

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-6549U
UKOP Doc Ref:1379533



Offshore Petroleum Regulator
for Environment & Decommissioning

INTERCONNECTOR LIMITED
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LONDON
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Registered No.: 02989838

Date: 21st January 2025

Department for Energy Security &
Net Zero

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Crimon Place
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AB10 1BJ

Tel [REDACTED]

Fax

www.gov.uk/desnz
opred@energysecurity.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

**THE OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION, UNLOADING
AND STORAGE (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS
2020
PIPELINE PL1339**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference PL/2542/0 (Version 3), dated 21st January 2025 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**

PIPELINE PL1339

PL/2542/0 (Version 3)

Whereas INTERCONNECTOR LIMITED has made an application dated 21st January 2025, 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, PA/5466.

Effective Date: 21st January 2025

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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 22 January 2025 until 28 February 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

3 Nature of stabilisation or protection materials

Rock bag deposits

18 x 8-tonne rock bags and 12 x 4-tonne rock bags

4 Location of pipeline and stabilisation or protection materials

Within an area bounded by the coordinates 52 48'15"N, 1 53'6"E to 52 48'15"N, 1 53'9"E; ED50 along the PL1339 pipeline

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

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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

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 assessments undertaken by OPRED to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required for this project.

This document 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 relevant 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 Project

This screening direction (PL/2542) relates to subsea pipeline remediation works on the interconnector pipeline running from Bacton to Zebrugge (PL1339).

Having regard, 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



This screening direction is for the deposit of stabilisation materials at three points across a freespan which has been identified along the PL1339 pipeline. The deposits are covered by Deposit Consent PA/5466.

The deposits comprise 18 8-tonne rock bags and 12 4-tonne rock bags.

Description of project

The Bacton to Zeebrugge Interconnect pipeline (PL1339) is located in the Southern North Sea. The owner has identified an exposed section (freespan) of the pipeline that requires immediate protection. the interconnector pipeline transports dry gas.

The proposed pipeline protection works will occur at Location 1 (52 48'15"N, 1 53'6"E to 52 48'15"N, 1 53'9"E; ED50) along the PL1339 pipeline (Figure 1.1) within Block 52/10. The works are located within the Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC, off the northeast coast of Norfolk.

The freespan of pipeline that requires protection is approximately 65 m in length and 1-1.2 m in height. The proposed works consist of worst-case placement a volumes of rock bags not exceeding 200 tonnes including 18 8-tonne rock bags and 12 4-tonne rock bags. The S type rock bags have a height of 0.7 m and diameter of 3m, with a mesh size of 50 mm and a recommended granulometry of the interior rock material of 75 mm. The 4-tonne Ecogreen type rock bags have a height of 0.6 m and diameter of 2.4 m, with a mesh size of 25 mm and a recommended granulometry of the interior rock material of 50 mm.

Location of 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 location of the deposits is located in the Southern North Sea (SNS) in Block 52/10,

approximately 15.5 km from the Norfolk coastline in an area where the water depth is between 20 and 30 m.

The project location is within the Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC and the Southern North Sea SAC. It is within 5 km of the Greater Wash SPA.

Seabed sediments within the area consist primarily of Atlantic circalittoral fine to muddy sand , with sandbanks associated with the Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC. To the east and west of the freespan of pipeline, circalittoral coarse sediment dominates. Topology within the area is locally affected by megaripples and/or sandwaves.



The majority of fishing activity occurring in the Southern North Sea is located away from the location of the proposed works within ICES Rectangle 34F1 (BEIS, 2022).

The key fishing gears used within ICES Rectangle 34F1 are pots and traps (representing a landed weight of 1200 tonnes), reflecting the majority of caught species consisting of brown crab and lobsters.

There are multiple major shipping routes through the Southern North Sea connecting major ports on the east coast of England and transiting the NS. Key ports in the area of the proposed works include Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. Block 52/10 is characterised in the Shipping Density Table of the 29th Licensing Round information pack as having a Very High shipping density.

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 impacts on the environment from the activities associated with the project were assessed, with particular focus on the predominant impacts resulting from physical presence of the installed infrastructure and associated deposits and seabed disturbance resulting from the deposit of those materials.

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 presence of permanent support materials in the form of rock bags does have the potential to interact with users of the sea - primarily fishermen however the deposits are within the footprint of the existing pipeline and are unlikely to have a significant impact.

The qualifying features of the SNS SAC are Harbour porpoise and it's prey. This operation, depositing up to 30 rock bags under the interconnector pipeline will not have a significant impact on the population within the Winter SAC. Noise from the vessel used to deposit the rock bags may potentially disturb a small number (less than 1) of individuals but will not have a significant impact on the population.

The qualifying feature of the Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC is 'Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time'. Deposits have the potential to impact this qualifying feature however given the small volume of deposit of rock bags and the fact that the deposits are below and within the existing footprint of the interconnector pipeline it can be concluded that there will not be a likely significant effect on the SAC.

The work is approximately 4 km from the Greater Wash SPA. Given the short duration of the works and the small area of seabed disturbance associated with the deposits it is not anticipated that there will be a significant effect on the features of the SPA. The vessel will not pass through the SPA.



Given the small area of disturbance associated with the deposits (around 84.8 m²), the project is not expected to have a significant impact on seabed sediments and features, benthos, fish or shellfish.

Noise emissions associated with the vessel undertaking the deposit and ROV. Noise from the vessel used to deposit the rock bags may potentially disturb a small number (less than 1) of individuals but will not have a significant impact on the population.

The vessel undertaking the work will result in 32 tonnes CO₂ e of emissions. 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 transboundary impacts as a result of the planned works, and no cumulative impacts have been identified given the other known existing and approved projects in the wider area.

Taking all the above determinations into account, the Secretary of State has concluded that the project is not likely to have a significant impact on the environment, and so an EIA 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