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

### **Silverstone Energy Limited**

#### **Viking Lx B North Phase 1 Development**

##### **Synopsis**

- Development type: Production well and tie-back
- July 2007
- Block: 49/17
- Viking Lx B North is located approximately 3.6km northwest of the Viking BD platform in the Southern North Sea, approximately 125km from the UK mainland at Bacton. It is located within the dSAC of the North Norfolk Sandbanks in the vicinity of the Indefatigable sandbank.
- It is expected drilling will commence in Quarter 2, 2008 with subsea installation activities scheduled to take place between July and September 2008. Commissioning is scheduled to be in October 2008, with first gas expected to be in September 2008.
- Maximum gas rate is expected to be 20Mm<sup>3</sup>/day.
- Drilling fluids will be WBM and it is estimated that 15 tonnes of cuttings will be discharged to the seabed.

##### **Key Environmental Sensitivities**

- Moderate shipping activity (4-5 vessels per day);
- Low fishing activity;
- Fish spawning area for plaice (Dec to Jan), cod (Jan to April), lemon sole (April to September), mackerel (May to August), Sprat (May to Aug), Nephrops (all year), Sandeels (Nov to Feb).
- Nursery area for lemon sole, whiting, Nephrops and sandeels.
- Seabird vulnerability lowest in summer and highest in winter, with high vulnerability being in March
- Cetacean numbers are low, but Harbour porpoise present all year round, with peak sightings usually in June;
- Annex I Habitats: project is in the proximity of the

North Norfolk Sandbanks dSAC. There is no evidence of Sabellaria spinulosa.

### **Habitats and Birds Directive potential issues:**

Though the location of the project is in the vicinity of "sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time", listed in Annex I to the EU Habitats Directive and is in the proximity to the North Norfolk Sandbanks, it is considered very unlikely that any significant impact will occur. Overall, the total area of seabed directly disturbed by the proposed operations is estimated to be 0.1341km<sup>2</sup>, which equates to 0.003% of the total North Norfolk Sandbanks. Though the Harbour porpoise, listed in Annex II to the EU Habitats Directive occur in the area of the proposed project, they are low in number and it is considered very unlikely that any impact from the proposed project will occur.

### **Issues requiring further investigation:**

At the time of writing the ES pipeline surveys had yet to be undertaken and JNCC advised that Silverstone are required to provide a thorough account of these surveys in their PON 15 applications. Dependent on the findings of the surveys, Silverstone were also advised that modification to their activities may be required if sensitive habitats/species were encountered. Silverstone were also required to amend mitigation measures with regard to potential hammer piling operations.

### **Additional Information Requests**

BERR requested further information with regard to some minor clarifications with respect to quantification of pipeline, rock dumping and drill rig footprint; the type of production profile used within the ES; and minor updates to the summary of legislation section. Silverstone provided the additional information requested on the 10th September 2007. All issues were considered satisfactorily amended and clarified.

### **Identification of Significant Impacts:**

No significant impacts identified.

### **Consultees:**

- JNCC
- CEFAS

**Public Consultation:** No comments were received within the 28 day period.

### **Conclusion:**

An environmental statement was submitted to cover the

proposed field development, which considered the potential implications of the development. Following consultation with the statutory consultees and the provision of additional information for clarification purposes from Silverstone Energy Limited on 10 September 2007, we are satisfied that this project is unlikely to have a significant impact on the receiving environment, including any habitats and species protected under relevant conservation legislation.

**Recommendation:**

Based on the information presented in the ES and further information received it was advised that project consent be given.

**Approval date:** 12 September 2007

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