

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-669U
UKOP Doc Ref:1372057



Offshore Petroleum Regulator
for Environment & Decommissioning

APACHE NORTH SEA LIMITED
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LONDON
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Registered No.: 04614761

Date: 28th November 2024

Department for Energy Security &
Net Zero

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AB10 1BJ

Tel [REDACTED]

Fax

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opred@energysecurity.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

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

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference PR/2535/0 (Version 2), dated 26th November 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.

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**

FORTIES

PR/2535/0 (Version 2)

Whereas APACHE NORTH SEA LIMITED has made an application dated 26th November 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, PCON/8121.

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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

This screening direction shall be valid from 1 January 2025.

2 Change to production level(s)

The holder of the screening direction shall ensure that the change in the level(s) of production do not exceed the amended level(s) detailed in the application for the screening direction, and in the application for consent relating to the approval for the getting of petroleum issued under the relevant production licence Model Clause.

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, using the appropriate Environmental Emissions Monitoring System (EEMS) reporting forms.

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

or

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

Increase in gas production from the Forties Echo field as a consequence of the recovery of existing 4 " x 3 " ESP completions, performing a clean out run to dress the PBR and re-completing the well with a new 4 " x 3 " ESP completion to re-instate well integrity on a number of platform wells.

Description of the project

This project consists of an increase in gas production of less than 500,000 cubic meters per day at the Forties Echo field as a consequence of the recovery of existing 4 " x 3 " ESP completions, performing a clean out run to dress the PBR and re-completing the well with a new 4 " x 3 " ESP completion to re-instate well integrity on a number of platform wells. This meets the definition of "project" under the Offshore EIA regulations (2020). The change to Gas baseline of 2024 is an increase



of 9,000m³ per day.

No cumulative impacts are expected to occur with any other existing or approved projects currently, from the project.

There is no change to the assessment of a major accident. 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.

It is not considered to be likely that the project will be affected by natural disasters.

Other than the matters considered further below, there is not likely to be any significant impact of 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 Forties Field lies in the Central North Sea, mainly in UKCS Block 21/10 and extending into Block 22/6. The platform is located in a water depth of approximately 121m. The platform is located 169km from the Aberdeenshire coastline and 59km from the UK/Norway Median Line.

Samples taken from within the Forties area are represented by medium to coarse sand with large shell fragments and other shell debris. The sediment was classified as moderately well sorted and was dominated by medium and fine sand with fine material (<63 μ m, silt and clay) accounting for 4.9% of the sediment. Gravel-sized material (>2 mm) was negligible, accounting for 0.2% of the sediment.

Analysis of survey data of the benthic ecology from the Forties Alpha Platform region demonstrated that polychaete *P. jeffreysii* was numerically dominant, being found in every sample at mean abundance of 87 individuals. No Annex I habitats or communities of conservation significance were considered to be present within the survey area. There were no other species and habitats of concern identified within the survey area, including those on the Oslo and Paris Convention (OSPAR) (2008) list of threatened and/or declining species and habitats, species listed on the Scottish Biodiversity List (2013), or species or habitats selected as Priority Marine Features (PMFs) in Scottish offshore waters, under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009).

Minke whale, Orca, Bottlenose dolphin, Risso's Dolphin, white-beaked dolphin, Atlantic white-sided dolphin and harbour porpoise have all been recorded in the vicinity of the Forties Field area. Densities of the species are categorised overall as moderate, with the exception of the white beaked dolphin, harbour porpoise, Atlantic white-sided dolphin and Minke which are observed in high density from July to October. Grey and harbour seals may be encountered but due to the distance from shore, it is unlikely that the area is visited regularly or in high numbers. Density maps



show the presence of grey seals and harbour seals in the area of the platform as between $>0\%$ and $\leq 0.001\%$ of the mean percentage at sea population per 25 km² respectively.

Seabird sensitivity in the region of the Forties field is low throughout the year with no data for November and December. In addition, the operations are located approximately 169 km from the nearest UK coast and is therefore remote from sensitive seabird breeding areas on the coast.

The Forties platform is not situated within any conservation areas, with the nearest area of conservation interest being the Scanner Pockmark SAC which lies 62 km to the North. This site is designating for the Annex I habitat 'submarine structures made by leaking gases'. The nearest NCMPA is the East of Gannet and Montrose Fields, which is 31 km to the south, and the Norwegian Boundary Sediment Plain 48 km to the east. Both sites are designated for ocean quahog *Artica islandica* aggregations, with East of Gannet and Montrose Fields also featuring the deep-sea muds habitat (JNCC, 2024b).

The Forties field lies within ICES rectangle 44F1, which is a spawning area for Norway pout, lemon sole, cod, mackerel, Norway lobster, and sandeel. It is also nursery grounds for a number of Priority Marine Feature species. Cod and spurdog are also listed on the OSPAR list of 'threatened and/or declining species (OSPAR, 2008). The area is mainly targeted for shellfish, followed by demersal species and fishing effort would be considered low. The operations take place in an established 500 m zone and thus fishing activity will not be impacted.

The Forties field is not within a MoD practice and exercise area and there are no military restrictions. Shipping activity within the area is assessed to be very low. There are numerous wrecks within 10 km of the platform area, but none are wrecks designated under the Protection of Military Remains or are of Historical Importance. The nearest offshore wind INTOG (Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas) application area is Campion Wind which is approximately 54km southwest from the operations.

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 and 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 or on population and human health.

The proposed increase in oil and gas production from the Forties field is the result of well intervention activities on existing platform wells which has brought them back



into service with increased gas production from said wells. The increases are within the design capacity of the existing Forties facilities. There will be only minor changes to the operating mode, emissions or discharges from the platform. Flaring and venting operations will remain unchanged as result of the increase in production and therefore no significant change in the atmospheric emissions or environmental impacts are expected.

No increase in produced water discharge volumes and discharged oil is expected and there are no requirements for an increase in chemicals due to the increase in production.

The probability of an accidental event leading to a release from the platform or a loss of the inventory will not increase as a result of the revised production.

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

The requested increase in production is not expected to result in an increase in the total quantity of gas to be extracted over the lifetime of the Forties field.

It is considered that the increase in production from the Forties field is not likely to have a significant impact on other offshore activities or other users of the sea, the seabed, marine life or cetacean species and no cumulative impacts are expected to occur. The development is in line with the policies of the Scottish Marine Plan.

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.