

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-5069U  
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Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment & Decommissioning

CNOOC PETROLEUM EUROPE LIMITED  
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Registered No.: 01051137

Date: 20th March 2023

Department for Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy

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Crimon Place  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1BJ

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[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**

**SCOTT, Scott JD Platform, DRILLING PRODUCER WELL ST35/ST76**

I refer to your amended application dated 15th March 2023, reference DR/2238/2 (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](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**

**SCOTT, Scott JD Platform, DRILLING PRODUCER WELL ST35/ST76**

**DR/2238/2 (Version 1)**

Whereas CNOOC PETROLEUM EUROPE LIMITED has made an application dated 15th March 2023, 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/13980/0/GS/1.

Effective Date: 20th March 2023



# **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 20 June 2022 until 31 December 2023.

### **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**

### **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**

This post screening direction amendment (ref: DR/2238/2) relates to a change to the project for which a screening direction was previously issued. This change has extended the end date of the project from 30 April 2023 to 31 December 2023.

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**

Due to operational delays, the end of the project has been extended from 30 April 2023 to 31 December 2023.

### **Description of Project**

The post screening direction amendment previously approved (DR/2238/1) included the following:



A contingency sidetrack well (ST76) to be drilled in the event that the geological objectives of the ST35 well are not met. The sidetrack will be a 12 " and 8 " sections drilled with Oil Based Mud (OBM), with no discharge to the environment. The depths of well sections and chemicals used to drill the original ST35 well will be the same as those utilised for the contingency sidetrack.

Due to the addition of the possible contingency sidetrack, the end of the operations will be extended from 31 October 2022 to 30 April 2023.

The original screening direction approved (DR/2238/0) included the following:

- Abandoning the J38z well prior to sidetracking to the new 15/22-ST35 (ST35) infill production well. The well will be abandoned using 2 mechanical plugs, with completion tubing recovered and cement plugs set. Residual fluids will be circulated out of the well and disposed of via a cuttings reinjection unit (CRI), with zero discharge. If the CRI is unavailable during the drilling operations, the Oil Based Muds (OBM) and cuttings will be skipped and shipped to shore.
- The new sidetrack well (ST35) will be a 12 " section drilled with Oil Based Mud (OBM) and a 9 5/8" casing cemented in place. All drill cuttings and OBM will be reinjected (as above) with zero discharge to the marine environment.
- An 8 "section will be drilled before a 7 " liner is cemented in place.
- If there are unexpected geological conditions encountered, another sidetrack has been planned as a contingency to a ST76 fallback target, however the sidetrack has not been included and is not assessed within the application.
- If the drilling project coincides with the Scott Platform turnaround (TAR), then the well will be temporarily suspended. There will be no additional impacts as there will be no discharge to the marine environment during that time.

Operations are expected to last 196 days instead of 98 days. The J38z well will be abandoned with bridge plugs and a cement plug set to allow new drilling to be undertaken. Drilling of a 12 " section will be undertaken, followed by an 8 " section, both of which will be drilled with OBM, which will be routed to the CRI unit (cuttings reinjection unit) on the Scott platform. There will be no discharge to the marine environment. If the CRI unit is unavailable, OBM and cuttings will be skipped and shipped onshore for treatment and disposal.

If the contingency sidetrack (ST76) is drilled due to unexpected geological conditions, the ST35 well will be abandoned in accordance with the UGUK Well Decommissioning Guidelines, with a 13 3/8" casing run to the ST76 fallback target. As a result of this post screening direction amendment, the contingency sidetrack well (15/22 ST76) has now been assessed. All drilling and casing running operations will be undertaken using OBM, which will be disposed of via the CRI unit, therefore there will be no marine discharge. The ST35 (and potentially ST76) well, which will be drilled within the installations' 500m safety zone, 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 reinjection of the OBM and cuttings, 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 Scott platform is located in the central North Sea, approximately 74km from the UK/Norwegian median line and 142 km from the Scottish mainland. Samples taken from within the Scott area are represented by homogenous fine material (silt and clay or mud) with low but variable proportions of sand and minimal coarse material. Sample locations around the site were classified as 'circalittoral fine mud'.

Mean water depth is approximately 140 m at the platform area and the wave height ranges from 2.11 - 2.4m. Numerous strings of pockmarks were observed which were interpreted to be relict, likely originating from gas seep features. There was no evidence of the Annex I leaking gases or submarine structures made by leaking gases during any survey of the area.

A survey of the area showed that the area had a moderately diverse macrofaunal community, dominated by burrowing anemone and polychaete. Two clusters of macrofaunal communities were noted with the difference in each thought to be attributed to the slight variations in sediment type across the survey area. The epifauna within the area is sparse, comprising sea pens, mobile crustaceans such as hermit crab and squat lobsters. The data also shows the presence of burrowing megafauna, with the slender sea pen observed (3-15cm). These sea pens were observed along the survey route but only single individual colonies were observed and was considered occasional to rare on the SACFOR scale. Burrow densities were observed to be common or frequent in ROV footage, and the habitat 'sea pen and burrowing megafauna' is potentially present.

Minke whale, long finned pilot whale, common dolphin, white-beaked dolphin, Atlantic white-sided dolphin and harbour porpoise have all been recorded in the vicinity of the Scott area. Densities of the species are categorised as low to moderate, with the



exception of the common dolphin, harbour porpoise and white beaked dolphin which are observed in high density from May to September/October. Grey and harbour seals may be encountered but due to the distance from shore, it is unlikely that the area is visited regularly or in high numbers. Density maps show the presence of grey and harbour seals in the area of the platform as 0-1 individuals per 25km<sup>2</sup>.

Seabird oil sensitivity in the vicinity of the Scott field is low to extremely high throughout the year.

The Scott platform is not situated within any conservation areas, with the nearest area of conservation interest being the Scanner Pockmark SAC which lies 44km to the east. This site is designating for the Annex I habitat 'submarine structures made by leaking gases'. The nearest NCMPA is the Central Fladen NCMPA which is 60km to the northwest, which is designed for the protection of burrowed mud including sea pens and burrowing megafauna.

The Scott field lies within fishing designated ICES rectangle 45F0, however the drilling of well ST35 does not extend outwith the 500m safety zone, where fishing vessels are already excluded. The proposed operations will coincide with fish spawning and/or nursery activity for a number of species. The proposed project is primarily used for pelagic fishing and shellfish, with fishing effort in the area accounting for only 1.5% of both UK landings and value. It is not anticipated that the drilling of well ST35 will have a significant impact on the fishing industry in the area.

The location of the proposed activity is not within a MoD practice and exercise area and there are no military restrictions. There are six wrecks within the Scott platform area but none are wrecks designated under the Protection of Military Remains or are of Historical Importance. There are no wind farms close to the area, with the closest being the Hywind (Scotland) Limited Buchan Deep Demonstration windfarm, which is located 127 km south-west of the platform. The Sectoral Marine Plan 2020 identifies an option area referred to as NE7, which is 35km west of the Scott platform. The closest telecommunications cable is located 69km to the south of the platform. The closest aquaculture sites are located along the Aberdeenshire coast, over 140km to the south west of the platform. It is not anticipated that the operations at Scott will have a significant impact on either the wrecks, cables 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.

There is in place a 500 m radius safety zone around the Scott platform, which excludes unauthorised access of vessels and prohibits access to fishing vessels. No additional impacts to other marine users are identified as part of the drilling of well ST35/ST76. The well is being drilled from the platform and therefore no significant effects are likely in terms of physical presence from the project.

There will be no seabed disturbance as a result of the project activities. Cuttings from the OBM sections will be treated on the platform in the cuttings reinjection unit (CRI) and there will be no discharge to the marine environment. In the event that the CRI is not available, the OBM and cuttings will be shipped to the shore.

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 the wells. The nearest boundary (UK/Norwegian median) is located approximately 74 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 Scott platform.

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 Scott 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 ST35 is minimal, and the developer has suitable mitigation in place to prevent such an occurrence.

The proposed drilling operation will utilise the existing Scott 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.

It is considered that the change to the drilling activities for the Scott wells are 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.

## **2) Decision**

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

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has proposed to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment:

n/a