

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-5520U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1300131



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment & Decommissioning

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Registered No.: 01051137

Date: 5th October 2023

Department for Energy Security &  
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[opred@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:opred@energysecurity.gov.uk)

Dear Sir / Madam

**THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION, UNLOADING  
AND STORAGE (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS  
2020  
PIPELINE PL6194**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference PL/2419/0 (Version 2), dated 3rd October 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 [opred@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:opred@energysecurity.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**

**PIPELINE PL6194**

**PL/2419/0 (Version 2)**

Whereas CNOOC PETROLEUM EUROPE LIMITED has made an application dated 3rd October 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 PWA/4765.

Effective Date: 5th October 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 5 October 2023 until 31 December 2023.

#### **2 Commencement and completion of the project**

The holder of the screening direction must confirm the dates of commencement and completion of the project covered by the screening direction. Notification should be sent by email to the Environmental Management Team Mailbox: [opred@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:opred@energysecurity.gov.uk)

#### **3 Nature of stabilisation or protection materials**

Rock deposits

2000 tonnes of clean, inert rock material, containing minimal fines, (The quantity of rock deposited should be the minimum required to provide the necessary stabilisation or protection, and any surplus rock must be returned to land).

#### **4 Location of pipeline and stabilisation or protection materials**

Within an area bounded by the coordinates as specified in the application.

#### **5 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.

#### **6 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.

## **7 Monitoring**

The results of any pre or post-placement surveys carried out to confirm the necessity for the deposits covered by the screening direction and/or to confirm the accurate positioning of the stabilisation or protection materials, should be forwarded to the Department following completion of the surveys

## **8 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.

## **9 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.

## **10 Deposit returns**

The holder of the screening direction shall submit a report to the Department following completion of the deposit covered by the screening direction, confirming the quantity of materials deposited and the estimated area of impact, using the appropriate Environmental Emissions Monitoring System (EEMS) reporting form. Where no deposits are made, a 'nil' return is required.

## **11 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).

## **12 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:

[opred@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:opred@energysecurity.gov.uk)

or

Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment & Decommissioning  
Department for Energy Security & Net Zero  
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:

#### **Summary of the project:**

Pipeline tie in operations at Golden Eagle's Northern Drill Centre (NDC). This is to tie in the new production well (DPG) from its location to the NDC. The operations will be conducted within the NDC's 500m exclusion zone and include the surface laid placement of a 48m rigid spool, 140m control umbilical, 31 concrete mattresses (6m x 3m x 0.15m) and 1536 x 25kg grout bags to protect the spools and control lines from the NDC to well DPG;

2000t of rock dump will be placed on the 8" existing water injection (WI) pipeline (PL3172) 3km south of the NDC. This is due to vertical displacement of the pipeline observed during a routine inspection;

Rock dumping operations at PL3172 are expected to last for 12 hours and the rock profile has been designed to be overtrawlable;

A post installation survey will be conducted to ensure sufficient coverage and protection of WI pipeline PL3172.

### **Description of project**

The Golden Eagle, Peregrine and Solitaire fields are part of the Golden Eagle Area Development (GEAD) and tie back to a Wellhead platform, and production, utility and





quarters (PUQ) platform, connected by a bridge. The PUQ platform processes hydrocarbon fluids, with oil exported into the Flotta Pipeline System and gas exported to the SAGE pipeline. There are 2 satellite drill centres, the Northern Drill Centre and the Southern Drill Centre.

Pipeline operations will be wholly undertaken with the already established 500m safety zone which surrounds the NDC with operations expected to last 10 days. The rock dumping operation is expected to take 12 hours and is located approx. 3km south of the NDC. The proposed project area is within a well-developed area of the Central North Sea and cumulative impacts from atmospheric releases and oil and chemical releases have been assessed.

The new pipeline will be laid on the seabed, with mattresses and grout bags used to protect the new tie in pipeline to the NDC manifold. A worst case assessment has been included within the application which includes 31 mattresses and 1536 x 25 kg grout bags. 2000t rock will also be added to protect a nearby existing water injection pipeline (WI) which has been subject to some vertical movement. A post installation survey will be conducted to assess the stability of the WI pipeline.

The project will utilise 2 vessels; one vessel for the pipeline installation (on location for 10 days) and the other is a fall pipe vessel used for the placement of rock (on location for 2 days).

The permanent seabed deposits of grout bags, mattresses and rock, will impact an area of 0.0013 km<sup>2</sup>.

No cumulative interactions are foreseen with any other existing or approved projects. There is no risk to human health from the works to install the pipelines or depositing the protective materials on the seabed. There is no credible potential for a major accident or disaster to affect this project.

Any wastes associated with the project will be handled appropriately and no significant impacts are anticipated. The project is not at risk from natural disasters given its location in UK offshore waters.

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 NDC is located in Block 14/26, approximately 70 kilometres (km) from the Scottish coast and 149 km from the UK/Norway median line, in an approximate water depth of 116 metres (m). The wave height within the field ranges from 2.11 -2.4m.



The sediment in the area is dominated by sand with a patch of muddy sand in the north of the block. Numerous pockmarks and depression are evident within the Golden Eagle field, however there was no evidence within the recent surveys for the presence of the Annex I habitat 'submarine structures made by leaking gases'.

Recent surveys showed that seabed photography and video footage showed that visible fauna included an abundance of polychaeta, crustacea, and molluscs. Seapens were observed at multiple sample stations and transects, and using the SACFOR scale, total seapen densities were classed as 'frequent'. Burrows were also recorded at all stations and were classified from 'rare' to 'common' at multiple survey stations. It is therefore concluded that the OSPAR listed habitat of 'seapens and burrowing megafauna communities' together with Scottish Priority Marine Feature (PMF) 'burrowed mud' and the Scottish biodiversity list habitat 'mud habitats in deep water' are present. Ocean quahog is on OSPAR's (2008) list of threatened and/or declining species and habitats and is listed as a low or limited mobility species under Scotland's Priority Marine Feature (PMF). This juvenile species was recorded at each sample station, and it was concluded that the species is commonly found within the Golden Eagle area.

There are no conservation areas within 40km of the NDC area. The field falls within International Council of the Sea (ICES) rectangle 44E9, and fishing effort is dominated by shellfish and demersal species. This area contributes to 1.21% of the total fishing effort in the UK, and accounts for 0.63% of value when compared to overall UKCS fishing in 2022. Fish spawning for a number of species occurs in ICES rectangle 45E9, and it is also a nursery area for a number of fish species throughout the year. Several species are Scottish Priority Marine Features. It is not anticipated that the project will have a significant impact on the fishing industry in the area.

Seabird oil sensitivity in the vicinity of block 14/26 is very high in October and November, high in December and January, and low to medium for the remaining months.

Harbour porpoise, minke whale, white-beaked dolphin, atlantic white-sided dolphin and Risso's dolphin have all been sighted in the area throughout the year. All of these species are found in low to moderate densities, with the exception of minke whale which is found in high densities in May and June, and the white beaked dolphin which is found in high densities in June. Grey and harbour seals are not frequently sighted within the area due to the distance from shore (70km). Individual densities of grey seals range from 0 -10 individuals per 25km<sup>2</sup>, while harbour seals densities range from 0-1 individuals per 25km<sup>2</sup>.

The project location is not within a military activity zone, with the nearest telecommunications cable (Tampnet CNS fibre optic) located 49km to the southeast. The North Connect Cable is due to begin construction and is routed 22km to the south of the Golden Eagle field. The closest windfarm is the Hywind floating offshore windfarm located 62km to the southwest. A number of offshore wind farm lease areas are located within the area, with the closest one 1.7km northeast of block 14/26. The



project is also located approximately 7 km southeast of the Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas Decarbonisation (INTOG) area E-b. Shipping intensity within the Golden Eagle field is described as moderate with an annual average of 2453 vessels passing within 10nm of the field.

There are 2 wrecks within 5km of the project area. The wrecks are considered non-dangerous and there are no known wrecks of historical importance. The closest aquaculture site is 100km to the southwest of the Golden Eagle field.

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 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.

The NDC has its own existing 500m exclusion zone, and all of the pipeline work scope will be undertaken with this exclusion zone. The rock dumping operation will be undertaken 3km south of the NDC. The vessel conducting the rock dumping operation will therefore exclude an area of the sea to fishing vessels (for up to 2 days). The existing 500m zone already excludes unauthorised access of vessels and prohibits access to fishing vessels. The placement of new pipework, mattresses and grout bags will all be within the 500m zone and will not affect any other users of the sea. Excluding fishing vessels for 2 days due to the rock placement work scope should not affect fishing vessels. Fishing activities within the area are low (contributing to only 1.21% of all UK fishing effort), and due to the very short timescale of that part of the project, it is concluded that there should be no significant effects likely in terms of physical presence from the proposed project.

There will be seabed disturbance from the placement of the spool and control umbilical and the placement of the mattresses, grout bags and rock. This could result in the smothering and mortality of benthic fauna, which will result in some short-term temporary impacts. The sediment within the area is muddy sand, and it is expected that whilst mobile fauna will be able to move from an area following disturbance, sessile fauna will be unable to move away and may be lost. Seapens have been shown to re-anchor themselves after disturbance and are not sensitive to smothering. Juvenile ocean quahog were also shown to be present and are sensitive to smothering over 30cm. It is expected that there may be some mortality of individuals ocean quahog, but that due to the small area of operations, and that due to the short duration of the project, it is concluded that there may be very small localised losses, but these will not impact on ocean quahog at a population level.



The seabed conditions at Golden Eagle suggest that recovery from the physical disturbance will be relatively rapid which is in part due to the shallower water depth. It is unlikely that the impact on the seabed will be permanent, with no long-term impacts predicted. There will be mortality of some individual species, as discussed above, but the impact on populations levels across the North Sea is unlikely to be significant with a very small footprint of 0.0013 km<sup>2</sup> affected. Seabed disturbance also impacts on fish spawning, and it is recognised that there could be impacts to individual species, however it is not expected to cause an impact at a population level.

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 proposed project. The nearest boundary (UK/Norwegian median) is located approximately 70 km away and it is not considered likely that any planned operational discharge (from chemicals) will be detectable at this distance from block 14/26.

The proposed project will utilise 2 vessels. Atmospheric emissions have been assessed from the diesel used for each vessel and the time spent on location. The total atmospheric emissions from the vessels undertaking the project work, accounts for 0.0046% of the total UKCS CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (using 2021 as a baseline). The emissions may result in a deterioration of the local air quality, but due to the relatively short duration of the work, and that the exposed conditions in the area will rapidly disperse the emissions, it is not anticipated that there will be a significant impact.

The main risk of accidental release of hydrocarbons is from a loss of diesel inventory from a vessel. The assessment showed that there is no potential for a significant effect from the loss of diesel from a vessel, therefore the impact was not assessed further.

There are no expected cumulative impacts as a result of the project.

## **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