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

### **Burlington Resources (Irish Sea) Ltd**

#### **North Asland Appraisal Well 110/09a**

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 Burlington Resources (Irish Sea) Ltd to the drilling of an appraisal well in Block 110/09a-A (hereafter referred to as "the project") subject to Burlington Resources (Irish Sea) Ltd conducting operations in respect of the project in accordance with the relevant environmental statement. The consent for the well was given on 12 July 2005 and shall remain in force for a period of two years.

#### **Background**

The proposed North Asland Appraisal Well is situated in Block 110/9a-c in the Liverpool Bay area of the East Irish Sea approximately 23 kilometres from the Lancashire coast and 124 kilometres from the UK-Ireland trans-boundary line. The well is being drilled to determine the potential size of the Asland gas reservoir and how it could be developed most effectively. Drilling is scheduled to commence August/September and completed over 17 days. A shallow (760m) single well will be drilled with Water Based Mud using a slim hole design to reduce the amounts of cuttings (approximately 407 tonnes) and chemicals discharged to the marine environment. The use of Low Toxicity Oil Based Mud is not planned or anticipated during the project and a well test is not anticipated. When drilling operations are completed the well will be plugged and abandoned and the seabed left clear. Any future development will be the subject of further assessment.

#### **Sensitivities**

The Liverpool Bay area has been identified as a potential Special Protection Area (pSPA) primarily for the protection

and conservation of black scoters and red-throated divers. No draft site boundary has been published and conservation objectives for the pSPA have yet to be fully defined. However, it has been agreed that efforts should be made to maintain the bird populations in the area in a favourable condition. There are a further 21 sites under some form of protection that fall within a 40 km radius of the proposed well location along the English and North Welsh coastlines.

The EIA identified the following impacts which were considered potentially significant :-

Drilling discharges

Hydrocarbon spills

The physical presence of the rig and support vessel.

Supply boat routes through the Liverpool Bay area

The ES considered these points in detail and elaborated on minimisation strategies, including shallow drilling to a slim hole design reducing cuttings discharges and the use of WBM reducing the likelihood of hydrocarbon spills. The ES emphasised the short period of 17 days minimising the physical impact of the rig. Burlington also proposed to ensure that supply boat routes were directed to maintain a minimum 2 km clearance zone from the main bird populations to minimise disturbance. We are satisfied that the ES, supported by additional information, addresses the impacts from the proposed development and overall no significant environmental impacts have been identified.

### **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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