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

Shell UK

BLOCK 214/24

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, pursuant to Licence P918, granted a consent to Shell U.K. Exploration and Production Limited to the getting of petroleum and the drilling of an exploration well in Block 214/24 (hereafter referred to as "the project") subject to Shell U.K. Exploration and Production Limited conducting operations in respect of the project in accordance with the relevant environmental statement. Consent for the well was given on 24 August 1998.

Background

Shell U.K. Exploration and Production Limited intend to drill an exploration well in the West Shetland Slope in relatively deep water (~ 653m), 86 km north-west of the Shetland Isles. Drilling, by the Ocean Alliance semi submersible mobile drilling unit, is due to commence in September/October 1998 and last roughly 2 months. The well is most likely to contain gas rather than oil. The entire well will be drilled to a depth below seabed of 3508m using WBMs.

The concession was awarded during the 16th round.

Drilling and Well Completion

Drilling

The top 36" and 26" sections will be drilled with seawater, riserless, with cuttings discharged directly to seabed. The lower, 16" and 12¼", sections will be drilled using a KCl/polymer WBM with discharge of cuttings overboard following clean-up.

It is anticipated that the following volumes of rock will be discharged to the sea:

Hole Section	Section Interval	Cuttings volume (m ³)	Specific gravity (g/cm ³)	Cuttings weight (tonnes)
36"	89	58-74	2.2	129-163
26"	794	272-356	2.3	626-819
16"	1087	141-317	2.4	338-761
12¼"	1538	117-255	2.5	292-638
Total		588-1002		1385-2381

Well Testing/Completion

No well testing planned.

Abandonment

The well will be designed to be plugged and abandoned at the end of the drilling operation. It will be sealed with a series of cement plugs, and all casing strings cut to a minimum depth of 3m below sea level. An ROV survey will be conducted before spudding and after abandonment to ensure the area is clear of debris.

Environmental Sensitivities and Impacts

The exploration well is in the West Shetland Slope in relatively deep water (~ 653m), 86 Km north-west of the

Shetland Isles. There is little commercial fishing in the area and there are no known fish spawning or nursery grounds of importance in the area. Sea birds are vulnerable to surface spills from February through to the summer months.

Lophelia pertusa has not been found in the vicinity.

Recommendation

Overall, the ES is satisfactory and adequately assesses the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development. Recommend that consent for the development is given.