

Hearing Transcript

Project:	North Falls Offshore Wind Farm
Hearing:	Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) - Part G
Date:	2 April 2025

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:03:05 - 00:00:12:04

Everyone. It's now 1155 and we will resume issue one. Before the break, we were

00:00:13:20 - 00:00:45:24

discussing the zones of visibility and those unaddressed areas. During the break, it occurred to me to invite the applicant, Mr. McRae, before deadline for if you if you would be able to submit some of that evidence about those, how those and assessed areas have been assessed or included within the overall impact analysis which you refer to in responding to that question.

00:00:46:05 - 00:00:53:18

And that will just give everybody sight of how those those zones have been considered in the impact assessment.

00:00:58:00 - 00:01:05:21

Moving on to the other items. The other bullet points under 3.1 and as.

00:01:07:22 - 00:01:26:00

Explain these. These may now be taken together slightly more briefly, as we have started to hear submissions on the design of the substation and the the visual impact that the substation will have.

00:01:30:07 - 00:01:33:27

This may be slightly more detailed to do with design.

00:01:36:11 - 00:01:46:24

Comments and issues were raised during relevant representations and written representations, and local impact report and questions were raised at Q one.

00:01:50:10 - 00:01:51:29

First of all, I'm going to.

00:01:55:21 - 00:02:19:11

Consider the joint coordination between of design of North Falls onshore substation with five estuaries substation. We heard at the open floor hearing that there were measures being taken to attempt to coordinate this design, and I'd like to hear concerns and progress on that.

00:02:23:00 - 00:02:27:29

And taken together, whether or not the proposed mitigation of onshore substation

00:02:29:17 - 00:02:39:08

would provide adequate visual screening. And again, how this relates to five estuaries. Offshore wind farm. Proposed development. Visual screening.

00:02:46:06 - 00:03:10:09

The first question, therefore, is I will invite the applicant to outline the progress made and steps taken to coordinate design. What remains to be undertaken on this coordination? What degree of understanding is there between five estuaries and North Falls? Applicants? I will ask the applicant to respond and then seek comments from interested parties.

00:03:12:09 - 00:03:50:04

Clare project the applicant. Um, before we set out, obviously the the progress that's been made um, to date. And then also obviously the further steps that are to be taken. I wondered if it would be helpful for, um, the examining authority and interested parties if the applicant just briefly explains the reason why there needs to be two separate substations, albeit co-located, um, and the technical reasons for why, um, there cannot be a combined single substation, because obviously the design work that has been undertaken flows from, um, those principles, but happy to go straight to design.

00:03:50:08 - 00:04:04:05

I think if we go straight to the question, if you have provided information in relation to that already in the documentation. If there's a summary you would like to provide on that, then if that could be provided in writing.

00:04:06:11 - 00:04:15:18

Yes, happy to do so. It was more. If it would be helpful, then we've got somebody prepared to speak to it. But we'll go straight to um, progress on um, design matters. Thank you.

00:04:20:20 - 00:04:55:10

Caroline Osborne for the applicant. Um, in terms of the, uh, design vision and design collaboration, collaboration today, I'll just provide a short summary of what has, has happened. So, um, five areas and North Wales have been working together, um, from spring 2023 to, um, a coordinated outline design for the onshore substations. This has involved regular meetings and workshops, um, to agree the locations of the co-located onshore substations. Cable routes entering and exiting onshore your substations matters such as the permanent access point.

00:04:55:12 - 00:05:36:23

Temporary construction compounds, drainage and the approach to landscape and visual mitigation. Um North Wales initiated an independent design panel and review process held with the Design Council, both five estuaries and North Falls. Actively participated in that. That process we had design reviews in November 23rd, March 24th and June 24th. Um, during this time, the landscape strategy for the site was developed, um, with um five estuaries and North Falls participating in a series of meetings to agree on the general approach to the onshore, um substation.

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Um, obviously five estuaries submitted their application ahead of North Falls, so there were around four months of additional time for, um, North Falls to, um, Consider the landscape strategy in more detail, particularly liaising further with the engineering team to, to look at, um, the detail of that. Um,

sections 1.4.3 and 1.6.1 of the design vision, which is document app two, three, four identifies that should both projects be consented.

00:06:14:17 - 00:06:29:27

This close working relationship will be maintained. Um, we've identified the production of a design guide to inform the detailed design, and I'll pass over to, um, Cormac Rooney to outline how that will be progressed.

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Thank you. Speaking on behalf of the applicant, uh, just to elaborate further on, um, Osborne's points raised, um, both parties have now committed to the development of a joint design guide. Um, during the course of this examination, um, North Falls and five series have worked together in weeks coming up to the hearings to develop a scope for that. And also we have worked to establish what type of external review process we will undertake, in collaboration with Essex County Council. And the development design Guide will be overseen by a appointed design champion, one from each project.

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Um, and we will also be, um, working with Essex County Council to uh, on an external review panel which through their exp which is the Essex Quality review panel. Um, so that further bolsters the work that's been done, um, with the Design Council of England. And we are due to set up a meeting in the coming weeks. Actually, um, for our stage one kind of consultation with EC, which will would likely take place within this examination with a follow up. Um, uh, post post post consent.

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Um, other than that, we are kind of Collaborating as well with National Grid, so there will be an attendance at those. Workshops with Essex County Council as Consultee observer. And just to make sure there's continuity through design and and landscape mitigation.

00:08:02:11 - 00:08:03:24

Thank you. Can I ask

00:08:05:20 - 00:08:13:22

when various of those items will be submitted into the examination? If your meeting is in a couple of weeks, we.

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We're looking to it's um it's at some point in June we hope to have our, um, you know, we would we're aiming for, um, some. So it has to be yet to be confirmed to date, but we we could probably confidently. D4 d5. Yeah.

00:08:30:10 - 00:08:48:13

Okay. If you could, if there is any way that you could give the an update on what you've just said, which I'm sure would come through the written follow up, um, at deadline for and then the, the substantive element of how progress is being made on that by deadline five. That would.

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That's it. That's perfect. Yeah.

00:08:50:11 - 00:08:50:29

Thank you.

00:08:51:17 - 00:09:26:25

Claire project. The applicant just to add to that, that the, um, design vision, um, will be updated to reflect what has happened in terms of those meetings and then set out the process for further meetings. So there are things that are required to be done. Um, post consent or pre-construction will then be referred to in that document. But as um, as was mentioned, um, we're in the process of setting up those meetings and reaching agreement on the, on the process to be followed.

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And once that's been done and the intention is to update, um, the document which is then referred to in the draft DCO, so that there is a securing of the um, mechanism for the review of the design. Um, post to DCA consent, but at the moment we don't have the information to update that. Update that document, but it will be provided, um, prior to the close of the examination.

00:09:53:07 - 00:09:53:27

Thank you.

00:09:56:27 - 00:10:34:14

Okay. Thank you for that update and how that will progress. I just invite local authorities and interested parties to briefly comment on that, especially, I suppose, Essex County Council, who will have been involved and will further be involved, and other local authorities and any interested parties, though, starting with Essex County Council to provide a brief update on that collaboration.

00:10:35:06 - 00:11:11:17

Carol Wallace um, Essex County Council, um, we welcome the approach from the applicant to work closely with five S3 wind Farm to have a collaborative approach in terms of design. And as mentioned by the applicant team. Um, we have um, a brief meeting with Essex Quality. We will panel and they're happy to be the independent design panel to work with both projects. So as mentioned, um, there's um meetings to be a range within the next two weeks.

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So we're hoping that there will be a significant progress, uh, by deadline five in terms of the design review process. Thank you.

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Thank you. Again, as invited of the applicant, if we could have that updated deadline for and then a substantive, more detailed update on that progress at deadline five, including the views of Essex County Council.

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Is there anything

00:11:40:17 - 00:11:52:29

Other local authorities Sussex County Council wish to raise at this point. And Tendring District Council. Any comments on that collaboration to date?

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Mr.

00:11:56:18 - 00:12:31:12

Jacob Yoshimura on behalf of Tendring District Council. So we also welcome attempts made by both by North Hills to coordinate and better collaborate, collaborate with five estuaries. And also we've heard that there's going to be they're going to bring National grid in as well so that that is welcomed. But so what I've heard, what we've heard is that North Falls initiate is in the process of initiating an independent independent design reviews. North Wales and five estuaries participate in various exercises, including working up a design guide.

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But other than mentioning EC, there's been no no mentioning of any other interested parties like maybe including, you know, representatives from national landscape, maybe parish councils, local, more local people because I think whilst whilst we we support this collaboration and the design review. I think what's really important to Tendring is that it needs to be meaningful and outcome based. And I think to, to, to achieve that you need to bring on board, um, you know, the representatives from EAC and, and local input, um, as early as possible in the process.

00:13:16:26 - 00:13:52:27

And we at this stage, it's a bit unclear as to when, when they're going to appoint, um, like a local champion, for example. Is it one is that this local design champion, is it one person or is it more than one individual? And is it going to be are they going to open it up to, to various, uh, interested parties because ultimately, um, you know, the people that will be at the sharp end of this or local people, um, and they should they should be involved in, in design matters from the outset and from an early stage.

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So we just need clarity on that.

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Thank you.

00:14:01:08 - 00:14:28:21

Just invite any other local authority or other council representative. I see a hand up in the audience which will come to in a moment, and I will invite Mr. Ramstad if there's anything to comment on that participation in the collaboration. But I'll start with miss Mason from Ardley parish. Sorry, Mr. Amos, in a couple of moments, we're turning to Ardley Parish Council in the first instance.

00:14:28:23 - 00:14:53:22

Thank you. Carolyn Mason, Audley Parish Council, just to follow on from that, we have as a parish council had individual meetings with five estuaries North Falls and Takum now, but we failed to have a meeting with National Grid as a parish council, and we've asked all of them if they would get

together and have a joint meeting with us to keep us informed, and Little Bromley as well, to keep us all informed as progress. Okay. Thank you.

00:14:53:27 - 00:15:03:21

Thank you. So there may be some scope for the involvement of National Grid through this process, which has now been outlined. Thank you. Mr. Blythe, if there's anything to add, just.

00:15:03:23 - 00:15:37:23

To add that, um. Yes, National Grid, um, have failed to engage with, um, all the parish council, they, um, and directly and there's been an awful lot of finger pointing in both directions. Uh, when the questions asked, why hardly, uh, both National Grid have been saying, well, you know, we have an obligation to supply and we've not been able to get a straight answer back as to who made the decision as to why.

00:15:37:25 - 00:15:50:19

Hardly. It's a very big question for Ardley, especially as they failed to use the village hall as a meeting place to talk to the to the public.

00:15:50:21 - 00:16:05:27

Okay. Thank you for that. Yes. Those points are noted, but largely directed towards National Grid, I presume. I saw a hand up within the room. Are we able to get a microphone? And if you could just introduce yourself and your point.

00:16:06:05 - 00:16:36:27

Thank you sir. Yeah. My name is Zoe Fairley. I'm the district councillor for Ardley and Little Bromley, and also my family farms, Norman's Farm, Ardley Road. So tea, Fairley and sons. I just think it's important, uh, to raise at this issue. I know the farming issues are tomorrow, but the impact of landscaping can affect farming operations. And I haven't heard any discussion around how landscaping is taking farming operations into account.

00:16:36:29 - 00:16:57:09

So when, um, I hear, uh, the local authorities saying that it's a positive thing about collaboration, I completely agree and support those comments. But again, I just want to ensure that you're aware, if you like, that the impact of landscaping on farming operations needs to be taken into account. So farming. Yes, please.

00:16:57:14 - 00:17:21:08

Thank you. Yeah. Very interesting point. I'm. I will come back to the applicant in a moment, but Mr.. We're just still on the topic of coordination between, um, design of substations. Is there anything you would like to add from either the National landscape area point of view?

00:17:22:01 - 00:17:25:21

So sorry, National landscape partnership. Um.

00:17:26:11 - 00:17:28:28

I think on the issue of the.

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Potential design panel, I think. Um, yeah. Um, previous speakers have mentioned the importance of bringing as many voices into that as possible, and I would certainly be interested in whether the national landscape could have an input to that. But we've also heard passionately about how farming communities and other local communities could, um, yeah, bring a different perspective on that. And my second point is, um, you know, we've heard previously today about the, uh, talk on proposals, uh, coming in there.

00:18:02:04 - 00:18:11:07

And I would hope that that they will be brought into this coordinated approach, um, as we move forward. Thanks very much.

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Thank you.

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Are there any other IPPs who wish to

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raise a point here? If not, I will just ask the applicant to respond to the points that have been made. in the in the foregoing.

00:18:32:28 - 00:19:03:00

Um project for the applicant. Um, just to highlight, um, some of the obviously we're talking in this context specifically about, um, the design process. So the detailed design of, um, the uh, substation layout and the landscaping and mitigation and enhancement measures that will be put in place rather than matters relating to sort of site selection, um, etc., which, which we weren't focusing on in terms of this particular, um, topic.

00:19:03:14 - 00:19:34:07

Um, the process, um, for um, what will happen post DCO consent in terms of consultation with communities etc. is currently set out in the design vision, which is app dash 234. Um, but as I said, um, when we started this topic, the intention is to develop that further as the design guide is produced resulting from the workshops that have been mentioned in the meetings.

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We did update the draft DCO at deadline um three, which is um rep 3-008, just to make reference to the um specific consultation process that is set out in sections 1.6 and 1.7. So just in respect to the comments made on behalf of Tendring District Council and others about other people being involved in the design process that has already been considered and is secured through through the DCO, I would say that that's perhaps a slightly separate stage than the actual, um, design review work.

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Um, that is being, um, anticipated with the workshops with Essex's EC. That's a very a more specific look at the actual detail of the design rather than a wider consultation forum, but consultation is built

into the into the process. So it may be that we can, once the meeting has taken place and the scope of the design guide has been agreed, we'll be able to provide a bit more information to stakeholders about where they fit into that, into that process, which might be helpful in response to the comments made.

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Thank you,

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Mr. Rooney. You previously had a.

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Just a speaking on behalf of the applicant, just to kind of reiterate what Clare said. Yeah, it's exactly that. And it was a motion on my part. We fully intend to engage with local stakeholders and landowners. Um, so it'll be um, that will become evident as this process kind of unfolds.

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Thank you. Okay.

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I'm going to move on.

00:21:20:27 - 00:21:53:02

I think the agenda contained a number of other headings relating to detailed design, which some of which have been covered. What I'd like to invite today is I think it might be the final bullet point. Others will be taken in writing in the interest of expediency, the final bullet point, and again without straying into what's already been stated.

00:21:53:04 - 00:22:35:24

Whether the proposed mitigation at the onshore substation of the proposed development would provide adequate visual screening. So we have heard points on this already, and including how that visual screening may relate to, for example, farming, but also how this relates to five estuaries. Proposed development, visual screening. If very briefly, I could ask the applicant to respond to that point, I presume that much of those concerns will be attempted to be overcome through this design review collaboration, but if there's anything the applicant would wish to respond to.

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Now, on that final point, including mitigation and mitigation plans, that would be helpful.

00:22:46:16 - 00:23:34:17

For the applicant. Before I hand over, I think you've alluded to and it's a point worth making that obviously when we're talking about, um, mitigation and enhancement, um, measures as a whole, they are obviously designed to address, uh, a multitude of different, um, impacts. So what may be, um, designed for um, visual, um, impact mitigation may also have a dual function in terms of ecological, um, etc.. Um, but we When undertaking the design work that's been done to date, the applicant has

been very mindful that increasing the mitigation um, put forward for one element may have other adverse impacts on other elements or other receptors.

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So um, increasing mitigation for example, for, for a, for a landscape perspective may result in increased adverse effects for visual receptors or um, increase adverse effects on the usability of BMV land for farming purposes. So when we're talking about IT receptors in isolation, I just wanted to make the point that the applicant has taken a holistic approach to mitigation, um, and made sure that the proposals, um, try and strike a balance between providing um mitigation for one element whilst not inadvertently causing adverse effects for other receptors.

00:24:12:25 - 00:24:19:19

But I'll hand over to, um, Miss Plus, I was born to see if they want to add anything other to that.

00:24:25:08 - 00:24:56:20

Ol McCrae for the applicant. So the landscape mitigation proposals. Um, the, the sort of aims of them are to address certain functions and clearly in having undertaken the the Elvia the the primary purpose in that respect is to to help reduce the visual effects and the landscape effects by, by limiting the the visibility of the proposed development within the landscape.

00:24:57:11 - 00:25:14:23

But at the same time, we're trying to design something which is which is in keeping with the the existing landscape character insofar as that's feasible to achieve. Um, so such that it would not itself introduce incongruent features. Beaches.

00:25:16:21 - 00:25:51:21

And we want to make sure as part of that that the successful establishment of that mitigation is secured so that it has a long term resilience and not introducing something that would only last for a short period. And as Claire, as alluded to, we we are also seeking to build in contributions to green infrastructure, um, biodiversity, um, and so on, as well as um, limiting the, the impacts on, on available farmland.

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Uh, so I've already discussed what the, we've already talked about today, what the effects of that mitigation are. So I wasn't going to go into that again in detail. Um, and I think we've also covered the points about how, um, we acknowledge that the screen planting Implanting can't fully conceal the development of this nature, but we would note that the the assessments at year 15 are a point in time and the

00:26:26:06 - 00:26:34:29

the landscape planting would, would continue to be maintained and, and hopefully be affected beyond that point throughout the operational life of the project.

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Thank you. Okay. Yes, I was going to move on to to the landscape mitigation plan and, uh, the cross section that was submitted at deadline three, showing views from Norman's Farm and Jennings Farm.

I think I'll hold those over for written questions based on the information provided today. Uh, our next set of written questions is before deadline five.

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Early May, um, from memory. And there will be further questioning along the lines along those lines. They're

00:27:17:26 - 00:27:21:17

turning to any IPS or local authorities. Is there anything?

00:27:21:19 - 00:27:54:11

Sorry, could I just interrupt for a minute? Could you just give me an example? You say you had regard to the impact on farming in your landscaping. Can you give me an example of how you've had regard and taken that into account? And the second point was the second aspect of this bullet point how your mitigation planting scheme. What considerations have you given as to how that would relate to the Five Estuaries Scheme?

00:28:11:18 - 00:28:19:13

I mean, if you do want, if you do need to take time and respond in writing to those, that's fine. But those are two points that I would like the response to.

00:28:19:25 - 00:28:49:27

Okay. Thank you. Yes. I'm happy to to give an initial response which we can develop. But in terms of the, um, regard to agriculture, we have sought to include areas within the the red line which would be returned to agricultural use. Uh, so that so that, you know, it's not entirely given over to, to landscape planting in that regard. Um, in terms of the, the relationship between North Poles and five estuaries.

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I'll let Miss Osborne answer that point.

00:28:57:16 - 00:29:31:00

Let's set out the, um, the relationship to the the five estuaries, um, mitigation as I've set out, um, in my response to the previous, um point. There was, um, extensive discussion with five estuaries about the approach. I think we were mindful of, um, the open character of the receiving landscape and the need to make sure that, um, mitigation wasn't detrimental to the underlying landscape character.

00:29:31:27 - 00:30:09:19

Um, consider the impact on best quality agricultural land. Um, consider what features were in the the landscape already. Um, there are shelter belts around some of the horticultural developments, hedgerows and hedgerow trees. And I think important point to note is that the in the um, landscape character landscape character assessment, the the Bromley Heath landscape is described as being in decline in terms of landscape conditions. So we were trying to weigh up the balance of, of, of the mitigation in terms of kind of, um, levels of intervention.

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Um, so primarily, I think we were both agreed on an approach that used shelter belts as the main form of screening. Um, I think after the submission of the Five Estuaries application, we were able to consider in more detail the composition of the screening and whether we had a having a woodland core and then maybe having a, um, an edge to the planting using, uh, woodland edge mix and hedgerows that provided, um, a bit more depth of vegetation, vegetation, proximity to um, visual receptors.

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So we were able to look at that in more detail. Um, also on the the southeastern side of the um site, we were able to liaise with, um, the engineering team to look to agree a localised narrowing of the um, the cable corridor though, to ensure we could include screening on the south eastern boundary of the site. And we also looked at whilst there was a restriction on on the depth of that planting, we looked at introducing further layers of vegetation beyond that.

00:31:21:06 - 00:31:56:07

Um, to achieve the screening there. We also looked as well, um, about um, uh, potentially new, uh, features or, or views that we could create with the site within the site to provide amenity. For example, the wetland area to the south of the site, looking at setting back screening from um, from the perimeter of the site so that views into that area, um, could be, um, could be created, which we felt would benefit, um, uh, the amenity of Ardley Road and users of that road.

00:31:57:05 - 00:32:48:14

Um, excuse me. Um, I mean, obviously the key difference between the schemes is in the extent of the Red line boundary, with five estuaries putting um, uh, their shelter belt screening um in closer proximity to um receptors such as Norman's Farm and Jennings Farm and Barn Lane. We, um, we could consider that at an early stage. And I think that this is part of the weighing up of of the balance and thinking about would, um, dense shelter belts, uh, placed in proximity to those features actually lead to, um, potentially detrimental impacts in terms of, um, visual screening of a landscape that is inherently open, as well as thinking about potential kind of overshadowing of, of agricultural land as well.

00:32:49:02 - 00:32:53:09

Um, I hope I've set out the key differences, but happy to take further questions.

00:32:53:11 - 00:32:54:07

Thanks. Thank you.

00:32:56:28 - 00:32:59:00

Thank you. I will,

00:33:00:15 - 00:33:29:15

uh, As we are nearing the end of this section, I will invite local authorities to respond to those points. Really, the principle of whether the proposed mitigation of the proposed development would provide adequate visual screening and those differences with five estuaries. Turning first to Essex County Council. Is there anything you'd like to respond to? Um.

00:33:31:20 - 00:33:34:08

I can see a hand up. So is that Miss Bailey?

00:33:36:14 - 00:34:14:03

Yes, sir. Catherine. Bailey. Um, Essex County Council. Uh, on this occasion. Uh, um, so so just two comments. It's, um, my understanding that the Design Council design review panel, um, in their initial meetings with North Falls, called for, um, much more extensive landscape mitigation which actually blended into the landscape beyond, which may be one of the reasons why five estuaries chose to extend the Red line boundary further.

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Um, so perhaps the applicant could, um, tell us why they drove through their landscape, mitigation of visual mitigation so narrowly? Um, that being said, we note that the applicant is willing to consider, um, extending that connectivity into the wider landscape, but not through the DCO. And I wondered if they could, um, provide more information on how they see that developing and

00:34:50:19 - 00:35:12:20

whether they can provide the, um, adequacy, if you like, of, um, further Landscape enhancements that would meet the the need for landscape mitigation which which I think they still haven't clarified what of the planting that they're proposing is actually landscape mitigation as opposed to a visual.

00:35:14:06 - 00:35:15:10

Okay. Thank you.

00:35:16:25 - 00:35:24:27

I'll just take together any other local authority responses. So around the room starting with Suffolk County Council.

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That's fine.

00:35:28:08 - 00:35:34:08

Thank you sir. Suffolk County Council I think we just defer to, uh, Essex and Tendring on this. Thank you.

00:35:35:01 - 00:35:38:05

In that case, Tendring District Council, Mr. Jasper.

00:35:38:25 - 00:36:18:08

Thank you, Jacob, for Tendring District Council. So we appreciate the clarity provided by the applicant. And following, uh, the panel's question on, uh, an example to be provided to show how they've taken into account the impact on farming as part of their landscaping proposals. And obviously we will to some extent defer to ECC on this as well. But on balance, um, and this is having, um, had regular meetings with my colleagues and parish councils and, and farmers that will be affected by this, uh, I think unbalanced DDC prefers the North full screening, uh, solution.

00:36:18:26 - 00:36:49:07

Um, because we feel I'm not a farming expert, but we have been in discussions. But, uh, we feel that in comparison to the five estuary screening proposals, um, on balance, the North Falls screening proposals are, are as effective and ineffective as they can be. So we say, um, as ineffective because one DDC didn't point anyone to these areas or to these sites for the substations, but that's a different matter.

00:36:49:09 - 00:37:20:15

We accept that. Um, and to we are we are Um, we are saying effective and ineffective because it will take we have covered at this point, but just to reinforce it will take up to 15 years for for the planting to mature and even at 15 years. The applicants themselves acknowledge that, you know, the substation or substations will will never be effectively screened. So with with that in mind, and we also agree that the balance has to be struck.

00:37:20:24 - 00:37:43:26

But we we feel that the, um, um, the screening solution that North Falls are putting forward will allow, um, a better, um, farming operation and a lesser impact on yields, I guess, uh, compared to the Five Estuaries proposals. And that's why tendering on balance support that screening solution.

00:37:44:05 - 00:38:00:04

Thank you for that confirmation. I can see a hand up online and I will come to you in a moment. Um, as Bailey did. Ardley Parish Council have any brief comments to make on this? Mr. Bligh?

00:38:00:06 - 00:38:38:21

Yes. Very briefly to, um. We had a meeting with, um, talk on, uh, a little while ago, and, um, we suggested to them that they might like to investigate further the possibility of going around Tilbury, considering they're coming all the way across the North Sea, um, under underground and from Germany. And maybe they might like to appear to be the greenest of all the the suppliers of electricity by going to where the electricity is needed.

00:38:39:16 - 00:38:41:28

Um, and I wonder whether

00:38:43:18 - 00:39:01:24

now that they're talking about working together with National, the National Grid and, um, the other suppliers, whether they'd like to join Tarquin and going round to Tilbury and avoid all of this. But leave it there. Thank you.

00:39:03:08 - 00:39:08:18

I think that's something that we'll be covering under the coordination agenda item later on.

00:39:08:20 - 00:39:23:01

Thank you. Uh, Miss Bailey, whose hand up it is on line. And then I will invite the applicants to respond and draw this session to a close. Miss Bailey.

00:39:23:03 - 00:39:59:02

Um, Catherine Bailey, Essex County Council and Tendring District Council in landscape and visual terms. So it's just to, um, say that our judgement is very much that the five estuaries approach is better in both landscape and visual terms because it gives a layered, um, uh, arrangement. So it's, um, if you like, a bit more belt and braces. So there's several opportunities to, um, reduce impacts from the south east and east.

00:39:59:22 - 00:40:14:22

Um, and to, um, support my colleague from Tendring in that point that he made about the mitigation planting, taking a long time to develop. And so there being significant effects for quite a long time before that that has effect.

00:40:17:00 - 00:40:17:20

Thank you.

00:40:19:07 - 00:40:28:09

Thank you I see Mr.. That you did say that you wanted to talk to this point. So I will bring you in now before moving on to the applicant.

00:40:29:12 - 00:40:57:23

Thanks very much, Simon. It's the National Landscape Partnership. I appreciate you trying to move things on, but, um, I didn't see any discussion around bullet point five, so I would just say I'd really encourage the applicant to look at the national landscapes, use of lighting guidance, um, in relation to that that point, and I'm not sure we got a full response around engaging with Tarc on on the cumulative impacts. Thanks.

00:40:58:16 - 00:41:14:04

Thank you for those reminders. Yeah. Yes. Bullet point five, which was lighting is going to be hand over to written questions. I'll just invite the applicant to respond to those points that have now been made before drawing this bit to a close.

00:41:15:03 - 00:41:46:07

Clear project for the applicant. I think obviously the discussion and the viewpoints expressed by various um, interested parties effectively demonstrates the point I was trying to make that there there is a balance. Um, and whilst, um, further mitigation is being requested to mitigate um, landscape impacts, which was being mentioned by Miss Bailey on the same hand, that additional planting does then take further land out of agricultural use, which other stakeholders, um, would prefer was was not done.

00:41:46:09 - 00:42:35:21

So I think in in this hearing we you have seen the balance that has to be has to be struck. As we mentioned before, the detailed design work is ongoing. Um, in terms of that coordinated approach, and we hope to provide you with more detail on that. And it may also be useful, um, for us to submit for your information, the final version of the um Outline Landscape Environmental Management plan that went into the Five estuaries um examination, because obviously that that their position has moved on since they submitted their DCO application as well, albeit the the corner of planting that's being

referred to here, um, is still a difference between between the two schemes for the reasons that have been um explained in, in the hearing.

00:42:36:09 - 00:43:10:03

Um, in terms of um, a number of comments have been made about Tarpon On interconnector we're dealing with obviously with cumulative later on on the agenda. But what I did want to point out is obviously that project is a much earlier stage. And therefore whilst obviously, um, there are opportunities for coordination and discussions in design, um, we wouldn't expect them to be having the same level of discussions on design as we have with five estuaries, obviously finished their DCO examination and proceeding to do more detailed design.

00:43:10:05 - 00:43:31:15

And obviously National Grid is due to submit its DCO application later this year. So I think that does need to be some recognition that depending on where a project is in the process, um, there will be varying degrees of participation in these design, um review, um meetings and the development of coordination of design.

00:43:34:12 - 00:43:35:02

Thank you.

00:43:36:19 - 00:43:37:15

Okay.

00:43:39:08 - 00:43:43:23

Uh, could you be very brief with that. And then I will really need to move us on.

00:43:43:25 - 00:44:08:26

Thank you. Carolyn Mason Parish Council. In terms of mitigation and planting. Are the applicants actually looking at or could they look at a wider area than just that that's affected by the proposal in terms of biodiversity, net gain around the whole of the area? We're talking about the whole of territory, other areas where they can develop biodiversity, net gain to compensate. Thank you.

00:44:09:12 - 00:44:14:10

I will ask the applicant to respond to that, and I think that will be the last point to it.

00:44:16:22 - 00:44:45:25

For the applicant. Um, obviously today's hearing has been about landscape mitigation, which, as Mr. Craig does mention, does have a dual benefit of in in some cases also providing biodiversity net gain. We obviously have onshore ecology on the agenda, um for issue specific hearing. Um to um and our um the applicant's psychologist will be there and can explain in more detail the approach taken to biodiversity net gain.

00:44:47:21 - 00:44:49:09

Okay. That does.

00:44:49:11 - 00:45:07:25

And perhaps you can respond to that. The specific question in writing, which I think was looking at a wider area, but obviously you've got, um, you know, your own red line boundary. But I think that was the point was made whether compensation could be enhancement could be provided elsewhere.

00:45:10:01 - 00:45:20:21

For the applicant. Yes. We can definitely explain the approach to, um, to gain obviously the term compensation is perhaps not appropriate in strictly in this context. No.

00:45:21:01 - 00:45:23:05

No, quite. I knew as I said.

00:45:23:24 - 00:45:25:00

They go off.

00:45:25:02 - 00:45:26:16

Site, you get you get the the.

00:45:26:18 - 00:45:27:23

Drift. Thank you.

00:45:29:01 - 00:45:42:12

Thank you. That does conclude item 3.1. Um, ordinarily we would turn to item 3.2 immediately, however, noting Essex County Council place services

00:45:44:03 - 00:45:50:20

expert is not available. I think until later. Just checking the time.

00:45:53:07 - 00:45:54:21

I think we will move on to.

00:45:56:25 - 00:45:58:19

The item beyond 3.2.

00:46:01:17 - 00:46:03:06

Which bear with me.

00:46:09:02 - 00:46:12:20

So we are proposing now before a lunch break to move on.

00:46:12:22 - 00:46:13:08

Sorry.

00:46:15:09 - 00:46:18:02

Going to give us an update on your witness availability.

00:46:18:04 - 00:46:18:19

Yes.

00:46:18:23 - 00:46:35:13

Carol Wallace, Essex County Council, our built a heritage consultant, is available from 1:00 onwards. So if we can go for archaeological concerns first, then she might be able to join us afterwards.

00:46:37:04 - 00:46:43:25

If that's helpful instead of swapping the two agenda item. But it's up to you, madam. Thank you.

00:46:52:06 - 00:46:56:09

Let me just check. I think that ought to be possible.

00:46:58:22 - 00:47:05:08

Could I just ask? So they're available from 1:00. Do they have any limit on their availability this afternoon?

00:47:07:00 - 00:47:07:19

Thank you.

00:47:10:27 - 00:47:18:09

In that case. In that case, we will actually move on to item 3.2. Thank you for the clarification.

00:47:18:25 - 00:47:24:22

Uh, Claire, the applicant, if we could just have a moment and we'll just swap round our. The applicant's experts on that. Of course. Thank you.

00:49:08:06 - 00:49:21:04

Thank you for that pause. Quite enough chairs for everyone at the same time. Um, I will just let, um, uh, Sarah introduce herself. Um, if that's okay for the applicants team, and then we can move on. Thank you. Thanks.

00:49:24:00 - 00:49:34:13

Good morning. Um, my name is Sarah Mount's, um, principal heritage consultant for Royal Household and DHB, representing the client, and I'll be leading on onshore archaeology and cultural heritage.

00:49:40:08 - 00:49:45:02

Thank you. Okay, so as stated, we're now moving on to 3.2.

00:49:50:17 - 00:49:52:21

I will update on.

00:49:55:05 - 00:50:01:09

Historic England submissions later when that becomes relevant.

00:50:03:03 - 00:50:37:22

Initially we're going to focus on archaeological mitigation, whether the adverse effects on buried archaeological assets would effectively be effectively mitigated through the proposed mitigation. So the principal source of mitigation proposes, through either avoidance or excavation and monitoring. An environmental statement concludes that with the application of mitigation through investigation and recording, it's anticipated the residual magnitude and significance of effect would be reduced or offset to levels considered non-significant in EIA terms.

00:50:38:27 - 00:51:02:16

Various interested parties have highlighted the known archaeology that highlighted that, as the known archaeology has not been assessed through intrusive methods along the entire length of the route and landfall area is not possible to agree with the conclusions of the environmental statement. Essex County Council raised this, amongst others, in the Local Impact Report.

00:51:07:06 - 00:51:37:16

The view is the level of information submitted with the DCO fails to provide sufficient information on the nature, extent and significance of heritage assets in order to determine the impact on archaeological remains by the proposed scheme. Due to factors such as incomplete coverage of the whole route by geophysical survey and a lack of physical evidence to corroborate the validity. Non-intrusive techniques. High percentage of the land within the scheme remains under investigated, and therefore the risk of encountering high value heritage assets remains a significant risk.

00:51:38:27 - 00:51:43:11

First question to the applicant is therefore. Um.

00:51:46:12 - 00:52:07:00

Whether or not or is further information from the results of intrusive evaluation required to underpin the conclusions of the environmental statement regarding what is significant and the magnitude of impact in terms of EIA with confidence, would further intrusive assessment by trial trenching provide clarity on significance and reduce project risk?

00:52:12:10 - 00:52:51:29

There amounts for the applicant. Um, I just I'd like to just, um, confirm that the geophysical survey has been ongoing. Um, and further areas have been, um, surveyed, um, since the submission of the application. And there are just two areas, um, that are outstanding, um, along the route. They will be completed, um, later this year. Um, in terms of the the trial trenching, um, to where we have completed trial trenching at the substation, um, and an area um, north of Little Clacton Road, um, which was seen as sort of key project areas.

00:52:52:07 - 00:53:28:07

Um, in terms of engineering pinch points and, um, sensitivity of the archaeology, um, identified through the aerial photographic assessment and geophysical survey. Um, we are not, um, intending to undertake any further, um, trial trenching at the pre um consent stage. We have been in discussions with um Essex Police Services, um Historic Environment Team and Historic England to agree. Um, a way forward and an approach, um, to undertaking scheme wide and trial trench evaluation.

00:53:28:09 - 00:54:14:18

Post consent. Um, and we will be undertaking that jointly with five estuaries um who have um submitted a trench plan um for the proposed um evaluation and we will be submitting that same trench plan, um, I think deadline five um or sooner. Um, potentially. And we've also agreed, um, an archaeological mitigation strategy and uh, which aligns again with the five estuaries approach, which sets out, um, sort of more of the details in terms of, um, the phasing to archaeological evaluation and mitigation, um, and sort of roles and responsibilities.

00:54:15:09 - 00:54:58:18

Um, and, um, the how the results of the archaeological trial trenching will inform. Um, will allow us to, um, identify the significance of the archaeology and inform the sort of appropriate, um, mitigation approach, whether that be preservation in situ or preservation by record. Um, and the, the the plan is that the archaeological trial trenching will be undertaken immediately post consent to inform the detailed design stage, um, again in consultation with the um Essex Place Services and Historic England, to agree to appropriate mitigation methods.

00:54:59:14 - 00:55:08:26

Um, and then sort of inform the programme for mitigation, um reconstruction and during construction. Okay.

00:55:09:24 - 00:55:17:24

Thank you. Just to follow up points really on that before inviting interested parties.

00:55:21:02 - 00:55:36:29

So the conjoined points on what you have said about trial trenching. So there are views expressed so that further detail is required on trial trench evaluation methodology, sampling strategies, Paleolithic test Pit methodology

00:55:38:15 - 00:55:53:15

and the examining authorities helpfully been provided with data that across the eastern region, the standard level of trial trenching to assess an area would be at least 4% of the area that would be disturbed through groundworks, with a 1% contingency.

00:55:55:02 - 00:56:05:28

Essex County Council raised this and recommended the 30 metre trenches are the preferred method on a grid system, unless specifically targeted geophysical data. Could you confirm?

00:56:08:04 - 00:56:25:15

The applicant's position on achieving that target, or how? How close to that target the application and the proposed the submitted information will take the application in order to fully assess the archaeology. And

00:56:27:05 - 00:56:31:19

after this, I will turn to my piece to provide their comments.

00:56:34:00 - 00:57:06:00

Amounts for the applicant. Yes, I can confirm that the the trench plan, uh, the initial trench plan that we have put forward will be putting forward jointly with five estuaries. Um, does conform to um Essex place services, um regional um standards for the county. Um, and we have um agreed that there will be some negotiation and flexibility in that percentage. Um, a 4% coverage in areas where we have identified archaeological remains.

00:57:06:22 - 00:57:34:23

Um, through the, the non-intrusive um, surveys and assessments. Um, as are areas where we, we know that will require mitigation and therefore, um, the trend, the, the level of trenching that will be required for those areas will should just should be sufficient to sort of characterize, characterize the archaeology and establish the the extent of the area.

00:57:35:21 - 00:57:58:21

Thank you. Okay. So you mentioned deadline deadlines for submission of that. Then the next deadline is deadline for which is 25th of April. Is is there a possibility that as some of that information is in existence, we I would prefer receipt of that information if possible by deadline for.

00:57:59:25 - 00:58:33:18

Um for the applicant. Um, draft documents have been sent to Essex for comment. We're very mindful of the Easter holidays. Um, and so we wanted to oh, the hope is that we can submit a document that's agreed Read by ethics so that you have that into examination. So whilst um. See if it's available for deadline for we, we would submit it. But we are mindful to give Essex sufficient time to properly review those documents, and then we can take into account any comments they might have on those documents and submit an agreed version.

00:58:33:20 - 00:58:49:16

So that's why we were going with deadline five. If it can be done sooner, then we definitely will do that. But it was more to make sure that Essex had sufficient time with all of the other things that they have to, to do. Um, and bearing in mind the Easter break. Thank you.

00:58:49:20 - 00:58:56:01

Thank you for that. Yes. The deadline five then takes us to the back end of of May. So.

00:58:58:07 - 00:59:07:25

We will turn to Essex County Council now um, to receive their update and maybe an indication on timescales.

00:59:11:24 - 00:59:12:13

Um.

00:59:15:29 - 00:59:25:09

So I will ask Essex County Council now to respond to their views on those three points. Really, the adequacy of

00:59:27:03 - 00:59:31:25

methodology, the trial trenching and the emerging

00:59:33:11 - 00:59:40:05

joined approach with five estuaries are on that trial trenching strategy. Thank you.

00:59:45:13 - 01:00:18:07

Sir Wallace, um, Essex County Council, uh, apologies about our specialist is having a power cut at the moment, so trying to get back online as soon as possible. But in terms of, um, in intrusive investigation, it remains to be a concern from Essex County Council that we still advocate same approach as if we say in the 5X3 S3 examination from the council. We would like the applicant to do more intrusive investigation.

01:00:18:19 - 01:00:54:07

So this would mean to be a matters not agreed between the parties. Um, we have only received the applicant's, um, draft version of the um, uh, mitigation strategy and the outline that we see on Monday. So we haven't have time to go through the content yet. So again, we will provide a more detailed response in deadline for. But we will be working with the applicant, hoping that we can resolve the content of these two documents so that it will be in a form that is available in an acceptable format by deadline five.

01:00:56:11 - 01:00:58:11

That's the update I can provide at this stage.

01:00:58:13 - 01:01:25:07

Thank you. Okay. Thank you. So noting that the power outage may, uh, render your colleague unavailable. It would. It would be worth receiving at deadline for a fuller response, which I think you've indicated you can provide. And then we're looking to deadline five for the hopefully agreed substantially more agreed position if that can be achieved.

01:01:28:14 - 01:01:46:19

If your colleague reappears in the next few moments, just give me a signal. But without that, I'll just check if any other local authorities wish to comment on these fairly, fairly detailed points. I'm looking

01:01:48:06 - 01:01:50:21

at Ardley Parish Council.

01:01:51:06 - 01:02:24:26

Perry Mason Parish Council, just a point of concern from the community. It does very much feel like this. Our community are really interested in the archaeological archaeology of our of our parish because we have ancient monuments. We've got Roman roads we know exist, going very close to these sites, and we hear nothing of the result of it. And it feels very much like we're being done to and not hearing what the, what the results are. So it's a term, you know, it goes back to communicate with with the community.

01:02:24:28 - 01:02:28:18

Please. We would love to hear what's being discovered. Thank you.

01:02:29:00 - 01:02:30:06

Thank you for that point.

01:02:33:03 - 01:02:36:18

Just going to check online and in the room.

01:02:39:08 - 01:02:49:12

If there's no further comments, I'll invite the applicant to respond to those few points if there's anything else to add.

01:02:53:21 - 01:03:26:07

Clare, project the applicant. We're just trying to find the reference, but we believe that there is a public engagement strategy set out in the section eight, apparently. Um, currently the version is um app 247, but that is one of the documents that will be updated that we mentioned at deadline five. But if you parish council would like to have a look at section eight of that document, that does explain public outreach, community engagement, um, as part of, um, the um, trial trenching that will be undertaken post consent.

01:03:26:21 - 01:03:27:06

Um.

01:03:29:27 - 01:03:31:23

Uh, yeah. Very briefly.

01:03:33:11 - 01:03:55:23

Can they communicate with us, please? Because it is we're volunteers. We we we've got so much going on at the moment, and we've got a very small parish council, and it's really hard to keep up with all of this. And for us to have to actively go looking for information, it's not helpful in terms of keeping our community involved. So I'd ask them to let us know and send it to us.

01:03:55:25 - 01:04:12:00

Yes. Thank you. Let the parties deal with that between themselves. But just to reiterate, if you could reconfirm where that document is, and I think you mentioned that there will be updates to it in the first instance, and then you can have your own discussions around that.

01:04:13:26 - 01:04:55:11

With the app. Yes, the point's been noted, and we'll see whether any further wording needs to go into that section when it's when it's updated. Um, the only other point I think I just wanted to reiterate was obviously the the applicant's position that its assessment is adequate and that the, um, non-intrusive, um, surveys that have been undertaken and the targeted trial trenching that's been done are sufficient to inform, um, the assessment from EIA perspective, and that what we are talking about in terms of further trial trenching is, um, post consent trial trenching to inform the detailed design and to inform the specific mitigation measures that are put in.

01:04:55:13 - 01:05:31:28

And, um, just to refer to, um, the relevant sections of Empson one which require the um assessment to be um. Proportionate. Um and and primarily deaths based and only where it's insufficient from a desk pace perspective is um field evaluation required. So we believe our assessment is adequate and is in accordance with, with national policy. So just to make that point, I don't know if ethics expert has been able to join yet, but.

01:05:33:21 - 01:05:36:25

It would it would appear not so that the

01:05:38:13 - 01:05:49:19

we will be moving then to receive the comments on that further comments and progress that deadline for including any progress with statement of common ground,

01:05:51:06 - 01:05:52:22

I think it makes sense to.

01:05:55:00 - 01:05:56:28

Put that into writing,

01:05:58:25 - 01:06:30:06

as I say. Deadline for Info. Deadline is 25th of April, so that's only three weeks away. But an update on as much progress as has been made on those points would be welcome at that point. Noting that there will be a deadline five ideally submission of further agreement. And unless there are any other comments on that bullet point, as discussed at 1:00, we would take our lunch break.

01:06:33:18 - 01:06:39:14

Therefore, we will adjourn for lunch. Just bear with me one second.

01:06:48:26 - 01:06:56:12

We will take a 50 minute break, resuming just after 10 to 2. Thank you very much.