groups visited all four of the stations during the afternoon and *key issues*, *new information sources* and *future* (SEA) *process improvements* were summarised and captured on cards (see subsequent pages of this report Station 1 - page 4, Station 2 - page 5, Station 3 - page 6, Station 4 - page 7).

The day ended with a plenary session where all participants had the opportunity to review the issues recorded by all groups during Session 3 and to amend or add additional feedback where appropriate. The next steps for SEA 4 where outlined.

Points for clarification	Response / Answer
Why were cephalopods selected as a topic for special study, separate from fisheries?	Major component of ecosystem Information gap on spawning grounds Potential link between discharge & food chain
BGS mapped all SB sediments south of 62N at 1:250,000 scale, prior to AFEN all published www.bgs.ac.uk	Noted
Area 3 (near coast) geology underlain, mainly by metamorphic not igneous rocks	Agreed
Likely significant effects on iceberg ploughmarks?	2 potential threats Large sponge growths on rocky areas Potential effects of discharges Physical threat eg. anchoring
What are the possible / realistic outcomes of the SEA in relation to the existing oil facilities?	Economics – possible extension to Sullom Voe Decline in jobs Potential for retrospective legislation if warranted SEA is a mechanism for addressing issues Potential for corrective action on existing sites / developments
Enlarge on improbability of blow-out!	Riser prevents fluid from reaching the sea Low pressures – less of a hazard Research into whether 'blow-out hazard' exists for SEA 4
What criteria might be envisaged that would result in withholding a block from licensing?	Significant impact on environment that cannot be mitigated Improved techniques / technology change and allowance needs to be made for this
Effects of opposing water currents on potential leakage from seabed and the fate of oil / gas as it ascends to sea surface	Information is largely based on behaviour of surface oil spills Not a lot of field research on deep spills. Assumptions based on theoretical extrapolation Research is continuing, some deep spill modelling with field based ground truthing has been carried out in Norway
Is the intro of exotics in ballast water really an issue? - especially in SEA4	Evidence of novel species in the North Sea is well known 'Algal blooms' & potential impact Sterilise ballast water Additional mitigation may be recommended
EMS a regulatory requirement but what is enforcement mechanism? Certified EMS - voluntary	A condition of being an operator is to have an EMS Requirement of independent auditing of EMS to be in place via OSPAR
Is there any scope for steel jackets to be left in situ if EIA indicates that this is the best environmental option	NO!

Station One

Key Issues

Block Licenses issued for 4 years initially; for exploration drilling

EIA process can pick up on information gaps. Results could impact development plans

Wind will be included and are included in SEA5+
Tidal power (for example) is being considered elsewhere

Contracts – what type?
Sample collection, sea-bed, topography… anything to fill the data gap.

If activity estimates too low – could SEA be not valid?

Promote licenses: should be taken into account in predictions

Fuel shortage over-riding?

Energy policy a little vague – what's the SEA link with it.
SEA has context within EP

Could shortage of fuel source override Env. impacts

New Information sources

Overlap / X-border issues

How similar are UK processes with Norway / Faeroes? Quite similar, driven by EU. Norway higher level

Faeroes had joint industry studies – similar scope

SEA approach is creating best practice ahead of legislation

Is there overarching process?

How does and SEA take account of possible developments across SEA border? Previous SEA's are taken into account

SEA covers whole region incl. eg. Shetland shore, but licensing not up to shoreline

Who to involve…… and How?

The ocean is not on doorstep, therefore lower on people's agenda

Not high public involvement? Problem of how to involve.
Web P & T

How to get the public on board need involvement at an earlier stage

Identifying all the stakeholders is not a perfect science

Knowing who to contact in organisations eg. OIC

Future Process Improvements

Need to have designated habitats in area

Did we invite anyone from
- Norway
- Faeroe Islands
- EU.

Potentially more local groups eg. Lobster fishing groups

Could use local radio to inform local people / public

Publicise the website by a variety of ways – eg. Posters in libraries

Organise local mtgs NERC did this. Those with interest will come

Point contact for councils could be via community (environmental) forums (through LA)

Involvement of local community groups / reps in SEA process eg. OIC

Station Two

Key Issues

Landscape Impact

Summary & conclusions in expert reports needed

Extreme Met conditions – hazard!

Offshore SPA's maybe designated

Offshore SPA's yet to be defined

SPA extensions

Uncertainty not considered enough!

Difficulty of establishing 'cause and effect'

Sharing of data
-North Sea bird club
- bird foraging data

Long term benthic data

Fishing catch data accurate?

<u>Mapping</u>
Areas of no prospectivity defined
Specify incomplete sea areas

Fishery data –
Out of date?
'Coull et al.'

New Information sources

Hadley – Met office

SCANS II
****DTI funding ****
Repeat & extension

Site investigation surveys – European projects meta data

Noise & Marine mammals – American study (MMS report)

Satellite deep detection as data source for sea floor to sea surface H/C migration & effects

Chevron / Texaco
204 / 17

Oil industry data
-BP Suilven, Foinaven / Schiehallion
Clair – Flotta Pipeline route

BGS – loads of data donated by oil co's

Future Process Improvements

Provide clarity on what requires protection on protected habitats to allow site specific surveys to identify protected habitats / species to enable developments to avoid these areas or provide mitigation.

Fulfilment of earlier SEA's - monitoring

Station Three

Key Issues

MEHRA's – Do they still exist? (or will they)

MEHRA's – What are they doing?

Is there a traffic (shipping) separation scheme

Uncertainty of extent of 'reef' rock on shelf

Information Management and/or sharing

List of NTS sites is incomplete

Is Dounreay a conservation / management issue?

How credible / valid is data on fisheries

There is a potential conflict between the robustness of the SEA process and lack of SEA type process for fishing

Fishing creates greater damage to sea bed environment than oil & gas exploration

Mapping old coastlines – existing surveys inadequate requires new surveys using swathe bathymetrry

Why did we not use more site investigation surveys (commercial)

How credible is archaeological issue?

Shortage of archaeological data

New Information sources

Coastal zone management initiatives (Fair Isle) is covered on page 86 of the report

Aquaculture: More sites on Orkney than shown on Fisheries – Shipping poster. – source?? Orkney island council

Commercial site investigation surveys

Future Process Improvements

Station Four

Key Issues

Process Issues

Have other sources gone into the interaction matrix & been screened out?

Have DTI been pleased with process so far? – Yes they are very involved and pleased with the evolution of the process

How do the DTI make assessments / judgements / decisions –

- We have to show significant / developments / opportunities / benefits-
- There is recourse to the courts as a final course of action

Process should start off with a 'simple high impact' ie. man, sea, biology / animals – not everyone uses web

How are ancillary industries coped with through this process? –

- Bigger base to start with as facilities exist.
- If one found more and it became necessary to increase facilities / onshore plant, this would be taken account of.
- SEA7 will be a bigger issue.
- It would come into the process but has not so far. It will be woven in.

Decommissioning

Decommissioning info available?

Growing information all the time - Steep learning curve.

- Scale is the difficulty ie. deep steel submersibles
- Smaller unit – a lot of information & actual experience is available

Technology

Oil companies – technology development

- Increased and improved technology
- Impact relates to deep water effects of engineering
- More monitoring is required
- Potential for drilling fewer wells as technology improves

Communication with 'The Public'

Need to put across output from this process in a simple & effective way to the public

Where does public dialogue come in?

Should it come in earlier?

Has anyone got any suggestions for developing / improving public awareness (ie. website, news-papers – Telegraph etc.)

Needs to be in journals ie. Birds / BBC Wildlife

Also goes to appropriate local papers.

Getting information out to the public is essential

Have the Hebridean WDT or WDCS been contacted

Assessment workshop would be enhanced if there was more local community involvement

Climate change

Has potential for climate change and increased storminess been taken into account?

- Looking forward predicting
- Safety design/construction do take this into account
- Effect is real and is recognised

New Information sources

DTI – noise studies There may be preliminary results – where are they?

Have we taken account of recent published data on cetaceans deaths and low seismic noise

'Pollution' & environmental impact

Low frequency seismic and non-seismic noise –
New techniques which are having an impact on cetaceans, are we taking this into account

Landscape never seems to appear as an issue.
Assumption is that impact is above sea
Definitions of seascape is unclear

Flaring? – Yes there is some done but it is minimal and requires consent.

Noise from construction and operation should be taken into account. Not just underwater noise

Damage to sea bed eg. what do you do with the statement.

- This is put in context and an assessment or judgement is made.
- Need for transparency
- Need to identify actual impact and therefore assessment of area is critical
- Strategic assessment informs decisions & potential restrictions / limitations

Managing Information

What is the link SEA & DTI document?

- Need reasons as to decisions
- Specific details are required
- Needs to be more transparent (there are some non-security issues)

Future Process Improvements

Further survey?

There is tremendous coverage for the whole area

May be some additional as time goes on

Make up of steering group – Who?

NGO's (RSPB) Gov. bodies (JNCC / Fisheries, academic institutions, industry.)

Responses come in from website – Responses to responses are published / summarised? - Yes

Are all potential stakeholders here today?

- Yes, we are conscious of stakeholder fatigue
- Oil companies are also carrying out consultation
- How aware are people?
- How do we communicate efficiently and effectively?
- CD roms were made available, 500 copies have been circulated, including to universities.
- Consider developing info for teachers?
- What about a road-show (BP did this with Foinaven)?
- Boards to public libraries?

Process for managing data / info?

- Expert judgement
- Knowledge of impacts
- Technical papers contain data
- Process evolves over time as knowledge is gained
- Shared knowledge

Technical reports were summarised, but did not state conclusions – this should be included.

This would then allow experts to argue their corner, and be grilled at workshops like this.

More feedback to the scientists writing the papers – so the knowledge & understanding can be improved, also offers scope for tech experts to integrate / discuss / join-up

- Experts need to make things simple so that the layman can understand the implications / info