

Our Ref: 01.01.01.01-7356U
UKOP Doc Ref:1458302



Offshore Petroleum Regulator
for Environment
& Decommissioning

BBL COMPANY V.O.F.
CONCOURS LAAN 17
9727 KC GRONINGEN
NETHERLANDS

Date: 3rd September 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
PIPELINE PL2225B**

A screening direction for the project detailed in your application, reference PL/2677/0 (Version 1), dated 21st August 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



**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 PL2225B

PL/2677/0 (Version 1)

Whereas BBL COMPANY V.O.F. has made an application dated 21st August 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, PA/6251.

Effective Date: 3rd September 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 4 September 2026 until 30 September 2027.

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/Gravel deposits

16 cubic metres of clean, inert rock in the form of gravel, containing minimal fines, (The gravel deposited should be the minimum required to provide the necessary stabilisation or protection, and any surplus rock must be returned to land).

4 Location of pipeline and stabilisation or protection materials

Within 500m of the following location

52 Degrees 45 Minutes 06.79 Seconds North

02 Degrees 17 Minutes 13.12 Seconds East

WGS84

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

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 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.

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

The project is to deposit up to 16 m of clean, graded gravel beneath a 79 m free span on the 36-inch Balgzand-Bacton Line gas interconnector pipeline (PL2225A) at approximately KP171.8 in UKCS Block 53/7. The gravel will form two localised support stitches, reducing the effective unsupported span lengths and the risk of vortex-induced vibration and pipeline failure during extreme winter storm conditions, while allowing the pipeline's natural self-lowering process to continue.

Description of the project

Routine integrity monitoring, including an April 2026 multibeam echo sounder survey, identified that a known free span at approximately KP171.8 had developed to a length of 79 m. Engineering assessment identified a low but credible risk of failure from cross-flow vortex-induced vibration during extreme winter storms. The adjacent 27 m free span does not require remediation and is outside the scope of the project.

Two gravel stitches are proposed at approximately KP171.793 and KP171.812. Up to 16 one-cubic-metre bags of gravel will be lowered by crane from a dynamically positioned offshore support vessel, positioned using a remotely operated vehicle and opened to release the gravel into the scour trench beneath the pipeline. The bags will

be recovered. Pre- and post-installation multibeam surveys will confirm the free-span condition, placement locations and successful remediation. No anchoring or planned chemical discharges are proposed.

The maximum gravel volume is 16 m³ , comprising 12 m³ for the two designed stitches and 4 m³ contingency. The maximum direct deposit footprint is approximately 48 m² . The gravel will be clean graded quarried rock, with a D50 of 35-50 mm, a maximum particle size of 75 mm and minimal fines. The deposited volume will be limited to the minimum required for effective remediation.

The works will be confined to a 100 m by 40 m work area. The anticipated offshore duration is up to three days on site, with one day of vessel transit each way. The vessel has yet to be commissioned so the start date is yet to be finalised but the principal execution window is October to December 2026, with an advanced contingency window from September and a late contingency extending to 30 September 2027.

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 works are located on the BBL pipeline (PL2225A) in UKCS Block 53/7, approximately 39.1 km from the UK coast at Caister-on-Sea and 61.4 km from the UK-Netherlands median line, in water depths of approximately 45-50 m LAT.

The work area is situated on Smiths Knoll within the Outer Great Yarmouth sandbank system. The seabed comprises mobile sandy sediments associated with a dynamic sandbank environment, with ripple features and scour depressions evident around the free span. The predicted habitat is principally deep circalittoral sand, with nearby areas of circalittoral fine or muddy sand.

The area is subject to strong tidal currents and continual sediment transport. These hydrodynamic conditions drive natural changes in bedform morphology and the development and infilling of pipeline scour and free spans.

The proposed deposits are located within both the Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton Special Area of Conservation and the Southern North Sea Special Area of Conservation. The Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC is designated for Annex I sandbanks and Sabellaria spinulosa reef, while the Southern North Sea SAC is designated for harbour porpoise. The Outer Thames Estuary SPA is approximately 10 km away, the Greater Wash SPA approximately 21-25 km away, and the North Norfolk Sandbanks and Saturn Reef SAC approximately 20-30 km away.

The proposed gravel stitch locations are within Annex I sandbank habitat but outside mapped or interpreted Sabellaria spinulosa reef. Review of historic surveys and the April 2026 pipeline survey identified the nearest potential reef patch approximately



150 m east of the proposed works and outside the anticipated footprint.

The wider area provides spawning and nursery habitat for several fish species. Sandeels are of particular relevance because they spawn on sandy seabeds, although the direct footprint of the gravel placement is very small in relation to the available spawning habitat.

A range of seabirds may occur in the area, including red-throated diver. Seabird sensitivity to oil pollution in Block 53/7 varies seasonally and is high during the principal October to December work period. The BBL pipeline transports dry sales-quality gas meaning the principal accidental pollution risk is associated with fuel and lubricating oils carried by the project vessel.

Harbour porpoise may occur throughout the year and is the qualifying feature of the Southern North Sea SAC. White-beaked dolphin, grey seal and harbour seal may also occur. The proposed works do not involve impulsive noise-generating activities; potential disturbance would arise from the temporary presence and dynamic-positioning operation of the vessel.

Commercial shipping density is high and fishing occurs throughout the year in ICES Rectangle 34F2. Other oil and gas infrastructure is generally more than 20 km from the works, while telecommunications cables are more than 2 km away. The pipeline is adjacent to the proposed cable corridors for the Norfolk Vanguard West consented, Norfolk Boreas consented and Norfolk Vanguard East offshore windfarms, however construction of these windfarms has yet to commence. The work area lies within the East Offshore Marine Plan area.

Given the offshore location and nature 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, except insofar as the project lies within designated European sites considered above.

Assessment of significant effects

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 environmental effects associated with the project include seabed disturbance, habitat loss, underwater noise, atmospheric emissions, vessel presence and accidental events.

The likely environmental effects of the project include localised seabed disturbance and habitat alteration from gravel deposition; temporary sediment suspension and resettlement; continuous underwater noise and vessel presence; atmospheric emissions; temporary interference with fishing, shipping and other sea users; and the risk of accidental releases from the project vessel.

The deposition of up to 16 m³ of gravel will directly alter approximately 48 m² of Annex I sandbank habitat within the Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC. A

conservative wider area of up to 4,000 m² has been considered for temporary disturbance and sediment resettlement. The deposits will be placed predominantly within the existing pipeline scour trench and adjacent to existing infrastructure. Although the immediate sediment composition and associated benthic assemblage will change, the footprint is extremely small relative to the sandbank feature and will not materially alter the wider sandbank morphology, hydrodynamic regime or sedimentary processes.

The gravel is intended to provide localised support while allowing gradual erosion, natural backfilling and continued self-lowering of the pipeline. The mobile sandy habitat and its associated communities are adapted to natural sediment movement. Any indirect effects from suspended sediment and resettlement are expected to be localised, short-lived and reversible. The use of a dynamically positioned vessel avoids anchoring and additional seabed disturbance.

No *Sabellaria spinulosa* reef has been identified within or close to the proposed stitch footprint, and the nearest potential reef patch is approximately 150 m east of the works. The gravel locations will avoid reef habitat and will be confirmed through the pre-installation survey. No significant effect on the reef feature is anticipated.

The project is within the Southern North Sea SAC. Vessel and dynamic-positioning noise will be continuous rather than impulsive, and the vessel will remain on site for up to three days. Any behavioural displacement of harbour porpoise or other marine mammals is expected to be temporary and localised. No significant effects on harbour porpoise or the conservation objectives of the SAC are anticipated.

The works will cause a very small loss and alteration of potential benthic spawning habitat for fish. Given the limited footprint relative to the wider spawning and nursery grounds, and the short duration of installation, effects on fish and shellfish populations are not expected to be significant.

Atmospheric emissions will arise from vessel transit and up to three days of dynamic-positioning operations, total carbon dioxide emissions are estimated at approximately 137.9 tonnes. The contribution is small and temporary, and no significant effect on air quality or climate is anticipated.

The principal accidental event is a release of fuel or lubricating oil from the project vessel following collision or another vessel incident. Standard navigation, vessel certification, pollution-prevention and spill-response measures, including a Ship Oil Pollution Emergency Plan, will be in place. The likelihood of a release causing significant environmental effects is considered very low.

The temporary presence of the project vessel and a 500 m safety zone may cause short-term, localised displacement of fishing and shipping activity. Notices to Mariners, Kingfisher notifications and VHF broadcasts will be used to inform other sea users. The works will also remove a potential snagging and integrity risk associated with the free-spanning pipeline. Significant effects on commercial fisheries, navigation or other sea users are not anticipated.



No significant transboundary effects are anticipated. The works are approximately 61.4 km from the UK-Netherlands median line, and all predicted effects are localised. The project is located within the East Offshore Marine Plan area and is considered compatible with the relevant objectives and policies of that Plan.

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