

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-7076U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1441690



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment  
& Decommissioning

ITHACA (NE) E&P LIMITED  
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Registered No.: 01483021

Date: 1st April 2026

Department for Energy Security &  
Net Zero

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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**

**Cygnus drilling 44/12a-AAH well**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference DR/2634/0 (Version 4), dated 26th 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](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**

**Cygnus drilling 44/12a-AAH well**

**DR/2634/0 (Version 4)**

Whereas ITHACA (NE) E&P LIMITED has made an application dated 26th 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/18355/0/IDA/1, WONS/18355/0/GS/1 and WONS/18355/0/C/1.

Effective Date: 1st April 2026

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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 April 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](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

Tel [REDACTED]



## **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 Assessment 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**

With regard to the 44/12a-AAH well:

Drilling of the following sections:

- Cleaning out the 30" conductor with water-based mud (WBM)
- 26" section using WBM
- 17.5" section using low toxicity oil-based mud (LTOBM)
- 12.25" sections using LTOBM
- 8.5" section using LTOBM (pilot)
- 8.5" section using LTOBM (geological side-track)
- 6" section using LTOBM
- Contingency mechanical side-track from the 17.5" section with LTOBM as a worst-case
- Contingency re-spud from the 26" section with WBM
- All LTOBM cuttings will be skipped and shipped to shore and there will be no discharge to the marine environment
- Well cementing operations
- Well completion operations
- Well and wellbore clean-up operations
- Well test which will be up to 96 hours long and combust up to 2,000

tonnes of hydrocarbons

### **Description of the project**

This project involves well operations (drilling, cementing, completing, cleaning and testing) for the 44/12a-AAH planned well at the Cygnus Alpha Wellhead Platform from the Valaris Norway jack-up rig. The impacts associated with the placement of the jack-up rig have been considered in DRA/1093. The continued presence of the Valaris Norway has been assessed in DRA/1099 and this application. It is estimated that the activities will take up to 150 days and be completed by 31st December 2026 to account for operational delays. WBM will be used for conductor cleaning and drilling the 26" section. WBM cuttings will be discharged into the marine environment. LTOBM will be used for the drilling all other well sections. LTOBM cuttings will be returned to the jack-up rig topside and will be skipped and shipped to shore for disposal. Casings will be cemented. The well will be completed and cleaned up. A well test will be undertaken.

It is not considered to be 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.

### **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 well is located at the Cygnus field, next to the Cygnus Alpha Wellhead Platform in the Southern North Sea (SNS), in UKCS Block 44/12, approximately 162 kilometres (km) from the UK coastline, and 36 km from the UK/Netherlands Median Line, in a depth of approximately 22 metres (m).

Site specific surveys confirmed that surficial seabed sediments are of silty gravelly sand with shell fragments. The wave height in the area ranges from 1.51 to 2.10 m. Wind strengths are generally between Beaufort scale 1 - 6 (1 - 11 m/s) in the summer months with a greater proportion of strong to gale force winds of force 7 - 12 (14 - 32 m/s) in winter.

Site surveys indicated that the benthic macrofaunal community in the survey area is sparse and non uniform, reflecting typical conditions for the region and driven primarily by heterogeneous sediment composition. Species assemblages varied with sediment type, with taxa such as *Pisone remota* and *Polygordius* associated with coarser sediments and *B. elegans* and *F. fabula* more common in finer sediments. Surveys confirmed low epifaunal presence consistent with mobile sandy substrates.

The Cygnus field is located within the Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is designated due to the presence of the Annex I habitat 'Sandbanks



which are slightly covered by seawater all the time', and the SNS SAC, which is designated for harbour porpoise.

Low to moderate densities of harbour porpoise and white-beaked dolphin have been identified throughout the year. Low densities of minke whale and long-finned pilot whale have been identified in the area between May and August. The Cygnus field is 162 km offshore and grey and harbour seals may be encountered in low numbers.

Seabird sensitivity in the project area is extremely high between November and January. It is low for the remainder of the year, except for July which is medium sensitivity.

The project area lies within fishing designated ICES rectangle 38F2 and the proposed operations will coincide with fish spawning and nursery activity for a number of species.

The project aligns with the East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans and aligns with its policies and objectives.

The project area is primarily used for shellfish and demersal fishing. Fishing effort in the area is considered low.

There are several oil and gas facilities nearby, the closest being Cygnus Bravo, 7.1 km away. The nearest marine cable is less than one kilometre away of the Cygnus field (MCCS TAMPNET). The nearest wind lease area to the proposed operations is the Dogger Bank A Offshore Wind Farm Project located approximately 22 km to the northwest. The CCS license reference CS021 is located approximately 15 km east of the proposed operations. There are no protected wrecks or known areas of military activity within the vicinity of the proposed operations; the nearest un named dangerous wreck is approximately 15.8 km away. Shipping density in the area is high.

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.

All the proposed activities will take place within the Cygnus Alpha Wellhead Platform 500-m safety zone and therefore impacts to other sea users due to physical

presence are not expected.

Discharge of offshore chemicals associated with the proposed activities have been assessed as not likely to have a significant impact on the environment. Chemicals associated with LTOBM sections will be skipped and shipped to shore for disposal and not discharged offshore.

WBM cuttings generated during drilling operations will be discharged to the marine environment and settle in close proximity of the well. LTOBM cuttings from the other sections will be returned to the jack-up rig and will be skipped and shipped to shore for disposal.

It is estimated that up to approximately 1,349.86 tonnes of WBM cuttings will be discharged to the marine environment. The discharge plume released from the WBM cuttings is expected to settle quickly out of the water column and any dissolved contaminants will disperse quickly. This could result in the smothering and mortality of benthic fauna which will result in some short-term temporary impacts. However, benthic communities are expected to regenerate the area impacted by WBM cuttings over time. Therefore, the impacts from seabed disturbance from this discharge are considered to not be significant.

The Valaris Norway will continue to exclude 346.36 m<sup>2</sup> of the seabed through the continued placement of one of the spud cans in sandbank habitat. This will be a temporary impact as the sandbank will be available again on departure of the Valaris Norway on conclusion of drilling activities at the Cygnus Alpha Wellhead Platform.

Noise generated from the project activities will not be significant, and it is concluded that the project is not expected to have a significant impact on the site in relation to the cetaceans in the area and their supporting habitats and prey.

Although not a planned activity, a worst-case major accident scenario resulting from well blowout was modelled and assessed. The probability of a well blowout from the proposed operations is very low. Therefore, it is considered that the control and safety measures in place minimise the risk of a hydrocarbon spill which could have a significant impact. The proposed operations carried out as planned are not likely to have a significant impact on the environment.

Atmospheric emissions directly attributable to the planned activities are expected to rapidly disperse and are not likely to have a significant impact.

Transboundary impacts have been assessed and are not expected to be significant. The nearest boundary (UK/Netherlands Median Line) is located approximately 36 km of the area of operations.

The cumulative impact arising from the proposed operations of the planned 44/12a AAH well have been shown to not be significant.

## **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