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

### **Kerr McGee**

#### **Jura Exploration well**

On 6 November 2002 Kerr-McGee North Sea (UK) Limited submitted an Environmental Statement under the Offshore Petroleum Production and Pipelines (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1999, for the proposed drilling of an exploration well 15/20a-13, in the Jura prospect in the UKCS block 15/20a, approximately 220Km NE of Aberdeen and 40Km from the UK/ Norwegian Median line. The field lies in approximately 128 to 140 metres of water, within a very broad shallow basin called the Witch Ground. If hydrocarbons are discovered they are expected to be oil and associated gas.

Drilling of the vertical well and four contingent sidetracks is planned to commence in January 2003 and the operations are expected to take 22 days to complete. Both water based mud (WBM) & Low Toxicity Oil Based Mud (LTOBM) containing Organic Phase Fluid (OPF) will be used to drill the well with an estimated 394 tonnes of cuttings discharged to sea from the top two sections and 157 tonnes of OPF contaminated cuttings returned to shore for processing. If a contingency sidetrack/s is required then the quantity of cuttings returned to shore will increase by 157 tonnes for each sidetrack drilled.

The proposed drilling activities will co-incide with the spawning period for nephrops, norway pout, and block 15/10 also occurs over nursery grounds for juvenile blue whiting and nephrops during the proposed drilling period. Seabird vulnerability is high during January and February. However mitigation measures are in place to minimise the potential risk of hydrocarbons entering the marine environment. A well test is not planned but has been included as a contingency. If it is undertaken then a maximum of 701 tonnes of oil, 2.1 tonnes of gas will be flared over a maximum of 36 hours. If undertaken the well test will result in 2,249 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> being generated.

The implications of the Offshore Petroleum Activities (Conservation of Habitats) Regulations 2001 have been considered, in particular any potential effects on future candidate SAC. The application considered in particular pockmarks containing submarine structures made by leaking gases, which is a habitat type as defined in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive. Although pockmarks are known to be present in the vicinity of the proposed well, historical data suggested submarine structures were unlikely to be present. This was confirmed by site specific survey which did not demonstrate the presence of a submarine structure.

Following provision of additional information contained in a letter dated 13 January 2003, we are satisfied that the ES addresses the impacts from the proposed exploration well and overall no significant environmental impacts have been identified, and it is unlikely to have any significant effect on any possible future SAC. The review of this ES was completed on the 5 February 2003.

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