

**Premier Oil E&P UK Limited**

**Tolmount to Easington Pipeline**

**Environmental Statement Summary**

**To: Jonathan Ward**

**From: Nicola Abrams**

**Date: 28 March 2019**

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| **ES Title:** | Tolmount to Easington Pipeline Offshore Environmental Statement |
| **Developer:** | Premier Oil E&P UK Limited |
| **Consultants:** | Xodus Group |
| **OGA Field Group:** | Southern North Sea |
| **ES Report No:** | D/4225/2018 |
| **ES Submission Date:** | November 2019 |
| **Block No:** | 42/28d, 47/3i, 47/2c, 47/2d, 47/7, 47/6, 47/11 |
| **Development Type:** | Gas and Condensate Pipeline |
| **Project Description**    The Tolmount field is located in Block 42/8d in the Southern North Sea, approximately 36 kilometres (km) from the nearest UK coastline at Flamborough Head and 156 km from the UK / Norway median line, in a water depth of approximately 50 metres (m).    The Tolmount development, comprising a minimum facilities platform supporting four development wells, was approved in 2018 (Ref: D/4203/2017).  Under the original proposals, the gas and condensate would have been exported to a new gas processing facility within the Dimlington gas terminal. However, processing capacity became available at the Easington Terminal in late 2017, and Easington then became the preferred option. As the pipeline route and landfall were changed, Premier Oil E&P UK Limited (Premier) submitted a new Environmental Statement (ES) for the pipeline system. The rest of the development remains unchanged and is covered by the approval issued in 2018.  The produced gas and condensate will be exported to a new gas processing facility within the existing Easington gas terminal via a new 48.4 km 20” export pipeline and a piggybacked 3” methanol pipeline.  The pipeline system will be installed through the cliffs and sea defences from the Easington terminal and then trenched and buried over its entire length to connect to the MFP.  First gas is scheduled for the end of 2020, with anticipated peak production of approximately 7,560,000 m3 per day of gas and 340 tonnes per day of condensate in 2022.  **Key Environmental Impacts**    The ES identified and discussed the following as having the potential to result in an environmental impact:     * Physical presence;      * Seabed disturbance; * Discharges to sea; * Atmospheric emissions;      * Underwater noise; and      * Accidental events   **Key Environmental Sensitivities**    The ES identified the following environmental sensitivities:     * **Seabed features**.  The project is located within an area comprising circalittoral mixed and coarse sediments with potential stony reef habitats.  The offshore section of the pipeline route also crosses rippled sands and shell fragments.  The trenching and creation of spoil tips, the clearance of boulders and the introduction of rock protection has the potential to impact features of potential conservation interest.  However, the seabed features are widespread in the area and pipeline route optimisation has been conducted to minimise adverse effects.  Impacts are therefore considered to be minor.      * **Fish species**: The project is located within spawning grounds for cod, lemon sole, plaice, herring, sandeels and sprat; and nursery areas for blue whiting, cod, lemon sole, whiting, herring, mackerel, sandeels, sprat, anglerfish and spurdog.  A herring spawning assessment was undertaken and areas potentially impacted by the project were identified as “prime”, “sub-prime” and “suitable” for spawning.  The proposed operations therefore have the potential to impact these potential spawning grounds, but any impacts would be short-term and localised and are therefore considered to be minor.      * **Seabirds**:  Seabird vulnerability over the pipeline route is considered to be extremely high in nearshore areas in February, March, May and June, very high in August, September and November, and high in January and December.  It is considered that sufficient mitigation measures are in place to prevent accidental spills that could have a significant impact on seabirds, and Premier will have an approved Oil Pollution Emergency Plan (OPEP) in place before offshore operations are undertaken.      * **Protected habitats**:  The pipeline proposals overlap the Greater Wash proposed Special Protection Area (pSPA), the Holderness Inshore Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) and the Holderness Offshore recommended MCZ (rMCZ).  A Likely Significant Effects (LSE) assessment was conducted for the Greater Wash pSPA and concluded that the pipeline will have a small permanent footprint (0.026 km2) in relation to the total foraging area available (24 km2).  Vessels have the potential to disturb foraging birds within the Greater Wash pSPA, as 156 km2 of the vessel transit corridor is within the site, and the ES estimates that <1 % of the common scoter and red throated diver population are likely to be present within this area.  However, any disturbance impacts will be temporary and localised and both species are unlikely to be present in significant numbers during the pipeline construction period (April - September).  It is therefore considered that the project will not result in any likely significant effect on the Greater Wash pSPA. Potential impacts on the designated features of the Holderness Inshore MCZ and the Holderness Offshore rMCZ were also considered and it was concluded that installation of the pipeline would not hinder achieving the conservation objectives for either site.      * **Protected species**:  The pipeline proposals overlap the southern North Sea Harbour Porpoise Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and bottlenose dolphins, white-beaked dolphins, white-sided dolphins and minke whales have also been recorded in the project area.  Grey and common seals also inhabit coastal and inshore waters adjacent to the Tolmount area, and the Donna Nook grey seal breeding site is located approximately 17 km from the pipeline.  However, the potential disturbance impact is considered to be low and no significant adverse effects on marine mammals or the southern North Sea Harbour Porpoise Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are anticipated.      * **Other users of the sea**:  The project is located within ICES rectangles 37F0 and 36F0.  Fishing effort in the area is moderate, with the majority targeting shellfish (99%).  Shipping density in the area is high.  Appropriate navigational controls will be put in place and it is not anticipated that the proposed pipeline installation operations will have any significant impact on other users of the sea.      * **Heritage interests**:  There are seven shipwrecks and two areas of archaeologic interest in the vicinity of the project.  The operator will therefore implement archaeological exclusion zones (AEZ) and a protocol for archaeological discoveries (PAD) to reduce any potential impacts.      * **In-combination, cumulative and transboundary effects**:  No significant in‑combination, cumulative or transboundary effects are anticipated.     **Key Mitigation Measures (including environmental or monitoring conditions)**    All activities will be undertaken in line with commitments detailed in the ES and best industry practice.  Specific mitigation measures identified for the project are:     * Archaeological review of marine geophysical survey data to be undertaken for anchoring areas and results submitted to the BEIS Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) prior to construction. * Routine vessel movements to be restricted to levels described in the ES, or lower, to ensure potential impacts on the Greater Wash pSPA have been accurately assessed. * Spoil tips to be located outwith the MCZs. * No pipeline protection shall be placed within the Holderness Inshore MCZ unless previously agreed in writing with OPRED.   **Consultation**    The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Natural England (NE), the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), the Environment Agency (EA), the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, (MCA), the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Trinity House and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council were consulted on the project. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was also notified of the proposals.  The ES was also subject to public notice.     * JNCC did not raise any objections but highlighted that stony reef impacts and hard substrate introduction (rock dumping) should be minimised.      * Natural England did not raise any objections but highlighted the importance of assessing impacts on the protected sites raising a query about the potential for the project to hinder the conservation objectives of the Holderness Inshore MCZ. * The EA raised queries in relation to potential impacts on coastal processes. * MCA did not raise any objections but detailed navigational and OPEP requirements.     No comments were received from the MMO, CEFAS, MOD, Trinity House, the East Riding of Yorkshire Council or the HSE, and there were no responses to the public notice.    **Further Information**    Further information was requested from Premier to address issues raised by consultees and during the OPRED review. The information requested related to coastal processes, impacts on seabirds and impacts on protected sites.  The additional information provided by Premier addressed all the issues that were raised.    **Determination**    Following review of the ES, the responses received from consultees and the additional information provided by Premier, OPRED is satisfied that, subject to implementation of the key mitigation requirements detailed above, the project will not have a significant adverse impact on the receiving environment or the living resources it supports, or on any protected habitats or species or other users of the sea.  **Recommendation**  Based on the information presented within the ES, the advice received from consultees and the additional information provided by Premier, OPRED is content that there are no grounds for objecting to the proposals and agrees to the Oil and Gas Authority issuing the necessary Pipeline Works Authorisation for the proposed pipeline. This agreement is not subject to the inclusion of any specific environmental conditions. | |
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