

Guidance on United Kingdom continental shelf (UKCS) subsea  
pipeline decommissioning including comparative assessment (CA)  
and interim pipeline regime (IPR)



GUIDANCE ON UNITED KINGDOM CONTINENTAL SHELF (UKCS) SUBSEA PIPELINE  
DECOMMISSIONING INCLUDING COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT (CA) AND INTERIM  
PIPELINE REGIME (IPR)

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## FOREWORD

*Guidance on United Kingdom continental shelf (UKCS) subsea pipeline decommissioning including comparative assessment (CA) and interim pipeline regime (IPR)* was commissioned by the Pipeline Users Group's (PLUG's) Good Operational Practice Forum (GOPF). It should enable operating companies to develop and justify a decommissioning programme (DP) for their subsea pipelines on a case-by-case basis.

This technical publication is focused on UKCS requirements, and as such it refers to UK legislation and regulatory expectations. In developing the technical publication, PLUG engaged key UKCS stakeholders Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to ensure the guidance provided aligns to their expectations. This publication does not represent, replicate or replace regulatory guidance (from BEIS, HSE, OGA, etc), which takes precedence. Rather, the aim is to provide enhanced guidance in support of the regulatory guidance as deemed appropriate by PLUG. Each operating company should interpret national or local legislative and regulatory frameworks in the context of their intended applications. It is acknowledged that this technical publication is UKCS-centric and future revisions may include additions to make it more relevant internationally.

It covers a broad range of subsea pipeline decommissioning issues, including:

- description of subsea pipeline systems and processes to inform stakeholders (background);
- the legislative and regulatory environment for subsea pipeline system decommissioning;
- decommissioning programme (DP), building on BEIS, HSE and OGA guidance;
- decommissioning options, including description of the PLUG *Screening tool*;
- CA approaches;
- risk assessment for IPR, and
- features of subsea infrastructure, including installation methods.

The intended users of this technical publication are:

- operating company personnel, such as pipeline engineers and technical authorities, and
- stakeholders in decommissioning outcomes.

The information contained in this publication is provided as guidance only. Whilst every reasonable care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of its contents, neither the Energy Institute (EI), nor PLUG, nor the representatives listed in the Acknowledgements, can accept any responsibility for any actions taken, or not taken, on the basis of this information. The EI shall not be liable to any person for any loss or damage that may arise from the use of the information contained in any of its publications. The intent is to review and where necessary update this technical publication periodically. Comments or suggestions for improvement (e.g. relevant project experience) should be sent to:

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EI will engage PLUG regarding comments received.

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In developing this technical publication, PLUG engaged Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to ensure the guidance provided aligns to their expectations.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION, SCOPE AND APPLICATION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Working groups of the Pipeline Users Group (PLUG) have been pursuing two related initiatives on the broad topic of decommissioning of subsea systems. The Decommissioning Working Group (DWG) has developed the PLUG *Subsea pipeline decommissioning screening tool* (a.k.a. PLUG *Screening tool*) to enable users to carry out an initial comparative assessment (CA). The Interim Pipeline Regime (IPR) Inspection Working Group (IWG) has investigated the inspection requirements for pipelines that have been placed in IPR; their findings are reflected in 4.3.3 and Annex E. Both initiatives draw on the extensive knowledge and experience of PLUG members to provide guidance to operating companies and stakeholders that satisfies:

- The requirements of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) set out in BEIS *Oil and gas: Decommissioning of offshore installations and pipelines*.
- Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) processes for maximising the economic recovery from the UKCS (MER UK) (see OGA *Decommissioning*), and for Pipeline Works Authorisation (PWA) and legal consent (see OGA *Licensing and consents*).

This technical publication was commissioned by the GOPF and covers a broader range of subsea pipeline decommissioning issues, (see 1.2).

## 1.2 SCOPE

The scope of this technical publication includes:

- description of subsea pipeline systems and processes to inform stakeholders (background);
- the legislative and regulatory environment for subsea pipeline system decommissioning;
- decommissioning programme (DP), building on BEIS, HSE and OGA guidance;
- decommissioning options, including description of the PLUG *Screening tool*;
- CA approaches;
- risk assessment for IPR, and
- features of subsea infrastructure, including installation methods.

The scope excludes:

- decommissioning of onshore pipelines (including landfalls of subsea pipelines);
- decommissioning costs (beyond discussion of their contribution to CA);
- specific proprietary decommissioning tools or technologies;
- the various activities likely to be required to prepare a pipeline for new service, where an alternative use for a pipeline has been identified, and
- a user guide to the PLUG *Screening tool* (as this is provided alongside the PLUG *Screening tool*).