



PROJECT EXPERIENCE

REMUS EXPLORATION WELL IN THE OUTER MORAY FIRTH

The Remus prospect lies within United Kingdom Continental Shelf (UKCS) Block 12/22 in the outer Moray Firth, about 35 km southeast of Sarclet Head in a water depth of approximately 52 m. The Licence for Block 12/22 is shared between by Amerada Hess Limited (40%) and Talisman Energy (UK) Limited (60%). The project involved drilling a single exploration well to establish whether commercially viable quantities of hydrocarbons are present in Block 12/22, including a well test if any hydrocarbons were to be found. Given the sensitive nature and ecological importance of this area, an extensive environmental impact assessment (EIA) was conducted in order to minimise any adverse environmental impacts that could derive from such a project.

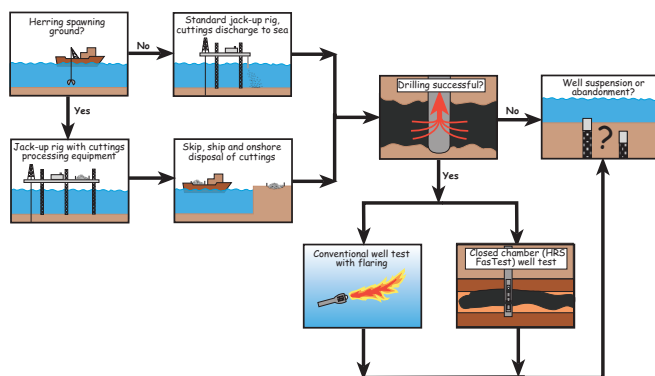
THE CHALLENGE

Any industrial operation in an ecologically important and potentially sensitive area such as the Moray Firth does need to be justified appropriately before such an operation can take place.

Next to being home for one of the only two resident pods of bottlenose dolphins in the UK, the Moray Firth does play a major role in the existence of many other animals as well. The whole estuary is an important feeding ground for birds, and spawning and nursery area various fish and shellfish species.

The Remus exploration well must have been drilled by the end of 2002 according to the terms of the licence conditions, which left Amerada Hess and Talisman with a limited operational window due to the changing environmental sensitivities throughout the year. The Licence conditions also stipulated that a herring spawning survey was executed before the drilling would commence. If the Remus location would be within a herring spawning area, all cuttings should be collected and brought to shore for disposal. If no indications were found to suggest the location was used as herring spawning ground, then the cuttings were allowed to be discharged to sea, as is general practise on the UKCS. Either option would have required a different drilling rig specification and the result of the herring survey would therefore dictated the drilling rig selection.

The selection process followed in this project is shown in the following figure:



THE EIA PROCESS

ERT conducted the environmental assessment for the Remus Exploration well in line with AHL's environmental management system. Some key elements of the environmental assessment process are outlined below.

Scoping and consultation

Scoping activities were conducted early in the process and involved informal consultation (complemented with an early consultation document) with key stakeholders to establish the potential key issues, and the identification of available information sources and information gaps. Formal consultation takes place following submission of the environmental statement.

Identification and assessment of potential environmental effects

ERT organised an environmental screening workshop and an ENVID (environmental issues identification) workshop attended by key members of the project team. These workshops were carried out to screen the project for potential environmental interactions, to identify key issues for further consideration and to establish project goals.

Participation in screening and option selection process

The Remus project underwent a screening process to identify those aspects of the proposed development with potential environmental effects. Consideration of the environmental implications of the project has been an integral part of the design of the drilling programme. The results of this process together with the (informal) consultation process provided a list of concerns that were considered further in the environmental assessment process.

BENEFIT TO THE CLIENT

As a result of the close co-operation with the client and the early consultation with stakeholders, after submission of the environmental statement, no further comments were received during the official public consultation period. This, in turn resulted in a smooth consent process keeping the licensing period to a minimum.