

Our Ref: 01.08.06.15/585C
UKOP Doc Ref:1245621



Offshore Petroleum Regulator
for Environment & Decommissioning

REPSOL SINOPEC RESOURCES UK LIMITED
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Registered No.: 00825828

Date: 14th December 2022

Department for Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

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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
AUK FIELD PRODUCTION INCREASE OIL**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference PR/2332/0 (Version 2), dated 12th December 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



**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**

AUK FIELD PRODUCTION INCREASE OIL

PR/2332/0 (Version 2)

Whereas REPSOL SINOPEC RESOURCES UK LIMITED has made an application dated 12th December 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, PCON/6499.

Effective Date: 14th December 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

This screening direction shall be valid from 1 January 2023.

2 Change to production level(s)

The holder of the screening direction shall ensure that the change in the level(s) of production do not exceed the amended level(s) detailed in the application for the screening direction, and in the application for consent relating to the approval for the getting of petroleum issued under the relevant production licence Model Clause.

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.

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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

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:

Summary of the project :

Increase in oil production from the Auk field.
Production consent application PCON/6499

Description of project

This project consists of an increase in oil production of less than 500 tonnes per day at Auk field, due to proposed well interventions at Auk to be completed over the coming months. The increase in production is proposed for 2023 and is requested in the production consent PCON/6499.

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

There is no change to the assessment of a major accident. 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.

It is not considered to be likely that the project will be affected by natural disasters. 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 field is located in Block 30/16 along with its production facility, Auk platform in the central North Sea (CNS) approximately 248 kilometres (km) from the Scottish coast of the UK and 40 km from the UK/Norway median line, in an approximate water depth of 85 metres (m). Surface currents range between 0.26 to 0.39 m/s flowing in a south-easterly direction. Average mean significant wave height is between 2.11 and 2.4m and spring tidal range 1.1 to 2.0m. Winds have variable direction and speeds up to 12.5m/s occur in winter.

The sediment of the Auk area is composed of sands, gravels and muds in various proportions. Auk is located 180km southeast of the Fladen and Witch grounds an area of sandy mud underlain by muddy beds associated with pockmarks. It is situated in subtidal mud with patches of other sediment. Survey results confirm poorly sorted sand overlying clays, slightly sandy silty clay with occasional boulders associated with outcrops of gravelly clay. Auk is in an area of sand and gravelly sand with an overall classification of 'deep circalittoral sand'. Auk platform is located within Fulmar Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), designated for subtidal sand, subtidal mixed sediment, subtidal mud and ocean quahog with the latter OSPAR listed as threatened/ declining and a Feature of Conservation Importance (FOCI). Infauna of note included polychaetes, bivalves and echinoderms with annelids dominating. Epifauna consist of sponges, bryozoans and crustaceans. The MCZ has burrowing tube anemone, brittlestars and sea potatoes but no burrows or seapen were identified during a recent survey.

The closest area protected for Annex I habitat is the Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation (SAC) located more than 100km from Auk field, designated for the protection of sandbanks slightly covered by seawater at all times. SACs are now referred to as sites of national importance retaining the same protection under UK as EU regulation The conservation objectives of the Fulmar Marine Conservation Zone is to maintain or attain favourable condition.

Auk is located in International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) rectangle 41F2. Fish spawning species include cod, lemon sole, mackerel, plaice, sprat, whiting and sandeel. Cod is less likely and sprat is not recorded in block 30/16. It is also a nursery area for several fish species including Priority Marine Feature (PMF) species of blue whiting, anglerfish, herring, mackerel, cod, ling, Norway pout, sandeel, spurdog and whiting. Sandy sediment indicates that sandeel spawning may



occur at Auk.

Seabird species include northern fulmar, European storm-petrel, northern gannet, arctic/ great/ skua, black legged kittiwake, great headed/ black backed/ common/ lesser black backed and herring gull, Arctic tern, common guillemot, razorbill, little auk and Atlantic puffin with some species showing a decline in numbers recently. Seabird vulnerability to accidental spill is low year-round in block 30/16 and neighbouring blocks.

Harbour porpoise, bottlenose dolphin, common dolphin, minke whale, white beaked dolphin and white sided dolphin have been sighted in Auk area in low to high density. All species are PMFs, Annex IV listed for protection and additionally harbour porpoise and grey and harbour seals are Annex II listed species (of national importance). Seals use the area on an infrequent basis.

Block 30/16 falls within International Council of the Sea (ICES) rectangle 41F2, and fishing effort is targeted for demersal species however, shellfish quantity is lower and value higher. There is a dominance of trawl gears. Monthly effort, quantity and value is recorded as 'disclosive'.

The Auk production installation has a 500m statutory safety exclusion zone around it. Shipping density in the area is low. The project location is not within a military activity zone, there are no known wrecks or historic marine protected areas. The nearest submarine cable is 14km away. The area is too far offshore for aggregate or renewable development and Auk is 12km from the next nearest installation.

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 of the atmospheric emissions on the environment from the activities associated with the project were assessed. 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 production increase associated with the well interventions at Auk will not require a change in offshore personnel hours with no change to the frequency of helicopter and vessel trips. Electrical power is supplied by interconnector cable from Fulmar installation and there will be no change to current combustion plant. Increased production will result in minimal increase in power demand for temporary artificial lift. There is anticipated to be minimal increase in flaring as a result of this project (consent application FCON/6435) and associated reportable emissions and a reduction in venting (consent application VCON/6423) with no likely significant effect on the environment.



Produced water will continue to be discharged with an expected decrease in volume between 2022 and 2023 with no change to oil in water concentration, maintained within current permitted discharge. There will be no change to the use and discharge of chemicals. Chemicals have been risk assessed and are not expected to have a significant impact upon the environment.

There are no expected transboundary effects from the operations.

It is considered that the increase in oil production from the Auk field is not likely to have a significant impact on other offshore activities or other users of the sea, the seabed, marine life or cetacean species 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