

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-6208U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1352413



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment & Decommissioning

PETROFAC FACILITIES MANAGEMENT LIMITED  
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Registered No.: SC075047

Date: 15th July 2024

Department for Energy Security &  
Net Zero

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Aberdeen  
AB10 1BJ

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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  
GANNET E, WELL 21/30c-GE05**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference DR/2471/0 (Version 3), dated 14th June 2024 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] or email the Environmental Management Team at [opred@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:opred@energysecurity.gov.uk).

Yours faithfully

Signature valid

Digitally signed by Department for Energy Security  
and Net Zero  
Date: 2024.07.15 14:35:35 BST  
Reason: On behalf of the Secretary of State  
Location: Offshore Petroleum Regulator for  
Environment and Decommissioning



**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**

**GANNET E, WELL 21/30c-GE05**

**DR/2471/0 (Version 3)**

Whereas PETROFAC FACILITIES MANAGEMENT LIMITED has made an application dated 14th June 2024, 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/16232/0/IDA/1 and WONS/16232/0/C/1.

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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 15 July 2024 until 30 November 2024.

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

The holder of the screening direction must notify the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (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: [opred@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:opred@energysecurity.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:

[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



## **SCHEDULE OF SCREENING DIRECTION DECISION REASONS**

### **1) Decision Reasons**

The following provides a summary of the assessment undertaken 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 the Gannet E field production well 21/30c-29 (GE05).

Top two sections: 42"x36"x26" and 26" to be drilled with water-based mud (WBM).

Lower three sections: 16", 12.25" and 9.5"x8.5" to be drilled with low toxicity oil-based mud(LTOBM).

Contingency re-spud and mechanical sidetrack.

Well completion with gravel pack screens.

Installation of xmas tree.

Well suspension for later tie into production at the Triton Floating Production, Storage and Offloading (FPSO) facility.

### **Description of the Project**



This project is the drilling of subsea development well 21/30c-29(GE05) in the Gannet Efield using the COSL Innovator semi-submersible rig which will be positioned using eight anchors and chains with a temporary 500m exclusion zone, mostly overlapping an existing permanent southern drill centre 500m safety exclusion zone.

GE05 is the fifth production well in the Gannet E field, targeting remaining oil reserves at the crestal area of the Gannet E field.

The GE05 well is planned as a near horizontal oil production well. It will consist of five well sections: 42"x36", 26", 16", 12.25" and 9.5"x8.5" sections. The 42"x36" and 26" sections will be drilled vertically downwards using a water-based mud, with all mud and cuttings being discharged to the seabed, before being lined with steel well casings that are cemented in place. The blowout preventor and connected marine riser will then be installed.

The 16", 12.25" and 9.5"x8.5" well sections will be drilled with a Low Toxicity Oil Based Mud (LTOBM). For all LTOBM sections the cuttings and mud returns will be returned to the rig, separated, the LTOBM recovered for re-use where possible with LTOBM contaminated cuttings skipped and shipped to shore for disposal.

The 9.5"x8.5" section will be lined with gravel pack sand screens and production packerset followed by cleaning with inhibited seawater and chemicals to remove OBM/debris, progressively circulating to inhibited seawater only. Rig fluid returns with residual LTOBM will be skipped and shipped to shore for treatment and disposal, or discharged when analysed concentration is less than or equal to 30 mg/l.

Seawater in the well will be treated to prevent degradation of assets and the upper completion run. The BOP will be recovered, xmas tree installed and tested and valves closed and well suspended for later tie into production.

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

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.

There is not likely to be any significant impact of the project on population and human health. It is not considered likely that the project will be affected by natural disasters.

### **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 Gannet E field is located within Block 21/30c in the central North Sea (CNS), approximately 163 kilometres (km) from the Scottish coast of the UK and 89km from the UK/Norway median line, in an approximate water depth of 96 metres (m).

Sediments in the Gannet E field are mostly categorised as 'Offshore Circalittoral Sand' with some areas of 'Offshore Circalittoral Mud'. Survey data confirmed the primary sediment type encountered was sandy mud or muddy sand with varying proportions of shell fragments.

The benthic assemblage identified from site surveys undertaken in the Gannet E area indicate a community typical of the sediments identified, dominated by polychaete worms and bivalve molluscs. Observed epifauna included sea pen, anemones, hermit crab and starfish with tracks and burrows indicating potential Norway lobster. Sponges and faunal turfs with faunal tracks were observed in shelly coarser sediment areas.

There is no evidence of any Annex I habitats as shallow depressions showed no evidence of methane derived authigenic carbonate. The nearest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for pockmarks is the Scanner Pockmark 130km north of Gannet E. The nearest Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area (NC MPA) is the East of Gannet and Montrose Fields NC MPA, which is 7km from Gannet E, is designated for 'offshore deep-sea mud' habitat and 'ocean quahog' aggregations and their supporting sands and gravels habitat. One adult Ocean quahog, OSPAR listed as threatened or declining and a Priority Marine Feature (PMF) was found following a nearby survey and could be present. Seapen and faunal burrows were also observed. Further assessment and comparison with previous surveys concluded the potential for the OSPAR listed 'seapen and burrowing megafauna communities' habitat to be present as well as the broad scale PMF habitat 'offshore deep-sea muds' and 'offshore subtidal sands and gravels'.

The Gannet E field lies within International Council of the Sea (ICES) rectangle 43F0. The area is a spawning and nursery ground for several species throughout the year. Many of the species identified are Scottish Priority Marine Features.

Seabird vulnerability for Block 21/30 is low throughout the year except for November where there is no data.

Atlantic white-sided dolphin, Harbour porpoise, Minke whale and White-beaked dolphin have been observed in the area between the months of February and November. White-beaked dolphin and Harbour porpoise have been observed in moderate densities in the area whereas the other species identified have been observed in low densities. Grey and harbour seals are not frequently sighted within the area, and the mean percentage at sea population of grey and harbour seals per 25km<sup>2</sup> is <0.001%.

Fishing effort in ICES rectangle 43F0 is predominantly targeted at demersal species, primarily cod, haddock and whiting, although landings and value are low in a UK context. Pelagic and shellfish species fishing effort and landings are low in a UK

context.

The Gannet E field is not located within a Ministry of Defence (MoD) training range.

The closest submarine cables are the North Sea Link power cable approximately 36km from the GE05 well location. The TAMPNET CNSFTC cable is the nearest telecommunications cable, approximately 70km north of the GE05 well location.

There are no historic wrecks identified in Block 21/30 or surrounding blocks.

There are no shellfish water protected areas or active aquaculture sites in the vicinity of the Gannet E field.

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 physical presence, seabed disturbance, atmospheric emissions, planned discharges and accidental spills. There is not likely to be any significant impact of the project on population and human health.

The development well 21/30c-29 (GE05) will be drilled using the COSL Innovator semi-submersible rig and will operate in a 500 m exclusion zone, which partially overlaps the existing statutory 500 m exclusion zone around the existing Gannet E subsea infrastructure. The navigational control measures are contained within the Consent to Locate which has been approved for the location of the COSL Innovator semi-submersible rig.

There will be localised impact on benthic fauna from the physical siting of the anchor mooring system for the semi-submersible rig and from the discharge of cuttings. Ocean quahog have not been recorded in recent surveys in the vicinity of the Gannet E field, although were recorded in historic survey in the area. If present, a significant impact is not anticipated on the population of the species due to the localised impact of the proposed operations.

Most sightings of white-beaked dolphins and harbour porpoise (which are Annex II species) occur between February and November at moderate density and the proposed operations are unlikely to have a significant impact on these species. Due to the distance of the GE05 Well from shore (163km), harbour and grey seals (Annex II species and PMFs), are not likely to be encountered regularly or in great numbers in the area of the well.

The wellbore clean-up operations may result in the discharge of wastewater containing residual base oil from the LTOBM. The WBM and cuttings will be



discharged to the seabed while the LTOBM drill cuttings will be skipped and shipped to shore for disposal. The discharge of WBM has been assessed and is not considered to have a likely significant effect on the environment.

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.

Atmospheric emissions are expected to be temporary in nature, to be emitted from the combustion plant on the drilling rig, supporting vessels and four flights per week to/from the drilling rig for personnel. Atmospheric emissions have been assessed from the fuel usage for each vessel and the time spent on location. Drilling activities are expected to last 84 days and well testing is not being carried out as part of these operations. The proposed operations will contribute to 0.1% of the total atmospheric emissions associated with the UK offshore exploration and production operations in a year. Atmospheric emissions are expected to be rapidly dispersed in the open offshore environment in the direction of the prevailing wind. The impact has not been assessed as significant.

There are no expected transboundary effects from the drilling of the GE05 well due to the localised and temporary nature of the disturbance and the 89 km distance from the UK/Norway Median Line, which is the nearest boundary. It is not considered likely that any planned operational discharge will be detectable at this distance from the well location.

A worst-case major accident scenario resulting from a potential well blow-out was modelled and assessed. The Developer has mitigation and control measures in place to prevent loss of well control and minimise the risk of an oil spill which could have a significant impact. The proposed operations carried out as planned are not likely to have a significant effect on the environment and the probability of a large oil spill from the proposed operations is low.

There is no operational renewable energy site, nor any under construction and there are no known wrecks of historical importance or military activity within the vicinity of the proposed operations. 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 GE05 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

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

Not Applicable