Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-7060U
UKOP Doc Ref:1438077

Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment & Decommissioning

NET ZERO NORTH SEA STORAGE LIMITED
CHERTSEY ROAD
SUNBURY ON THAMES
MIDDLESEX
UNITED KINGDOM
TW16 7BP

Registered No.: 12473084

Date: 4th March 2026

Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

AB1 Building
Crimon Place
Aberdeen
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
NEP Expansion – Phase 3, Noble Intrepid DRILLING EXPLORATION WELL C43/30- BC39 planned well

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference DR/2630/0 (Version 3), dated 2nd March 2026 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

Signature Not Verified
Digitally signed by Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
Date: 2026.03.04 16:47:21 GMT
Reason: On behalf of the Secretary of State
Location: Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning

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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

NEP Expansion – Phase 3, Noble Intrepid DRILLING EXPLORATION WELL C43/30- BC39 planned well

DR/2630/0 (Version 3)

Whereas NET ZERO NORTH SEA STORAGE LIMITED has made an application dated 2nd March 2026, 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/17859/0/IDA/1 and WONS/17872/0/WT/1.

Effective Date: 4th March 2026

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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 4 March 2026 until 31 December 2026.

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

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:

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
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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 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 the 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 the drilling of the C43/30-2 (BC39) exploration well which will target a brine aquifer for the purpose of carbon storage as part of the Northern Endurance Partnership (NEP) development. The well will be drilled from the Noble Intrepid jack-up rig. The aim of the well is to evaluate the structure for its suitability to store dense-phase CO2. As part of the project a wire line logging campaign will be completed including Vertical Seismic Profiling and well test. Following drilling the well will be phase 2 abandoned (all zones of flow being permanently isolated) with long term reservoir pressure and temperature monitoring gauges installed.

Operations are estimated to last 120 days with work commencing from 4 March 2026.

Drilling will consist of the following sections:

- 36" top hole section drilled using water based mud (WBM)

- 17 " section drilled using WBM

- 12 1/4 " section drilled using low toxicity oil based mud (LTOBM)

- 8 " section drilled using LTOBM

Following the drilling a wellbore clean-up assembly will be run in hole and a well wash train will remove all LTOBM from the well bore. Following Well bore clean up, the 7" liner will then be perforated and well test performed, performing reservoir injecting testing using completion or formation brine.

The drilling operations are detailed in the application to the NSTA reference - WONS/17859/0/IDA/1

The well test operations are detailed in the application to the NSTA reference - WONS/17872/0/WT/1

Description of the Project

The project is to drill the BC39 exploration well from the Noble Intrepid in 4 sections, two using LTOBM and using WBM. Cuttings for the sections containing OBM will be skipped and shipped to shore. After each section is drilled, the wellbore will be lined with steel casing which is cemented in place. As the BC39 is an exploration well, conductor cementing shall be required. Conductor cementing will require cement to be pumped to the seabed.

Following the 8 " section being cored, drilled and logged to a target depth, a 7" liner will be run and cemented in place to provide reservoir isolation barrier. A wellbore clean-up assembly will be run in hole to mechanically scrape the wellbore and to facilitate displacement of the wellbore from LTOBM to completion brine. A well wash train consisting of clean up pills will be pumped ahead of the completion brine to remove all LTOBM from the wellbore.

Upon the completion of well bore clean up operation, a well test will be run. The 7" liner will be perforated and well test performed, firstly drawing down and flowing back reservoir brine to surface followed by reservoir injecting testing using completion or formation brine.

At the end of pumping, testing and monitoring operations, the well will be killed, and the drill string recovered to surface. As the BC39 well is targeting a brine aquifer reservoir, it is considered very unlikely that any reservoir hydrocarbons will be encountered.

Long term monitoring station will then be deployed in the wellbore and upon successful verification testing, the reservoir and gauges will be isolated with cement plug barrier for caprock restoration. The conductor will then be cut 3 m below the mudline, recovered to surface and a LTMS transponder (1 m x 0.1 m) will be positioned vertically at the mudline. The transponder will be in place for a maximum of 15 years.

Two tidal gauges will be placed on the seabed for the duration of well testing in order to monitor pressure and temperature. Both tidal gauges will be placed within a 2 m x 0.5 m basket and will be recovered following the completion of well testing.

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

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. 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 proposed drilling project is located is located in carbon storage license CS006 which forms part of the Northern Endurance Partnership (NEP) Expansion area - Phase 3 in the Southern North Sea in Block 43/30 approximately 125 km East of the English mainland and 63 km West of the UK / Netherlands median line. The water depth is 40 m. The annual mean significant wave height ranges from 1.5 to 2.1 m. The mean residual currents in the area are 0.5m/s.

The seabed in the area of BC39 sediments in the vicinity of the BC39 well are comprised largely of muddy sand, with patches of sand to the north and south of Block 43/30 and a small area of slightly gravelley sand in the north west corner of the Block.

The most frequently noted taxa were Annelida, Anthropoda, Mollusca, Echinodermata (6%) making up the rest of the majority. The survey found that the macrofaunal communities across the survey area can be considered typical of the wider area

There was some evidence of the presence of juvenile Ocean Quahog. Other than Ocean Quahog, there was no evidence from the seabed imagery of habitats listed

under Annex I of the Habitats Directive, habitats or species features of conservation importance, nor any priority habitats or species. There was no other evidence of any species or habitats on the OSPAR (2008) list of threatened and/or declining species and habitats or any species on the IUCN (2024) Global Red List of threatened species.

The site is within the Southern North Sea (SNS) SAC which is designated for the presence of the Annex II species harbour porpoise *Phocoena Phocoena.* The Dogger Bank SAC is located approximately 19 km to the northeast of the proposed operations which is designated for the Annex I habitat 'Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time'.

The project is within the East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plan area.). The proposed operations have been assessed against the marine plan objectives and sectoral and cross-sectoral policies.

Harbour porpoise, long-finned pilot whale, minke whale and white-beaked dolphin have been observed in the vicinity of the area of proposed operations. All cetacean species recorded in the area are listed as European Protected Species (EPS) under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and are listed as UK BAP priority species (JNCC, 2007). Harbour porpoises are also protected under Annex II of the European Union (EU) Habitats Directive.

Seabird vulnerability in the vicinity of the site is low to extremely low throughout the Year.

The proposed operations will coincide with fish spawning and/ or nursery activity for the following species: anglerfish, blue whiting, cod, herring, ling, mackerel, plaice, sandeels spurdog and whiting. The project area is targeted primarily for shellfish and the fishing effort in the area is below average.

There are two installations located within a 40 km radius of the BC39 well, Trent and Kilmar. There nearest submarine cable is 9km from the project. Block 43/30 is located in an area of concern to the Ministry of Defence. As such, the MoD must be notified at least 12 months in advance of any upcoming drilling activity. The operator has confirmed that consultation with the MoD has taken place.

There are nine offshore wind developments located within 40 km of the proposed operations with the nearest being 18 km southwest of the well.

The proposed operations are located in an area of high vessel traffic. A Vessel Traffic Survey was undertaken for the presence of the Noble Intrepid during the drilling operations at BC39 well. The report concluded that there are an estimated 3,438 vessels per year within 10 nm of the BC39 location, corresponding to an average of approximately 9 to 10 vessels per day.

Given the location of the project, it is not likely that the areas identified at paragraphs

2(c)(i), (iii), (iv), (vi), (vii) 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 and planned discharges.

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 well will be drilled from the Noble Intrepid jack up rig, within a temporary 500m safety exclusion zone in place which excludes unauthorised access of vessels and prohibiting access to fishing vessels. An ERRV will be on site and in addition to providing emergency support to the Noble Intrepid, it will act as a guard vessel advising other users of the presence of the installation. All appropriate notifications to mariners will be made prior to the well drilling activities commencing.

The MODU has the potential to cause interference to other users of the sea, namely fishing boats and vessel traffic, however the rig and support vessels will be located in a 500m safety zone. Their presence within the safety zone means only authorised vessels would be allowed within the 500 m radius of the MODU, therefore excluding other users of the sea. Given that the well is located in an area considered to be of low importance to the UK fishing industry, any impacts on this industry is not considered to be significant. Although the shipping density is high this is a temporary activity and the impact is deemed insignificant. An emergency response and rescue vessel will be on site continually to monitor for vessel traffic and provide alerts to other users of the sea.

Offshore registered chemicals will be used and discharged during the drilling of the well. The use and discharge of the chemicals has been risk assessed and modelled in accordance with other regulatory requirements. The use and discharge modelling shows a low risk to the environment from the chemicals. Use and discharge of chemicals are not expected to have a significant impact on the environment.

The impacts of drilling discharges on water quality and benthic fauna is predicted to be minimal as affects will be localised and short-lived.

Seabed impacts as a consequence of cement and cuttings discharge, spud can placement are deemed to be negligible when compared to the proportion of the habitat affected.

Moreover, given that recovery of the seabed and the associated benthic communities are likely to begin once drilling has been completed, the environmental impact of the

discharged cuttings, within the impacted area, can be considered insignificant.

There is evidence of juvenile Ocean quahog in the vicinity of the development. However, Ocean quahog are not expected to be significantly impacted at a population level by the proposed operations. There are not likely to be any significant effects.

Fish, marine mammals and other benthic species (which may be PMFs, Annex II species and EPSs) are not considered to be significantly impacted. This includes noise impacts to marine mammals, as drilling and vessel noise is deemed below levels which present a significant risk.

Underwater noise will be generated by the VSP activities which may impact upon cetaceans and fish. However, with a combination of soft start procedures and marine mammal observers ensuring a 500m mitigation zone, there is no significant impact upon cetaceans predicted. Regarding impacts upon fish, no significant impacts are predicted beyond 425 m from the noise source.

The emissions associated with these drilling operations from vessels, helicopters, power generation and contingency flaring may result in short-term deterioration of local air quality within the vicinity of the well location, however, in the exposed conditions that prevail offshore, these emissions are expected to disperse rapidly such that emissions from the vessels are not considered to have a significant impact. CO2e emissions from the operation of the rig and support vessels is estimated to be 10,986 tonnes which represents 0.059% of the emissions associated with UK offshore activities annually.

There are no expected transboundary effects from the planned drilling operations.

There is a low probability of hydrocarbons being encountered during the drilling as the drilling targets a saline aquifer. It is considered that the control measures in place and the low probability of the proposed operations carried out as planned are not likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

The drilling operations are in accordance with the East Offshore Marine Planobjectives and policies. It is considered that the drilling of the BC39 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

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

n/a