

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-5216U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1217967



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment & Decommissioning

ITHACA ENERGY (UK) LIMITED  
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Registered No.: SC272009

Date: 2nd August 2022

Department for Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy

AB1 Building  
Crimon Place  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1BJ

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[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**

**CAPTAIN, Captain WPP'A', DRILLING PRODUCER WELL 13/22a-C51Y**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference DR/2269/0 (Version 2), dated 27th July 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**

**CAPTAIN, Captain WPP'A', DRILLING PRODUCER WELL 13/22a-C51Y**

**DR/2269/0 (Version 2)**

Whereas ITHACA ENERGY (UK) LIMITED has made an application dated 27th July 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 agreement to the Oil and Gas Authority to the grant of consent for the project as detailed in the application, WONS/13702/0/GS/1.

Effective Date: 2nd August 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 2 August 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](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, 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



## **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 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:

Drilling of a new production well (LM30P), which will be drilled from the Captain WPP 'A' platform within the 500m safety exclusion zone.

The LM30P well be drilled using Water Based Mud (WBM), with a discharge of cuttings and mud to the environment.

The existing C51y slot will be recovered to the 13 3/8" shoe and re-drilled to access the Lower Captain Sand. The new well will be in 2 sections (12 " and 8 ")



Contingency sidetracks (12 " and 8 " sections) have been included to represent the worst case.

During the completion phase, a series of pressure tests will be completed to confirm well integrity.

There will be no vertical seismic profiling or extended well tests carried out on the well.

## **Description of the Project**

The Captain development began production with the field tied back to a Floating, Production, Storage and Offloading Vessel (FPSO). There were 2 subsequent topside developments - a Bridge Linked platform which serves Area B and c drilling centres, and a Wellhead Protection Platform (WPP'A') which is a self-contained drilling rig position above Area A drill centre. Crude oil is exported from the FPSO via a shuttle tanker, and gas is exported and imported via the Frigg pipeline.

Well LM30P will be drilled from the platform utilising slot C51y and will be drilled with WBM, which will be discharged to sea along with the mud and drill cuttings. Two contingency sidetracks have been included for the well to allow for a worst-case drilling scenario to be assessed. The well will be drilled within the already established 500m safety zone which surrounds the Captain WPP 'A' platform. Operations are expected to last a total of 69 days. The proposed project area is within a well-developed area of the Central North Sea and cumulative impacts from drilling discharges, atmospheric release and oil and chemical releases have been assessed.

It has been concluded that there will be no cumulative impacts expected to occur with this project due to the selection of low bioaccumulation water-based muds, the proposed mitigation and the short duration of the project.

It is not considered to be likely that the project will be affected by natural disasters and 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 from 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 Captain platform is located in the Outer Moray Firth area, approximately 191 km from the UK/Norwegian median line and 69 km from the Scottish mainland. Survey data shows the sediments within the area to be indicative of a soft sediment with





marginal variations across the area. The sediment within the area is classified as 'deep circalittoral mud' with the main sediment type observed to be mud and sandy mud. Seabed scars were observed within the area, and are thought to be the result of relic anchoring activities and small pull-out pits. There is no evidence within the area of Annex I submarine structures.

Water depths across the area range from 89.2m in the west to 124.1m in the east of the area. Water depth at the platform is 105m, and the average wave height ranges from 1.81 - 2.1m.

A survey of the area showed that epibenthic fauna was relatively sparse. The dominant epifauna were sea pens, with other species observed including Norway Lobster, starfish, brittle stars, polychaetes and gastropods. Sea pens were recorded at all survey stations, with an abundance ranging from occasional to frequent. Burrows created by the Norway lobster also ranged from common to abundant. A SACFOR assessment concluded that the Captain area would be considered to represent to OSPAR habitat 'Sea pens and burrowing megafauna communities'. Juvenile ocean quahog was recorded at survey stations within the Captain area.

In the most recent survey, there was observations of an area of sandy mud interspersed with boulder, cobbles and pebbles which was further assessed as a stony reef habitat. Further observations of the soft sediments indicated the area represented a transition zone between coarse and soft sediment and was classed as 'no reef'.

Minke whale, long finned pilot whale, killer whale, bottlenose dolphin, white beaked dolphin, Atlantic white-sided dolphin and harbour porpoise have all been recorded in the vicinity of the Captain area. Densities of the species are categorised as low to moderate, with the exception of the white beaked dolphin which is high in August and December. Grey and harbour seals may be encountered, and density maps show the presence of grey and harbour seals in the area of the Captainfield as 1-5 and 0-1 individuals per 25km<sup>2</sup> respectively.

The Captain area is not situated within any conservation areas, with the nearest area of conservation interest being the Southern Trench NCMPA which lies 47km to the south. This site is designated due to a variety of biodiversity and geological features including burrowed mud, sub-glacial tunnels and minke whale. The Moray First SAC is located 109km to the west and is designated due to the presence of Annex I sandbanks which are slightly covered by seaweed all the time, and the population of bottlenose dolphins.

The Captain field lies within fishing designated ICES rectangle 45E8 and the proposed operations will coincide with fish spawning and/or nursery activity for a number of species. Fishing effort in the area is designated as of moderate importance, with demersal fishing dominating the species type. Fishing in the area accounted for 0.39% of the total UK value, 0.32% of the total live weight and 0.75% of total UK effort. It is not anticipated that the drilling of well LM30P will have a significant impact on the fishing industry in the area.



Seabird oil sensitivity in the vicinity of the Captain field is extremely high in February and December and from April - June, low to medium in the summer months and increases to medium sensitivity to high sensitivity towards the end of the year.

There are 5 non dangerous wrecks within block 13/22, however only 2 are located within the Captain field. None are designated under the Protection of Military Remains or are of Historical Importance. There are no offshore wind farms within 40km of the field. The closest wind farm is the Moray East, which is located 54km to the southwest. The nearest sectoral Marine Plan for offshore wind energy is NE6, which is 8km south of the Captain WPP 'A' platform. There are no telecommunication cables within 40km of the Captain field, and there are no aquaculture sites or shellfish protected areas within the vicinity of the project area. The closest CCS site is the Pale Blue Dot Energy (Acron) site, which is located 4km to the east of Captain, however the current focus of the project is injection wells which are located 83km from the Captain field. There are no military restrictions within the block, and the nearest MoD practice and exercise area is located 12 km to the west of the well location. It is not anticipated that the proposed project will have a significant impact on either the wrecks, CCS site or windfarms.

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.

A 500m safety exclusion zone is already in place around the Captain WPP 'A' platform, which excludes unauthorised access of vessels and prohibits access to fishing vessels. Fishing within the area is of low importance to the fishing sector and shipping density is low. No additional impacts to other marine users are identified as part of the drilling of well LM30P. Therefore, there are no significant effects likely in terms of physical presence from the proposed project.

Cuttings from the WBM sections will be discharged at the seabed and into the water column. Cuttings dispersion modelling was undertaken for the cumulative effect of all four wells to be drilled as part of the current Captain platform drilling campaign, which includes well LM30P. The modelling assessment concluded that the cumulative effect of drilling the wells shows a maximum cuttings pile thickness of 860mm which decreases to 1mm within 100m of the well. For this particular well, which has a cuttings weight of less than that modelled, it is estimated to produce a cuttings pile



which may impact up to 200-250m from the well location, with a cuttings pile of less than 30cm.

Seabed disturbance from the discharge of WBM drill cuttings could result in the smothering and mortality of benthic fauna which will result in some short-term temporary impacts. Ocean quahog are sensitive to increased siltation above 30cm, and it is predicted that this smothering may cause some mortality to ocean quahog who are present in the area. The sea pen and burrowed mud habitats are also likely to be more sensitive to smothering above 30cm. Burrowed mud habitats are also used by the Norway Lobster, which are considered likely to spawn within the vicinity of the Captain well. It has however been shown that the Norway Lobster are tolerant to smothering and have been assessed as not sensitive to an increase in suspended sediment. Given the small area of impact and the discharge of the WBM to the water column, there is the potential for mortality of individual ocean quahog if present in the area, and the potential to effect sea pens and burrowing megafauna. However, it is not expected to affect the population levels across the North sea and it is expected that the benthic communities will regenerate in the area over time.

Noise generated from the project activities will not be significant, and it is concluded that the project 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 to drill LM30P well. The nearest boundary (UK/Norwegian median) is located approximately 191 km from the proposed well location. It is not considered likely that any planned operational discharge (cuttings and chemicals) will be detectable at this distance from the well location.

The well to be drilled is a production well, and an assessment has been included within the project proposal to assess as a worst case, a well blow out within the Captain field, and the subsequent potential for a Major Environmental Incident (MEI). The assessment concluded that there is a potential for an MEI to occur, however the risk of an oil spill event as a result of a well blow out from well LM30P is minimal, and the developer has suitable mitigation in place to prevent such an occurrence.

The proposed drilling operation is being undertaken at the Captain WPP 'A' platform, and will use existing power generation equipment. Atmospheric emissions are regulated under the platforms PPC and ETS Permits. It is not expected that the emissions due to the drilling of the well will have a significant impact on air quality.

As a result of the UK's Government commitment to reducing the UK's net emissions, the developer has set up an Emissions Strategic Working Group which has set asset emissions reduction targets and emissions KPIs, which will reduce the carbon footprint of their operations.

## **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