
Mark H Durkan MLA
Minister of the Environment
Goodwood House, 44 - 58 May Street,
Town Parks, Belfast BT1 4NN

Oliver McMullan MLA
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont

AQW 42929/11-15

Oliver McMullan MLA has asked:

To ask the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 42175/11-15, whether he will provide a copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment report.

ANSWER

A copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment determination will be placed in the Assembly library.

Signed:



Mark H Durkan MLA

Date:

11/03/15

EA DETERMINATION SHEET

Applic. No. **V/2013/0127/PREAPP**

Date Received **28.08.2013**

Case Officer:

Proposal: **proposed petroleum exploration well and access lane**

Location: **350m east of Woodburn North Reservoir, Woodburn Forest, north-west of Carrickfergus**

Deadline for Determination:

Extension of time requested:

Date Agreed:

The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

Does the development fall within the scope of Schedule 1 of the above Regulations: -

No

Does the development fall within the scope of Schedule 2 of the above Regulations: -

Yes

If 'Yes' which category: -

2 (D) - The carrying out of development to provide deep drillings, including in particular:(i) geothermal drilling,(ii) drilling for the storage of nuclear waste material,(iii) drilling for water supplies, with the exception of drillings for investigating the stability of the soil.

What are the likely environmental effects of the project:-

Dust – Due to the nature of the proposal, dust will be generated from the onsite drilling and the traffic transporting machinery and material on and off site.

Noise – Due to the nature of the proposal, noise will be generated from on site operations.

Visual amenity – The proposed site is 1.33 ha and has the potential to be visually prominent in the current landscape.

Loss of fauna and flora - Due to the nature of the proposal there may be a loss of flora as the development involves the disturbance and removal of material.

Impact on the Hydrology - As the development involves deep drilling, there is potential for impact on the local water table

Impact on Archaeological Designation - The development has the potential to impact on nearby NIEA Archaeological Designations.

Potential for accidents during operations – There is scope for accidents to occur during the working of the extraction site.

Traffic - The development will generate traffic movements, which may impact on the local road network.

Were consultations necessary to complete the environmental assessment determination? If YES please specify.

NIEA: Natural Heritage

Are the environmental effects likely to be significant:- NO

Recommended Determination

An Environmental Statement is not required for the following reasons

Specify below

Characteristics of the development

The development is for a borehole drilling to a depth of 2000m using a drilling rig. The boreholes are designed to gain a better understanding of the subsurface geology of the area, under which the operator holds a petroleum exploration licence. The boreholes are also to be utilised to identify areas where there is potential for oil or gas deposits to have accumulated.

The Drilling rig is a light to medium rotary drilling rig. The maximum height of the rig mast will not exceed 55 m above ground level. There are no aerodromes within 3km of the proposal site. The drill rig will be illuminated at night for health and safety reasons.

Size of the development

The area in which the borehole drilling is proposed is approximately 1.33 ha.

The cumulation with other developments

There would be cumulation with agricultural developments however given the short duration of the development (approximately 18 weeks) it is considered that the addition of this development is not likely to result in significant environmental effects.

The use of natural resources

There will be a disturbance of the land as a result of the development. There will also be the removal of some immature non-native trees. This land disturbance and non-native

tree removal is not considered to be environmentally significant.

The production of waste

The proposal itself should not generate any additional waste products.

Pollution and nuisances

The proposal will involve the use of machinery, which will produce emissions to the air in the form of noise and dust. The closest residential property to the site is approximately 250m to the south east, as such any noise and dust emissions will not have a significant effect. The proposed development is well screened by the surrounding forestry and as such there is very limited potential visual impact.

The risk of accidents

The development will involve the standard risks associated with any such operation consistent with deep drilling and ancillary processing practices. Standard Health and Safety procedures should be adopted, implemented and complied with at all times.

Location of the development

There are a number of dwellings surrounding the site, however the nearest dwellings is approximately 250m to the South East.

The proposal site is not located within any environmentally designated areas. There are a number of environmental designations within 10km of the proposed site. The closest environmentally designated site is North Woodburn Reservoir ASSI, approximately 450m east of the site.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

- North Woodburn Reservoir ASSI – 450m East
- North Woodburn Glen – 1420m South
- South Woodburn Reservoir – 1950m South

Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas

- Antrim Hills SPA – 8200m North
- Belfast Lough SPA – 5190m South
- Belfast Lough Open Water SPA – 5770m South
- Larne Lough and Swan Island SPA – 9200m Northeast

Archaeological Sites

- Duncrue Fort – 1600m South East

The Department has consulted with NIEA: Natural Heritage regarding the potential impact of the development on the closest environmentally designated site. NIEA: NH has advised that there will be no likely significant effects on the North Woodburn ASSI, provided the well design is in accordance with Section 5.5 of the submitted document entitled, Information to Inform Planning Service. As such it is deemed that there will be no impact on these designations.

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered having regard in particular to,

The existing land use

The land is currently a forested area, managed by the DARD Forest Service. The site is routinely felled and replanted. As such the removal of trees within this site will not be environmentally significant.

The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area

Due to the small scale nature of the proposal it is not considered that there will be a significant impact in terms of the relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area.

The absorption capacity of the natural environment

The application site does not lie within an AONB, nor does it affect any wetlands, coastal zones or nature reserves. The site is located within a forested area, however this is non-native managed forest, which is routinely felled and managed. As such the removal of a small number of trees within this area will not be environmentally significant.

The applicant has also considered the potential impact on the fresh water aquifers and surface water catchment in the vicinity of the proposal. The applicant has proposed the use of a bentonite mat, which will seal the site in its entirety with zero discharge. NI Water has advised it is satisfied with this pollution prevention and mitigation measure. As such the effects on the water environment are not deemed to be significant.

The proposal does not affect areas where environmental quality standards have already been exceeded, nor does it affect a densely populated area.

Characteristics of potential impact

The extent of the Impact

It is anticipated that the extent of any potential impact would be limited to the proposal site. The area appears to be remote and well concealed by the existing forest. The closest residential dwelling is some 250m to the south east; as such it is unlikely that there will be any significant noise or dust impacts.

There will be localised disturbance of the land; however the developer is required to return the land to its condition prior to the development taking place.

Transfrontier nature of the impact

There will be no transfrontier impacts associated with the proposal.

The magnitude of the proposal

It is considered that the magnitude and complexity of the environmental impacts the proposed development could potentially have are not significant.

The probability of the visual impact

Taking into account the scale and nature of the proposed development set within the context of its location, the probability of the impacts referred to above being significant, is considered to be low.

Duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact

The development is for a short duration, a 10 week site preparation, 1 month drilling period and 1 month restoration, so any impact with may occur will be short term and as such not considered to be significant. The impacts are considered to be reversible as they are limited to the 1 month drilling period and the site will be restored to its original condition.

Conclusion

DCAN 10 'Environmental Impact Assessment' states that's in general EIA will be needed for Schedule 2 developments in the following three circumstances;

- For major developments which are of such a scale as to have wide-ranging environmental effects and be of more than local importance;
- For developments of a smaller scale located wholly or partly in environmentally sensitive locations where their effects are significant; in certain cases, other areas subject to environmentally- bases statutory or non-statutory designations not included in the definition of "sensitive areas" may also be relevant in determining whether EIA is required; urban locations may also be considered sensitive as effects on a densely populated area may be significant;
- For developments with unusually complex and potentially hazardous environmental effects where expert and detailed analysis of such effects would be desirable and would be relevant to the issue of whether or not the development should be allowed.

In relation to the first point, the proposed development is not considered to be a major development.

In relation to the second point the application concerns development located in close proximity to an environmentally sensitive location, however, it is determined that this development will not detrimentally impact on North Woodburn Reservoir ASSI.

In relation to the final point, it is considered that the development will not have unusually complex or potentially hazardous environmental effects which would warrant the preparation of an Environmental Statement.

Taking into account the above, it is considered that this Schedule 2 development it unlikely to have significant effects on the environment and does not warrant the submission of en ES to accompany the application.

Signatures

Dated

1. 
2. 
3. 





REASONS WHY AN EA DETERMINATION IS NECESSARY

PROPOSAL: proposed petroleum exploration well and access lane

This form must not be detached from EA Determination Sheet

The development is 1.3 ha in size and as such is considered to fall within a Schedule 2 Column 1 of the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012; 2 (D) - The carrying out of development to provide deep drillings, including in particular: (i) geothermal drilling, (ii) drilling for the storage of nuclear waste material, (iii) drilling for water supplies, with the exception of drillings for investigating the stability of the soil. In accordance with the EIA regulations, a screening exercise has been carried out to determine whether or not an EIA is required.

The proposal has been considered against the selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 developments as identified in Schedule 3 of the regulations and it is concluded that an Environmental Statement is not required for this development.

Signatures

1. 
2. 
3. 

Dated

- 
- 
- 

PROPOSAL: proposed petroleum exploration well and access lane

1. Characteristics of development.

The characteristics of development must be considered having regard, in particular,

to: -

- | | |
|---|---|
| a) the size of the development; | y |
| b) the cumulation with other development; | y |
| c) the use of natural resources; | y |
| d) the production of waste; | y |
| e) pollution and nuisances; | y |
| f) the risk of accidents, having regard in particular to substances or technologies used. | y |

2. Location of development

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, having regard, in particular, to: -

- | | |
|--|-----|
| a) the existing land use; | y |
| b) the relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area; | y |
| c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas: - | |
| i.) wetlands; | N/a |
| ii.) coastal zones; | N/a |
| iii.) mountain and forest areas; | Y |
| iv.) nature reserves and parks; | N/a |

- v.) areas classified or protected under EEA states' legislation; areas designated by EEA states pursuant to Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds (a) and Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (b); N/a
- vi.) areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in Community legislation have already been exceeded; N/a
- vii.) densely populated areas; N/a
- viii.) landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance. Y

3. Characteristics of the potential impact

The potential significant effects of development must be considered in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in particular to: -

- a) the extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population); Y
- b) the transfrontier nature of the impact; N/a
- c) the magnitude and complexity of the impact; Y
- d) the probability of the impact; Y
- e) the duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact; Y

Signature of Officer: _____

Date: _____