

**PLANNING ACT 2008**

**THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (APPLICATIONS: PRESCRIBED FORMS AND PROCEDURE) REGULATIONS 2009**

**The Morecambe Offshore Windfarm Generation Assets**

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**Deadline 5 Submission of Spirit Energy Production UK Limited**

**Responses to the Examining Authority's further written questions and requests for information (ExQ2)**

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**EN010121**  
**Unique Reference: 20049981**

<b>Date</b>	11 March 2025
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## Responses to the Examining Authority's written questions and requests for information (ExQ2)

The following table sets out the responses of Spirit Energy Production UK Limited (**Spirit**) to the Examining Authority's further written questions and requests for information (**ExQ2**) [[PD-015](#)] directed to Spirit.

Question			Spirit's Response
2CAR5	Spirit Energy	<p><b>Minimum distance from platform(s) in VMC / Visual Flight Rules (VFR)</b>  In Spirit Energy's WR at D1 and D3 ([<a href="#">REP1-116</a>], paragraph 2.22 and [<a href="#">REP3-102</a>] paragraph 2.12) it states that a minimum distance of 1.9nm would be required to ensure safe approach and OEI take off in VMC using VFR.  Without prejudice to Spirit Energy's wider position that a minimum 3.76nm buffer is required, should the SoS be minded to make the DCO in favour of the applicant accepting that this would restrict access to daytime VMC/ VFR only, can Spirit Energy advise:</p> <p>a) whether a minimum distance of 1.9nm would be acceptable and, if not, what minimum distance would be required and why?</p> <p>b) whether this should be secured by way of a Protective Provision and if so, can you please provide drafting of such a provision?</p>	<p>a) Spirit Energy maintains that a 3.76nm buffer is required for the safety of its operations in all weather and after dark including in conditions requiring instrument flying (IMC).</p> <p>A buffer distance of 1.9nm is the minimum acceptable requirement for safe landing and take-off in daytime visual meteorological conditions (VMC). However, this restricts Spirit Energy from undertaking operations after dark in VMC.</p> <p>With regard to VMC night flying, Spirit Energy refers to the anticipated CAA restriction on all operations under 3nm to day VMC only. While the CAA regulations have not yet been confirmed, the 3nm buffer has been agreed between operators in consultation with the CAA. Spirit understands that a meeting between the CAA and several major operators took place on 6 April 2023 in relation to Operations to O&amp;G Helidecks in the Vicinity of Windfarms. At this meeting, it was agreed that to operate without a restriction to daylight VMC, turbines must be located at least 3nm from an oil and gas helideck as a conservative minimum. This is already being applied by helicopter operators, including NHV, Spirit's aviation operator for the Morecambe Hub.</p> <p>Further supporting the requirement for a greater buffer distance for night VMC than 1.9nm, the Heli-Offshore: Approach Path Management Guidelines (July 2017) sets out that a longer stabilisation distance is required in degraded visibility and night VMC conditions due to the lack of a distinct natural horizon (see pages 9-11 of the 2017 Guidelines). NHV has applied this to its Operations Manual as an additional 0.5nm to the stabilised approach point (SAP) in night VMC as compared to day VMC. This makes NHV's operational buffer distance for night VMC 2.4nm. It should further be noted that on the Applicant's behalf, Anatec stated that 2nm rather than 0.5nm is appropriate for the SAP in night VMC (an addition of 1.5nm to the 0.5nm SAP already contemplated in the day VMC buffer proposed by the Applicant) at paragraph 38 of</p>

			<p>Appendix A (Report on Impact to Helicopter Flights) of the Applicant's Deadline 3 Remaining Response to Spirit D1 Submissions [<a href="#">REP3-071</a>]. Adding this to the Applicant's submissions of an aviation buffer of 1.5nm for daytime VMC would total a night VMC buffer of 3nm on the basis of the Applicant's own submissions.</p> <p>b) Spirit Energy is not able to provide a protective provision for a minimum distance of 1.9nm as this would not be a safe minimum distance for its aviation operations. Spirit Energy continues to engage with the Applicant on the technical basis for its concerns.</p>
2DCO2	Applicant Spirit Energy Harbour Energy	<p><b>Potential additional requirement</b></p> <p>Without prejudice to its consideration, the position of the parties and further representations, in the event that the ExA or SoS were to conclude that the objections of Spirit Energy and Harbour Energy were overriding to prevent development in proximity to the existing oil and gas installations, could the applicant, Spirit Energy and Harbour Energy all produce an additional requirement (on a 'without prejudice' basis where appropriate) to prevent development taking place within the relevant area until decommissioning activities would no longer represent an impediment to construction of the proposed development.</p> <p>Such a requirement should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a defined point or points (if phased) in time relating to decommissioning activities at which the proposed development could take place</li> <li>• distance from the outer extremity edge of the Calder Platform (or other defined structure, such as the CPC)</li> <li>• height above HAT beyond which no development could be installed</li> <li>• height above HAT beyond which no temporary equipment could be located</li> </ul>	<p>The O&amp;G Decommissioning Requirement to be inserted in the draft Development Consent Order provided below is proposed by Spirit Energy without prejudice to its position. This requirement relates only to aviation buffers: pipelines and cables are addressed in Part 1 of Schedule 3 of the draft Development Consent Order on which Spirit reserves the opportunity to comment.</p> <p>With regard to the height above HAT beyond which no development could be installed, Spirit notes that IMC operations cannot be undertaken above any infrastructure, temporary or otherwise, within the horizontal path of the flight. VMC operations may take place below the cloud base height of 700ft with cloud base clearance of 100ft (i.e. total maximum altitude of 600ft). The minimum sector altitude (MSA) for the final approach in VMC is 500ft above obstacles and surface as set out in rule (f)(2) of the CAA's SERA.5005 Visual Flight Rules. However, Spirit requires the ability to fly in IMC for the safety of its operations and has therefore not included reference to HAT as relevant to the O&amp;G Decommissioning Requirement on that basis.</p> <p>For VMC Operations the maximum elevation of any offshore temporary or permanent structure above HAT is 100ft as could be overflown when flying visually. For IMC operations there is no temporary or permanent structure that could be installed of any height as the aircraft will not be able to overfly on the final approach path.</p> <p>Spirit has provided the coordinates of the helipads relevant to this requirement in both day-minute-second and day-minute formats below.</p>

		<p>If possible, the ExA would appreciate agreed drafting of the basic text, even if there may be differences over the precise criteria. See also ExQ200I1.</p>	<p><b>O&amp;G Decommissioning Requirement</b></p> <p>X.(1) No part of the authorised development within 3.76nm of the locations of the O&amp;G Helipads may commence until the O&amp;G Decommissioning Date.</p> <p>“O&amp;G Decommissioning Date” means the date on which OPRED confirms acceptance of the close-out reports for the decommissioning of the Spirit Energy’s East Irish Sea assets under the Seaward Production Licences P.251, P.1483 and P.153.</p> <p>“O&amp;G Helipads” means DP1 Helipad, AP1 Helipad, DP6 Helipad and DP8 Helipad, and the Calder Helipad, as defined by the coordinates in the following table.</p> <table><tr><th>Location</th><th>Lat WGS84 (DD MM SS.sss)</th><th>Lon WGS84 (DD MM SS.sss)</th><th>Lat WGS84 (DD MM.mmm)</th><th>Lon WGS84 (DD MM.mmm)</th></tr><tr><td>DP1 Helipad</td><td>53° 50’ 45.272” N</td><td>003° 34’ 50.104” W</td><td>53° 50.75454’ N</td><td>003° 34.83567’ W</td></tr><tr><td>AP1 Helipad</td><td>53° 50’ 44.348” N</td><td>003° 35’ 00.579” W</td><td>53° 50.73913 N</td><td>003° 35.00964’ W</td></tr><tr><td>DP8 Helipad</td><td>53° 53’ 26.724” N</td><td>003° 37’ 27.233” W</td><td>53° 53.44541’ N</td><td>003° 37.45389’ W</td></tr><tr><td>DP6 Helipad</td><td>53° 51’ 50.155” N</td><td>003° 37’ 04.993” W</td><td>53° 51.83592’ N</td><td>003° 37.08322’ W</td></tr></table>	Location	Lat WGS84 (DD MM SS.sss)	Lon WGS84 (DD MM SS.sss)	Lat WGS84 (DD MM.mmm)	Lon WGS84 (DD MM.mmm)	DP1 Helipad	53° 50’ 45.272” N	003° 34’ 50.104” W	53° 50.75454’ N	003° 34.83567’ W	AP1 Helipad	53° 50’ 44.348” N	003° 35’ 00.579” W	53° 50.73913 N	003° 35.00964’ W	DP8 Helipad	53° 53’ 26.724” N	003° 37’ 27.233” W	53° 53.44541’ N	003° 37.45389’ W	DP6 Helipad	53° 51’ 50.155” N	003° 37’ 04.993” W	53° 51.83592’ N	003° 37.08322’ W
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2OOL1	Spirit Energy	<p><b>Decommissioning of existing assets</b></p> <p>At ISH3, and in Spirit Energy’s post hearing summary ([<a href="#">REP4-070</a>, paragraph 2.47) it states that the cessation of production for the Central Processing Complex (CPC) is 2027, plus or minus two years, but that Spirit are looking to extend the life of the asset to 2030 and beyond.</p> <p>a) Please can you advise for what future purpose the CPC is proposed to be used and whether a new consent or licence would be required for any such new use?</p> <p>b) Given the age of the platform, would any new development or works be required to extend the life of the asset?</p> <p>c) If the decision is taken to decommission the CPC (and Calder CA1 platform), how long would it take to remove the infrastructure?</p> <p>See also question ExQ2DCO2.</p>	<p>a) Spirit Energy intends to maintain the life of its East Irish Sea assets in accordance with principle of maximising the economic recovery (MER) of UK petroleum under section 9A(1) of the Petroleum Act 1998 and the OGA Strategy (2021, reviewed without change in 2024). The NSTA’s Strategy sets out a legally binding obligation on licensees, offshore infrastructure owners and others to take steps necessary to secure the maximum value of economically recoverable hydrocarbons, and in doing so take appropriate steps to assist the Secretary of State in meeting the net zero target.</p> <p>NSTA’s Decommissioning Strategy defines an operator’s approach to cost-effective decommissioning delivery in line with MER UK obligations. This outlines the expectation that six years prior to the expected permanent cessation of production (CoP) of the asset, operators should have a strategy for cost effective decommissioning which is in line with NSTA’s stewardship expectations. Before commencing planning of decommissioning owners must ensure, and be able to demonstrate, that all viable options for continued use including for reuse or re-purposing have been suitably explored.</p> <p>As such, there is no decommissioning deadline or requirement set by OPRED or the NSTA. In accordance with MER, Spirit Energy will decommission CPC and its East Irish Sea assets once it is in a position to demonstrate that it has maximised economic recovery of the field and any reuse or repurposing options have been explored. This is influenced by macro-economic factors including the price of gas, as well as the degree of maintenance required and other factors influencing the economic viability and recovery of continuing production. Spirit Energy may notify OPRED that it intends to proceed to decommissioning when MER has been demonstrated. At that stage, a decommissioning programme is provided to OPRED by Spirit Energy.</p> <p>Once the infrastructure is removed as per the approved decommissioning programme, an over-trawl of the 500m safety zones around each platform or NUI and 50m either side of pipelines is conducted by an independent fishing body to verify that the seabed is clear of hazards to other users of the sea. Upon the issue of a clear seabed verification certificate, Spirit will provide OPRED with a close</p>
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			<p>out report. Once the close out report is accepted by the regulator, this closes out the decommissioning programme formally.</p> <p>Any remaining infrastructure (i.e. pipelines buried to satisfactory depth) is subject to post-decommissioning surveys at a frequency that is agreed with OPRED (usually every ~3 - 5 years). These continue until the regulator is satisfied that there is no potential risk to other users of the sea, at which point they write to Spirit to advise no further post-decommissioning monitoring is needed. The frequency and how long surveys continue will depend on the area, the as-left status, etc and can't be defined at this stage. It also doesn't technically take away the operator's obligation to deal with potential future issues (albeit these will be low risk and very minimal) as this liability for any remaining decommissioned infrastructure remains in-perpetuity.</p> <p>To be clear, a new licence or consent would not be required to 'extend' the life of Spirit's East Irish Sea assets until 2030. Spirit has indicated that it intends to decommission two years before or after 2027. However, current economic factors indicate that the life of the East Irish Sea assets could be maintained to 2030 in accordance with MER.</p> <p>b) No development or works would be required to maintain the life of the East Irish Sea assets. Enhanced maintenance may be required within the remit of the existing licence. This would not involve any works that would require further consenting or licensing process.</p> <p>c) In the case that decommissioning is initiated, Spirit Energy plans for a period of 5 years from the date of cessation of production to complete decommissioning. While a minimum of 3.5 years is required to remove the jacket and topsides of CPC, this could take longer if the removals contractor utilises a different year within the 3-year window according to their availability. This is a timing factor that is outside of Spirit's control, and informs the 5 year window anticipated to complete decommissioning. Helicopter operations will be required throughout decommissioning including once the installations are no longer accessible.</p>
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