Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-5218U
UKOP Doc Ref:1220998

Offshore Petroleum Regulator
for Environment & Decommissioning

EQUINOR UK LIMITED
1 KINGDOM STREET
LONDON
W2 6BD

Registered No.: 01285743

Date: 18th August 2022

Department for Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

AB1 Building
Crimon Place
Aberdeen
AB10 1BJ

**Tel** [redacted]
**Fax** [redacted]

www.gov.uk/beis
bst@beis.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

**THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION, UNLOADING AND STORAGE (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2020**
**MARINER, WELL 9/11a-AAMID**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference DR/2271/0 (Version 1), dated 30th June 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.

Yours faithfully

Signature Not Verified
Digitally signed by Environmental Section
Date: 2022.08.18 09:22:10 BST
Reason: On behalf of the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy
Location: The Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy

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# 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

## MARINER, WELL 9/11a-AAMID

## DR/2271/0 (Version 1)

Whereas EQUINOR UK LIMITED has made an application dated 30th June 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/14485/0/IDA/1.

Effective Date: 18th August 2022

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# 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 22 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

### 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]

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# 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:

## Summary of the Project

-Drilling of 34" section with seawater and Water Based Mud (WBM).

-Suspension and debris cap installation.

as detailed in WONS/14485/0/IDA/1

## Description of the Project

The drilling of the wells at the Mariner project area was assessed in an Environmental Statement D/4145/2012 and approved on 31st January 2013. This project consists of the drilling of the top-hole section of the Development AMID Mariner well and the cementing of a 28" conductor located at the Mariner Production, Drilling and Quarters (PDQ). The top-hole, riserless section (34" diameter) of the well will be drilled with seawater /spud mud; a Water Based Mud (WBM). The 34" section length will be 109 m and a 28" conductor will be cemented in place to provide structural integrity. As this section is riserless and using seawater sweeps, the mud and cuttings discharges will be directly on to the seabed, so there will be no re-use of mud between wells on these sections. The well will then be suspended and drilled to target depth and completed at a later date.

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 proposed drilling project is located in the Mariner field in the Northern North Sea, in UKCS Block 9/11, approximately 134 km southeast of the Shetland Isles coastline, and 45 km west of the UK/Norway Median Line, in a depth of 94 metres (m). The

seabed in the area of the Mariner A (PDQ) is described as flat with a gentle downward slope to the west with a seabed gradient of <0.5 across the survey area.

Sediments in the area are predominantly sand and muddy sand, although the deeper areas within the Fladen Ground consist of mud or sandy mud. Site specific surveys identified the seabed sediments to comprise a veneer, <0.2 m in thickness of 'clayey sand' with occasional shell fragments, but overall dominated by sand sediments. The annual mean significant wave height ranges from 2.41 to 2.7 m.

Benthic surveys observed dense populations of sea urchin Echinoidea. The dominant fauna also included sea urchins Gracilechinusacutus, star fish Asterias rubens, Hippasteriaphrygianaand Astropecten irregularis and hermit crabs Paguridae. Faunal burrows, tubes and tracks were visible on the sediment surface; however,these were small, and no burrowing megafauna were observed. Sessile fauna wasalso observed such as anemones Actiniaria, common whelk Buccinumundatum and turf forming genera such as Hydrozoans and Bryozoans. There was evidence of ocean quahog (OSPAR threatened and/or declining habitats and species andScottish Priority Marine Feature (PMF)) in the vicinity of the Mariner field and additionally, one sea pen, Virgularia mirabilis was observed. No other Annex I habitats have been recorded within the area. There are noprotected sites within 40km of the Mariner field. The project is in the Scottish Marine Plan area.

Five species of cetaceans have been spotted in the waters around the Mariner field: Atlantic white-sided dolphin, harbour porpoise, killer whale, minke whale, and white-beaked dolphin. Grey and harbour seals may be encountered in the area; however, are not expected to be found in significant densities. Seabird vulnerability in the vicinity of the Mariner field is medium in May and low throughout the year, with no data being available for April and October - December. The proposed operations will coincide with fish spawning and/or nursery activity including the following species: anglerfish, blue whiting, cod, european hake, haddock, herring, ling, mackerel, Norway lobster, Norway pout, saithe, sandeel and whiting.

The project area is primarily used for demersal fishing and the fishing effort in the area is rated low.There are several oil and gas fields nearby. The nearest marine cable is connected tothe Mariner PDQ with another located approximately 1.5 km away. There are nonearby Military of Defence practice areas. There are no operational renewableenergy sites, nor any under construction in the vicinity. Shipping density in the area is low. There are no protected wrecks or sites, or objects of archaeological importance identified in the area.

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 Mariner A PDQ, excluding unauthorised access of vessels and prohibiting access to fishing vessels. During the drilling of the top-hole section, WBM cuttings will be discharged to the water column however, given sediment movement and the residual current in the vicinity of the Mariner area is approximately 0.25 m/s, it can be expected that over time the recovery of seabed sediments should occur. WBM are water-soluble and areexpected to dissolve, dissociate and disperse during settlement through the watercolumn. A chemical risk assessment for the discharge of the mud additives concluded that discharge of the WBM is not considered to present a significant impact on the environment. In addition, it is anticipated that most of the cementing material will remain downhole with discharge to the environment only occurring when the conductor is cemented back to the seabed and when the cement unit is cleaned at the end of the cementing operation. A small area of the seabed will be impacted when cementing the conductor back to the seabed, however, this is very small in comparison to the surrounding available seabed and therefore the impact is considered not to be significant.

There is evidence of ocean quahog in the vicinity of the Mariner field, however, this species is not expected to be significantly impacted at a population level by the proposed operations. Additionally, one sea pen was observed, however at an insufficient abundance to constitute the OSPAR habitat 'Sea pens and burrowing megafauna communities.' No other Annex I habitats have been recorded within the area. Therefore, there are not likely to be any significant effects. Although Norway lobster and sandeels are benthic spawners, they are unlikely to be present within the vicinity of the operations while sandeels are unlikely to be impacted at a significant population level due to the nature of the operations.

There are no expected transboundary effects from the drilling operations at the Mariner A PDQ. The nearest boundary (UK/Norway Median Line) is located approximately 18 km north west of the operations. It is not considered likely that any planned operational discharge (chemicals) will be detectable at this distance from the well location.

The main risk associated with the drilling of the proposed Mariner well are from diesel during bunkering operations or as a worst-case scenario a large spill of Mariner crudeoil could occur to loss of well control. However, as only the upper section of this Mariner well will be drilled and no entry into the reservoir will occur, a loss of wellcontrol is not a risk. In the case of an accidental diesel release from the Mariner APDQ, it is expected to evaporate quickly due to its very high level of light ends. The low asphaltene content prevents emulsification, therefore reducing its persistence inthe marine environment. As such, a diesel release is not expected to present asignificant risk.

The emissions associated with the project result from power demand for the proposed operations. It is expected the emissions will be rapidly dispersed and are not likely to have a significant impact. Drilling operations will be conducted from the existing Mariner A PDQ Installation such that there is no increase in the infrastructure footprint. The drilling operations are in accordance with the National Marine Plan for Scotland's objectives and policies. It is considered that the drilling of the AMID well 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 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