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Consents given under the Petroleum Act 1998 and Reviews under the Assessment of Environmental Effects Regulations 1999

Conoco (U.K.) Limited

VISCOUNT FIELD DEVELOPMENT

Pursuant to Regulation 5(8) of the above Regulations, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry gives notice that she is content that the requirements of the above Regulations have been satisfied. Pursuant to Licence P003, consent has been granted to Conoco (U.K.) Ltd to the getting of petroleum and the construction of installations in relation to the development of the Viscount Field, in accordance with the environmental statement. The consent for the Viscount field took effect from 25/04/02 and shall last until 17/09/10.

Background

Conoco (U.K.) Limited propose to develop the Viscount Field in Block 49/16. The proposed development will consist of three production wells, a normally unmanned minimum facility and a subsea pipeline tied in to the existing Vampire to LOGGS pipeline. The first well is planned to be drilled on 1 May 2002, followed by the other two. The pipelines and platform will be installed during the Q3 of 2002 with production predicted from Q4 2002. The Viscount field will produce gas over an expected field life of 14 years.

Two new wells and one sidetrack of an existing exploration well will be drilled and completed using a jack-up rig with all the wells to be drilled using water based mud that will be discharged. Once drilling is completed, each well may be flowed for up to 48 hours in order to clean up the well. All gas and condensate produced during this period will be flared.

The new wells will be linked to the Vampire to LOGGS pipeline by an 11.3 km, trenched 12" Pipeline. A 3" methanol line to prevent hydrate formation will be piggy-backed on top of the gas production pipeline.

Sensitivities

The laying and trenching of a 12" and 3" lines will have a short-term environmental impact, but it is predicted that the seabed will recover relatively quickly. The location of the field is in the Southern North Sea and there are sandbanks within 3km of the drilling locations. However, the pipeline route avoids shallow sandbank areas.

The environmental statement includes an option selection process and presents a case for not using other existing infrastructure. A detailed risk assessment has been undertaken and the significant risks identified are addressed within the ES. Mitigation measures are in place to ensure that impacts are kept to a minimum and details of the management systems in place were presented.

Recommendation

Overall the environmental statement is satisfactory and adequately assesses the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development. It is recommended that consent is given to the project.