

# EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

## CONFIDENTIAL

**Title of Report:** Application from Rockhopper Exploration for Licence to deposit chain on seabed

**Paper No:** 242/11

**Date:** 26 October 2011

**Report of:** Marine Officer  
Director of Natural Resources

---

### 1.0 Purpose

To seek approval to the grant of a licence to Rockhopper Exploration Limited to allow them to deposit clump weights on the sea bed during a programme of measuring currents.

### 2.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve the granting by HE the Governor of a licence under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 in its application to the Falkland Islands authorising Rockhopper Exploration Limited to deposit clump weights on the sea bed as part of their programme of ocean current measurement.

### 3.0 Summary of Financial Implications

None

### 4.0 Background

- 4.1 Rockhopper Exploration Limited ('Rockhopper') consulted the Director of Natural Resources and the Marine Officer to examine the process of how permission would be granted in order to carry out the deployment and recovery of current meters in the North Falkland Basin.
- 4.2 Rockhopper intend deploying the instruments in early November 2011 and recover the gear every 3 months before deploying the equipment again. The project is planned to take place over a period of 1 year.

- 4.3 The equipment is planned to be deployed in approximately 450 metres of water adjacent to Well 14/10-3 between the Johnson and Sea Lion areas in position 49° 12' 50.28"S 059° 07' 22.81"W.
- 4.4 The equipment will gather information on currents at or near the sea bed and 60 metres below the surface, to inform an analysis of the currents that may affect any equipment used during a production phase of an offshore oil and gas industry.
- 4.5 FIG have already issued licences under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 for the depositing of anchor chain in Port San Carlos.

## **5.0 Equipment**

- 5.1 The array of instruments includes 2 Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) buoys. The upper buoy will be situated 60 metres under the sea surface and the lower buoy will be placed 8 metres above the sea bed.
- 5.2 Both buoys are fitted with flotation collars and beacons.
- 5.3 Between the lower ADCP buoy and the sea bed will be an Aanderaa Seaguard instrument (4 metres from sea bed) and below that will be an acoustic release mechanism.
- 5.4 The instruments will be connected and be attached to approximately 1000kg of clump weight (anchor chain).
- 5.5 It is planned to recover the instruments every 3 months. The acoustic release mechanism will then separate the gear from the clump weight and all instruments will be recovered for data acquisition before being redeployed.
- 5.6 The intention of Rockhopper therefore is to deposit 4 separate clump weights on the sea bed.

## **6.0 Licence Considerations**

- 6.1 A licence would be granted in accordance with section 8 of the Food and Environmental Protection Act 1985 as applied to the Falkland Islands by virtue of the Environment Protection (Overseas Territories) Order 1988 and the Environment Protection (Overseas Territories) (Amendment) Order 1997.
- 6.2 As the deposited chain will be in approximately 450 metres of water, there are no significant environmental considerations.
- 6.3 1000kg of anchor chain at each of the 4 locations will not amount to a significant physical size even if the clump weights do not make a substantial impact on the sea bed. The weights are expected to be released from a surface

vessel so will free fall to the bottom. It is expected that some or most of the chain will be embedded into the sea bed.

- 6.4 As the clump weight is to be anchor chain there is no significant risk of snagging onto fishing gear.
- 6.5 As the upper buoy will be 60 metres below the sea surface there is no threat to surface vessels.
- 6.6 No surface buoys to mark the gear will be required.
- 6.7 Advice has been sought from the Fisheries Department, Environmental Planning Department, Shallow Marine Survey Group and Falklands Conservation. No concerns have been expressed so therefore it is recommended that Rockhopper should be granted a licence in order for this project to go ahead.
- 6.8 It may be considered that a licence include a period of validity of one year with a reasonable margin of time added to allow some flexibility.

## **7.0 Financial Implications**

None

## **8.0 Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The applicants require a licence from the Governor in accordance with the provisions of section 8 of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 in its application to the Falkland Islands. This is because the proposed activity amounts to a deposit of an article in the sea from a vessel within the fisheries waters of the Falkland Islands (as defined). There is no exemption in the legislation for short-term activities of this nature.
- 8.2 The Governor, when considering an application for a licence, is required by the legislation to have regard to the need (i) to protect the marine environment, the living resources which it supports and human health; and (ii) to prevent interference with legitimate uses of the sea. Conditions may be included in a licence to achieve these objectives, or for such other purpose as the Governor considers appropriate.

## **9.0 Human Resources Implications**

None