

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-6363U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1365794



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment & Decommissioning

PERENCO UK LIMITED  
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Registered No.: 04653066

Date: 11th October 2024

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 PL23**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference PL/2502/0 (Version 3), dated 10th October 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] 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 PL23**

**PL/2502/0 (Version 3)**

Whereas PERENCO UK LIMITED has made an application dated 10th October 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, PWA/5199

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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 14 October 2024 until 13 October 2025.

### **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**

Concrete mattress deposits

21 Concrete mattresses, each measuring 3 metres x 5.6 metres x 50 centimetres. (The number of mattresses deposited should be the minimum required to provide the necessary protection, and any surplus mattresses must be returned to land).

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

Within an area bounded by the coordinates as detailed in the application documentation

### **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:

N/A

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 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.

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**

The project is to deposit concrete mattresses and rock filler units over areas of exposed pipeline on PL23, the works will be undertaken via NSTA consent PWA/5199. The intention is to provide protection to the exposed pipeline and provide extra weight to prevent buoyancy and further exposure and de-burial.

### **Description of the project**

As part of their regular monitoring of infield and export pipelines Perenco observed areas of pipeline which are no longer buried and are exposed on the seabed. Some of these exposures are large enough that they meet risk criteria meaning that intervention is required. This intervention will protect the pipeline, provide stability, minimise buoyancy and prevent further exposure, ensuring the long-term integrity of the pipelines. These works will involve the targeted placement of flexible concrete mattresses and rock filter units (which are bags of small rocks) over parts of the exposed pipe. The mattresses and RFUs will be deposited via an ROV support vessel. The minimum number of deposits have been proposed which minimise the area of seabed impact whilst also ensuring effective stabilisation and protection of the pipeline.



This application is one part of a wider campaign by Perenco to place protective deposits over their pipelines in the Southern North Sea. Through this campaign Perenco are looking to deposit concrete mattresses and RFUs over parts of the following pipelines: - PL22, PL23, PL24, PL07, PL109, PL447, PL451, PL630, PL669.

This application (PL/2502) proposes to deposit 21 Mattresses over pipeline PL23

### **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:-

PL23 is the export pipeline for all gas produced within both the Leman and Indefatigable fields and is located between the Leman 27A platform in Block 49/27 and the Bacton Gas Terminal on the Norfolk coast. Approximately 6km from the Norfolk coastline and 61 km from the UK Netherlands median line. The water depth varies from 23 to 38 metres and the seabed sediments in the deposit locations are a variable mixture of circalittoral sands (EUNIS MD5&MC5), circalittoral mixed sediments and circalittoral coarse sediments (MD3). The seabed is characterised by highly mobile sandy sediments in a tide swept dynamic environment. The powerful hydrodynamic regime in the area creates a complex landscape of sandbanks, sandwaves and changing seabed depths which create a particularly challenging environment for buried pipelines and infrastructure.

The tide predominantly flows in a south easterly direction with residual current flow to the east with modelling showing the tidal flow to be 0.356 metres per second (ms<sup>-1</sup>) and 0.065 ms<sup>-1</sup> for spring and neap peak flows respectively. The annual mean significant wave height in the vicinity of the deposits location ranges from 1.51 m to 1.80 m and dominant wind directions between the south west and north west.

Some of the deposits will be in marine protected areas, these are the:

Southern North Sea Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is designated for the protection of harbour porpoise

North Norfolk Sandbanks and Saturn Reef (NNSBSR) SAC which is designated for the protection of subtidal sandbanks and reef which occurs in the form of biogenic sabellaria spinulosa aggregations.

Haisborough Hammond and Winterton (HHW SAC) which is designated for the protection of subtidal sandbanks and reef which occurs in the form of biogenic sabellaria spinulosa aggregations

The Greater Wash Special Protection Area (SPA) which protects a number of bird species, including Red Throated Diver and Common Scoter which may found in the vicinity of the pipeline works.



Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) which are designated for the protection of chalk rock habitats but also includes various sediment habitats.

Multibeam Survey footage suggests the deposits will be placed on mobile sediments as indicated by ripple features and scour depressions. This habitat is part of the annex 1 subtidal sandbank feature in both the HHW and NNSBSR SACs and circalittoral coarse sediment feature of the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ.

The ROV footage has not shown there to be any Sabellaria reef located in the deposit locations meaning there is no overlap with the annex 1 reef MPA feature.

A wide range of seabird species utilise the area with the species composition and numbers varying throughout the year with the more common species in the breeding season being kittiwake, guillemot and lesser black backed gull whilst in summer it is guillemot, fulmar and razorbill. Due to the wide area and time frame over which the deposits will occur seabird vulnerability to oiling varies from low sensitivity to high sensitivity.

The area is important to a variety of fish species with the area acting as a nursery and spawning ground for several species such as cod, herring, nephrops, plaice and sole. Plaice and sole are known to spawn at high intensities in the region.

Cetacean abundance in the SNS is relatively low compared to the northern and central North Sea, with the exception being harbour porpoise and white beaked dolphin which are the most common species. Harbour porpoise in particular has been observed in relatively high densities in the operational area.

There is a considerable amount of human activity in vicinity of the pipeline works. Fishing occurs at variable intensities along the pipelines with a mix of demersal trawling and shellfisheries operating in the area. Shipping levels are considered high with large numbers of cargo vessels and ferries between the UK and continental Europe traversing the works area with offshore supports vessel activity also being high. There is a considerable amount of oil and gas activity in the area, the pipelines traverse a number of active fields in the region such as the Leman, Hewett and Indefatigable. There also a number of other export and infield pipelines operated by Perenco and other operators in close proximity to the pipeline works. The nearest operational windfarm is Dudgeon located approximately 34 km north of deposit 4 along PL23. The Dudgeon extension offshore windfarm area is located 27 km north of deposit 4 and is in the planning phase. The consented Norfolk Vanguard West is located 15 km southeast of deposit 1 and 31 km east of deposits 2 & 3. The Hornsea 3 Transmission Asset offshore wind cable is located 17.5 km north of deposit 4, and 29 km northwest of deposits 2 & 3 and is in the consented phase. The Norfolk Boreas Transmission Asset is located 4.5 km south of deposit 4 and is in the consented phase.

Some of the deposits lay within an MOD practice range which require MOD to be notified of any structure. There are a large number of wrecks in the region of the



works but none within 500m of the deposits. The works are either within or close to Carbon Storage license areas CS009(Exploration Operator: PUK) and CS008 (Exploration Operator: ENI UK Limited). These both form a part of the SNS Area 4 Carbon Storage area. The works do not overlap with any aggregate extraction site or electricity cables .

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.

The mattresses and RFUs will be lowered onto the pipelines from an ROV support vessel. The vessel will notify other sea users of it's presence and advise a 500m avoidance area around the vessel to minimise the risk of interaction. There will thus be some small scale impact to vessel traffic but this limited to the 1 number day the deposit campaign will be undertaken over after which vessel movements will return to normal. Furthermore, the deposits are intended to reduce the risks associated with fisheries interaction with the exposed pipeline.

The placement of the deposits i.e. mattresses and RFUs, will cause disturbance to the seabed in the immediate area. The deposits will cover the natural sandy seabed overlaying it with a hard surface which will support difference species and create different habitat characteristics compared to the pre-existing seabed. The total area of seabed to be covered mattress and RFUs deposited as part of this application is 352m<sup>2</sup> and over the whole SNS pipeline deposit campaign it is 1465m<sup>2</sup>. This represents a very small proportion of the respective seabed sediment types found in the wider geographic area of the southern North Sea. The deposits will also be placed directly over the existing pipeline, meaning of this 1465m<sup>2</sup> of impacted seabed a large part proportion is comprised of either pipeline or the scoured and highly disturbed seabed immediately adjacent to the pipeline.

The placement of the pipeline deposits will also create a secondary impact through the creation of a small sediment plume, which will increase turbidity and sedimentation in the immediate vicinity. The naturally high sediment loads, mobile sandy substrate and small size of the plume mean that these impacts will not be significant.

Both the Haisborough Hammond and Winterton SAC and North Norfolk Sandbanks and Saturn Reef SAC have conservation objectives to restore the extent and



distribution of the subtidal sandbank feature within the site. This restore objective is driven by the view that the site is in unfavourable condition which is partly due to the presence of existing or consented energy infrastructure e.g. offshore windfarms and oil and gas, which has caused the loss of sandbank habitat. Whilst the SNS pipeline deposit campaign will cause some further change to the extent of sandy habitat in the SACs the area of seabed that will be covered by mattresses and RFUs is so small that it cannot make a significant change to the overall condition or ecological function of the SAC either alone or in-combination. Namely the area of the deposits in the NNSBSR SAC from this project alone are 33.6m<sup>2</sup>, the whole SNS pipeline deposit campaign results in 336m<sup>2</sup> which equates to <0.00001% of the estimated area of sandbank in the site. The area of the deposits in the HHW SAC from this project alone are 168m<sup>2</sup>, the whole SNS pipeline deposit campaign results in 268.8m<sup>2</sup> which equates to (< 0.000018% of the estimated area of sandbank in the site. Given that of the area covered by deposits a large proportion is already characterised by existing pipeline, the effect of the deposits on the SACs will not be significant.

The pipeline deposits will cover an area of the Southern North Sea (SAC) of approximately 201m<sup>2</sup> from this project alone, the area of the whole SNS pipeline deposits are 974m<sup>2</sup>, which equates to <0.000003% of the site. Whilst the deposits will change the character of immediate area from sandy sediment to hard surface this is not expected to alter the prey availability or supporting habitats of harbour porpoise in a way whereby the condition of the population or the objectives of the site could be affected.

151.2m<sup>2</sup> of mattresses will be deposited in the Cromer Shoals Chalk Beds MCZ, whilst they wont be located on any of the chalk or rock bed features of the site, the MCZ does also offer protection to the surrounding sedimentary habitats. The mattresses will be placed on areas of coarse and mixed sediments and their presence will likely change, to some degree, the type of species and properties associated with the pre-existing seabed. The area covered by the mattresses equates to approximately < 0.000048% of the total area of the MCZ. The proportion of the area impacted is so small that the change in habitat function is not likely to have any significant effect on the site or its conservation objectives either alone or in-combination with other projects.

The works will take place in the Greater Wash SPA and whilst there will be some modification to local seabed conditions due to the presence of mattresses this will not be of a spatial scale capable of significantly affecting the prey availability or supporting habitats of any designated species. The ROV support vessel may be present in the SPA during winter when common scoters and red throated divers are present. These birds are features of the SPA and may be found around the deposit location whilst works are underway. There may be some disturbance to these birds due to the physical presence of the vessel and birds may show avoidance of the area. This avoidance will only be for the duration of the works (3 days) and will be limited to the immediate area around the vessel. Such minor disturbance is not likely to cause any significant effects to the conservation objectives of the SPA.

Fish, marine mammals and benthic species are not considered to be significantly



impacted. Underwater noise from the operations is considered to have a negligible impact on marine mammals and fish species as the majority of noise is of low frequency and is not impulsive.

The main risk of accidental release of hydrocarbons is the loss of diesel inventory from a vessel. The assessment showed that the probability of a diesel spill from a vessel involved in the project is very low, with numerous mitigation measures and procedures in place. Therefore, the risk of an oil spill event that could have a significant impact on the environment is minimal.

The proposed operation is planned to utilise a single vessels and atmospheric emissions have been assessed from the diesel used for this vessel and the time spent on location. The total atmospheric emissions from the vessel when undertaking the works will be 56.88 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) which accounts for 0.000398% of the total offshore oil and gas UKCS CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (using 2022 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.

There are no expected transboundary effects from the operations. There are no planned discharge of offshore chemicals associated with the works

Whilst a number of other activities are occurring the in wider region which have an interaction with the seabed, the minor and small-scale nature of the effects resulting from the deposit campaign mean that that it will not cause any significant increase in cumulative impact.

The operations are in accordance with the English East and Offshore East Marine Plan.

## **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