

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-5264U
UKOP Doc Ref:1266927



Offshore Petroleum Regulator
for Environment & Decommissioning

CHRYSAOR PETROLEUM COMPANY U.K. LIMITED
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Registered No.: 00792712

Date: 23rd March 2023

Department for Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

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Aberdeen
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Dear Sir / Madam

**THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION, UNLOADING
AND STORAGE (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS
2020
TALBOT 30/13e-TA DEVELOPMENT WELL**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference DR/2290/0 (Version 8), dated 27th January 2023 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**

TALBOT 30/13e-TA DEVELOPMENT WELL

DR/2290/0 (Version 8)

Whereas CHRYSAOR PETROLEUM COMPANY U.K. LIMITED has made an application dated 27th January 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/14431/0/IDA/1 Version 2.

Effective Date: 23rd 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 23 March 2023 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

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]



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

Drilling of new development well 30/13e-TA from the Ensco 120 drilling rig through an existing pre-installed 4-slot drilling template

Drilling of 42" x 36" section with water-based mud (WBM) and cementing of casing

Drilling of 26" section with WBM and cementing of casing

Drilling of 16" section with low toxicity oil-based mud (LTOBM) and cementing of casing

Drilling of 12.25" section with LTOBM and cementing of casing



Drilling of 8.5" section using LTOBM and cementing of casing

Completion operations including installation of a sand control packer

Wellbore clean-up operations

Installation of a sub-sea Xmas tree from the Ensco 120 drilling rig or from a construction support vessel (CSV)

Contingency re-spud of top-hole sections (42" x 36" and 26" sections)

Drilling a contingency mechanical side-track (16", 12.25" and 8.5" sections)

Description of the Project

Development well 30/13e-TA will be drilled by the Ensco 120 jack-up drilling rig, through the existing 4-slot drilling template at the Talbot field. The well will be batch drilled in conjunction with two other wells (the 30/13e-TB and 30/13e-TC wells which are subject to separate screening direction applications) and well 30/13e-TA is expected to take 82 days to complete. The rig will be held in position by 3 spud cans and 4 anchors and will be supported by an emergency response and rescue vessel (ERRV).

WBM will be used to drill the 42" x 36" and 26" well sections and LTOBM will be used to drill the 16", 12.25" and 8.5" hole sections. The WBM and associated cuttings may be pumped away from the drilling template using a cuttings transportation system (CTS) located 60m from the drilling template, or alternatively will be discharged conventionally and remain at the well location. All WBM and associated drill cuttings will be discharged to the seabed. All LTOBM and associated drill cuttings will be contained and shipped to shore for onshore processing and disposal. Following the drilling of each hole section, a casing string will be installed and cemented into place. Upper and lower completions will be run into the well.

Following completion operations the wellbore will be cleaned by the circulation of wellbore clean up chemicals. The volume of fluid used to clean the wellbore will be returned to the slops pit for treatment, and the remaining fluid will either be discharged to sea or skipped and shipped to shore for disposal.

On completion of drilling operations a vertical subsea Xmas tree will be installed on the suspended wellhead from either the drilling rig or from a CSV.

This project forms part of the wider Talbot field development for which an EIA was submitted under Regulation 5(1) (Talbot Field Development Environmental Statement D/4273/2021).

Location of the Project

The Talbot field is located in the Central North Sea (CNS) in United Kingdom



Continental Shelf (UKCS) Block 30/13e, approximately 280 km east of the Scottish coastline and 9 km west of the United Kingdom (UK)/Norway boundary line.

The water depth at the TA well location is approximately 75 m. Offshore tidal current velocities are between 0.01-1.0 m/s during mean spring tides and the mean residual current is approximately 0.01 m/s. The wave height within the area ranges from 2.11-2.40 m and the annual mean wave power is 18.1-24.0 kW/m.

The sediment characteristics in the Talbot field can be categorised as European Union Nature Information System (EUNIS) biotope 'Offshore deep circalittoral sand' with a diverse range of polychaetes, amphipods, bivalves and echinoderms. Site specific survey data show the seabed sediments to be comprised of silty sand with frequent shell fragments. The priority marine feature (PMF) habitat 'offshore subtidal sands and gravels' occurs within the wider Talbot area. Offshore subtidal sands and gravels often comprise communities of tube building polychaetes, burrowing brittlestars, polychaetes and bivalves, other communities in medium sands are dominated by pea urchins, while communities in fine sands are dominated by amphipods and hooded shrimps.

Benthic survey data from the Talbot are showed that the adult fauna community was dominated by Annelida accounting for 61% of the recorded individuals and 38% of taxa. Arthropoda and mollusca accounted for 16% and 10% of total individuals respectively, and Echinodermata accounted for 4%. The echinoderm species *Amphiura filiformis* and polychaete *Amphicteneauricoma* found during the survey are known to be sensitive to heavy physical disturbance to the seabed. The most abundant polychaete found, *Galathowenia oculata*, is known to be intolerant to hydrocarbon contamination. Also abundant was the polychaete *Paramphinoamejeffreysii*, known to be highly tolerant to hydrocarbon contamination but intolerant to heavy metals.

Burrows were observed at survey stations but at a rare level of abundance and as such the area is not considered to support the OSPAR habitat 'Seapen and burrowing megafauna communities', the associated PMF 'Burrowed mud' or the Scottish Biodiversity List Habitat 'Mud habitats in deep water'.

'Offshore subtidal sands and gravels' is the preferred habitat of the PMF and OSPAR 'threatened and/or declining' species ocean quahog. Ocean quahog shells, and suspected ocean quahog siphons, were observed in low densities across the area.

Survey data shows the presence of horse mussel *Modiolus modiolus*. The density of horse mussels observed and the elevation of areas containing horse mussels from the surrounding seabed, indicated the potential Annex I habitat 'Biogenic reef', although there was insufficient evidence to make a positive identification.

Survey data indicates that the area is not expected to qualify as the OSPAR habitat 'Deep-sea sponge aggregations', the Scottish priority marine feature (PMF) 'Deep-sea sponge communities' or the Scottish Biodiversity List Habitat 'Northern sea fan and sponge communities'.



Seabed survey data do not show discrete sonar contacts or areas of high or variable sonar reflectivity that could indicate the Annex I habitat 'rocky or biogenic reef'.

Although bacterial mats were found during a site specific survey, no Methane Derived Authigenic Carbonate (MDAC) was identified and none of the survey data suggested the presence of the Annex I habitat 'Submarine structures made by leaking gasses'.

Samples of Sediment Total Hydrocarbon Concentration (THC) around the Talbot site ranged are considered within the normal range of background contamination for the CNS. Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon (PAH) concentrations recorded during the surveys are considered to be near background at samples taken near the Talbot drilling site, and at levels at which toxic effects are rarely expected to occur. Heavy metal concentrations are within OSPAR Background Assessment Concentration (BAC) limits.

The Talbot drilling site is located within a spawning area for cod, lemon sole, mackerel, Norway pout and plaice and sandeel, with the area experiencing high concentration spawning for mackerel and Norway pout. Of these species sandeel and plaice are benthic spawners. The planned operations will take place during the spawning periods for all these species. The majority of the sediments surveyed in the Talbot field are likely to be suitable for sandeel spawning and less suitable for plaice. The Talbot field is located in a nursery area for anglerfish, blue whiting, cod (high intensity), European hake, haddock, herring, lemon sole, ling, mackerel, Norway pout, plaice, sandeel, spotted ray, spurdog and whiting.

Seabird sensitivity in Block 30/13 is considered low throughout the year except May and June where it is classified as very high, and the average density for all species during breeding season is 1-9 individuals per km², 1-4 individuals per km² in winter months and 1-6 individuals per km² in summer months.

Five species of cetacean, Atlantic white-sided dolphin, common dolphin, harbour porpoise, minke whale and white-beaked dolphin have been recorded in the vicinity of the Talbot field between May and November, with densities ranging from high to low.

The proposed operations within the Talbot field are located within the Fulmar MCZ which has the designated features: 'subtidal mud', 'subtidal sand', 'subtidal mixed sediments' and 'ocean quahog'. The next closest protected site is the East of Gannet and Montrose Fields Nature Conservation Marine Protection Area (NCMPA) which is located approximately 64 km to the northwest of proposed operations. No other protected sites are present within 40 km of the proposed TA well location.

The area is described as a low intensity fishing area. The proposed operations are in an area of very low vessel traffic. There is a large amount of other oil and gas infrastructure in the surrounding area. The project location is not within a military activity zone or near any renewable energy infrastructure projects. There is a wreck within the licenced block but not in proximity to the project location.



Given the location of the project, the areas identified at paragraphs 2(c)(i), (iii), (iv), (vi), (vii) and (viii) of Schedule 5 are not likely to 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.

Atmospheric emissions are expected to be temporary in nature and be emitted from combustion plant on the drilling rig and supporting vessels used on the project. As the well will be batch drilled alongside wells 30/13e-TB and 30/13e-TC the developer has assessed the total atmospheric emissions that would arise from the entire drilling campaign. These emissions are estimated to contribute a very small percentage of the total annual emissions estimated for offshore activities in the UK. The emissions from the project are not expected to result in a significant impact on the environment.

Seabed disturbance will result from locating the jack-up drill rig and CTS on location. The potential area of seabed affected by placement of the spud cans, anchors, anchor chain contacts will be small. Once these have been removed, the natural physical process of sediment transportation and biological settlement will be expected to restore the seabed to its original condition over time. The impact has not been assessed as significant.

Drilling of the 42" x 36" and 26" hole sections will result in the discharge of WBM associated drill cuttings to the seabed. As the well will be batch drilled alongside wells 30/13e-TB and 30/13e-TC the developer has conducted cuttings dispersion modelling for the discharge of WBM associated cuttings from all three wells. This discharge is predicted to result in a drill cuttings pile either around the drilling template, or, if the CTS is utilised, approximately 60m from the drilling template. Although some smothering will occur the impacts on the benthic fauna are not considered to be significant. The discharge is not expected to cause an impact to spawning fish species at a population level.

It is anticipated that as the cement slurry falls through the water column it will be naturally dispersed and diluted. Discharge of this nature is not expected to have any significant effect on deterioration in water quality or any significant impact on benthos or fish populations. It is not anticipated to have any negative implications for future decommissioning operations. Any cement slurry discharged to sea will comprise of inert materials and low toxicity additives.

The discharge of chemicals used to drill the well, including cementing, wellbore clean up, and completion chemicals have been assessed and are not considered likely to



have a significant impact on the marine environment.

A 500 m safety exclusion zone will exist around the rig once it is on location. The zone is there for the safety of the rig and vessel traffic. Once in place no unauthorised vessels will be allowed to enter meaning that vessel routes and fishing will have to avoid the area. Commercial fishing intensity and vessel traffic are both regarded as low. These receptors are not at risk of being significantly impacted by the project.

The planned discharge of the oil contaminated wellbore clean up fluids and slops will be at a sufficiently low concentration and quantity that it is not expected to result in a significant impact.

Accidental spill modelling has been undertaken for the project application. The worst-case scenario would result in a spill of crude that would be unlikely to beach on the UK coastline, but would have a higher likelihood of beaching on the coast of Norway. The developer has outlined multiple response measures available to them which would be enacted in the unlikely unplanned event of a spill. Such measures would be used to reduce the potential impact as far as possible and as quickly as possible.

There are no expected transboundary impacts because of the project, and no cumulative impacts have been identified given the other known existing and approved projects in the wider area.

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:

N/A