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

Centrica Resources Ltd

Prometheus Exploration Well 42/21a

Background

The proposed Prometheus Exploration Well is situated in Block 42/21-a in the southern North Sea approximately 15 kilometres to the North-East of the nearest landfall at Flamborough Head. The well is being drilled to target potential gas bearing sands in the region.

Drilling operations are scheduled to commence in September using a jack-up rig. It is expected that drilling will be completed over 25 days with an additional 20 days allowed for clean-up and well testing. A well test will only be undertaken if sufficient gas bearing sands are encountered. The proposed single vertical well will be drilled with Water Based Mud. The use of Low Toxicity Oil Based Mud is not planned or anticipated. If commercial hydrocarbons are encountered the well will be plugged and suspended. Alternatively, the well will be plugged and abandoned and the seabed left clear.

The Block lies adjacent to an important potential herring spawning area during September and a sea-bed survey was undertaken to determine if the sediments in the immediate vicinity of the well site would be conducive to herring spawning. A site survey and herring spawning ground report (HSGR) was commissioned to support the ES

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

Drilling discharges

Hydrocarbon spills

Physical presence

The ES considered these points in detail and elaborated on

minimisation strategies, including drilling a single vertical well. It is estimated that the drilling of the well will generate a maximum total of 590 tonnes of cuttings. These cuttings are expected to settle and cover an area of approximately 11.44 metres in diameter. The remaining 307 tonnes of finer cuttings from lower sections would have the potential to be carried by the currents to herring spawning areas. Therefore, these cuttings will be returned to the rig and collected for return to shore for licensed disposal.

Recommendation

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

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