

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-5126U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1204890



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment & Decommissioning

ITHACA ENERGY (UK) LIMITED  
13 QUEEN'S ROAD  
ABERDEEN  
AB15 4YL

Registered No.: SC272009

Date: 13th May 2022

Department for Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy

AB1 Building  
Crimon Place  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1BJ

Tel [REDACTED]

Fax

[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  
PIPELINE PL6083**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference PL/2248/0 (Version 3), dated 13th May 2022 has been issued under regulation 6 of the above Regulations. The screening direction notice, and any relevant conditions and comments 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**

**PIPELINE PL6083**

**PL/2248/0 (Version 3)**

Whereas ITHACA ENERGY (UK) LIMITED has made an application dated 13th May 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 PWA/3739.

Effective Date: 13th May 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 13 May 2022 until 31 December 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 Nature of stabilisation or protection materials**

##### Rock deposits

27,000 tonnes of clean, inert rock material, containing minimal fines, (The quantity of rock deposited should be the minimum required to provide the necessary stabilisation or protection, and any surplus rock must be returned to land).

##### Grout bags deposits

120.75 tonnes of grout contained within 25 kilogramme capacity biodegradable bags. (The number of bags deposited should be the minimum required to provide the necessary protection, and any surplus bags must be returned to land).

##### Concrete mattress deposits

190 concrete mattresses, each measuring 6 metres x 3 metres x 150 centimetres. (The number of mattresses deposited should be the minimum required to provide the necessary protection, and any surplus mattresses must be returned to land).

#### **4 Location of pipeline and stabilisation or protection materials**

Within an area bounded by the coordinates as specified in the application

#### **5 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.

## **6 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.

## **7 Monitoring**

The results of any pre or post-placement surveys carried out to confirm the necessity for the deposits covered by the screening direction and/or to confirm the accurate positioning of the stabilisation or protection materials, should be forwarded to the Department following completion of the surveys

## **8 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.

## **9 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.

## **10 Deposit returns**

The holder of the screening direction shall submit a report to the Department following completion of the deposit covered by the screening direction, confirming the quantity of materials deposited and the estimated area of impact, using the appropriate Environmental Emissions Monitoring System (EEMS) reporting form. Where no deposits are made, a 'nil' return is required.



## **11 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).

## **12 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: 01.01.01.01-5126U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1204890



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:

#### **PL/2248/0 (V3) - 13 May 2022.**

The Department has the following comments:

When undertaking the piling operation for the Abiagil manifold, Ithaca Energy (UK) Limited must:

1. Follow the JNCC 2010 Statutory nature conservation agency protocol for minimising the risk of injury to marine mammals from piling noise[1], and this is to be followed at all times during the piling operation.

2. The pre-piling search and soft start should be timed to occur during hours of daylight/good visibility to allow an MMO to observe for any marine mammals within 500m of the sound source and, if necessary delay the soft start if animals are detected within this zone.

3. If the pre-piling search and soft start cannot be timed to occur during daylight hours/good visibility, then Ithaca Energy (UK) Limited should consider using a PAM system to allow effective mitigation during the hours of darkness/ periods of poor visibility.

4. As a minimum one dedicated MMO must be used. They should be fully trained and not have a dual role onboard (for example, in addition to being an MMO also work as a Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO)).

5. At the end of the piling operations, a report (indicating the BEIS reference number) must be sent to the JNCC. This report should detail the soft start procedures, any visual observations/PAM detections and include the Marine Mammal Recording Forms (i.e., the excel spreadsheet) in its original format (i.e., not converted to a pdf). Any difficulties encountered, or recommendations that may be of use for future work should be included within the report.

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-5126U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1204890



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment & Decommissioning

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





## **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:

- 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 Assessment Regulations 2020) (the Regulations);
- c) the results of any preliminary verifications or 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 the Project**

1. Installation of a new 12km pipeline system comprising a 6"/10" production pipe-in-pipe pipeline, a 3" gas lift pipeline and a control umbilical.
2. The installation of a new (piled) 95t Abigail manifold (12m x 6m x 6m (above seabed)), with associated rigid tie-in spools and a control jumper
3. A new 85t production riser base (PRB) (9.5m x 5m x 3.5m), which will contain a new Subsea Isolation Valve (SSIV) at the FPF-1
4. Permanent deposits of 27,000t of rock, x 190 concrete mattresses and 4830 grout bags.

### **Description of the Project**

The Abigail field forms part of the Greater Stella Area, which includes the Stella,



Harrier and Vorlich fields. All fields tie back to the Stella FPF-1 which is a floating production platform, where the oil, gas and condensate are treated before being exported via oil and gas export lines.

The Abigail development is a new field which is currently being developed. The initial phase of the development is the drilling of one production well, and the installation of the subsea infrastructure. The new 12km pipeline will connect the new Abigail manifold to the existing Stella Main Drill Centre (MDC), which is then connected to the Stella FPF-1. The new pipeline will cross the 10" gas export pipeline between the FPF-1 and the Stella gas export tee. The proposed project is expected to last 90 days.

The pipelines will be laid within a single trench and will be protected by the mechanical backfill of sediment and protective material (rock, mattresses and grout bags). The Abigail manifold will be piled at the Abigail drill centre, and a new SSIV with a new PRB will be installed at the FPF-1. Should high production be achieved, a new well will be drilled and tied into the new pipeline. A second well tie in is not part of this assessment.

The chosen route for the 12km pipeline was selected as the shortest route, and trenching the pipeline minimises the amount of protective materials on the seabed surface. The sequence of events are:

1. A pipelay vessel will lay the production and gas lift pipeline in the seabed by reeled installation
2. A trenching vessel will use a mechanical plough to trench the pipelines post installation (target depth is 1.5m)
3. A construction support vessel will install the manifold and lay the umbilical on the seabed between the Stella MDC and the trend transition.
4. The trenching vessel will backfill the trenched pipeline and umbilical using the backfill plough
5. A rock dump vessel will be used for additional pipeline and umbilical protection for 600m from the western trend to 90m west of the Stella MDC to protect the pipeline crossing.
6. Tie in works are due to commence in August 2022. Divers will install rigid spools to connect pipelines to the Stella MDC, the new Abigail manifold and install the umbilical jumpers.

Pre and post surveys will be undertaken, and all pipelines, rigid spools, umbilical and jumpers will be leak tested. The new Abigail manifold will be secured to the seabed with 4 piles, each 22m long. The PRB will not be piled, but will be a gravity-based structure. The permanent seabed deposits of grout bags, mattresses and rock will impact an area of 0.055 km<sup>2</sup>. There will be temporary disturbance of the seabed due to the trenching and backfilling method (the plough skis have a reach of 22m), the disturbance from installing the PRB, and a corridor of disturbance for the surface laid spool and jumpers. It is estimated that the temporary seabed disturbance is 0.262 km<sup>2</sup>.



No cumulative interactions are foreseen with any other existing or approved projects. There is no risk to human health from the works to install the pipelines or depositing the protective materials on the seabed. There is no credible potential for a major accident or disaster to affect this project.

Any wastes associated with the project will be handled appropriately and no significant impacts are anticipated. The project is not at risk from natural disasters given its location in UK offshore waters.

### **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 Abigail field is located in the Central North Sea (CNS), approximately 36 km from the UK/Norwegian median line and 233 km from the Scottish mainland. The seabed sediment observed within the area is muddy sand/sandy mud, with the sediment type classed as 'deep circalittoral mud'.

The wave height within the area ranges from 1.5 - 2.8m, and mean water depth is approximately 87.9 m in the south east to 92.2m in the north east of the field. Pockmarks are present in some areas of the Central North Sea, however none were identified in any of the surveys undertaken in the area, therefore there was no evidence of leaking gases or submarine structures made by leaking gases.

A number of surveys have been undertaken within the Greater Stella Area. Seabed surveys of the area have shown an abundance of polychaetes, with sparse visible fauna. Observations of hermit crab, seapens, crustacean burrows, vents and worm casts were noted. Occasional large sea anemones and soft corals were also observed. In previous surveys, ocean quahogs were observed at different locations, with the abundance classed as 'occasional' using the SACFOR scale. Samples taken during Abigail pipeline route surveys have also shown the area in terms of visible fauna as sparse, with evidence of bioturbation, crustacean burrows, worm casts and urchin furrows. Seapens were also observed along with stone crab, starfish and juvenile flatfish. A recent survey supported this assessment which found the epibenthic fauna to be sparse, with the dominant fauna including sea pens.

The most recent habitat assessment was undertaken to determine whether 'sea pen and burrowing megafauna communities' habitat was present. Results from the SACFOR assessment concluded that sea pens and burrows were observed in sufficient densities to potentially comprise the OSPAR listed threatened and/or declining species and habitats- 'sea pen and burrowing megafauna communities'. The presence of burrows could be formed by Nephrops, however based on the SACFOR scale, the density of burrows was considered to be rare. The recent survey report also concluded that Priority Marine Feature's (PMF) such as burrowed mud and offshore deep muds are likely to be present within the Abigail area.

Minke whale, white-beaked dolphin, Atlantic white-sided dolphin and harbour



porpoise have all been recorded in the vicinity of the Abigail area. Densities of the species are categorised as low to moderate, with the exception of the minke whale, white-beaked dolphin and harbour porpoise, with all three of a high density in July, with the harbour porpoise also high in May. Due to the location of the field from shore, grey and harbour seals may be encountered but it is likely that these sightings are in low numbers.

Seabird oil sensitivity in the vicinity of the Abigail field is low to medium throughout the year.

The Abigail field is not situated within any conservation areas, with one of the closest (22km) areas of conservation interest being East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NCMFA. This site is designated for offshore deep sea muds and ocean quahog aggregations. The Fulmar Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) lies 20km to the south of the project area and this has been designated for the conservation of ocean quahog and its habitats. The Scanner Pockmark SAC is located 100km to the north of the project area and is designated such due to the presence of the Annex I habitat 'submarine structures made by leaking gases'.

The Abigail field lies within fishing designated ICES rectangle 42F1 and 42F2. Fishing vessels are excluded from a number of areas within the Greater Stella Area, due to the number of 500m safety exclusion zones. The proposed operations will coincide with fish spawning and/or nursery activity for a number of species. The proposed project area is primarily used for pelagic and demersal fishing, with lower quantities of shellfish fishing, and the fishing effort in the area is rated as low. Fishing in the area accounts for 0.6% (by weight) and 0.12% (by value) of total UK reported landings in 2020. It is not anticipated that the installation of the infrastructure will have a significant impact on the fishing industry in the area.

The Abigail field lies in a mature oil and gas area, and there are a number of platforms in the area, the closest being 20km away in block 30/06. The nearest pipeline to the project area is the Shearwater to Bacton (SEAL) pipeline located 2km west of the new Abigail well. There are no military practice and exercise areas identified within the pipeline routes. The closest wreck to the drilling location is 2.2km (northwest) of the Stella MDC, with an unnamed wreck 2.2km east of the Stella MDC where Abigail will tie in. There are no wind farms close to the area. Block 29/10 does lie within an area identified by Sectoral Marine Planning for consideration of offshore wind development. The North Sea Link electricity interconnector passes 31km to the north of the site and the closest active cable to the project location is the TAMPNET offshore cable approximately 15km from the Abigail manifold. Due to the distance of the Abigail field (>200km) to the nearest aquaculture sites, it is not anticipated that the project will have any significant impact on that sector.

It is not anticipated that the proposed project will have a significant impact on either the wrecks or cables.

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



change to 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 change to 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 from the change to the project on population and human health.

There is a 500 m radius safety zone around the new Abigail well, and a 500m safety zone around the FPF-1, which will exclude unauthorised access of vessels and prohibits access to fishing vessels. The PRB will be installed within the FPF-1 safety zone and the manifold will have its own 500m safety zone established with it. The pipelines and umbilical will be trenched and backfilled to a sufficient depth to prevent interference with other users of the sea (demersal fishing). There may be a time lapse between the infrastructure being laid and commissioning, therefore a guard vessel will be on location to minimise the risk of other users of the sea from the new infrastructure. There should therefore be no likely significant effects in terms of physical presence from the project.

Seabed disturbance will occur from the trenching and backfilling of the pipeline, the installation of the manifold and the PRB, the surface laying of spools and jumpers and short sections of pipelines, and the introduction of the protection materials. The disturbance of the seabed will result in the smothering and mortality of benthic fauna (particularly sea pens and burrowing megafauna and ocean quahog) which will result in some short-term temporary impacts. Burrowed mud habitats show a medium sensitivity to abrasion/penetration which may be caused by the project activities. Sea pen have been shown to re-anchor themselves after disturbance and can be resilient. Ocean Quahog are sensitive to increased siltation and can bury into the sediment when disturbed as long as their inhalant siphon is not damaged. Ocean quahog have a short life span and a high reproduction rate, and given the small area of seabed affected, it is not thought that the project activities will impact on the population of the species. It is expected that the benthic communities will regenerate in the area over time.

The introduction of hard surface substrate to the area will have a direct impact on the benthic communities, with the natural habitat and communities lost. This will be a permanent habitat change. It is anticipated however that the new infrastructure will create a new habitat for benthic organisms, such as sponges, soft corals and brittle stars.

The installation activities will generate underwater noise through vessel engine use and piling of the manifold (expected to take 2-3 hours per pile). Noise associated with vessel use is not considered likely to have a significant impact. An assessment of the noise associated with the piling was undertaken and the mitigation measures the Developer has in place mean that the underwater noise generated is not considered



likely to have a significant impact. It is concluded that the activity is not expected to have a likely significant effect on the site in relation to harbour porpoise and the supporting habitats and prey.

There are no expected transboundary effects from the proposal as there should be no operational discharges. Pipeline flushing will occur but the flushing returns will be directed to the FPF-1 and treated accordingly.

The main risk of accidental release of hydrocarbons is resulting from a loss of diesel inventory from a vessel. The assessment showed that the probability of a diesel spill from a vessel involved in the project is very low, with numerous mitigation measures and procedures in place. It is concluded that an accidental release of a hydrocarbon during the project is not considered to have the potential to cause a major environmental incident (MEI). Therefore, the risk of an oil spill event that could have a significant impact on the environment is minimised.

The proposed operation will utilise seven vessels, and atmospheric emissions have been assessed from the diesel used for each vessel, and the time spent on location. The total atmospheric emissions from the vessels undertaking the project work, accounts for 0.034% of the total UKCS CO2 emissions (using 2018 as a baseline). The emissions may result in a deterioration of the local air quality, but due to the relatively short duration of the work, and that the exposed conditions in the area will rapidly disperse the emissions, it is not anticipated that there will be a significant impact.

## **2) 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.

## **3) 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