

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-7202U  
UKOP Doc Ref:1449302



Offshore Petroleum Regulator  
for Environment  
& Decommissioning

ITHACA ENERGY (UK) LIMITED  
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Registered No.: SC272009

Date: 12th June 2026

Department for Energy Security &  
Net Zero

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Fax

[www.gov.uk/desnz](http://www.gov.uk/desnz)  
[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**

**CAPTAIN, Paul B. Loyd, Jnr DRILLING PRODUCER WELL 13/22a-B15**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference DR/2652/0 (Version 2), dated 1st June 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**

**CAPTAIN, Paul B. Loyd, Jnr DRILLING PRODUCER WELL 13/22a-B15**

**DR/2652/0 (Version 2)**

Whereas ITHACA ENERGY (UK) LIMITED has made an application dated 1st June 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/18865/0/GS/1.

Effective Date: 12th June 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 15 June 2026 until 31 January 2027.

### **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:

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]



## **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, 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:**

Drilling of a side track UB07P to replace the non-operational B15 well which will be drilled using the Paul B. Loyd Jr semi-submersible rig at the Area B template.

The UB07P well will be drilled using Water Based Mud, with a discharge of cuttings and mud to the environment.

The base case is the existing B15 will recover the upper completion and kill weight brine is displaced to Water Base Mud (WBM) and a shallow retrievable bridge plug is set. The side track drilling will have a whipstock set in the existing 9 5/8" casing. An 8 " hole will be directionally drilled, 7 5/8"

liner run and cemented and a 6 " production hole drilled. No direct discharge of cuttings to the marine environment will occur.

The Contingency Full Slot Recovery (FRS) will occur if the 9 5/8" casing integrity is inadequate or the whipstock exit cannot be achieved safely. The well will be drilled from below the 16" Casing shoe. A 12 " hole will first be drilled and be opened up to 12-1/4" x 14-3/4" hole. A 9-5/8" x 11-3/4" casing will be set and the well will be displaced. The 8 " production hole will then be drilled and have been included to represent the worst assessment case.

The assessment includes the completion phase of the project, and there will be no vertical seismic profiling or extended well tests carried out on the well. Drilling and completion operations are expected to last up to 120 days.

### **Description of the Project**

The Captain development began production with the field tied back to a Floating, Production, Storage and Offloading Vessel (FPSO). There were 2 subsequent topside developments - a Bridge Linked platform which serves Area B and C drilling centres, and a Wellhead Protection Platform (WPP'A') which is a self-contained drilling rig position above Area A drill centre. Crude oil is exported from the FPSO via a shuttle tanker, and gas is exported and imported via the Frigg pipeline.

The proposed UM07P well will be drilled using the Paul B. Loyd Jr. semi-submersible drilling rig at the Area B template to replace the existing B15 producer well. The rig will be positioned using eight anchors that will be pre-laid ahead of the arrival of the rig.

The Base case involve deep sidetrack from the existing casing and the contingency is Full Slot Recovery (FRS) if casing integrity issue arise. The base case option will involve to recover the upper completion and kill weight brine will be displaced to Water Base Mud (WBM) and a shallow retrievable bridge plug is set. The side track drilling will have a whipstock set in the existing 9 5/8" casing. An 8 " hole will be directionally drilled, 7 5/8" liner run and cemented and a 6 " production hole drilled. No direct discharge of cuttings to the marine environment will occur.

The Contingency FRS will involve drilling from below the 16" Casing shoe. A 12 " hole will first be drilled and be opened to 12-1/4" x 14-3/4" hole. A 9-5/8" x 11-3/4" casing will be set and the well will be displaced. The 8 " production hole will then be drilled and have been included to represent the worst assessment case.

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

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

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.

## 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 Captain field is located in the Outer Moray Firth area, approximately 191 km west from the UK/Norwegian median line and 69 km north of the Aberdeenshire coast. Survey data shows the area to be indicative of a homogenous sediment mainly made up of sandy mud/muddy sand, which is classified as 'deep circalittoral mud'. Small, localised areas comprising sandy mud were also observed, with pebbles, cobbles and boulders, and are representative of 'deep circalittoral mixed sediments'.

Seabed scars were observed within the area, and are thought to be the result of trawl scars, relic anchoring activities and associated small pull-out pits. Water depths across the area range from 96.5 m Lowest Astronomical Tide (LAT) in the west to 124.1 m (LAT) in the east of the area. Water depth at the Captain WPP A is 105 m LAT and the mean wave height is 1.9 m. Mean wind speed in the area is 8.6 m/s and originates from all directions though primarily from the northeast / east / southeast and south. The mean annual mean surface temperature in the area is approximately 9.5 C whilst the annual mean seabed temperature is approximately 8.5 C. The annual mean surface and near bed salinity in the area is approximately 34.8 .

A survey of the area showed that epibenthic fauna was relatively sparse. The dominant epifauna were sea pens, with other species observed including Norway Lobster, starfish, brittle stars, polychaetes and gastropods. Sea pens were observed over the majority of the survey area, with densities ranging from occasional to frequent using the SACFOR scale, and burrow densities ranging from common to abundant. A SACFOR assessment concluded that the Captain area would be considered to represent the OSPAR habitat 'Sea pens and burrowing megafauna communities'. There was no evidence of ocean quahog in stills or video footage, however grab samples taken had evidence of ocean quahog shells.

Observations of areas of sand concluded that the area may fall broadly within the habitat 'subtidal sands and gravels', which is a priority habitat in the UK. Sandy mud interspersed with boulders and cobbles are indicative of 'stony reefs' however it was concluded that the area was of low resemblance to a stony reef and the Annex I habitat 'stony reef' is not considered to be present.

The Captain field lies within fishing designated ICES rectangle 45E8. The proposed operations will coincide with fish spawning and/or nursery activity for a number of species, including the following which are designated as priority marine features; anglerfish, blue whiting, cod, herring, ling, mackerel, Norway pout, sandeels, spurdog and whiting. Fishing effort in ICES rectangle 45E8 is considered as of moderate importance, with demersal and pelagic fishing dominating the species type. It is not

anticipated that the drilling of the UB07P well will have a significant impact on the fishing industry in the area. The closest aquaculture sites and shellfish protected areas to the Captain location are at Dornoch Firth (ca. 142 km west of the Captain WPPA location).

Minke whale, white-beaked dolphin, Atlantic white-sided dolphin and harbour porpoise have all been recorded in the vicinity of the Captain field. Densities of the species are categorised as very low with the exception of the white beaked dolphin which is low in February, July, September, October and December. Grey and harbour seals may be encountered, and density maps show the mean percentage of at sea populations of grey and harbour seals in the area of the Captain field as  $>0.001$  to  $<0.025\%$ , and  $<0.001\%$  per 25 km<sup>2</sup> respectively. It is unlikely that harbour seals frequent the area.

The Captain area is not situated within any conservation areas, with the nearest area of conservation interest being the Southern Trench NC MPA which lies 45 km to the southwest. This site is designated due to a variety of biodiversity and geological features including shelf deeps, fronts, burrowed mud, minke whale, sub-glacial tunnel valleys and moraines and slide scars from submarine mass movement.

Seabird oil sensitivity in the vicinity of the Captain field is extremely high in February, very high in December, high from April to June, and medium in September and October, and low for the remaining months.

The closest wrecks to the Captain Area B location is located 1.1 km north east. The closest offshore wind farm is located 6.5 km to the south, with 4 other windfarms proposed within 40 km of the Captain field (8 km, 18 km, 24 km and 33 km respectively - all at pre-planning stage). The closest Innovation and Targeted Oil and Gas offshore wind project is approximately 3 km south of the Captain south west of Area B. There is a carbon storage licence (CS003) located approximately 15 km to the east of the Captain field. There are no military restrictions within the block, and the nearest MoD practice and exercise area is located 7 km to the west of the Area B. The closest oil and gas installation is the Bleo Holm FPSO which is 40 km to the southeast of the Captain WPP A. Shipping density within the area is considered to be low. It is not anticipated that the proposed project will have a significant impact on either the wrecks, offshore wind area or the CCS project.

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 change to 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 change to 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 from the change to the project on population and human health.

The proposed UB07P well is already covered by an existing 500 m safety exclusion zone, which excludes unauthorised access of vessels and prohibits access to fishing vessels. Fishing activities within the area are moderate, and shipping density is considered to be low. No additional impacts to other marine users are identified as part of the drilling of well UB07P. Therefore, there are no significant effects likely in terms of physical presence from the proposed project.

Cuttings from the WBM sections will be discharged into the water column. Cuttings dispersion modelling was undertaken for the cumulative effect of all four wells to be drilled as part of the current Captain platform drilling campaign, which includes the UB07P well. The modelling assessment concluded that the cumulative effect of drilling the four wells shows a maximum cuttings pile thickness of 580 mm which decreases to < 6.5 mm within approximately 311 m and <1 mm within 1000 m of the wells. Discharge of offshore chemicals associated with the drilling of the well, cementing and completion operations have been assessed as not likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Seabed disturbance from the deposit of WBM and cuttings to the water column could result in the smothering and mortality of benthic fauna which will result in some short-term temporary impacts. Ocean quahog are sensitive to increased siltation above 30 cm, and it is predicted that this smothering may cause mortality to some ocean quahog who are present in the area. The sea pen and burrowed mud habitats are also likely to be sensitive to smothering above 30 cm, the area of which is likely to extend to approximately 10 m from the release location. Burrowed mud habitats are also used by the Norway Lobster, which are considered likely to spawn within the vicinity of the UB07P well. It has however been shown that the Norway Lobster are tolerant to smothering and have been assessed as not sensitive to an increase in suspended sediment. Given the small area of impact and the discharge of the WBM to the water column, there is the potential for mortality of individual ocean quahog if present in the area, and the potential to effect sea pens and burrowing megafauna. However, it is not expected to affect the population levels across the North Sea and it is expected that the benthic communities will regenerate in the area over time. Cuttings deposition is unlikely to have a significant impact on the environment.

Noise generated from the project activities will not be significant, and it is concluded that the project is not expected to have a likely significant effect on the site in relation to harbour porpoise and the supporting habitats and prey.

There are no expected transboundary effects from the proposal to drill the UB07P well. The nearest boundary (UK/Norwegian median) is located approximately 191 km from the proposed well location. It is not considered likely that any planned operational discharge (cuttings and chemicals) will be detectable at this distance from the well location.

An assessment has been included within the project proposal to assess as a worst

case, an uncontrolled well blow out from the Captain field, and the subsequent potential for a Major Environmental Incident (MEI). The assessment concluded that there is a potential for an MEI to occur, if there is an uncontrolled well blowout. The operator has developed plans and procedures to mitigate against the impacts of oil released to the environment.

The impact of atmospheric emissions on air quality from the proposed operations are not considered to be significant given the offshore location of the Captain field and the expectation that emissions will rapidly disperse. GHG emissions generated from the proposed UB07P drilling operations represent a very small percentage of the total tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e generated from all sectors in the UK (<0.003%) and will contribute only a small fraction towards the fourth carbon budgets (<0.0005%).

There are no known wrecks of historical importance or military activity in the vicinity of the Captain field and the proposed operations are unlikely to impact the proposed offshore wind farm project areas. The drilling operations are in accordance with the National Marine Plan for Scotland's objectives and policies.

It is considered that the drilling activities for the Captain UB07P 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:

Not applicable