



Hearing Transcript

Project:	EN010148 - Tween Bridge Solar Farm
Hearing:	Preliminary Meeting
Date:	14 April 2026

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AUDIO_TWEENBRIDGE_PM_SESSION1_12 0426.

Tue, Apr 14, 2026 11:24AM • 1:11:23

00:05

Good morning. It's now 10am and the preliminary meeting is now open. I'd like to welcome you all to this preliminary meeting for the tween bridge solar farm project, and thank you for attending. Could I just confirm that everybody can hear me clearly?

00:27

Excellent.

00:30

Can online participants hear me clearly?

00:34

I think we've only got one.

00:42

Yeah, okay, good, excellent. I'm getting funds up.

00:47

So could I confirm the case team that the live streaming and recording of this event has now commenced? Yes, excellent. Thank you, right. My name is Luke Simpson. I am a chartered town planner, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State as the single appointed person, otherwise known as the examining authority, or ex a to examine this application. I'm also joined in person by my colleagues, Sarah Norris and Emma Smith of the planning Inspectorate case team. They're sat at the back of the room and handling the virtual components of the meeting online. Are Jessica Dunlop and Sam Stevens. Okay? I'll now deal with a few housekeeping matters for those attending in person. Could everyone please set all devices to silence such that we aren't disturbed during today's proceedings. Toilets are to the rear or halfway down the room on the right hand side, tea and coffee making facilities are at the rear. I

01:56

understand there aren't any fire drills planned today, but in the event that the fire alarm does go off, the fire exit is just behind me here, and the meeting point is the tourist information center, which is to the left as you exit the building.

02:14

Okay, I'll aim to keep this morning's proceedings as focused as possible.

02:21

Annex A of the rule six, letter which you should have received previously, sets out the agenda for today's preliminary meeting.

02:31

You will find information about this application on the planning inspectorates national infrastructure planning website, and I would strongly encourage you to familiarize yourselves with this website, because I will be using it to communicate with you and to provide access to documents and information received throughout the examination.

02:54

So today's meeting is being undertaken in a hybrid way, and this means that some of you are present with us at the hearing venue, and some of you are joining us virtually via Microsoft Teams. I will do my best to make sure that however you have decided to attend today, you will be given a fair opportunity to participate.

03:18

You should be aware that a recording of today's meeting will be made available on the tween bridge solar farm project section of the national infrastructure planning website. As soon as practicable after the meeting has finished. With this in mind, please ensure that you speak clearly into a microphone stating your name and who you are representing every time you speak.

03:46

If you're not able,

03:48

sorry if you're not at a table with a microphone, there should be a roving microphone, so please wait for one of these to be brought to you before you speak.

03:59

A link to the planning inspector's privacy notice was provided in our rule six letter. This sets out how the personal data of our customers is handled in accordance with the principles set out in data protection laws. If you have any questions or concerns about this, then please speak to the case team after the meeting,

04:22

as mentioned, this meeting will follow the agenda as set out in Annex A of the rule six letter. So it'd be helpful if you had a copy of this in front of you, the applicant will be displaying a copy on screen later if you don't have one in front of you,

04:40

okay, the purpose of this morning's meeting is to focus on the way in which this application is proposed to be examined. On that basis, it will, I will only be inviting discussion about the procedural aspects of this examination. So the purpose of this meeting is not to discuss.

05:00

The merits of the application, nor any concerns that you may have regarding the application. These are matters which can only be discussed once the examination of the application begins, which happens following the close of this preliminary meeting? So effectively, the preliminary the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the procedural elements of the forthcoming examination.

05:26

I'm going to now ask those of you who are participating in today's meeting to introduce yourselves when I state your organisation's name. Could you introduce yourself, stating your name and who you represent and which agenda item you wish to speak on, if you are not representing an organization,

please confirm your name, summarize your interest in the application and confirm the agenda item you wish to speak on.

05:53

Please, could everybody also state how they wish to be addressed so Mr. Mrs. Ms, miss, Dr and so on.

06:03

Could we start with the applicant and their advisors? Please?

06:09

Thank you, sir. My name is Tom McNamara. Sorry, I'm getting some feedback.

06:15

My name is Tom McNamara. I'm a legal director with the law firm, TLT, LLP. I'm acting for the applicant, RW, e renewables, UK, solar and storage limited,

06:28

Mr. McNamara is fine, and I expect that I will speak against all of the agenda items. I have various members of the wider project team alongside me, so I will ask them to introduce themselves now as well.

06:47

Good morning, sir. Michael Baker, I'm a development project manager at RWA,

06:54

and I wish to speak any relevant agenda items i

07:03

Good, Good morning, sir. I'm here on behalf of the applicant. My name is Mr. Gareth Roberts, Senior Director at Pegasus group, and I'm here just as a reserve to come to comment on any matters that Tom

07:18

Throws over to me. Thank you, sir.

07:23

Good morning, sir. My name is Mr. Mustafa, Latif aramesh. I'm from TLT, LLP, and I'm here on behalf of the applicant.

07:35

Good morning. Angus Duncan, DCO development project manager, on behalf of archerbury.

07:47

Okay, thank you very much.

07:50

So do we have a representative from the city of Doncaster

07:56

Council? Yeah, yes. Good morning, sir. Andrew Chirakovsky, on behalf of the City of Doncaster Council. Refer to me as Mr. Yakovsky.

08:06

I'm not intending to speak to any particular item on the agenda, but if there's any points come up, I may

08:13

comment. Okay. Thank you very much. Sorry. It's Mr. Is it Sierra cough ski, that'll be fine.

08:23

And are there any representatives from North Lincolnshire Council?

08:28

Thank you, sir, yes. My name is Paul Skelton. Mr. Paul Skelton, of Paul Skelton planning, and I'm a consultant working on behalf of North Lincolnshire Council. And again, we'll speak on anything that arises through the agenda items. Thank you.

08:47

Okay, thank you. So can we now move on to other organizations and individuals that have given notice of their intention to speak? So I believe we have a couple of representatives, or perhaps just one representative from National Highways Limited participating virtually? Is that correct?

09:10

morning? Sir? Yes. My name is Keir Donnelly. I'm a solicitor at Princeton Medicines, and I'm here to speak on behalf of National Highways today. You will also have my colleague, Mr. Corso, on your list, but he's not attending today. It's just me.

09:24

Okay. Is it? Miss Mrs. Fine. Thank you, Miss, miss. Thank you. Okay, yeah, thank you.

09:39

Okay. I think we did initially have some interested parties registered to participate, but I'm not sure whether they are anymore. So are there any interested parties in the room who'd like to participate? If there are, could you raise your hand?

09:57

Yes. Would you like to introduce.

10:00

Yourself

10:02

and let me know which gender item you wish to speak on. Yes, good morning. My name is Beverly Georgiou. I'd like to speak as a resident

10:12

about the organization of everything this meeting and everything involved in it

10:22

are okay, so how would you like to be addressed? Just call me Beverly. I'd rather refer to you as Miss Mrs. Call me Mrs. Georgiou. Okay. Thank you.

10:39

Great. Are there any other interested parties who wish to speak?

10:46

Okay,

10:48

is there anyone else participating virtually who wishes to speak who I haven't spoken to thus far?

10:59

No,

11:01

okay.

11:04

Right. Thank you. If anybody else decides that they wish to speak during the course of this morning's proceeding, for example, to make comments in response to representations made by other parties, then they may do so, please raise your hand, either physically or using the function within Microsoft Teams,

11:25

and I'll come to you. Are there any other comments anyone wishes to make on agenda item one before we move on to agenda item two?

11:38

No, okay. Thank you. So like the applicant to please display the agenda on the screen, if possible.

11:48

All right, thank you.

11:51

I now turn to agenda item two.

11:55

So in Annex B of my rule six, letter, I provided an introduction to the preliminary meeting and the examination process, explaining how it will be conducted and how you can participate. So hopefully you have read this, but I'll pick out the key points.

12:15

It's important that you are clear in your understanding of the process. So the purpose of this examination is to enable me to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State as to whether this project should receive consent in the form of a development consent order.

12:34

So in deciding an application where a national policy statement has effect, as is the case here, section 104 of the Planning Act 2008 requires the Secretary of State to have regard to any national policy

statement which has effect in relation to the development, any local impact report submitted on time, any matters prescribed in relation to the proposed development, and any other matters which the Secretary of State thinks are important and relevant to his decision.

13:05

These considerations will therefore be the primary focus of this examination.

13:12

You should know that the examination is primarily a written process, but there will be opportunities for hearings. Indeed, we have two hearings scheduled over the next couple of days.

13:24

From commencement of this examination, at the end of this meeting, I will have six months to examine the application, ask questions and seek evidence.

13:35

From the closure of the examination, I will then have three months to prepare a report to the Secretary of State, who will then normally take a further three months to make a decision. So on this basis, I'd expect the decision to be reached in approximately 12 months time.

13:55

During the examination, you'll have the opportunity to set out your case and the evidence to support it in writing, you will also have the opportunity to comment on everyone else's written submissions.

14:09

Written material that is accepted into the examination will be published on the project page of the national infrastructure planning website, so it is available for all to see. There are various types of documents hosted on this website, and I'll go through some of those now. So firstly, local impact reports. So a local impact report is a report written by a local authority giving details of the likely impact of the proposed development. So the Planning Act 2008 defines which local authorities are required to be invited to submit a local impact report.

14:51

And I think in this instance, they are North Lincolnshire Council and city of Doncaster council. So.

15:00

Annex D of my rule six letter sets out the procedural deadline for local authorities to submit their local impact report. And this deadline is deadline one which is fifth of May 2026

15:16

statements are common ground. They are documents which set out where there are issues of agreement and dispute between the applicant and other interested parties. These statements allow me to focus in on the key areas of disagreement between parties.

15:35

Written representations are opportunities for any interested party to write to me to draw my attention to an item of evidence,

15:46

the examining authority's written questions will typically follow the themes of the initial assessment of principal issues

15:55

and will formally ask the applicant and interested parties for answers to specific queries which I have regarding this application.

16:04

The dates when I will publish these written questions are set out in the draft timetable. I will also hold a series of hearings during the examination, and will publish dates and agendas for these

16:19

there are three different types of hearings under the Planning Act. The first type of hearing is an open floor hearing, which I am required to hold if requested by an interested party

16:31

in the rule six letter, I took a procedural decision to hold an open floor hearing today, at 2pm

16:37

I have also provisionally scheduled a further open floor hearing for later in the examination, as set out in the rule six letter.

16:47

The second type of hearing is a compulsory acquisition hearing, which, if requested, will be held to discuss compulsory acquisition issues. This will be focused on affected persons who are those with an interest in the land affected by proposed compulsory acquisition.

17:10

I will also hold issue specific hearings which are typically held on a topic by topic basis to address specific issues which arise during the course of the examination. So I would like everyone to note that I'm holding an issue specific hearing tomorrow on environmental matters and network connection

17:36

that includes five different issues. Obviously, I haven't received the local impact reports yet, and I will only have only just opened the examination. However, there are a few specific queries which I have on each of those topics, and I thought it would be a good use of time to hold the first issue specific hearing, given that I'm here for the preliminary meeting,

18:03

I'd like to point out that it's highly likely that some, if not all, of those topics and issues will be subject to further issue specific hearings later in the examination. So on that basis, I didn't I do not need or expect chapter and verse from the respective experts on each topic tomorrow, and that's that we've got a number of experts from the councils and the applicant. So what I'm effectively saying is it's very early days, but I thought it'd be good use of time to hold an initial hearing asks some key questions, and it's likely that we'll have further issue specific hearings on most, if not all of those topics again later in the examination. Okay,

18:47

if you'd like to participate in a hearing, then you're required to submit a request to register for each hearing on or before the date set out in the timetable.

18:58

Information about how to submit a request to register is provided in the rule six letter.

19:05

If you simply wish to observe the hearings, then you do not need to make a request to register.

19:11

Public live streams and recordings of the hearings will also be available on our project web page. So on the basis of what I've just described, and the information set out in Annex B. Are there any questions about the way in which I propose to examine this application? If you have any specific points to make regarding the draft timetable, can I ask that these are raised later under agenda item four? So are there any questions about how I propose to examine the application?

19:41

If you could raise your hand if you have any queries.

19:47

No,

19:49

okay, let's move on to agenda item three. Then,

19:58

right. Agenda.

20:00

Item three is my remarks about the initial assessment of principal issues.

20:06

I think we've got annex can we bring up Annex C on screen? Please?

20:19

Okay, thank you.

20:22

So I undertook an initial assessment of the application document and documents and relevant representations, and I've compiled a list of what I consider to be the principal issues relating to this application. So it's important to note that this list is not does not necessarily cover all of the issues that I may wish to inquire about during this examination. It's likely that I'll be scheduling additional issue specific hearings on some of these topics, and I will notify you of these once I have had an opportunity to review the local impact reports, statements of common ground and written representations.

21:03

It should also be noted that they're not the principal issues are not listed in order of importance. They're listed alphabetically.

21:12

So effectively, these are the key issues which I expect the examination to revolve around. But that does not preclude other issues from being addressed and discussed during the examination and in my report

to the Secretary of State. So does anyone have any comments on the framing of the initial assessment of principal issues?

21:40

So can I just ask a question. Possibly should have been for the pre overlapped slightly with the previous item in terms of, sorry, if you could introduce yourself. Apologies. Andrew sharikovsky for city of Doncaster, Council, yeah, just for a point of clarification in tomorrow's hearing, is h1

22:01

we the purpose of the hearing is to look at the network connection and the environmental matters. Can I just clarify as to the extent to which that is about the the

22:15

environmental matters on the one hand, and the grid connection on the other, at least in terms of the issues that are raised, you'll be aware from having read the application documentation that there is a question around the level of detail that's provided about the grid connection, because it's intended that should form part of a separate application at a later date. And is it your intention tomorrow to look at that particular aspect of the issue?

22:39

Yes, so

22:42

I don't see network connection as an environmental matter,

22:46

so it's separate. But we will be discussing the grid connection

22:53

and the fact that it doesn't necessarily form part of the applicant's application, and then we'll move on to discuss the environmental matters separately. There might be a little bit of overlap between those two issues,

23:09

but yes, they're distinct from one another.

23:12

Thank you. Okay.

23:15

Are there any other

23:17

queries on the initial assessment of principal issues?

23:24

Okay, let's move on to Agenda Item four, then, which relates to the examination timetable. Could the applicant please bring up Annex D of the rule six letter on screen? Please?

23:41

Perfect. Thank you.

23:43

So the draft timetable sets out how I propose to examine this application.

23:50

So within the six month examination period, I have sought to avoid clashes with other NCIP examination hearings and deadlines. So in this regard, a lot of work has gone into the timetable, and it's very carefully calibrated with statutory periods in mind throughout.

24:09

I'm not going to take you through the timetable line by line, as it's relatively self explanatory. However, I would like to highlight some key points. So firstly, the gray box highlights the events which are taking place today and tomorrow, along with procedural deadline a which has already passed. These are highlighted in gray because by the time I issued a final timetable in my rule eight letter towards the end of next week, these events will have already taken place.

24:44

So as I say, I'm aiming to issue the rule eight letter towards the end of next week, and that will set out the final examination timetable. I expect that to be published probably on Friday next week.

24:57

There are various deadlines in the draft.

25:00

Staff timetable. So you should note that the time for the submission of documents for all deadlines is 11:59pm,

25:09

on the relevant deadline date, unless instructed otherwise.

25:15

Some but not all deadlines include opportunities for the applicant to update the application documents. I've taken this approach to avoid unnecessary updates at every deadline, which can lead to significant numbers of revisions of documents and can also be confusing to interested parties and others participating in the examination

25:39

deadline one is a key deadline, as it includes the deadline for the submission of local impact reports and for the submission of draft statements of common ground. You should also be aware that it includes provision for any oral statements submitted over the next two days to be submitted in writing. So anything you say at any hearing over the next couple of days, you can submit a summary of that statement in writing by deadline. One

26:08

deadline, one is also the deadline for the submission of written representations,

26:15

which I discussed earlier.

26:18

You'll notice that throughout the timetable, every deadline includes provision for me under Rule 17 to request further information.

26:29

In addition, most deadlines include an opportunity to make representations to any submission made at the previous deadline.

26:38

So for example, at deadline, two representations can be made on the applicant's updated documents submitted at deadline one and so on.

26:48

So I have two sets of hearings scheduled in the timetable. The first are today and tomorrow, and the second round

26:57

are scheduled for week commencing Monday, 22nd of June,

27:03

I will, of course, keep you informed well in advance of any proposed hearings, and I'll discuss the notification shortly.

27:11

The examination is primarily a written process, so I will be posing written questions to the applicant and other parties. In order to ensure that I have the information I need to properly examine the application.

27:26

As such, I have scheduled three rounds of written questions. The first will be published on or before Friday next week.

27:36

The second will be published on seventh, July, 2026 and a third will be published on 11th of August, 2026

27:46

if required,

27:49

I will close the examination after a period of six months, which is currently scheduled to be Monday, 12th of October. 2026,

28:01

okay, is there anyone present in the room who would like to comment on the draft timetable?

28:09

Yes. Would the applicant like to comment? Tom mcnamar, on behalf of the applicant, thank you, sir.

28:16

In general terms, we don't have any comments on the timetable. It seems to us to be very sensible.

28:23

What I will do, if possible is just

28:28

because it bears upon the question of timetabling, in particular, deadline two, and there is a relationship with matters for discussion tomorrow under network connection.

28:41

What I can advise you, sir is that the applicant is progressing a piece of work, the purpose of which is to stress test the conclusions of the environmental impact assessment submitted with the application,

28:56

having regard to the delay to the schemes grid connection. And we communicated that delay to you earlier, earlier this year, sir,

29:08

what I, what I can say, Sir, is that the applicant is proposing that this further analysis will form the basis of a substantive written submission, which we are proposing be submitted at deadline two.

29:21

And I have four, four points briefly that I'd like to make about our proposed deadline, sir, the submission date is led by the nature and depth of the analysis, which naturally differs across different EIA topics. And so deadline two is the day by which we consider the work can reasonably be completed for submission

29:41

the same the second point there is that that date falls approximately one month after the start of the examination, so very early in the examination process.

29:51

The third point I'd make is that deadline to falls approximately one month prior to the hearings scheduled.

30:00

In the week, commencing the 22nd of June, which will therefore ensure that you have sufficient time to consider any matters that you wish to raise during those hearings, following your consideration of the document, and indeed for interested parties to consider the submission.

30:16

And the final point I'd make, sir, is that, as you mentioned, there is a space for a second round of written questions.

30:25

And I think I have the date. It's the seventh of July. So that's approximately seven weeks after deadline two, so again, ample time to accommodate any questions you may have following consideration of the submission at deadline two. So I raise it now. I don't propose to speak to the substance of that submission. We can talk about that in further detail tomorrow, if you would like to, but it's relevant, I think, to

30:48

the framing of the timetable in particular deadline too.

30:57

Okay. I mean, what I think we'll do? Because one of my questions tomorrow was going to relate to the effect of the connection, proposed connection date on the ES and any updates that may be required. And obviously, at that point, I'd like to establish what you anticipate, anticipation is in terms of the extent of any changes that are likely to be required, and obviously, depending on the extent and scope of any anticipated

31:29

amendments to the ES

31:32

that well that will have a bearing on when I think it would be appropriate to submit it.

31:39

So I would reserve judgment on that, but I take your point that that could be specified within the timetable. So are there any comments from the Councils on that? Andrew Sharikovskiy for City of Doncaster, Council,

31:58

yes, sir, obviously, in some respects. It's unfortunate we're having the session tomorrow before that submission is made. But having said that, I really do welcome Mr. McNamara's offer to make that submission, and I would agree with him. I think it's quite important that that the time is taken to prepare that document properly. So I think that the council really has no objection to what Mr. McNamara says, and I think it would be helpful to actually have a document that is more considering there is a little bit of time taken to prepare it.

32:28

Okay? So

32:30

Mr. McNamara, just so we're clear, the purpose of that document will be to

32:37

set out.

32:40

What exactly can you just summarize? Again, just the applicant, of course, the purpose of that document would really be to consider what the implications are on the assessment conclusions set out in the environmental impact assessment as a result of a delay to the

32:58

grid connection for the project. So it will look at the implications on the construction operation, decommissioning effects as a result of a delay.

33:10

And so I totally understand that you will reserve judgment as to when you think that document

33:16

needs to be submitted. Members of the project team will be available tomorrow, soon to walk through the initial conclusions that are emerging from that work,

33:27

and that may enable you then to understand better

33:32

where you think this sits in the examination process.

33:36

But, but yes, it's, it's simply considering the implications of delay on what we have said by way of conclusion in the submitted environmental statement,

33:50

does that mean that you would be making any amendments to the assessment at that Point,

33:58

ie the environmental statement Tom

34:02

McNamara on behalf of the applicant. So it's proposed to be a standalone document, so we would not amend the environmental statement. It would be a submission that's that stands on its own two feet, so to speak, but it will cross cross reference to chapters of the ES, and will make it absolutely clear how the ES should be read in light of what we're saying.

34:27

So if there are any implications for the conclusions reached in the ES, it will state clearly what those are talking about. The more on behalf the opportunity precisely that, sir, yes, do

34:44

Okay,

34:46

is there anyone else who would like to comment on the draft timetable before we move on second, I just come back on that final point from that, Mr. McNamara, don't get involved in substantive discussion on the issue now, but we may make more comment tomorrow, because there are obviously monitors.

35:00

Other points I think we might like to make in the substantive discussion tomorrow. Mr. McNamara Mara and I can have a discussion anyway about the sort of form and content in that document.

35:11

Okay, that sounds good. We can discuss that tomorrow, and I think that's going to be the one of the first agenda items. So,

35:20

okay, are there any other comments on the draft timetable before we progress to agenda item five

35:32

for national highways, if that's all right, thank you.

35:37

Sorry. Just lower hand, yeah. Kid only for national highways, just one comment, just to give you some some context to the to the request not to get into the merits, but national highways is in ongoing discussions with the applicant to understand the impact of the proposed development on the strategic network, the SRN. And that's both in terms of SRN traffic generated by the development, but also the extent to which the works proposed would directly interface with the SRN. The application has submitted contained insufficient information on modeling of impacts to the SRN, and the applicant has only recently provided national highways with some updated information on this which national highways is in the process of reviewing. Discussions are also ongoing regarding protective provisions and the extent of compulsory acquisition powers over national powers over national highways land. So in that context, although national highways is hopeful that these matters can be resolved through engagement with the applicant, national highways does note that the draft examination timetable only provides for one further round of hearings following deadline, two, quite early in the process. So national highways would just suggest in circumstances that the examining authority may wish to consider reserving time later in the examination for an ish on transport matters and possibly further CH, if these matters remain unresolved at, for example, deadline five. Thank you, sir.

37:13

Okay, yeah, well, there is definitely scope to have a host an issue specific hearing in relation to transport matters.

37:24

I'm aware of national highways relevant representation, and I think there were some issues relating to upgrade works.

37:37

So yes, it may well be the case that there is an issue issue specific hearing on transport,

37:44

yeah, just because it's not included tomorrow doesn't mean that

37:49

I'm precluding a further transport issue specific hearing. And the other thing I'd say is the examination is primarily written process, and I have a significant number of written questions in my first round of written questions on transport,

38:08

and obviously there are three rounds

38:11

of questions proposed, so there definitely is sufficient scope to discuss transport matters.

38:22

I don't know if the applicant has any response on that.

38:27

Tom McNamara, on behalf of the applicant,

38:32

not, not really, sir, I mean, I think, I think I agree with your

38:38

suggestion that this is probably a matter that could be dealt with through written submissions. Obviously, it's a matter for you to decide whether you think a hearing is merited.

38:48

What I would say is that it's right to say that protected provisions are

38:54

progressing, and we're at a very early stage in the examination process, so in the normal way those, those will be progressed as we go through and we think there'll be a significant narrowing of issues in the weeks ahead. And so instinctively, I think it is something that could, that could be dealt with through written submissions.

39:14

But we're in your hands, sir.

39:18

Miss Donnelly, is there any not particularly clear on what your

39:23

point is regarding the hearings, the way they're structured, is it, was it just a general concern that you wanted to make sure we were having an

39:33

issue specific hearing on transport, or was there something more that I've missed on the International harvest? So the point was purely just that the set the next round of hearings are scheduled quite early in the examination process. And national highways concern was that, because we're catching up on some information that's only recently been provided, it might be beneficial to the examining authority to have a transport ish later on in the exam.

40:00

Information timetable, but so it was purely, as the applicant has said, it was purely to the extent that that might assist you, and if you are comfortable that this can be dealt with through the written procedures, then we will not, of course, object to that. Thank you.

40:13

Okay, thank you very much.

40:17

Were there any other comments on the draft timetable before we progress.

40:24

Andrew sharikovsky for city of Doncaster Council, just to follow up on the same point, I kind of agree with both the speakers there that I think that there's an active and ongoing discussion with the applicant, certainly with CDC, and I suspect the same is true with North Lincolnshire Council. And I think there's an element of, let's see how that progress. That discussion progresses if we can proceed without a hearing, and the local highway authorities don't feel it's necessary for there to be a hearing,

fair enough, but I think, I think there's some merit in just seeing how that progresses, and then, if necessary, going to a hearing.

40:58

Okay. Thank you very much.

41:01

So I propose to move on to Agenda Item five,

41:07

which relates to my remarks on notifications of initial hearings.

41:14

So if the applicant could display that on screen, that'd be great. That's Agenda Item five,

41:21

Annex E of the rule six letter. Sorry.

41:25

So here all I really wanted to point out is that we have two hearings over the next two days. The first is the open floor hearing, which will take place this afternoon, and the second is issue specific hearing one on network connection and environmental matters which will take place tomorrow, from 10am

41:47

the environmental matters to be discussed will be limited to landscape and visual flood risk, cultural heritage and biodiversity and ecology.

42:00

I provided a notification of both the hearings at Annex E of my rule six letter, I will notify parties in good time to allow for attendance and preparation

42:11

for future hearings.

42:14

Details of how to register to participate in future hearings will be included in any Hearing Notification Letter and agendas will be published in advance of the hearings. If you have any difficulty in registering or using the event participation form, then please note that the case team's contact details are provided in the letter and they can provide assistance in this regard.

42:41

Were there any questions on this agenda item before we move on?

42:49

Yes.

42:52

Miss Georgia. Giorgio, yes. Mrs. Giorgio,

42:57

well, I would

43:00

sorry I'm not professional. So you'll have to bear with me. This deadline for written representations seems to be a moving deadline, a constant moving deadline.

43:13

I put written representations in May of last year,

43:19

then everything went offline. Everybody said, Oh, it's all it's all been withdrawn. Everything's been withdrawn.

43:27

Then all the signs go up again. Oh, it's all on again. You have to make written representations.

43:36

A lot of the public have made written representations again. What at what point are these written representations just knocked off the line? And that's the last case, or it's this case. Do people keep making representations? I've made written representations. A lot of my neighbors have made written representations. We weren't informed. We're not informed along the way about anything. So why are we making these written representations? There was a meeting in March of this year. I made that written representation. I was told I would be informed along the way. I wasn't informed that a meeting at the Holiday Inn had been canceled. I turned up at the Holiday Inn for a meeting. So somewhere along the line, it's either very, very disorganized all of this, or

44:34

it's being done on purpose. So now we're being told that we have representations to go in by May. This is from a neighbor. I wasn't informed any of this. Do we make written representations again? Do we keep making written representations, or are we being hoodwinked into thinking we've made a representation last May and we don't have to make another representation?

45:00

I'm afraid, as a public's opinion, the whole situation is terribly, terribly, terribly organized. The signs going up at the end of the roads, I'm sorry, but you would have to be a planning officer to understand any of the signs. Each time the signs go up, it's a different area that's got solar panels on.

45:26

When my neighbors have had people come out to see them, they're all different maps. Everything's a different map. So how do you expect the public to be able to make representations when they don't know what's going on.

45:41

Most of the public didn't know this is this is happening today. Hey, look at all the public here. Where Have people been told that this meeting has been going on today? Please. Because I me emailed in a representation. I didn't even get informed. I learned it from a neighbor. So where, where, where is, where. You know what? How do you make representations? How do the public make representations? When a they don't know the proper maps? There must be 25 different maps on the RWE website.

There's ones from last year, there's one from two years ago. There's current ones. How do the public make representations on false information?

46:28

Okay, would the applicant like to come back on that?

46:34

Thank you, sir.

46:36

Tom McNamara, on behalf of the applicant,

46:39

thank you for that. I sort of grouped my response into

46:45

three headings. And I think the overarching point is that

46:49

we fully understand that this is a complex process. These are nationally significant infrastructure projects, and so

46:59

understandably, there is a long period of

47:03

reflection and development of the proposals

47:07

and different touch points at which we as the applicant will seek feedback from from members of the public before the application is formally submitted to the planning Inspectorate. And then once you're into the planning Inspectorate machinery that that engages in a new process. What I think I can say is that,

47:29

speaking on behalf of you know, the applicants team, I think we'd be absolutely happy to to speak with you and discuss how you can engage in the process and the steps that you need to take in order to

47:43

engage in the examination process going forward. And that's you know, by reference to the planning inspectorates, websites and the relevant deadlines for submission of information, if that would be, would be helpful. There are members of the applicants team here today, and we would be more than happy to sit down with you briefly to discuss how you can do that.

48:03

That is lovely. But what about the whole of the population of Thorne and Crowell and everywhere else? I'm just one person. What about the whole of the public in this area? Okay, sorry, if we could just let Mr. McNamara finish his bit, and then any questions can be directed through me, that'd be great. Thank you.

48:24

Thank you, sir. I think in relation to that,

48:29

all I can say is that the project page on the planning inspectorates websites, it contains all the relevant information. There is a there is an exact examination library, and there is a timetable, and there are multiple sources of information which explain in a user friendly way how to engage with the process and how to go about submitting documents.

48:57

So from my perspective, engaging with with that,

49:01

with that site, it is, it is very user friendly,

49:06

and so that all of that information is there,

49:09

just to take the second point, which I think was your your concern around the user friendliness of Signs and notices that are placed on site, and again, I appreciate that those are often couched in complex language. The issue that we as the applicant have to grapple with there is that many of the notices that need to be placed on site have to comply with statutory requirements. So it is it is written into legislation, what the notice has to contain, and there isn't really much one can do to to depart from the standard terms of a notice so that that information needs to be included. And the reason for the numerous notices is that there are no.

50:00

Numerous requirements at different points in the process to place them.

50:04

So what I would say, though, is that the notices are just one aspect of the publicity that we've undertaken. And if one looks back at the public consultation, the preceded submission of the application, we disseminated information about these proposals in a number of different ways, including newsletters, which are much more public facing, user friendly documents, but the notices are, I'm afraid, just one of those things that are in the form they're in. For a reason,

50:37

I think that's probably everything. And as I say, more than happy to sit down with you after this hearing

50:44

to explain a little a little further what you can do to engage with the process.

50:51

I think the other thing to say from the planning Inspectorate perspective is that

50:59

there are different parts of the process. So I think early on, you may have been consulted by the applicant, whereas at this point, the planning Inspectorate are taking charge of the process and the examination

51:15

is beginning.

51:17

So earlier on, consultation was led by the applicant, so correspondence would have been sent by the applicant, and from this point, correspondence will be sent by the planning inspectorate,

51:34

and there are plenty of opportunities for you to participate in the examination. It hasn't even started yet, and it's a six month period with opportunities to respond to written questions, to attend open floor hearings, to attend issue specific hearings,

51:53

unless I am concerned, and I apologize for the fact that you weren't notified of the cancelation of the last set of hearings.

52:04

That was quite unusual, so it doesn't normally happen, but there was a an administrative error, which meant that we weren't certain that everyone who should have been consulted or notified of the preliminary meeting had been so on that basis, I made a procedural decision to cancel those hearings because I didn't want to go ahead without consulting everyone properly. Normally, that doesn't happen. I'm not sure why you weren't notified, and perhaps you could speak to the case team at the back of the room after the hearing

52:42

to establish why

52:45

you weren't notified and how you can have your say on this application going forwards.

52:54

Hopefully that helps answer some of your queries. It does. Thank you, but and thank you for for clearing that up. But I just feel that I'm one of probably 1000s of people in the same position,

53:09

and I don't think it's it's clear to the public at all.

53:15

And I one of the I put it on social media yesterday, and one of the big things that came up was it's being done in a hotel 14 miles away from the area that is involved on a day that there's a bus strike.

53:35

Okay, that's an important point.

53:38

I wasn't aware the bus strike, but that's why I've scheduled another open floor hearing later on examination. So normally, you wouldn't necessarily have an open floor hearing unless an

53:51

interested party requests one, but I've actually sort of pre-empted that, and we've got two already scheduled one after this hearing. And yeah, there is scope to have the second hearing closer to the site, we could look at venues with the applicant.

54:10

So yeah, thank you for that information, and I'll take that on board.

54:17

Okay, is there anything else? Okay, does anyone else wish to comment on agenda item five, which relates to notifications?

54:31

No,

54:33

okay,

54:35

we shall move on to agenda item six, in that case, which relates to procedural decisions.

54:43

So in my rule six letter,

54:46

I made a procedural decision to hold the following initial hearings. So the open floor hearing, which is 2pm today, and issue specific hearing one, which is tomorrow.

54:59

So.

55:00

Statements of common

55:02

ground. The first have

55:07

requested statements of common ground between the applicant and various parties

55:12

where a particular draft statement of common ground cannot be agreed between the parties by deadline, one or if any local authority position needs to be signed off at a higher level. Draft versions of that statement of common ground are requested to be submitted by the applicant at deadline, one

55:31

the position of relevant interested parties should then be confirmed in the course of the examination. And the draft examination timetable makes provision for updated statements of common ground to be submitted at various deadlines, with the final versions required by deadline eight,

55:50

whereas statements of common ground are dealing with the assessment contained in the environmental statement. I would appreciate it if you could explain any disagreements on the baseline, the likely significant effects, proposed mitigation and residual effects. So baseline, likely significant effects, mitigation, residual effects,

56:15

okay in terms of the company site inspection,

56:21

in the event, yes, sorry, I just had a couple of points on the SAC GS, if I if I may, I think we'll just go through all the procedural decisions and then I'll come back for questions at the end, if that's all right. So the company site inspection in the event, I consider that an accompanied site inspection is required. The draft examination timetable at NXT

56:46

of the rule six letter includes a provisional period for this to take place, which will be week commencing, 22nd of June.

56:56

Interested parties should be aware that accompanied side inspections are not an opportunity to make any oral representations to the EXA about the proposed development. However, participants may be invited to indicate specific features or sites of interest.

57:14

I will consider each suggested site location, including those provided in the applicant's draft itinerary, to determine if it could be viewed from public land on an unaccompanied basis. In the first instance,

57:30

if an accompanied site inspection is required, I will publish the final itinerary at least five days before the date of the ASI.

57:41

Okay. So another procedural decision which I made is a request that the applicant provides at each deadline an updated status of the applicant's examination Documents, Document which provides a list of the most up to date status the document submitted, a final version must be submitted before the close of the examination. Additional submissions are made a procedure, procedural decision to accept additional submissions. And they are examination library reference numbers as double 01, to as 021, and they have submissions made by the applicant in response to the section 51 advice issued on 23rd September 2025

58:28

I also made a procedural decision to accept representations from various parties who were unable to submit a relevant representation before the closure of The relevant representation period,

58:41

and they are included at exam library references as 022 to as 025,

58:50

I have made a procedural decision to require that written representations are received by Tuesday fifth of May 2026 which is deadline one

59:02

and as I alluded to earlier,

59:05

I made a procedural decision to cancel the previously proposed preliminary meeting, open floor hearing and issue specific hearing. This was because it transpired that a number of interested parties had not been given sufficient notice of those hearings.

59:22

So those the procedural decisions I've made thus far. Did anyone have anything to raise in relation to those matters? I think the applicant, Mr. McNamara,

59:35

thank you, sir. Tom McNamara, on behalf of the applicant,

59:38

so I've got a numbered list of one to six there of the procedural decisions, sir, and I'll go through them quite quickly. You started with the statements of common ground. We're broadly happy with the list, and drafts of those will be submitted to Deadline one I just had one or two comments. So in addition to your list of stakeholders, we are also proposing to.

1:00:00

Enter into a statement of common ground with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, so they'll be on the list of parties for deadline one,

1:00:08

and then just in relation to the fire and rescue services. So there were two

1:00:14

mentioned on your list. So first of all, North Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service, and secondly, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. So

1:00:25

in relation to the latter, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, we are proposing to enter into an socg with them, North Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service. So we think that might be an error. We're not aware that a body by that name exists. What we do understand is that fire and rescue matters. Responsibility goes in North Lincolnshire, falls to Humberside Fire and Rescue Service.

1:00:53

And what I can say about that stakeholder is that they haven't submitted relevant rep

1:01:00

and we we didn't have any specific feedback from them during the pre application stage, so what we have done is try to reach out to them now to see if they'd be interested in entering into an socg, but we haven't had Any response yet, so subject to

1:01:21

what if any response we get from them between now and deadline one, we weren't proposing to enter into an into an socg with them, particularly if they don't respond to say they would like one. But obviously we keep the matter under review, and if they subsequently say we'd like one, then we have no, no problem in entering into one. Okay, I take your point. Obviously you can't force them into a statement of common ground, but I think the general point on that was I would like you to as you, as you say you're seeking

1:01:54

agreement with them. I basically want to boss them out the fire safety issues with the

1:02:00

responsible fire service departments that would help me a lot in terms of my report and recommendation. Tom mcnamar, on behalf of the applicant, totally understand that, sir and I can say that we're making every effort to make contact with them with calls and emails, and we'll keep doing that in the days ahead.

1:02:26

Okay, were there any other did you want to carry on? I can carry on. I don't have much to say, Sir, the accompanied sides inspection. You've got our list of suggested locations for that

1:02:39

just on the third item status of application documents. So what we did submit in our response to Section 51 advice and the examination library reference there is as 018

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is a document known as

1:02:59

the application document tracker, and that is the conduit for us to let you know about updated documents as we proceed during through the examination. So we will simply produce another version of that for deadline one, and then subsequently, as we proceed,

1:03:19

we know the date for written representations. And we'd just like to say in relation to the cancelation of the previous hearings that we're extremely grateful to you and the case team for facilitating a an expeditious start to the examination

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following that cancelation.

1:03:38

Would the council's like to comment on any of the procedural decisions. Sir Andrew sharikovsky for city of Doncaster Council, we've got no further comment to make on any issues raised.

1:03:52

Yes, thank you. Sir Paul Skelton, North Lincolnshire Council, just in terms of the Fire and Rescue question, we will see what we can do to encourage the service to to engage in the in the process and with the applicant. That would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

1:04:12

Okay, is there anyone else who would like to comment on any of the procedural decisions before we move on to

1:04:21

Agenda Item seven.

1:04:26

Okay. Is there anyone online who would like to comment?

1:04:33

No, Okay, agenda item seven is any other matters? So any other matters? Are there any other matters relating to the procedural conduct of this examination that anyone in the room

1:04:49

or joining us virtually would like to raise before we move on to close the preliminary meeting?

1:04:58

So this is the.

1:05:00

Last opportunity to discuss procedural matters. Effectively, as I said earlier, we're going to have an open floor hearing 2pm today, and then issue specific hearing tomorrow morning.

1:05:16

Yes, Tom McNamara on behalf of the applicant. So I just had one final point to make it's it bears on procedural issues,

1:05:25

and that is that I can confirm that the the applicant is at the very early stages of progress in relation to a small proposed update to the scheme

1:05:36

which which responds to stakeholder feedback as part of relevant representations and socg discussions. So I'd make two points about this. First of all that it is, as I say, at the very early stages.

1:05:53

So we've recently launched a period of targeted stakeholder engagement on what we are proposing, and we would wish for this engagement to mature further before introducing anything formally as part of the examination process. And the second point is that we

1:06:10

have given early consideration to the planning inspectorates guidance on changes to an application after it has been submitted for application for examination. And our initial view is that there is a strong case for finding that the update is not such that it would engage the formal process for implementing changes during examination set out in the guidance. So we accept that that is not our decision. It's your decision,

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but that's our initial view, at least,

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however, with regards to timetabling, if the update is progressed, as I say, as a result of the targeted stakeholder engagement that's progressing,

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we are Indicatively targeting the end of this month, so that's Thursday, the 30th of April,

1:06:59

for a written submission to the examining authority setting out the nature and scope of the updates, the engagement activity undertaken and the next steps proposed to formalize the update as part of the examination. And so we would be seeking as part of that notification, procedural advice from you in relation to how you think it should be examined and so, so that's all I was proposing to say at this stage. But I just wanted to ensure that it was on your on your radar, and as I say, will form the basis of a more formal submission, if progressed by the end of this month at the very latest.

1:07:41

So small update, and you're effectively saying you don't think that you require a change request, in your view. Tom McNamara, on behalf of the applicant, yes, sir, that that is our case, and it is, as you, as you rightly say, a very small update to the to the scheme responding to stakeholder feedback. And we think that, looking at the way in which the guidance is framed, that this falls under the heading of project updates, as opposed to formal scheme change that would that would engage the staged process for introducing changes as part of an examination.

1:08:21

Okay, so it does, doesn't, does it involve an extension of the order limit? So

1:08:27

Tom that my on behalf, the applicant knows. So no extension of the order limits, no new land powers, no variation to the works works powers, either.

1:08:37

So it really is a small change, but nevertheless, we want to understand what stake stakeholders think about what we're proposing before, before bringing it forward.

1:08:49

Okay, and is this, I mean, obviously we've got the network connection and environmental matters tomorrow, any of those issues that we're going to be discussing tomorrow related to

1:09:02

this change, and if so, would it be appropriate, in your view, to discuss that further tomorrow?

1:09:10

Tom McNamara, on behalf of the applicant, sir, I'm just trying to think now whether it has any implications,

1:09:18

certainly not for network connection and in terms of the environmental topics, it may

1:09:26

have a relationship with ecology, but it would be very minor. May I reflect on that overnight, sir and

1:09:37

and then speak to it tomorrow and confirm to you whether I think it needs to be raised under any Yeah, that's fine. It sounds like you think it's a minor change, and obviously that's quite common within sips, that things change over the course of examination. Obviously we need to know in good time, or I need to know good time, what that change?

1:10:00

It comprises and why it's necessary. And obviously the councils and interested parties and statutory parties require sufficient time to consider any changes as well,

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until I see it. I can't comment on it, all right,

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on behalf of the applicant, audits there and that

1:10:24

information we provided.

1:10:28

Okay, did anyone want to

1:10:31

come back on that? Any of those points before we close the examination, close the preliminary meeting?

1:10:41

No. Okay, good,

1:10:48

right. So if I move on to Agenda Item eight, which is the close of the preliminary meeting. So thank you very much for participating in this meeting today, I will now close the meeting, and I look forward to hearing from those of you who are joining me this afternoon for the open floor hearing. So it is now 11 minutes past 11, and this preliminary meeting is now closed. Thank you. Applause.