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Offshore Petroleum Regulator
for Environment & Decommissioning

PREMIER OIL UK LIMITED
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Registered No.: SC048705

Date: 17th March 2022

Department for Business, Energy
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Crimon Place
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bst@beis.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

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

CATCHER NORTH - PRODUCER WELL 28/09a-NP1 planned well

I refer to your amended application dated 11th March 2022, reference DR/2212/2 (Version 1).

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.

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**

CATCHER NORTH - PRODUCER WELL 28/09a-NP1 planned well

DR/2212/2 (Version 1)

Whereas PREMIER OIL UK LIMITED has made an application dated 11th March 2022, 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: 17th March 2022



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 26 February 2022 until 31 December 2022.

2 Commencement and completion of the project

The holder of the screening direction must notify the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (hereinafter called the 'Department') of commencement and completion of the project within two days:

- a) of commencement of the project and
- b) of completion of the project.

Notification should be sent by email to the Environmental Management Team
Mailbox: 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, extended well test emissions or flaring and venting emissions relating to a well test, using the appropriate Environmental Emissions Monitoring System (EEMS) reporting forms. In the case of atmospheric emissions relating to drilling projects undertaken from a fixed installation, they should be included in the annual EEMS reporting forms for the fixed installation.

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.

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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:

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]

Fax [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

This document provides a summary of the assessments undertaken by OPRED to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required for this project. This document 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:

- a) The information provided by the developer.
- b) The matters listed in Schedule 5 of The Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage (Environmental Impact Regulations 2020) (the Regulations).
- c) The results of any developer assessments of the effects on the environment of the project; and
- d) Any conditions that the Secretary of State may attach to the agreement to the grant of consent.

Characteristics of the Project

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 project

- i) Drill 8.5" pilot hole
- ii) Drill top hole 36" and 26" Water Based Mud (WBM) sections
- iii) 16", 12.25", 9.5 and 8.5" Low Toxicity Oil Based Mud (LTOBM) sections
- iv) Carry out well test
- v) Wellbore clean-up
- vi) Completion and installation of Xmas tree



Variation 2 amendments

This variation amends the direction to include a contingency sidetrack option which was not applied for during the initial suite of applications. The contingency sidetrack option covers all sections from below the 20" shoe i.e. 16 1/2", 12 1/4" and 9 1/2" hole sections. The assessment of impact as described below remains valid.

Description of project

Catcher North development Well 28/09a-NP1 will be drilled from the Maersk Innovator Heavy Duty Jack-up, a Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit (MODU with operations expected to last 85 days. The well will target the Catcher North oil and gas reservoir. The well will be completed as a Development (Producer) well to support production in the Catcher Area Development.

Prior to drilling the 36" and 26" top hole sections an 8.5" pilot hole is required to be drilled as there has been no previous drilling at the Catcher North Drilling Template (CNDT). The pilot hole will be drilled using seawater and high viscous sweeps. Subsequent sections will be drilled with a combination of Water Based Mud (WBM) and Low Toxicity Oil Based Mud (LTOBM). Cuttings from the WBM sections will be discharged at the seabed, whilst cuttings generated in the LTOBM sections will be returned to shore for treatment and disposal.

Once all drilling, cementing and clean-up operations have been conducted a subsea Xmas Tree will be installed on the well and the well left suspended until first oil.

No cumulative impacts are expected to occur with any other existing or approved projects.

It is not considered to be likely that the project will be affected by natural disasters. The risk of a major accident such as a well blowout has been assessed. The Developer has control measures in place to reduce the risk of a major accident occurring and the probability of such an event occurring is very low.

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 Catcher Area Development is in Block 28/9 of the Central North Sea approximately 175 km south-east of Aberdeen and approximately 104 km west of the UK/Norwegian median line in a water depth of approximately 85 m. It currently comprises three discoveries, Catcher, Varadero and Burgman. The Catcher North well is one of two wells which will form part of the expansion of the current Catcher



Project. It is in an area characterised by a relatively flat seabed with occasional subglacial/postglacial erosional channels and sediments comprised of fine slightly silty sand with shell fragments or gravel. The wave height within the Catcher Area Development ranges from 2.1-2.7 m. Recent surveys indicate that sediments in the area consist predominantly of offshore circalittoral sand with occasional areas of low energy circalittoral rock habitat or offshore circalittoral mixed sediment. Site surveys identified that within areas of fine slightly silty sand fauna is limited to sea pens, sea anemones, seven-rayed scallop, spatangoid urchins, starfish and polychaete worms. Within areas of sub-cropping shelly sandy gravel conspicuous fauna included sea pens, sea anemone, starfish, brittlestars, polychaete tube worms, some sponges and hermit crabs. No evidence of sub tidal reefs, submarine structures or any potential Annex I Habitats have been found in the vicinity of the Catcher Area Development. The nearest marine protected area in the vicinity of the Catcher Area Development is the East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NCMPA, which is located approximately 34 km to the north-east and it is therefore unlikely to be impacted by the planned activities.

Fish spawning and nursery activity will occur in the area, which may coincide with the drilling operations. Harbour porpoise, white-beaked dolphin, minke whale and Atlantic white-sided dolphin have been recorded in the vicinity of the Catcher North well. Densities of these species range from medium to low throughout the year. Seals are not expected to be seen at the remote location. Seabird vulnerability in Block 28/9 is predominantly low all year round. The project area is primarily used for demersal fishing and the effort in the area is rated low.

The Catcher Area Development is in an area of major oil and gas developments and infrastructure and there are several oil and gas fields nearby. There are no military exercise areas in the vicinity of the Catcher Area Development. The nearest known wreck is approximately 5 km northwest of the proposed Catcher North well. There are no scheduled monument war graves, Historic Marine Protected Areas within the vicinity of the proposed activities. There are no known cables in the vicinity of the Catcher well and no planned renewable energy developments. Shipping density in the area is low.

Given the location of the project, it is not likely that the areas identified at paragraphs 2(c)(i), (iii), (iv), (vi), (vii) 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.



There is a 500 m radius safety zone around the Catcher North Drilling Template excluding unauthorised access of vessels and prohibiting access to fishing vessels. No additional impacts to fisheries are identified as part of the operations at the proposed Catcher North development well location. Residual effects resulting from the physical presence of the Maersk Innovator MODU, the establishment of a 500 m safety exclusion zone and the support vessels at the sea surface on other sea users (shipping and commercial fishing) have been assessed as not likely to have significant effect.

The overall impacts from seabed disturbance have been assessed as not likely to have a significant effect on the environment. Water-based mud drill cuttings will be discharged to the seabed and result in seabed disturbance. Seabed disturbance could result in the smothering and mortality of benthic fauna which will result in some short-term temporary impacts however the benthic communities are expected to regenerate the area impacted by drill cuttings over time. No evidence of burrowing megafauna was recorded at the Catcher Field survey area adjacent to the CNDT location. Any specimens buried by deposition of drill cuttings, muds and cement on the seabed are likely to be able to recover to the surface before succumbing to anoxia. It is therefore unlikely that the project will have any significant impact on this species. Cementing operations may involve discharges of cement when cementing the top-hole section. This will, however, be confined to a small area within the immediate vicinity of the wellbore and will not extend beyond the area where the drill cuttings are predicted to be deposited. The total area of disturbance as a result of rig placement is estimated to be 1,100 m². The total area of temporary disturbance is estimated to be 450 m².

Discharge of chemicals associated with the WBM and the risk posed to the marine environment has been assessed as not having a likely significant effect on the environment. Chemicals associated with LTOBM will be returned to shore for treatment and disposal, resulting in no significant impact to the offshore environment.

There are no expected transboundary effects from the drilling operations at the Catcher Area Development. The nearest boundary (UK/Norwegian median) is located approximately 104 west km of the operations. It is not considered likely that any planned operational discharge (chemicals) will be detectable at this distance from the well location.

Although not a planned activity, a worst-case major accident scenario resulting from a potential well blow-out was modelled and assessed. Although the consequences of an oil spill can be severe, the probability of a large oil spill from the proposed operations is low. Therefore, it is considered that the control measures in place to prevent loss of well control minimise the risk of an oil spill which could have a significant impact and the proposed operations carried out as planned are not likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Atmospheric emissions will arise during the Catcher North drilling operations from fuel burnt for power generation on the Maersk Innovator MODU, associated support



vessels and helicopters and flaring during the well clean up. It is expected the emissions will be rapidly dispersed and are not likely to have a significant impact. Mitigation measures are in place to reduce emissions including reduction of vessel movement and minimisation of the duration of the project and control processes to minimise greenhouse gas emissions.

No cumulative impacts are expected to occur. The Catcher Development Area has been developed for a several years and the location of the Catcher, Varadero and Burgman fields are known to other marine users and marked on the appropriate navigational charts. It is considered that the drilling of the well from the MODU is not likely to have a significant impact on other offshore oil and gas activities or other users of the sea.

There is no aggregate extraction, dredging, or dumping activity. There are no planned, consented or operational wind farms within Block 28/9. Additionally, both fishing activity and shipping activity within Block 28/9 is considered relatively low. There are no charted wrecks located in the vicinity of the proposed Catcher North development well location. The project is in the vicinity of other oil and gas developments, but there are no expected cumulative impacts with other oil and gas activities. Cumulative impacts have been assessed as not likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Decision

Taking the above considerations into account, the Secretary of State has concluded that 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:

Not Applicable