

APPENDIX 2 – EXPERT ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

An Expert Assessment Workshop was held over two days in May 2004. The workshop was attended by members of the SEA Steering Group, the authors of the SEA 5 underpinning technical reports, other users of the offshore area and the SEA assessment team.

The workshop addressed three themes with objectives as follows:

Theme 1 - Licensing of the SEA 5 area for offshore oil and gas

- Gain a shared understanding of environment and uses of the SEA 5 area
- Consider important areas, sites or features in SEA 5
- Identification of Strategic Issues for SEA 5 oil & gas licensing for further consideration in Public Consultation Document
- Identify information gaps & consider significance for SEA 5

Theme 2 - Process for assessment of re-offering blocks

- Consider process for evaluation of re-offering of blocks in the areas previously assessed by SEAs 1, 2, 3 and 4

Theme 3 - Offshore renewable energy considerations

- Consider the comprehensive listing of potential wind R&D projects
- Consider key issues & information gaps for renewable energy SEA

In advance of the workshop, backing papers were distributed to the participants covering:

- The agenda, purpose and objectives of the workshop
- History of oil and gas licensing within the SEA 5 area
- Draft plan and alternatives for SEA 5
- Potential oil and gas activity in SEA 5
- A summary of the strategic issues considered in previous UK Oil and Gas SEAs
- Key issues and gaps identified in the Wind Round 2 Environmental Report
- A compilation of potential wind energy environmental projects and studies

Further background information relevant to the workshop was available from the SEA website.

Theme 1 - Licensing of the SEA 5 area for offshore oil and gas

Following agreement of ground rules and processes for the workshop, participants received an update on issues arising from scoping, and a series of presentations by the topic experts covering:

- Overview of SEA 5 area including energy prospectivity and likely activity levels
- Seabed sediments and sedimentary processes
- Shelf benthos
- Shellfish and fisheries
- Cephalopods
- Nearshore birds
- Marine mammals
- Conservation sites
- Prehistoric & archaeological remains
- Socio-economic implications

- Updates on controls and mitigation

The Assessment Workshops for SEAs 2, 3 and 4 used a detailed interactions matrix (see the example below) to identify those issues of strategic importance which should be examined in detail within the SEA assessment.

Source of Potential Impact		Environmental Receptor/Issue																			
		Climate	Air quality	Marine wildlife	Seabed	Flora	Marine Mammals	Fish & Shellfish	Marine Wildlife	Coastal & Estuaries	Marine mammals	Coastal & Estuaries	Other related issues	Other related issues	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries
UNDERWATER NOISE																					
Seismic																					
Drilling																					
Offshore Construction																					
Production operations																					
Decommissioning																					
Source of Potential Impact		Environmental Receptor/Issue																			
		Climate	Air quality	Marine wildlife	Seabed	Flora	Marine Mammals	Fish & Shellfish	Marine Wildlife	Coastal & Estuaries	Marine mammals	Coastal & Estuaries	Other related issues	Other related issues	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries
LIGHT & AIRBORNE NOISE																					
Seismic																					
Drilling																					
Offshore Construction																					
Production operations																					
Support Activities																					
Source of Potential Impact		Environmental Receptor/Issue																			
		Climate	Air quality	Marine wildlife	Seabed	Flora	Marine Mammals	Fish & Shellfish	Marine Wildlife	Coastal & Estuaries	Marine mammals	Coastal & Estuaries	Other related issues	Other related issues	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries	Coastal & Estuaries
PHYSICAL DAMAGE TO FEATURES & BIOTOPES																					
Seismic (strapped array only)																					
Site investigation ENVIRO SURVEY																					
Drilling (rig anchoring)																					
Drilling (jack dumping for jack-ups)																					
Construction (anchoring of lay barges)																					
Construction (pipelay, trenching & reconnection)																					

White	No effects foreseen
Light Blue	Positive
Light Green	Minor or negligible issues
Light Purple	Issues to be considered further in SEA 4

This workshop was the fourth in the series and the identification of strategic issues to be considered within SEA 5 built on the outputs from the previous SEAs.

The workshop used a structured process to review and discuss the strategic issues identified from previous SEAs in the context of their applicability to the SEA 5 area.

A presentation was given on the identified strategic issues. The following prompts were used for the structured discussion of strategic issues:

- Any issues missing?
- Can any be deleted?
- Any other studies of effects of relevance?
- Identify areas that should be given further consideration

Theme 2 - Process for assessment of re-offering blocks

The workshop considered and discussed a suggested outline process for reviewing “change” and re-assessment for re-offer of blocks in previously SEAed areas

Following discussion, a case by case approach was agreed based on the following principles:

1. Review of scenarios and work programmes against what activity has actually occurred.
2. Review the scale of predicted activity that could follow re-offer.
3. Assess information base and new information on the environment and uses of the areas.
4. Review previous SEA conclusions for continued validity in the context of regulatory controls, mitigation techniques and technology and understanding of effects.

It was agreed that re-offering should also be considered in future Assessment Workshops.

In addition, participants helped to identify recent studies of relevance to the consideration of blocks within the previous SEA areas.

Theme 3 Offshore renewable energy considerations

A compilation and grouping of potential projects/issues raised in relation to offshore wind energy developments was included in the backing papers for the workshop. The compilation had been drawn from various sources and was predominantly, but not entirely, related to environmental issues. In addition, the workshop had a presentation on the key issues identified in the Round 2 Offshore Wind Licensing Environmental Report to provide a context for a detailed consideration of the priorities, additions and deletions to the draft listing “Potential Wind Energy Projects and Studies”.

The workshop also considered key issues for renewable energy development in the SEA 5 area.

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