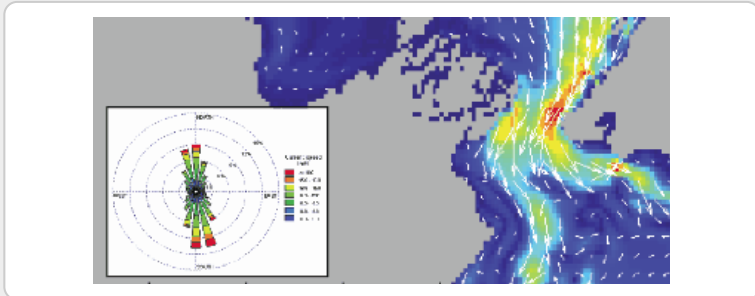


Impact of Drill Cuttings on Benthic Marine Ecology

The disposal of drill cuttings into the marine environment has the potential to cause negative impacts on adjacent benthic ecology. To evaluate these impacts, MetOcean Solutions undertook a detailed assessment of the present disposal regime as well as past disposal activities. This was compared with a review of the international scientific literature of disposal and ecotoxicology.



The results clearly showed that past disposal activities had not caused negative effects on the benthic ecology. The overall effect of the platform on the adjacent seabed was positive due to organic enrichment from the biota on the structure.



Prior to a drilling campaign, MSL sampled the seabed surrounding an offshore platform at 96 locations. Sediments were sampled using a surface deployed grab and analysed for benthic infauna, mineralogy (XRD) and particle size. Wave and current hindcasting were used to predict the dispersal patterns.



These data form a baseline for the future monitoring of effects. MSL has also started similar baseline surveys for newly developed oil and gas fields on the New Zealand continental shelf.