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

Marathon Oil UK Ltd

Dragon Appraisal Well 103/01

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 granted a consent to Marathon Oil UK Ltd to the getting of petroleum and the drilling of an exploration well in Block 103/1a (hereafter referred to as "the project") subject to Marathon conducting operations in respect of the project in accordance with the relevant Environmental Statement. The consent for the well was given on 16 August 2005 and shall remain in force for a period of two years.

Background

The drilling location lies in the St George's Channel, close to the UK/Ireland median line and approximately 34 km to the Pembrokeshire coast of Wales. Marathon Oil UK Ltd is planning to drill a single appraisal well with a possible geological sidetrack. Three well design options are being considered but a slim hole design is favoured reducing cuttings and chemical discharges. Top-hole sections will be drilled using Water Based Mud (WBM) and it is anticipated that the final section will be drilled using Oil Based Mud (OBM). OBM will be totally contained and OBM contaminated cuttings will also be contained and shipped to shore for processing. The start date is expected to commence mid-September to end October with a drilling period of between 50 and 80 days. The well will be evaluated using wireline techniques to allow samples of rock and well fluids to be accessed. Marathon also proposes to conduct a Vertical Seismic Profile (VSP) on the well for correlation with existing surface gathered seismic data. No flowing well test is proposed so there will be no associated flaring. Dependent on the outcome of the project the well may be suspended for potential future use or abandoned. If suspended, the well will be left intact, plugged with cement to prevent hydrocarbons from escaping and the well location notified for marking on

the Admiralty Charts. If abandoned, the well will be sealed and the seabed left clear.

Sensitivities

The environmental statement identifies a range of potential environmental hazards and outlines proposed mitigation measures, including: Drilling discharges Underwater noise Hydrocarbon spills Trans-boundary effects Physical presence of the rig on other sea-users

The ES considered these points in detail. We are satisfied that the ES addresses the impacts from the proposed development with sufficient mitigation in place to protect both offshore and coastal habitats from impacts from the drilling activities or potential oil spills. It is also noted that Marathon is working closely with JNCC concerning the VSP operations to minimise potential acoustic disturbance to marine mammals in the area. Overall no significant environmental impacts have been identified and the impact on other sea-users will be minimised.

Recommendation

Overall the environmental statement is satisfactory and adequately assesses the potential environmental impacts of the proposed operation. It is recommended that consent is given to the project.

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