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

Mobil North Sea Ltd

Arthur Development

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, she has granted a consent to Mobil North Sea Ltd to the getting of petroleum and the drilling of a production well in Block 53/02 (hereafter referred to as "the project") subject to Mobil North Sea Ltd conducting operations in respect of the project in accordance with the relevant environmental statement. The consent for the well shall remain in force for a period of two years.

Background

The project will involve the tie back of an existing well, Arthur 1, through a subsea manifold to the Thames platform via a new 30km production pipeline and new control umbilical (2004). A second well, Arthur 2, will be drilled 3 km south east of the existing well (September ? November 2004), and if economical, will be tied back to the first well using a new production pipeline and control umbilical (2005). A possible third development well 2km west of Arthur 1 will be drilled and tied back in 2005 should it be required.

Gas produced from the Arthur Field will be processed through existing facilities on the Thames platform and exported onshore via the existing Bacton pipeline. No new gas receiving infrastructure is required at the Bacton terminal.

Arthur 2 is planned to be drilled in September 2004 and is expected to be completed by November 2004. Installation and commissioning of the subsea infrastructure will begin in August 2004 with first gas planned for November 2004.

The well will be drilled and completed using a conventional jack-up rig and a water-based drilling fluid, with 675 tonnes of cuttings to be discharged.

Once drilling is completed, Arthur 2 will be cleaned-up using an Expro clean-up package which employs high efficiency burners. The volume of gas expected to be flared over a period of 24 - 36 hours is estimated to be 1.5 million m3.

Sensitivities

The environmental statement identifies a range of potential environmental hazards and outlines proposed mitigation measures, including:

- Physical presence/surface vessels
- Discharge of drillings cuttings
- Well clean-up/completion
- Pipeline installation and commissioning
- Pipeline/rock dump presence
- Produced water oil-in-water discharges
- Diesel oil spillage

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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