

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-4157U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1163310



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment & Decommissioning

IOG NORTH SEA LIMITED  
6TH FLOOR  
60 GRACECHURCH STREET  
LONDON  
EC3V 0HR

Registered No.: 07632999

Date: 1st October 2021

Department for Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy

AB1 Building  
Crimon Place  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1BJ

Tel [REDACTED]

Fax [REDACTED]

[www.gov.uk/beis](http://www.gov.uk/beis)  
[bst@beis.gov.uk](mailto:bst@beis.gov.uk)

Dear Sir / Madam

**THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION, UNLOADING  
AND STORAGE (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS  
2020**

**Blythe Export pipeline PL4956**

I refer to your amended application dated 30th September 2021, reference PL/2114/3 (Version 2).

It has been determined that the proposed changes to the project is not likely to result in a significant effect on the environment, and therefore an environmental impact assessment is not required.

A screening direction is therefore issued for the changes to the project. An amended schedule of conditions, comments, and main reasons for the decision on the amended application, are attached. A copy of this screening direction will be forwarded to the application consultees, the Oil and Gas Authority and published on the gov.uk website.

If you have any queries in relation to this screening direction or the attachments, please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] or email the Environmental Management Team at [bst@beis.gov.uk](mailto:bst@beis.gov.uk).

Yours faithfully



**THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION, UNLOADING  
AND STORAGE (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS  
2020**

**SCREENING DIRECTION CONFIRMING THAT AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
ASSESSMENT IS NOT REQUIRED**

**Blythe Export pipeline PL4956**

**PL/2114/3 (Version 2)**

Whereas IOG NORTH SEA LIMITED has made an application dated 30th September 2021, under The Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2020, and whereas the Secretary of State has considered the application and is satisfied that the project is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment; in exercise of the powers available under regulation 6, the Secretary of State hereby directs that the application for consent in respect of the project need not be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment, provided that the project is carried out as described in the application for the screening direction and in accordance with the conditions specified in the attached schedule.

In giving a screening direction under regulation 6 of the above Regulations, the Secretary of State accordingly gives his agreement to the Oil and Gas Authority to the grant of consent for the project as detailed in the application.

Effective Date: 1st October 2021



## **THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION, UNLOADING AND STORAGE (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2020**

### **SCHEDULE OF SCREENING DIRECTION CONDITIONS**

The grant of this screening direction is conditional upon the screening direction holder complying with the following conditions.

#### **1 Screening direction validity**

The screening direction shall be valid from 30 June 2021 until 30 June 2022.

#### **2 Commencement and completion of the project**

The holder of the screening direction must confirm the dates of commencement and completion of the project covered by the screening direction. Notification should be sent by email to the Environmental Management Team Mailbox: [bst@beis.gov.uk](mailto:bst@beis.gov.uk)

#### **3 Prevention of pollution**

The holder of the screening direction must ensure that appropriate measures are taken to minimise discharges, emissions and waste, in particular through the appropriate use of technology; and to ensure that necessary measures are taken to prevent incidents affecting the environment or, where they occur, to limit their consequences in relation to the environment.

#### **4 Inspections**

Should the Department consider it necessary or expedient for an inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to investigate whether the conditions of the screening direction are being complied with, the holder of the screening direction shall afford the inspector with such facilities and assistance as the inspector considers necessary to exercise the powers conferred by the regulations. The holder of the screening direction shall additionally ensure that copies (electronic or paper) of the screening direction and any other relevant documents are available for inspection by the inspector at:

- a) the premises of the holder of the screening direction; and
- b) the facilities undertaking the project covered by the screening direction.

#### **5 Check monitoring**

Should the Department consider it necessary or expedient to undertake an independent monitoring programme to assess the impact of the project covered by the screening direction, the screening direction holder shall afford the Department with such facilities and assistance as the Department considers necessary to



undertake the work.

## **6 Atmospheric emissions returns**

Following completion of the project covered by the screening direction, the holder of the screening direction shall report all relevant atmospheric emissions, such as combustion emissions, using the appropriate Environmental Emissions Monitoring System (EEMS) reporting forms.

## **7 Unauthorised deposits**

Following completion of the project covered by the screening direction, the holder of the screening direction shall recover any materials accidentally or temporarily deposited on the seabed, such as debris, temporary containers, structures or deposits, or scientific instruments, and shall return the materials to land. If it is not possible to recover any of these deposits, full details of the materials remaining on the seabed must be reported to the Department in accordance with the requirements of Petroleum Operations Notice No.2 (PON2).

## **8 Screening direction variation**

In the event that the holder of the screening direction proposes changes to any of the particulars detailed in the application for a screening direction, the holder must notify the Department immediately and submit an application for a post screening direction amendment. The post screening direction must be in place prior to the amended proposals taking effect.

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-4157U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1163310



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment & Decommissioning



## COMMENTS ON THE APPLICATION FOR SCREENING DIRECTION

### Section 1

The attention of screening direction holders is drawn to the following provisions regarding The Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2020.

1) You are deemed to have satisfied yourself that there are no barriers, legal or otherwise, to the carrying out of the project covered by the screening direction. The issue of a screening direction does not absolve the screening direction holder from obtaining such authorisations, consents etc that may be required under any other legislation.

2) The Department would draw your attention to the following comments:

The Department has no comments.

3) All communications relating to the screening direction should be addressed to:

#### **Out-of-hours emergency screening direction variations:**

Telephone Met Office out-of-hours service (0330 135 0010) and ask to be connected to the Department's On-call Response Officer (Offshore Environmental Inspectorate).

#### **Routine communications**

bst@beis.gov.uk

or

Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment & Decommissioning  
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy  
AB1 Building  
Crimon Place  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1BJ

Tel [REDACTED]



## SCHEDULE OF SCREENING DIRECTION DECISION REASONS

The Secretary of State has decided that, based on the information provided, the project is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The main reasons for this decision are:

### 1) Decision reasons

The following provides a summary of the assessments undertaken by OPRED to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required for this project, summarises the information considered, the potential impacts and sets out the main reasons for the decision made. In considering whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required or not, the following have been taken into account:

The information provided by the developer.

The matters listed in Schedule 5 of The Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage (Environmental Impact Regulations 2020) (the Regulations).

The results of any preliminary verifications or assessments of the effects on the environment of the project; and

Any conditions that the Secretary of State may attach to the agreement to the grant of consent.

### Characteristics of the Project

This post screening direction amendment (ref PL/2114/3) relates to a change to the project for which a screening direction was previously issued.

Having regard, in particular, to the matters identified at paragraphs 1(a) to (g) of Schedule 5 to the Regulations, the characteristics of the project include the following:

#### Summary of the project :

The installation of the 12" Blythe export line PL4956 and 12" tie-in spool section were subject to the Offshore Petroleum Production and Pipe-lines (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1999, PLA/768 PL/1952.

This project (PL/2114/3) includes 180 additional concrete mattresses and 488 temporary grout bags, laid at intervals along the length of the Blythe export pipeline PL4956, to mitigate against upheaval buckling, and to extend the end date of the operations from 31 October 2021 to 30 June 2022. It will be consented by the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) under Pipeline Works Authorisation (PWA) 4/W/20 reference PA3622. Previous screening directions relating to PLA/768 are as follows:

PL/2114/0 - The presence and connection of the Blythe platform 12" riser being connected to the 12" Blythe export line PL4956 and the presence of the Blythe platform 6" riser (the connection to the 6" Elgood pipeline is covered under Direction PLA/769 PL/2106).



PL/2114/1 - to extend the end date of the previous Screening Direction (PL/2114/0) from 30 June 2021 to 31 October 2021, following operational delays.

PL/2114/2 - covers the connection of Blythe export pipeline PL4956 to both the Blythe platform and the Thames pipeline including both permanent and temporary deposits associated with such.

#### Description of project:

The previous screening directions related to the installation and connection of a 12" tie-in spool installed on Blythe export pipeline PL4956 and connected to the Blythe platform 12" rigid riser. The installation of the 12" Blythe export line PL4956 and 12" tie-in spool section were subject to Direction PLA/768 PL/1952, and the installation of the 6" Elgood pipeline PL4955 was subject to Direction PLA/769 PL/1965. The presence and connection of the 12" riser to the 12" Blythe export pipeline and the presence of the 6" platform rigid riser were captured under PLA 768 PL/2114/2.

The risk of an unplanned diesel release from the vessels involved with the operations has been assessed. The developer has control measures in place to reduce the risk of an unplanned release occurring and the probability of such an event occurring is very low.

No cumulative impacts are expected to occur with any other existing or approved projects, as a result of the change to operations. It is not considered to be likely that the project will be affected by natural disasters. Other than the matters considered further below, there is not likely to be any significant impact of the project on population and human health.

#### **Location of the Project**

Having regard in particular to the matters identified at paragraphs 2(a) to (c) of Schedule 5 to the Regulations, the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the project has been considered as follows:

The project area is located in Block 44/23 in the southern North Sea (SNS) in an approximate water depth of 23 metres (m), approximately 36 kilometres (km) north east of the UK and 107 km west of the UK/Netherlands median line. The project area is not located within any protected areas.

The project is in an area characterised by circlittoral coarse sediment (gravelly sand with shell fragments) and mobile bed forms (sand waves and mega-ripples). The quantitative assessment of seabed imagery obtained during the survey indicated that the species abundance and diversity were typical of the SNS. Benthic communities within sandy mobile sediments of the SNS are typically low in both numbers of taxa and individuals and dominated by species adapted to a degree of physical disturbance associated with tidal movement and wave action. Broken *Sabellaria spinulosa* tubes were collected in a few grab samples within the survey area but no





intact *Sabellaria spinulosa* tubes were evident from the video analysis. Inspection of side scan sonar data and ground-truthing with visual camera systems indicated that there are no areas of *Sabellaria spinulosa* that could be classified as 'reef' (i.e. not an Annex I habitat) within the surveyed area. Species diversity appeared to increase in areas of coarser sediments (favouring epilithic attachment). Epifauna was generally sparse throughout the survey area. No sensitive epifaunal species were identified near the platform location.

The fishing effort in the area (ICES 35F1) is rated low and medium for shellfish. Fish spawning and nursery activity will occur in the area, which may coincide with the operations. However, operations will be undertaken outwith the herring and sandeel spawning period, and the area has been considered as 'unsuitable' for herring spawning habitat. Spawning intensity for sandeels in the area is low.

Atlantic white-beaked dolphin, harbour porpoise and Atlantic white-sided dolphin have been recorded in the vicinity. Densities of these species range from high to low throughout the year. Common seal and the grey seal are resident in the SNS, and the Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC, provides ideal breeding site and haul out conditions, located 30.6km southwest of the operation area. Common seals usually feed within 50km of their haul-out site and therefore may be observed within the operational area. Grey seals usually feed within 100km of their haul-out site and therefore may be observed within the operational area, however it is estimated that they only spend 12% of their time at distances greater than 50 km from the coast. Seabird vulnerability is very high from October to February (extremely high in four surrounding Blocks), high in March, April and August, moderate in September, and low from May to July.

Shipping density in the area is very high. A significant portion of vessel activity appear to be attributed to appearing to be a result of the Dudgeon Offshore windfarm which routes vessel traffic around its south western edge. Fishing activity is identified in the areas surrounding the operational area but the major traffic is associated with general shipping and passing vessels. The project location is within the East Offshore Marine Plan area, no aggregate dredging, military practice sites, sites of marine archaeological interests or aquaculture sites have been identified within 40km of the operation.

Given the location of the project, it is not likely that the areas identified at paragraphs 2(c)(i), (iii), (iv), (vi), (vii) or (viii) of Schedule 5 to the Regulations will be affected by the project.

### **Type and characteristics of the potential impact**

In accordance with paragraph 3 of Schedule 5 to the Regulations, the likely significant effects of the project on the environment have been considered. Potential effects on the environment from the activities associated with the project were assessed, including impacts arising from atmospheric emissions, seabed disturbance, physical presence, planned discharges and accidental spills. Other than the matters considered further below, there is not likely to be any significant impact of



the project on population and human health.

The physical presence of the vessels involved with the operations will not have an exclusion area attributed to them, however will be subject to navigational provision and would be able to move away from location in an emergency. The presence of the additional protection materials will be wholly within the pipeline corridor, and so the impact on other users of the sea is not expected to be significant.

A 500m exclusion zone is located around the Blythe platform excluding unauthorised access of vessels and prohibiting access to fishing vessels, and there are no navigational concerns.

Power generation by the associated vessels (HLV, anchor handling vessel, cargo barge, guard vessel, tug vessel) will result in the emission of gases to the atmosphere, however it is expected the emissions will be rapidly dispersed and are not likely to have a significant impact.

The cetacean density for Atlantic white-beaked dolphin, Atlantic white-sided dolphin and harbour porpoise (Annex II species), during the operational period (April to July), are low to moderate for Atlantic white-beaked dolphin and harbour porpoise, high for harbour porpoise in July only and low for Atlantic white sided dolphin in August. The proposed operations are unlikely to have a significant impact on these species. Due to the distance of the operational area from shore, harbour seals and grey seals (Annex II species) , are not likely to be encountered regularly at the operational area. Any noise generated during operations is expected to be within local background levels.

Broken *Sabellaria spinulosa* tubes were collected in a few grab samples within the survey area but no intact *Sabellaria spinulosa* tubes were evident from the video analysis. Inspection of side scan sonar data and ground-truthing with visual camera systems indicated that there are no areas of *S. spinulosa* that could be classified as 'reef' within the surveyed area. No evidence of any potential Annex I Habitats have been found in the vicinity. The nearest Annex I habitat 'Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all of the time' is 15.6km from the location of the operational area (NNSSR).

The placement of deposits will be within the pipeline corridor and the worst case seabed footprint impacted by the placement of deposits will be 0.003295 km<sup>2</sup> (0.00324 km<sup>2</sup> from the mattresses and 0.000055 km<sup>2</sup> from the temporary grout bags). The mattresses will be removed at the time of decommissioning and the grout bags will be recovered post operation. The placement of the deposits on the seabed will result in direct physical impact to benthic habitats and species within the immediate footprint of the operation. The seabed is inhabited by numerous organisms, including sessile species and animals that are unable to move rapidly or over large distances. The area of seabed directly affected is very small and represents a minute fraction of the similar habitat available in this region of the North Sea and therefore the impacts are not considered to be significant.



The connection of the 12" riser is not expected to impact any additional areas of the seabed, other than those already assessed and covered by PRA/301 PR/2092 and PLA/768 PL/1952. There is no likely significant effect associated with the connection of the 12" platform rigid riser, and there

The discharge of associated pipeline chemicals have been assessed and are not considered to have a likely significant effect on the environment.

There are no expected transboundary effects from the change in operations due to the localised and temporary nature of the disturbance and the 107 km distance from the UK/Norway Median Line. It is not considered likely that any planned operational discharge will be detectable at this distance from the project location.

Although not a planned activity, an unplanned release of diesel from a vessel was assessed. The developer has mitigation and control measures in place to prevent such. The proposed operations carried out as planned are not likely to have a significant effect on the environment and the probability of an unplanned release from the proposed operations is low.

The Dudgeon offshore wind farm is operational and is approximately 0.09km from the site and the project is not considered to have any significant in-combination impacts. There are no planned construction operations, no aggregate dredging, military practice sites, sites of marine archaeological interests or aquaculture sites within the vicinity of the proposed operations. The operations are in accordance with the East Offshore Marine Plan's objectives and policies. It is considered that the change to the project is not likely to have a significant impact on other offshore activities or other users of the sea and no cumulative impacts are expected to occur.

## **Decision**

Taking the above considerations into account, the Secretary of State has concluded that the change to the project is not likely to have a significant impact on the environment and that an environmental impact assessment is not required.

## **2) Mitigation of significant effects**

The following are features of the project or measures envisaged that the developer has proposed to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment:

N/A