



PROJECT EXPERIENCE

THE BLACKROCK EXPLORATION WELLS

The Blackrock prospect in Block 49/26 lies off the south coast of Ireland, approximately 65 km southeast of Cork and in water depths of over 100 m. Providence Resources Plc, the owners of the licence block, were involved in the drilling of two exploration wells to establish whether commercially viable quantities of hydrocarbons were present within the block, and to gain key reservoir information for the targeting of new development wells. In support of this, ERT (Scotland) Ltd was responsible for preparing environmental assessment reports and oil spill contingency plans, as well as chemical analysis of environmental samples.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Applications for consent to drill each exploration well in the Blackrock prospect block were supported with environmental assessment reports prepared by ERT, on behalf of Providence. These reports were produced at the request of, and in accordance with advice provided by, the Petroleum Affairs Division (PAD) of the Department of Communications, Marine at Natural Resources. They described both the drilling operations and the receiving environment.



Summer circulation in the Celtic Sea around Blackrock prospect

As part of this process ERT conducted an ENVID (Environmental Issues Identification) workshop, compiling a matrix of all interactions between drilling activities and the surrounding environment. This workshop facilitated the identification of any significant environmental impacts and key issues for further consideration.

OIL SPILL MITIGATION

In accordance with the Sea Pollution (Amendment) Act 1999, the Petroleum Affairs Division guidelines, and good industry practice, ERT developed oil spill contingency plans for the two Blackrock explorations wells. These documents assessed the risk, likely location and type of any potential oil spill, as well as addressing the safety implications and potential impacts of spilled oil on the environment. They were designed to mitigate the environmental impacts of any incidents associated with drilling operations, by providing guidance on practical actions and reporting requirements.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF DRILLING

ERT was involved in the analysis of seabed sediment samples collected as part of an environmental monitoring programme undertaken around Well 49/26A, to assess the impact of drilling on the seabed. Baseline sediment samples were collected from the general area prior to drilling, followed by a second seabed survey, focusing on the area close to the well site. Selected sediment samples were analysed for hydrocarbon and metals content, and grain size.



Evaporation of sediment samples in preparation for hydrocarbon analysis