



Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Meridian Solar Farm
Hearing:	Preliminary Meeting
Date:	8 September 2026

Please note: This document is intended to assist Interested Parties.

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The video recording published on the Planning Inspectorate project page is the primary record of the hearing.

1

00:00:00,060 --> 00:00:03,860

Good morning, everybody. It's now just slightly after 10:00 o'clock

2

00:00:04,040 --> 00:00:05,580

and time for this meeting to begin.

3

00:00:05,660 --> 00:00:09,390

I'd like to welcome you to the preliminary meeting for the Meridian Solar

4

00:00:09,460 --> 00:00:13,320

Farm project. Just before I go any further, can I confirm that

5

00:00:13,360 --> 00:00:17,210

everybody can hear me clearly and that we've got no more IT issues?

6

00:00:18,420 --> 00:00:22,380

Thank you. Can I just confirm that obviously the live streaming

7

00:00:23,580 --> 00:00:27,480

and recording has commenced, yeah. Thank you. My name is Ms. Casini.

8

00:00:27,580 --> 00:00:30,370

I'm a chartered town planner and examining inspector.

9

00:00:30,540 --> 00:00:34,340

I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the lead member of the panel to

10

00:00:34,380 --> 00:00:38,260

examine this application. I'm now going to ask my colleagues to introduce

11

00:00:38,280 --> 00:00:38,760

themselves.

12

00:00:40,280 --> 00:00:42,360

Good morning. My name is Ms. Davies.

13

00:00:42,660 --> 00:00:46,180

I'm a chartered geologist and an examining inspector.

14

00:00:46,240 --> 00:00:50,180

I've also been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of this panel.

15

00:00:52,580 --> 00:00:54,600

And good morning. My name is Samantha Murphy.

16

00:00:55,080 --> 00:00:58,200

I am a chartered town planner, and I'm a chartered environmentalist.

17

00:00:58,260 --> 00:01:01,140

I have also been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of this panel

18

00:01:01,160 --> 00:01:03,040

of inspectors to examine this application.

19

00:01:04,541 --> 00:01:08,140

Thank you. Together, we constitute the examining authority or also

20

00:01:08,280 --> 00:01:11,020

ExA, as we'll be referred to for this application.

21

00:01:11,700 --> 00:01:14,080

Also present today are members of the case team.

22

00:01:14,180 --> 00:01:17,760

The case manager is Mrs. Magum. She is supported by Mr.

23

00:01:18,080 --> 00:01:21,640

Stevens here at the venue, and also we have colleagues online.

24

00:01:21,700 --> 00:01:25,520

If you have any questions or concerns about today's event, please contact a

25

00:01:25,660 --> 00:01:29,430

member of the case team. In addition, there are technicians from

26

00:01:29,480 --> 00:01:33,280

TM Services in the room who are attending solely for the purpose of managing the

27

00:01:33,320 --> 00:01:35,720

recording and the live streaming of the event.

28

00:01:37,000 --> 00:01:40,730

Before we move on, I'll deal with a few housekeeping matters for those people

29

00:01:40,780 --> 00:01:41,700

attending in person.

30

00:01:42,580 --> 00:01:45,880

Can I ask that all devices and phones are set to silent?

31

00:01:46,250 --> 00:01:49,820

There are no fire alarm drills today, so if the alarm does go,

32

00:01:50,140 --> 00:01:53,660

please exit the building and the assembly point is at the Chris Turner

33

00:01:53,740 --> 00:01:57,450

statue outside the football club located on the approach to the

34

00:01:57,520 --> 00:02:00,160

venue, and toilets are in the outside corridor.

35

00:02:01,220 --> 00:02:04,620

For those of you attending virtually, please be assured that you have our full

36

00:02:04,680 --> 00:02:08,530

attention at all times, even if we're not looking at the camera all of the

37

00:02:08,560 --> 00:02:12,440

time. To avoid visual noise and distractions, please keep your

38

00:02:12,500 --> 00:02:15,420

cameras and microphones off unless we invite you to speak.

39

00:02:16,900 --> 00:02:20,560

No requests have been made for any special measures or arrangements to

40

00:02:20,580 --> 00:02:22,780

enable participation in this hearing.

41

00:02:22,800 --> 00:02:26,010

But if you do need assistance, then please speak to the case

42

00:02:26,100 --> 00:02:29,740

team. We aim to keep today's proceedings

43

00:02:29,860 --> 00:02:31,780

focused and as efficient as possible.

44

00:02:32,360 --> 00:02:36,260

To assist this, we issued Annex B to our letter, which invited you to this

45

00:02:36,320 --> 00:02:39,740

meeting, which is known as a Rule 6 letter and has the

46

00:02:39,780 --> 00:02:43,520

examination library reference PD006.

47

00:02:44,320 --> 00:02:48,000

Annex B sets out an introduction to the preliminary meeting process,

48

00:02:48,480 --> 00:02:51,920

and we trust that you've read this in advance as we will only be providing a

49

00:02:51,980 --> 00:02:52,480

summary.

50

00:02:53,740 --> 00:02:57,200

You will find information about this application on the Planning Inspectorate's

51

00:02:57,280 --> 00:02:59,620
National Infrastructure Planning website.

52
00:03:00,020 --> 00:03:03,420
We'd strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with this website

53
00:03:03,800 --> 00:03:07,480
because we'll be using it to communicate with you and to provide access to

54
00:03:07,520 --> 00:03:09,140
documents throughout the examination.

55
00:03:10,440 --> 00:03:14,320
A recording of today's meeting will be made available on the Meridian Solar

56
00:03:14,400 --> 00:03:18,360
Farm section of the National Infrastructure Planning website as soon as

57
00:03:18,440 --> 00:03:20,340
possible after the meeting is finished.

58
00:03:21,860 --> 00:03:25,200
With this in mind, please ensure that you speak clearly into a

59
00:03:25,240 --> 00:03:28,920
microphone, stating your name and who you are representing each

60
00:03:29,000 --> 00:03:32,960
time before you speak. If you are not at a table with a microphone,

61
00:03:33,000 --> 00:03:36,960
there is a roving microphone, so please wait for one of these to be brought to

62
00:03:37,000 --> 00:03:37,980
you before you speak.

63
00:03:39,640 --> 00:03:43,380

A link to the Planning Inspectorate's privacy notice was provided in our Rule

64

00:03:43,640 --> 00:03:47,590

6 letter, which was published on the 23rd of July this

65

00:03:47,660 --> 00:03:51,430

year. We assume that everyone here has familiarized themselves with this

66

00:03:51,460 --> 00:03:55,420

document, which established how the personal data of our

67

00:03:55,460 --> 00:03:59,300

customers is handled in accordance with the principles set out

68

00:03:59,440 --> 00:04:03,200

in data protection laws. Please speak to the case team if you have any

69

00:04:03,300 --> 00:04:04,360

questions about this.

70

00:04:05,680 --> 00:04:09,440

This meeting will follow the agenda set out in Annex A of our Rule

71

00:04:09,700 --> 00:04:13,460

6 letter and as will be displayed on the screens around the

72

00:04:13,500 --> 00:04:16,959

room at various points. So let me briefly explain the

73

00:04:17,019 --> 00:04:18,541

purpose of this meeting.

74

00:04:19,380 --> 00:04:23,180

So the preliminary meeting, or PM as it's also known as, is the

75

00:04:23,300 --> 00:04:27,200

opening stage of the examination process and focuses on the way in

76

00:04:27,240 --> 00:04:30,140
which this application is proposed to be examined.

77
00:04:30,640 --> 00:04:34,320
On that basis, we will only be inviting discussion about the procedural

78
00:04:34,400 --> 00:04:37,600
aspects of this examination during today's meeting.

79
00:04:39,080 --> 00:04:43,070
Much as it may be tempting to do so, we will not be taking any evidence at this

80
00:04:43,100 --> 00:04:47,000
meeting. We will not be discussing the merits of the case or any concerns that

81
00:04:47,060 --> 00:04:49,040
you may have regarding this application.

82
00:04:49,880 --> 00:04:53,700
That discussion will take place once the examination of the

83
00:04:53,740 --> 00:04:56,820
application begins, which follows the close of this meeting.

84
00:04:57,260 --> 00:05:00,400
We will stop you if you start to stray into the merits or otherwise of the

85
00:05:00,440 --> 00:05:01,820
application.

86
00:05:03,620 --> 00:05:07,480
The PM is scheduled for this morning only, and should the meeting look like it's

87
00:05:07,500 --> 00:05:10,900
going to take the full allotted time, we may need to take a mid-morning break at

88

00:05:10,960 --> 00:05:12,120
around 11:30.

89

00:05:13,460 --> 00:05:17,300

Please also bear in mind that the only official recording of the proceedings

90

00:05:17,380 --> 00:05:20,840

are the notes and audio recording that are to be placed on the Planning

91

00:05:20,860 --> 00:05:24,830

Inspectorate's website. Tweets, blogs, and similar communications

92

00:05:24,860 --> 00:05:28,280

arising out of this meeting will not be accepted as evidence in the

93

00:05:28,300 --> 00:05:30,160

examination of the application.

94

00:05:31,660 --> 00:05:35,300

So I'm now going to move on to ask those of you who are participating in today's

95

00:05:35,340 --> 00:05:39,240

meeting to introduce yourself. When I state your organization's name,

96

00:05:39,320 --> 00:05:43,210

could you introduce yourself, stating your name and who you represent and

97

00:05:43,240 --> 00:05:45,780

which agenda item or items you wish to speak on?

98

00:05:46,520 --> 00:05:50,260

If you're not representing an organization, please just confirm your name,

99

00:05:50,660 --> 00:05:54,600

summarize your interest, and confirm the agenda items which you wish

100

00:05:54,640 --> 00:05:58,320
to speak. Please could you also confirm how you wish to be

101
00:05:58,360 --> 00:06:00,490
addressed, so Mr., Mrs., however.

102
00:06:00,940 --> 00:06:04,410
So could I turn to the applicant and their advisors, please, for

103
00:06:04,460 --> 00:06:05,030
introductions?

104
00:06:06,380 --> 00:06:06,960
Good morning.

105
00:06:08,000 --> 00:06:10,470
Hi, my name is Taylor Power, Ms. Taylor Power.

106
00:06:10,960 --> 00:06:14,390
I'm a Managing Senior Associate at Pinsent Masons, and I'm the legal
advisor for

107
00:06:14,420 --> 00:06:17,960
the applicant, Meridian Solar. I have with me, to my left, Mr.

108
00:06:18,220 --> 00:06:21,240
Rob Davies, who's an associate at Pinsent Masons.

109
00:06:21,580 --> 00:06:25,400
To my right, I have Jackie Critchley, who is the DC0 lead at

110
00:06:25,480 --> 00:06:27,720
Downing, which is the parent company of Meridian Solar.

111
00:06:28,480 --> 00:06:32,420
And then I have Michelle Burns, who is an associate at Quad and the
planner for

112
00:06:32,460 --> 00:06:33,080
the project.

113

00:06:34,020 --> 00:06:34,060
I

114
00:06:35,760 --> 00:06:39,440
think the main points to speak to are items four and item

115
00:06:39,480 --> 00:06:43,340
five, but are available for any questions there, Ken, on all items.

116
00:06:43,380 --> 00:06:44,100
Thank you very much.

117
00:06:45,900 --> 00:06:49,600
I'm now going to move to the organizations and individuals that have given notice

118
00:06:49,640 --> 00:06:52,460
of their intention to speak. So Lincolnshire County Council?

119
00:06:54,920 --> 00:06:58,860
Good morning. My name's Mrs Justine Foster, and I'm the infrastructure manager

120
00:06:58,880 --> 00:07:02,320
at Lincolnshire County Council. I'm accompanied today by Mr

121
00:07:02,800 --> 00:07:06,500
Andrew Barton, who is the principal infrastructure officer at the

122
00:07:06,540 --> 00:07:07,000
council.

123
00:07:07,940 --> 00:07:10,920
I'm happy to be referred to as Mrs Foster and Mr

124
00:07:10,940 --> 00:07:11,980
Barton.

125
00:07:12,900 --> 00:07:16,530
We will mainly wish to make comments on items four and five today,

126

00:07:17,020 --> 00:07:20,570

but obviously we're here to take any questions or respond to any points arising

127

00:07:20,600 --> 00:07:21,980

from the other agenda items.

128

00:07:22,060 --> 00:07:22,900

Thank you very much.

129

00:07:24,220 --> 00:07:27,820

I believe we have a speaker from the Meridian Action Group.

130

00:07:28,720 --> 00:07:31,340

If you just wait for a roving mic to come to you.

131

00:07:37,200 --> 00:07:38,120

It's just on its way.

132

00:07:52,560 --> 00:07:56,000

My name is Andrew Malkin. I'm representing Meridian Action Group,

133

00:07:56,500 --> 00:08:00,300

and I'd like to speak on item three, the initial assessment of

134

00:08:00,340 --> 00:08:03,720

principal issues, and item four, the draft examination

135

00:08:03,760 --> 00:08:07,220

timetable. And you can call me Andrew or Mr Malkin.

136

00:08:08,060 --> 00:08:08,840

Thank you very much.

137

00:08:09,740 --> 00:08:13,100

Could I ask if there's anybody else in the room today who wishes to speak?

138

00:08:15,280 --> 00:08:15,460

Nope.

139

00:08:17,380 --> 00:08:20,110

So I'm now going to move on to our virtual attendees.

140

00:08:20,200 --> 00:08:24,110

Please could you raise a virtual hand, and I'll invite you to speak and

141

00:08:24,160 --> 00:08:28,140

introduce yourself. So anybody online who wishes to speak, if you could raise your

142

00:08:28,150 --> 00:08:28,820

hand, please.

143

00:08:32,920 --> 00:08:36,280

Thank you. I think that is South Holland District Council.

144

00:08:39,060 --> 00:08:40,709

If you would like to put your camera on. Good morning.

145

00:08:40,821 --> 00:08:42,961

Yes. Hi, good morning. Can you hear me okay?

146

00:08:43,060 --> 00:08:44,240

I can, and can see you.

147

00:08:45,360 --> 00:08:47,980

Super. My name's Sam Dewar. I'm a planning consultant,

148

00:08:49,000 --> 00:08:51,420

chartered planner. I'm representing South Holland today.

149

00:08:52,820 --> 00:08:55,640

We may have some comments to make on

150

00:08:57,180 --> 00:09:00,100

Annex C, which I believe is item

151

00:09:01,040 --> 00:09:04,980

three of the agenda. We are available on other items if

152

00:09:05,020 --> 00:09:05,560
necessary.

153
00:09:06,800 --> 00:09:07,640
Thank you very much.

154
00:09:08,240 --> 00:09:08,250
Thank you.

155
00:09:08,250 --> 00:09:10,680
Do we have anybody from National Grid

156
00:09:12,100 --> 00:09:13,160
wishing to speak this morning?

157
00:09:15,880 --> 00:09:17,800
Hey, good morning. I'm Gordon Clark.

158
00:09:18,000 --> 00:09:21,549
I'm from DLE Piper and acting for National Grid Electricity

159
00:09:21,620 --> 00:09:22,180
Transmission.

160
00:09:23,000 --> 00:09:26,440
I have with me David Watkins, who is the EPC project manager,

161
00:09:27,420 --> 00:09:31,040
and we may wish to speak to agenda item three today.

162
00:09:32,120 --> 00:09:32,960
Thank you very much.

163
00:09:35,140 --> 00:09:38,900
Is there anybody from Lincolnshire Against Needless Destruction

164
00:09:38,970 --> 00:09:40,220
online who wishes to speak?

165
00:09:45,800 --> 00:09:48,280
I can't see any hands up. If you are there,

166

00:09:49,100 --> 00:09:52,180

please raise your hand and we'll come back to you. And Jane Thompson?

167

00:09:57,240 --> 00:10:00,260

I think you're there, Ms Thompson. I can see your icon.

168

00:10:01,570 --> 00:10:03,530

There you are. If you want to-

169

00:10:03,590 --> 00:10:07,580

Hi. I won't need to speak this morning, thank you.

170

00:10:07,620 --> 00:10:08,260

Thank you very much.

171

00:10:10,440 --> 00:10:13,060

Have I missed anybody online who wishes to speak?

172

00:10:21,100 --> 00:10:24,460

I think, Mr Dewar, your hand is still raised.

173

00:10:24,520 --> 00:10:27,799

Is that you have something to say or are you just-

174

00:10:27,840 --> 00:10:31,580

Yeah, apologies. I forgot to introduce our landscape consultant, who is Tom

175

00:10:31,620 --> 00:10:35,160

Rawlings, who may well also speak with regards to item

176

00:10:35,240 --> 00:10:38,180

C if I have to introduce him. Thank you.

177

00:10:38,540 --> 00:10:39,300

Thank you very much.

178

00:10:41,420 --> 00:10:45,340

I think that is everybody.

179

00:10:45,400 --> 00:10:48,740

If anybody else decides that they wish to speak during the course of this morning's

180

00:10:48,780 --> 00:10:52,540

proceedings, for example, to make comments in response to representations

181

00:10:52,600 --> 00:10:55,240

made by other parties, you may do so.

182

00:10:55,900 --> 00:10:59,540

Please raise your hand either physically or using the function within

183

00:10:59,580 --> 00:11:01,040

Microsoft Teams if you wish.

184

00:11:03,120 --> 00:11:07,020

For those people watching the live stream, can I also advise you

185

00:11:07,080 --> 00:11:11,060

that should we have a break in proceedings, we will have to stop the live stream

186

00:11:11,460 --> 00:11:13,860

in order to give us clear recording files.

187

00:11:14,420 --> 00:11:18,040

As a result, at the point at which we recommence the meeting and restart the live

188

00:11:18,140 --> 00:11:21,810

stream, you'll need to refresh your browser page to view the

189

00:11:21,880 --> 00:11:22,920

restarted stream.

190

00:11:23,720 --> 00:11:27,060

Are there any other comments anybody wishes to make under agenda

191

00:11:27,220 --> 00:11:29,460

item one before I move on?

192

00:11:32,280 --> 00:11:36,220

No. Thank you very much. That concludes this item of the agenda,

193

00:11:36,240 --> 00:11:39,720

and I now hand over to Mrs Murphy to deal with agenda item two.

194

00:11:41,140 --> 00:11:44,780

Thank you. We will now turn to agenda

195

00:11:44,860 --> 00:11:48,660

item two. So as previously mentioned, in order to streamline the

196

00:11:48,700 --> 00:11:52,580

running of this event, in Annex B of our Rule 6 letter, we provided

197

00:11:52,600 --> 00:11:55,630

an introduction to the preliminary meeting and the examination

198

00:11:55,740 --> 00:11:59,680

process, explaining how it will be conducted and how you can

199

00:11:59,740 --> 00:12:00,380

participate.

200

00:12:01,680 --> 00:12:05,500

For expediency, I'm assuming everyone has read this and therefore I do not

201

00:12:05,540 --> 00:12:09,400

propose to spend time reading it out, but if we could draw on the following

202

00:12:09,540 --> 00:12:10,200

key points

203

00:12:11,584 --> 00:12:15,233

In respect to the General Data Protection Regulations or GDPR,

204

00:12:15,804 --> 00:12:19,394

you will note from the Rule 6 letter that this event is being recorded

205

00:12:20,064 --> 00:12:23,344

as well as being live-streamed to interested parties or

206

00:12:23,564 --> 00:12:26,624

IPs, as they are also known, who requested this.

207

00:12:27,504 --> 00:12:31,003

The digital recordings form a public record that can contain your

208

00:12:31,044 --> 00:12:34,844

personal information and to which

209

00:12:34,904 --> 00:12:38,414

GDPR applies. The Planning Inspectorate's practice is to

210

00:12:38,444 --> 00:12:42,284

retain and publish recordings for a period of five years from the

211

00:12:42,344 --> 00:12:44,464

Secretary of State's decision on this application.

212

00:12:45,424 --> 00:12:49,224

Consequently, if you participate in today's hearing, it is important

213

00:12:49,664 --> 00:12:53,544

that you understand that you will be recorded, and that therefore to

214

00:12:53,584 --> 00:12:56,973

consent to the retention and publication of the digital recording.

215

00:12:58,304 --> 00:13:01,544

We will only ask for information to be placed on the public record that is

216

00:13:01,564 --> 00:13:04,234

important and relevant to the planning decision.

217

00:13:05,064 --> 00:13:08,704

It will only be in the rarest of circumstances that we might ask for you to provide

218

00:13:08,764 --> 00:13:10,904

personal information of the type that is most

219

00:13:12,464 --> 00:13:15,964

of us would prefer to keep private or confidential.

220

00:13:16,024 --> 00:13:19,944

Therefore, to avoid the need to edit digital recordings, we would

221

00:13:20,064 --> 00:13:23,624

ask that you try your best not to add information to the public

222

00:13:23,644 --> 00:13:27,074

record that you would wish to be kept private or confidential.

223

00:13:28,564 --> 00:13:32,434

The examination is primarily a written process, and the examination

224

00:13:32,544 --> 00:13:35,504

is not a public inquiry like a planning appeal.

225

00:13:36,084 --> 00:13:38,444

As a result, we do expect the majority of

226

00:13:38,504 --> 00:13:43,384

evidence

227

00:13:43,404 --> 00:13:44,774

to be provided in writing.

228

00:13:46,564 --> 00:13:50,424

Therefore, if you feel you have not been given a full opportunity to make an

229

00:13:50,504 --> 00:13:54,424

oral representation at today's hearing or moving forward, for example, due

230

00:13:54,464 --> 00:13:58,294

to time constraints, please be assured that representations received in

231

00:13:58,364 --> 00:14:01,964

writing carry the same weight as an oral representation.

232

00:14:03,784 --> 00:14:07,304

In terms of deadlines, we will come on to talk about the examination timetable

233

00:14:07,384 --> 00:14:10,364

shortly, located at item four on the agenda.

234

00:14:10,864 --> 00:14:14,414

However, I would like to highlight the importance of ensuring information

235

00:14:14,824 --> 00:14:18,484

is submitted in accordance with the set deadlines within the examination

236

00:14:18,524 --> 00:14:19,184

timetable.

237

00:14:20,224 --> 00:14:23,814

Because the examination can only proceed smoothly and efficiently if all

238

00:14:23,844 --> 00:14:27,384

parties meet the deadlines, please provide submissions that are

239

00:14:27,424 --> 00:14:28,743

comprehensive as possible.

240

00:14:30,004 --> 00:14:33,724

Late submissions restrict the ability of other parties to respond to the

241

00:14:33,764 --> 00:14:37,114

information, and that can lead to unfairness in the

242

00:14:37,184 --> 00:14:40,124

process and the potential for costs to be awarded.

243

00:14:40,924 --> 00:14:44,854

So it is important for everyone to note that if you do submit something late,

244

00:14:45,404 --> 00:14:49,384

there is a possibility that it may not be accepted into the examination.

245

00:14:50,464 --> 00:14:54,084

In terms of resolving disagreements, where there is a disagreement

246

00:14:54,184 --> 00:14:58,124

between parties on matters, we ask all sides engage in

247

00:14:58,164 --> 00:15:02,004

a positive and timely manner to seek resolution as soon as possible.

248

00:15:02,873 --> 00:15:06,204

That includes progressing statements of common ground as proactively as

249

00:15:06,244 --> 00:15:10,104

possible and demonstrating progress with land negotiations

250

00:15:10,444 --> 00:15:12,224

and protective provisions where relevant.

251

00:15:13,944 --> 00:15:16,144

I would like to also briefly mention costs.

252

00:15:17,304 --> 00:15:20,964

Just to advise that all parties involved in the examination process are

253

00:15:20,984 --> 00:15:24,764

expected to meet their own costs. However, costs

254

00:15:24,904 --> 00:15:28,864

can be awarded where a timely application for an award is made by an interested

255

00:15:28,944 --> 00:15:32,904

party and/or affected person, and the party against whom the

256

00:15:32,944 --> 00:15:36,874

award is sought is considered by the examining authority to have

257

00:15:36,964 --> 00:15:40,824

acted unreasonably, and that unreasonable behavior has caused a

258

00:15:40,844 --> 00:15:44,804

third party applying for the award of costs to incur unnecessary

259

00:15:44,844 --> 00:15:46,924

or wasted expense during the examination.

260

00:15:48,664 --> 00:15:51,653

My final point here is to mention the importance of our website.

261

00:15:52,554 --> 00:15:55,444

This will be where you will find the information and the documents about the

262

00:15:55,484 --> 00:15:59,084

application, including the examination library, which contains all of the

263

00:15:59,124 --> 00:16:02,754

application documents, written submissions, and procedural

264

00:16:02,804 --> 00:16:03,364

documents.

265

00:16:04,224 --> 00:16:08,144

Each time a deadline passes, the documents that have been submitted will be

266

00:16:08,204 --> 00:16:12,104

added to the examination library, so they're available for everyone

to see.

267

00:16:13,844 --> 00:16:17,424

And so we strongly advise that you familiarize yourself with the website,

268

00:16:17,964 --> 00:16:21,884

because we will be using it to communicate with you throughout the examination.

269

00:16:23,244 --> 00:16:26,084

It's important that you are clear in your understanding of the process.

270

00:16:26,564 --> 00:16:30,524

Therefore, if there is anything you are unclear about or which you need clarity on,

271

00:16:30,564 --> 00:16:32,634

then this is your opportunity to ask.

272

00:16:33,784 --> 00:16:37,694

So on the basis of the information set out in Annex B, does anyone have any

273

00:16:37,724 --> 00:16:40,364

questions about the way in which we propose to examine the

274

00:16:40,404 --> 00:16:44,384

application? I wish to add that we have noted comments about procedural

275

00:16:44,424 --> 00:16:48,104

deadline A with regards to the timetable and statements of common ground,

276

00:16:48,584 --> 00:16:52,454

and these and any other specific points on the draft timetable will be raised

277

00:16:52,564 --> 00:16:53,464

under item four.

278

00:16:54,364 --> 00:16:57,924

So I can ask now if there's anybody in the room that wishes to make any comments on

279

00:16:57,964 --> 00:16:59,264

agenda item two.

280

00:17:01,964 --> 00:17:02,964

And anyone online?

281

00:17:04,585 --> 00:17:05,045

I'll take that

282

00:17:05,964 --> 00:17:08,104

as a no, and I'll pass over now to Ms. Davies.

283

00:17:10,664 --> 00:17:13,004

Thank you, everyone. So agenda item three.

284

00:17:13,144 --> 00:17:16,464

Can everybody please turn to Annex Six of the Rule 6 letter?

285

00:17:21,535 --> 00:17:25,094

Annex Six sets out the EA's initial assessment of

286

00:17:25,164 --> 00:17:29,084

principal issues, which is a legal requirement under Section 88 of the

287

00:17:29,124 --> 00:17:30,384

Planning Act 2008.

288

00:17:31,894 --> 00:17:34,964

The initial assessment is an indicative list as we start the

289

00:17:34,984 --> 00:17:38,244

examination. It does not determine the final scope.

290

00:17:39,644 --> 00:17:43,544

Other issues may come up that appear to be important and

291

00:17:43,604 --> 00:17:47,564

relevant to us. Equally, issues on the list may turn out

292

00:17:47,644 --> 00:17:51,164

not to be as important as we thought.

293

00:17:51,204 --> 00:17:54,864

We've had notification that several parties want to speak on this agenda

294

00:17:54,964 --> 00:17:55,364

item.

295

00:17:56,964 --> 00:18:00,034

Before we start hearing from people, I just want to say that we have noted the

296

00:18:00,124 --> 00:18:03,464

comments that were made in this regard at procedural deadline A,

297

00:18:03,984 --> 00:18:07,404

including the suggestion that the carbon budget should be a principal issue, and

298

00:18:07,464 --> 00:18:09,324

we'll take all of these into account.

299

00:18:11,344 --> 00:18:15,324

So we'll hear now from each party that wants to speak on this matter, and

300

00:18:15,344 --> 00:18:16,983

then the applicant will have the final say.

301

00:18:17,688 --> 00:18:20,848

So can I start with Lincolnshire County Council, please?

302

00:18:20,988 --> 00:18:21,788

Mrs Foster.

303

00:18:26,468 --> 00:18:28,708

Sorry. Andrew Barton, Lincolnshire County Council.

304

00:18:29,888 --> 00:18:33,548

Thank you, madam. I don't think we've got any specific comments on the

305

00:18:35,448 --> 00:18:39,287

matters raised in the IAAP, so nothing further to add.

306

00:18:39,408 --> 00:18:39,668

Thank you.

307

00:18:39,988 --> 00:18:40,328

Thank you.

308

00:18:41,748 --> 00:18:41,808

Mr

309

00:18:42,708 --> 00:18:45,088

Malkin for Meridian Action Group.

310

00:18:45,848 --> 00:18:47,348

Do you still have the mic, sir?

311

00:18:48,648 --> 00:18:51,048

Would somebody be able to get the microphone?

312

00:18:52,828 --> 00:18:56,568

Yeah, that's fine. I think you're going to comment on a few agenda items, so if you

313

00:18:56,608 --> 00:18:57,808

want to sit up.

314

00:19:00,228 --> 00:19:02,888

And I'm sure you've used them before, but you just press the button on the front

315

00:19:02,928 --> 00:19:03,788

until it goes green.

316

00:19:12,068 --> 00:19:13,768
So whenever you're ready, Mr Malkin.

317
00:19:14,898 --> 00:19:15,748
Okay. Can you hear me okay?

318
00:19:17,548 --> 00:19:21,288
My name is Andrew Malkin, and I'm here with my colleague, Simon Smith,

319
00:19:21,428 --> 00:19:24,908
and no relation, Paul Smith, representing Meridian Action Group.

320
00:19:25,628 --> 00:19:29,468
We also represent every single one of 734 residents and

321
00:19:29,488 --> 00:19:32,668
businesses who will be most impacted by the proposals.

322
00:19:33,228 --> 00:19:36,968
It's our submission that these 734 in our group alone are the

323
00:19:37,008 --> 00:19:39,678
most important to consider for the examination to come.

324
00:19:40,488 --> 00:19:44,328
Meridian Action Group is the prime local community action group dedicated to the

325
00:19:44,428 --> 00:19:47,908
area of the Meridian Solar Farm, and is a prime source of

326
00:19:47,948 --> 00:19:51,828
information about the proposed project to members through the Meridian

327
00:19:51,888 --> 00:19:55,768
Action Group Facebook page, but also through newsletters, leaflets, and

328
00:19:55,808 --> 00:19:59,698
public open meetings. We've also liaised with parish councils,

329

00:20:00,308 --> 00:20:03,748

as well as the local MP, district authorities, and district and county

330

00:20:03,828 --> 00:20:07,318

councilors. As such, we request that this

331

00:20:07,368 --> 00:20:10,698

important local status is recognized by the examination.

332

00:20:11,708 --> 00:20:15,068

We're concerned that there are currently omissions which warrant consideration at

333

00:20:15,108 --> 00:20:18,888

the examination stage, or which appear not to have been given sufficient

334

00:20:18,928 --> 00:20:22,818

weight. I'd like to refer to item three, the initial assessment of

335

00:20:22,888 --> 00:20:26,228

principal issues, and item four, the draft examination

336

00:20:26,388 --> 00:20:27,088

timetable.

337

00:20:27,487 --> 00:20:29,938

Mr Malkin, that's helpful. Thank you.

338

00:20:30,408 --> 00:20:33,768

I'm just listening to item three at the moment, and then

339

00:20:33,808 --> 00:20:37,048

we'll bring you back to talk about item four when we move on to that.

340

00:20:37,368 --> 00:20:37,608

Okay.

341

00:20:37,748 --> 00:20:37,758
Okay?

342
00:20:37,788 --> 00:20:41,468
My item four submission is a single paragraph.

343
00:20:41,568 --> 00:20:43,608
I could deal with it now or later.

344
00:20:43,728 --> 00:20:46,508
That's fine. We'll hear from you at the correct time in the agenda-

345
00:20:46,548 --> 00:20:46,557
Okay

346
00:20:46,557 --> 00:20:47,168
... if that's okay.

347
00:20:47,208 --> 00:20:51,068
All right. Item three then. Point one, while we

348
00:20:51,128 --> 00:20:54,777
welcome the wide-ranging scope of the initial assessment of
principal issues,

349
00:20:55,188 --> 00:20:57,997
we feel this must include the impact on food security.

350
00:20:58,568 --> 00:21:02,548
This is particularly relevant given the impact of climate change and
hotter

351
00:21:02,588 --> 00:21:05,908
weather leading to reduced yields across Europe.

352
00:21:05,988 --> 00:21:09,768
Two, there must be a wholly independent assessment of the actual

353
00:21:09,788 --> 00:21:13,288
proportion that is BMV land. It's our concern that the

354

00:21:13,348 --> 00:21:17,208

applicant's assessment is based on use of flawed methodology.

355

00:21:17,248 --> 00:21:21,117

Natural England has stated that Meridian's assessment methods understate the

356

00:21:21,208 --> 00:21:24,878

permanent loss of BMV land. Lincolnshire County Council and

357

00:21:24,948 --> 00:21:28,848

Reading Agricultural Consultants have both expressed concerns about

358

00:21:28,888 --> 00:21:31,668

how the assessment of BMV land has been arrived at.

359

00:21:32,188 --> 00:21:36,148

We question whether it is feasible on decommissioning to 100%

360

00:21:36,188 --> 00:21:38,088

restore land quality to BMV.

361

00:21:39,188 --> 00:21:41,568

Three, water quality and resources.

362

00:21:42,208 --> 00:21:45,188

We're concerned that the vital role of internal drainage boards should be

363

00:21:45,268 --> 00:21:49,228

recognized, and similarly, the importance of Culvert and Crowland Washes.

364

00:21:49,928 --> 00:21:53,748

The Environment Agency has said publicly that the developer has shown an

365

00:21:53,828 --> 00:21:57,378

inadequate understanding of tidal flood risk, Fenland flood

366

00:21:57,448 --> 00:22:01,368

dynamics, and the vital role that Crowland and Culvert Washes play

367

00:22:01,448 --> 00:22:03,428

in protecting large areas from flooding.

368

00:22:04,208 --> 00:22:07,617

South Holland Internal Drainage Board has publicly expressed concern about the

369

00:22:07,628 --> 00:22:11,248

possible impact on drainage efficiency of more than 100

370

00:22:11,348 --> 00:22:15,108

cable and road crossings over water courses, and subsequent

371

00:22:15,148 --> 00:22:17,708

threats to properties, infrastructure, and farmland.

372

00:22:18,328 --> 00:22:21,708

In particular, the failure by the developer to address their concerns.

373

00:22:22,588 --> 00:22:26,078

Much of the area is at or below sea level and the fens are

374

00:22:26,108 --> 00:22:29,928

flat. So far as flood risk is concerned, Meridian's plans are either

375

00:22:29,968 --> 00:22:33,608

flawed or incomplete, with little regard for the special nature of the

376

00:22:33,668 --> 00:22:34,148

fens.

377

00:22:35,168 --> 00:22:38,868

Four, much more consideration and investigation is required to

378

00:22:38,888 --> 00:22:42,388

better assess the suitability of the road infrastructure for the

379

00:22:42,428 --> 00:22:44,088

construction needs of the development.

380

00:22:44,868 --> 00:22:47,548

Special advice must be sought on this issue.

381

00:22:48,408 --> 00:22:52,308

A commitment to a review of reinstatement measures at the end of consultation is

382

00:22:52,348 --> 00:22:53,108

required.

383

00:22:54,528 --> 00:22:58,488

Five, on BESS, there is a complete lack of detail

384

00:22:58,548 --> 00:23:01,788

on scale of the proposed development and no strategy on

385

00:23:01,848 --> 00:23:05,458

safety. There must be detail of fire and rescue services

386

00:23:05,528 --> 00:23:09,188

required and available locally, and their ability to deal with

387

00:23:09,268 --> 00:23:12,928

runaway fires in order to safeguard neighboring residents and property.

388

00:23:14,008 --> 00:23:17,888

Six, the assessment of net impact on employment and the local

389

00:23:17,948 --> 00:23:21,568

economy. There has to be a realistic assessment of new jobs

390

00:23:21,668 --> 00:23:25,128

created, balanced against existing jobs which will disappear.

391

00:23:25,768 --> 00:23:29,308

How will construction improve the temporary and permanent employment prospects for

392

00:23:29,388 --> 00:23:33,298
local residents? And to provide a fair balance, how many

393
00:23:33,388 --> 00:23:37,288
jobs will be lost to agriculture and associated industries by the
loss

394
00:23:37,348 --> 00:23:40,948
of 2,700 acres of productive food-growing land?

395
00:23:41,408 --> 00:23:43,738
Mr Malkin, I'm going to stop you there.

396
00:23:43,768 --> 00:23:46,948
They're all very relevant points, but probably the sort of thing
we'd expect to

397
00:23:46,988 --> 00:23:49,428
hear at the open floor hearing later on today.

398
00:23:49,468 --> 00:23:53,368
The purpose of this agenda item is to actually look at the list in
Annex C,

399
00:23:54,368 --> 00:23:57,948
which is what we've set out as being the principal

400
00:23:57,988 --> 00:24:01,658
issues at this early stage. Did you have any specific

401
00:24:01,658 --> 00:24:03,658
comment on that list that we've put out?

402
00:24:03,768 --> 00:24:06,648
Is there something you think is missing that we should have on
there?

403
00:24:06,868 --> 00:24:09,408
Right. Okay, I'll move on to my point seven then.

404
00:24:09,448 --> 00:24:13,048
There must be an assessment of alternative sites and methods of

generation from

405

00:24:13,068 --> 00:24:16,848

solar, such as rooftop, including factories, warehouses, car

406

00:24:16,928 --> 00:24:20,348

parks, and dwellings. There is no evidence that Meridian has done this.

407

00:24:21,828 --> 00:24:23,068

Then I'm on to item four.

408

00:24:23,268 --> 00:24:25,107

Okay. Thank you, Mr Malkin.

409

00:24:28,118 --> 00:24:29,178

Mr. Dewar

410

00:24:30,018 --> 00:24:33,878

for South Holland District Council, I think you indicated that you wanted to

411

00:24:33,898 --> 00:24:35,218

speak on this agenda item.

412

00:24:37,258 --> 00:24:38,218

Yes. Thank you.

413

00:24:39,038 --> 00:24:42,998

It's mainly about Part 5 of Annex C with regards

414

00:24:43,018 --> 00:24:44,538

to landscape and visual amenity.

415

00:24:46,418 --> 00:24:47,958

Okay. Over to you.

416

00:24:48,078 --> 00:24:51,938

So we've made previous representations before about the lack

417

00:24:52,018 --> 00:24:55,558

of a residential visual amenity assessment having been undertaken,

418

00:24:56,518 --> 00:25:00,358

and the list wasn't explicit in that regard for that particular

419

00:25:00,398 --> 00:25:00,978

section.

420

00:25:04,538 --> 00:25:05,978

Thank you, Mr. Dewar. That's noted.

421

00:25:08,618 --> 00:25:12,418

Then Mr. Clark from NGET. Did you indicate that you wanted to

422

00:25:12,458 --> 00:25:13,618

talk on this item as well?

423

00:25:21,258 --> 00:25:21,878

Mr. Clark?

424

00:25:25,218 --> 00:25:27,718

Or somebody else from NGET?

425

00:25:30,338 --> 00:25:30,538

Okay.

426

00:25:31,377 --> 00:25:33,758

Well, if you do want to speak, put your hand up.

427

00:25:33,778 --> 00:25:37,538

I'll move on, and then if I see your hand up, we can come back and hear what you're

428

00:25:37,738 --> 00:25:38,038

saying.

429

00:25:38,918 --> 00:25:39,998

I can see there's a hand up at the back.

430

00:25:40,038 --> 00:25:42,758

I'll just continue with the list that I've got before me, and then

I'll open the

431

00:25:42,798 --> 00:25:45,258

floor for any other comments that need to be made.

432

00:25:46,358 --> 00:25:48,558

Lincolnshire Against Needless Destruction.

433

00:25:49,858 --> 00:25:53,718

Ms. Mackinson, I've got you down as wanting to speak, but I think I heard from you

434

00:25:53,758 --> 00:25:56,958

earlier that you don't need to speak on this agenda item any longer.

435

00:25:56,998 --> 00:25:58,718

Can you just confirm that that's still the case?

436

00:25:59,998 --> 00:26:01,078

Ms. Thompson, was it? Okay.

437

00:26:02,018 --> 00:26:02,818

Sorry, Ms. Thompson.

438

00:26:06,218 --> 00:26:08,878

Yeah. No, I have nothing to say on this agenda item. Thank you.

439

00:26:09,278 --> 00:26:09,698

Thank you.

440

00:26:12,858 --> 00:26:13,118

Okay.

441

00:26:14,198 --> 00:26:18,058

Is there anybody else then, before I turn to the applicant, who wants to

442

00:26:18,138 --> 00:26:22,018

speak on this item? Mr. Clark's back now, so I'll take from him

443

00:26:22,098 --> 00:26:25,078

first and then I'll see who else is wanting to speak. Mr. Clark.

444

00:26:26,018 --> 00:26:28,758

Apologies. Had technical issues there. Just nothing to say at this stage.

445

00:26:28,838 --> 00:26:29,178

Thank you.

446

00:26:30,098 --> 00:26:33,378

Thank you, Mr. Clark. Was there anybody else in the room who wants to comment on

447

00:26:33,418 --> 00:26:33,998

this item?

448

00:26:35,397 --> 00:26:39,037

Would you like to come forward or use the roving mic? I don't mind.

449

00:26:40,458 --> 00:26:42,018

Whatever you feel most comfortable doing.

450

00:26:43,058 --> 00:26:45,377

Hello. Okay. Hi, my name's Tim Henderson.

451

00:26:45,498 --> 00:26:47,178

I'm a resident of Langar Gate Road.

452

00:26:48,878 --> 00:26:52,038

You did mention the issue of the carbon budget.

453

00:26:52,438 --> 00:26:52,498

Yes.

454

00:26:52,518 --> 00:26:54,638

And that was, I think, an issue that I raised.

455

00:26:54,778 --> 00:26:55,118

Yes.

456

00:26:55,238 --> 00:26:58,998

And I think it's very important because if the carbon budget doesn't actually add

457

00:26:59,078 --> 00:27:01,838

up, then there is no point in the scheme at all.

458

00:27:01,918 --> 00:27:05,678

So it's really a fundamental issue that if they can't

459

00:27:05,698 --> 00:27:09,638

demonstrate that they will actually save CO2 emissions during the

460

00:27:09,678 --> 00:27:12,038

course of the existence of the scheme,

461

00:27:13,238 --> 00:27:14,998

then there's no point in it going ahead at all.

462

00:27:15,298 --> 00:27:15,498

So,

463

00:27:17,978 --> 00:27:21,338

I suppose I'd like some clarity about whether that will be added as

464

00:27:21,418 --> 00:27:23,618

an important item on that list.

465

00:27:24,058 --> 00:27:26,818

Thank you, Mr. Henderson. Yeah, we saw those comments, and we will take them into

466

00:27:26,858 --> 00:27:27,298

account.

467

00:27:27,598 --> 00:27:27,898

Thank you.

468

00:27:28,918 --> 00:27:31,988

Anybody else in the room that wants to comment on agenda item four?

469

00:27:33,198 --> 00:27:33,418

Three.

470

00:27:34,858 --> 00:27:37,418

And anybody online who wants to make any comment?

471

00:27:39,898 --> 00:27:40,198

Okay.

472

00:27:42,458 --> 00:27:42,838

Ms. Power.

473

00:27:44,038 --> 00:27:45,598

Thank you. Taylor Power for the applicant.

474

00:27:45,998 --> 00:27:49,687

The applicant doesn't have any comments on Annex C and appreciates the

475

00:27:49,718 --> 00:27:52,218

comments from those who contributed this morning.

476

00:27:52,458 --> 00:27:53,878

We have nothing further to add.

477

00:27:54,758 --> 00:27:55,358

Thank you, Ms. Power.

478

00:28:00,598 --> 00:28:03,518

Okay. I'll now pass to Ms. Casini for agenda item four.

479

00:28:05,058 --> 00:28:08,838

Thank you. If you could turn to Annex D of the Rule 6

480

00:28:08,898 --> 00:28:12,858

letter, which is the ExA's draft timetable as required under Section 58

481

00:28:12,878 --> 00:28:16,418

of the Planning Act 2008. I don't intend to read the

482

00:28:16,478 --> 00:28:19,638

timetable out as we're assuming you've had an opportunity to review it.

483

00:28:20,378 --> 00:28:21,508

You'll notice from the

484

00:28:22,838 --> 00:28:26,398

timetable we're looking to examine this application in

485

00:28:26,438 --> 00:28:30,318

approximately five and a half months, with the examination proposing to

486

00:28:30,358 --> 00:28:33,198

close on Tuesday the 23rd of February next year.

487

00:28:34,478 --> 00:28:38,378

Consider that there's sufficient time within this period to thoroughly examine

488

00:28:38,478 --> 00:28:39,918

all of the necessary matters.

489

00:28:40,918 --> 00:28:44,218

I'd like to remind interested parties that it's not our

490

00:28:44,257 --> 00:28:48,158

intention to continue a cycle of questioning

491

00:28:48,218 --> 00:28:51,758

or invitation of responses. Once we have a full

492

00:28:51,798 --> 00:28:55,658

understanding of the parties' position on a particular matter, even if the

493

00:28:55,718 --> 00:28:59,478

parties remain opposed to each other's position, we are likely to draw a line

494

00:28:59,518 --> 00:29:03,298

under it and report that to the Secretary of State, as we find that

495

00:29:03,338 --> 00:29:07,098

sometimes there's nothing to be gained by repeated examination of

496

00:29:07,158 --> 00:29:10,098

issues where there is no agreement of the issue.

497

00:29:11,258 --> 00:29:14,798

Should the examination period prove to be insufficient

498

00:29:14,938 --> 00:29:18,318

time, we can issue a new timetable and extend the period.

499

00:29:18,778 --> 00:29:22,318

However, interested parties should be aware that I have a legal duty to

500

00:29:22,338 --> 00:29:25,678

complete the examination by Monday the 8th of March next

501

00:29:25,738 --> 00:29:29,028

year. I'm aware that we do have some people and

502

00:29:29,058 --> 00:29:32,538

organizations registered to speak on this matter. Mr.

503

00:29:32,578 --> 00:29:36,548

Mulcair, would you like to come forward or have the roving

504

00:29:36,618 --> 00:29:38,358

mic? Whichever is...

505

00:29:40,998 --> 00:29:41,538

Thank you.

506

00:29:48,298 --> 00:29:50,958

Yes. Item four, the draft examination timetable.

507

00:29:51,718 --> 00:29:55,298

Whilst recognizing the constraint of the six-month timetable, we wish to

508

00:29:55,338 --> 00:29:58,198

express our unhappiness at the timescale of each stage.

509

00:29:58,758 --> 00:30:02,498

This presents a particular challenge to Meridian Action Group as a local

510

00:30:02,558 --> 00:30:06,378

action group comprised of lay volunteers, but nevertheless an

511

00:30:06,418 --> 00:30:10,218

important cog in the machine of dissemination of information the public

512

00:30:10,228 --> 00:30:14,038

takes notice of. We have particular concern about the very short

513

00:30:14,158 --> 00:30:18,118

period allowed over the Christmas and New Year period of only 11

514

00:30:18,138 --> 00:30:19,018

working days.

515

00:30:22,138 --> 00:30:24,878

Thank you very much, and we've noted your comments.

516

00:30:25,238 --> 00:30:28,098

Lincolnshire County Council, I believe you want to speak on this item?

517

00:30:29,522 --> 00:30:31,922

Thank you. Andrew Barton, Lincolnshire County Council.

518

00:30:32,722 --> 00:30:36,002

Madam, just to draw attention to the letter that we submitted

519

00:30:36,962 --> 00:30:40,762

in response to the timetable document PDA

520

00:30:41,082 --> 00:30:41,592

002,

521

00:30:42,842 --> 00:30:45,462

where we raised the issue, which I think has just been raised by Mr.

522

00:30:45,622 --> 00:30:49,362

Malkin, about the time period between the issue

523

00:30:49,402 --> 00:30:50,442

of the examining

524

00:30:51,502 --> 00:30:55,492

second set of written questions and the deadline five for responses,
and

525

00:30:55,562 --> 00:30:58,002

just highlighting that is only 11 working days.

526

00:30:58,012 --> 00:31:01,531

And over the Christmas period, it may be difficult to resource that

527

00:31:01,942 --> 00:31:04,322

given people's existing or potential leave commitments.

528

00:31:04,822 --> 00:31:06,262

No, we've noted that.

529

00:31:06,302 --> 00:31:06,312

Yeah.

530

00:31:06,322 --> 00:31:06,762

Thank you.

531

00:31:07,022 --> 00:31:08,202

That's all we wanted to raise. Thank you.

532

00:31:08,462 --> 00:31:12,122

Thank you. Is there anybody else in the room or online, before I
turn to the

533

00:31:12,162 --> 00:31:14,592

applicant, who wants to speak on this agenda item?

534

00:31:18,702 --> 00:31:20,242

No. As ever, if you do wish,

535

00:31:21,102 --> 00:31:24,922

please let us know. To the applicant.

536

00:31:26,302 --> 00:31:27,782

Hello. Taylor Power for the applicant.

537

00:31:27,942 --> 00:31:31,682

And yes, the applicant has the same comment as Meridian Action Group and

538

00:31:32,202 --> 00:31:35,512

Lincolnshire County Council. And the applicants propose that

539

00:31:35,582 --> 00:31:39,202

to address that point, the written

540

00:31:39,262 --> 00:31:43,192

questions, the ex Q2s, are published a

541

00:31:43,262 --> 00:31:46,782

week earlier on the 11th of December, which would provide another working week

542

00:31:47,242 --> 00:31:51,102

prior to Christmas for parties to be able to consider and prepare responses.

543

00:31:51,782 --> 00:31:55,282

And from the applicant's perspective as well, to give the applicant time to engage

544

00:31:55,322 --> 00:31:58,442

with key stakeholders like Meridian Action Group and the council.

545

00:31:59,322 --> 00:32:02,932

We consider that to be reasonable because it would still allow 10

546

00:32:03,022 --> 00:32:06,942

days between deadline four and those written questions being published,

547

00:32:07,322 --> 00:32:08,182

and it would still be a

548

00:32:09,302 --> 00:32:13,142

full four weeks following the second round of hearings, but would be

549

00:32:13,222 --> 00:32:16,042

open to discussing that further with the examining authority if that assists.

550

00:32:17,462 --> 00:32:20,762

Thank you. Obviously, we noted the comments that were made at

551

00:32:21,142 --> 00:32:24,722

procedural deadline A, and we've taken on board your comments, and we will

552

00:32:25,062 --> 00:32:28,362

take this into consideration when we publish the final

553

00:32:28,442 --> 00:32:32,382

timetable in our Rule 8 letter. So thank you very much for those

554

00:32:32,422 --> 00:32:33,512

comments. They're very helpful.

555

00:32:34,322 --> 00:32:37,562

If there's nothing else on agenda item four, I will now pass to Mrs.

556

00:32:37,782 --> 00:32:39,361

Murphy for agenda item five.

557

00:32:41,962 --> 00:32:42,382

Thank you.

558

00:32:43,342 --> 00:32:47,262

So can I ask that we now turn to Annex F in

559

00:32:47,302 --> 00:32:48,302
the Rule 6 letter?

560

00:32:49,922 --> 00:32:53,771
So Annex F sets out the ExA's procedural decisions that

561

00:32:53,822 --> 00:32:57,722
we have taken to date between the appointment by the Secretary of
State

562

00:32:58,242 --> 00:33:00,582
and the publication of the Rule 6 letter.

563

00:33:01,542 --> 00:33:05,322
So whilst I do not intend to read each of these out verbatim, I'd
like to draw on

564

00:33:05,362 --> 00:33:08,702
some key points on a few of the procedural decisions.

565

00:33:10,202 --> 00:33:12,082
The first one is artificial intelligence.

566

00:33:12,522 --> 00:33:16,352
We understand the benefits that AI can bring when used ethically and

567

00:33:16,422 --> 00:33:20,242
transparently, and as such, all participants in the examination

568

00:33:20,302 --> 00:33:23,452
are directed to the Planning Inspectorate's guidance for submitting

569

00:33:23,502 --> 00:33:27,042
information that has been generated or altered by AI.

570

00:33:28,042 --> 00:33:31,902
This guidance is linked in our Rule 6 letter, and if any

571

00:33:31,942 --> 00:33:34,991
parties use AI to create its submission,

572

00:33:35,822 --> 00:33:39,662

it's important to let us know. This doesn't include a basic

573

00:33:39,742 --> 00:33:41,602

spell check or grammar tools.

574

00:33:42,462 --> 00:33:46,082

As detailed in Annex F, all parties should specify which AI

575

00:33:46,122 --> 00:33:49,882

systems or tools have been used, and if the use of AI is

576

00:33:49,982 --> 00:33:53,862

not declared, the examining authority reserves the right to reject the

577

00:33:53,902 --> 00:33:54,382

submission.

578

00:33:55,822 --> 00:33:59,642

Statements of common ground. Under item two in Annex

579

00:33:59,762 --> 00:34:03,662

F of the Rule 6 letter, we requested a number of statement of common grounds were

580

00:34:03,682 --> 00:34:06,991

drafted between various parties and the applicant.

581

00:34:08,022 --> 00:34:11,252

Since the issue of the Rule 6 letter, we made a further procedural

582

00:34:11,303 --> 00:34:15,223

decision at PD 007, which requested two

583

00:34:15,303 --> 00:34:18,922

additional statements of common ground between the applicant and Lincolnshire

584

00:34:19,002 --> 00:34:22,342

County Council and the applicant and South Holland District Council,

585

00:34:23,283 --> 00:34:26,283

and I wish to add that we have noted the applicant's comments on statements of

586

00:34:26,303 --> 00:34:29,542

common ground within their procedural deadline A response.

587

00:34:30,842 --> 00:34:32,582

Accompanied site inspections.

588

00:34:33,703 --> 00:34:37,062

Turning to the suggested locations, we

589

00:34:37,243 --> 00:34:41,152

received one request at procedural deadline A to include Hagg

590

00:34:41,263 --> 00:34:44,152

Beach Farm in an accompanied site inspection

591

00:34:44,182 --> 00:34:48,102

undertaken. We undertook a further unaccompanied

592

00:34:48,172 --> 00:34:52,162

site inspection yesterday and viewed Hagg Beach Farm and its surrounding from

593

00:34:52,243 --> 00:34:52,902

public land.

594

00:34:53,882 --> 00:34:57,782

Following that visit yesterday and noting the comments made by the

595

00:34:58,062 --> 00:35:01,782

interested party, we consider it necessary to arrange an access

596

00:35:01,842 --> 00:35:05,812

required site visit. This would take the form of an unaccompanied

597

00:35:05,862 --> 00:35:09,642

site inspection by the examining authority, but with access onto

598

00:35:09,682 --> 00:35:13,552

private land to be granted by the relevant party, and

599

00:35:13,602 --> 00:35:16,582

this will be arranged in due course by the case team.

600

00:35:18,342 --> 00:35:21,342

The status of the applicant's examination documents.

601

00:35:21,662 --> 00:35:25,562

So this request was made to ensure that at each deadline, the applicant provides

602

00:35:25,662 --> 00:35:29,142

a document which lists the most up-to-date versions of the

603

00:35:29,162 --> 00:35:32,382

examination documents. Given the number of documents

604

00:35:32,522 --> 00:35:35,882

examinations produce, it's important to ensure all

605

00:35:35,922 --> 00:35:39,682

parties are able to access the most up-to-date versions of those

606

00:35:39,722 --> 00:35:40,322

documents.

607

00:35:42,002 --> 00:35:43,522

Request for further information.

608

00:35:44,542 --> 00:35:48,082

So in our letter dated the 23rd of July 2026,

609

00:35:49,102 --> 00:35:52,942

we made a procedural decision, PD 005, where we asked the

610

00:35:53,022 --> 00:35:56,622

applicant to provide the following information by deadline one,

which is the

611

00:35:56,862 --> 00:36:00,662

22nd of September 2026, and this was for

612

00:36:00,722 --> 00:36:04,422

information regarding the connection to the National Grid Western Marsh

613

00:36:04,442 --> 00:36:08,362

substation and additional baseline photographs and summer and

614

00:36:08,402 --> 00:36:10,582

winter visualizations.

615

00:36:11,542 --> 00:36:15,192

For the winter visualizations, these are to be submitted into the examination for

616

00:36:15,222 --> 00:36:17,002

deadline four.

617

00:36:17,962 --> 00:36:21,622

And finally, we had an acceptance of additional submissions into the examination.

618

00:36:21,942 --> 00:36:25,761

At Annex F, we accepted five additional submissions into the

619

00:36:25,802 --> 00:36:26,522

examination.

620

00:36:27,562 --> 00:36:27,742

So,

621

00:36:28,762 --> 00:36:32,582

further to these procedural deadlines, I want to ask if anybody in the

622

00:36:32,662 --> 00:36:34,452

room wishes to comment on

623

00:36:35,302 --> 00:36:37,532

the procedural decisions that have been taken to date

624

00:36:40,812 --> 00:36:41,792

Lincolnshire County Council?

625

00:36:42,952 --> 00:36:46,072

Yeah. Thank you, madam. Andrew Barton, Lincolnshire County Council.

626

00:36:46,352 --> 00:36:48,652

It's just in regards to statements of common ground.

627

00:36:49,952 --> 00:36:53,922

Our experience with other NSIP projects is that the statement

628

00:36:53,952 --> 00:36:57,812

of common ground for Lincolnshire Fire Rescue is incorporated within our

629

00:36:58,092 --> 00:36:59,672

wider statement of common ground.

630

00:36:59,712 --> 00:37:01,022

So if that's acceptable to the

631

00:37:02,812 --> 00:37:06,732

examining authority and to the applicant, then that would be our preference for the

632

00:37:06,792 --> 00:37:09,852

statement of common ground to incorporate both Lincolnshire County Council's

633

00:37:09,892 --> 00:37:10,482

comments and

634

00:37:11,572 --> 00:37:12,452

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue.

635

00:37:13,512 --> 00:37:13,722

Thank you.

636

00:37:13,722 --> 00:37:15,632

Thank you. We'll take that away then. Yes.

637

00:37:15,672 --> 00:37:19,382

Thank you for confirming that. Anyone else wish to comment?

638

00:37:19,662 --> 00:37:22,132

Anyone else in the room on the procedural decisions?

639

00:37:23,592 --> 00:37:24,632

And anyone online?

640

00:37:26,372 --> 00:37:26,452

No.

641

00:37:28,692 --> 00:37:32,072

So at this point, I'd like to then turn to the applicant and invite them to provide

642

00:37:32,112 --> 00:37:35,852

a brief update on the current status of the statements of common

643

00:37:35,892 --> 00:37:39,772

ground, obviously taking into account procedural deadline A comments

644

00:37:39,832 --> 00:37:42,852

and where you're at at the moment and any other information. Thank you.

645

00:37:43,632 --> 00:37:45,432

Thank you. Taylor Power for the applicant.

646

00:37:46,252 --> 00:37:50,142

So just to confirm, the applicant is progressing the listed statements

647

00:37:50,172 --> 00:37:53,572

of common ground within NXF, other than those that

648

00:37:53,972 --> 00:37:57,812

we've specified in our procedural deadline A that we

649

00:37:57,872 --> 00:38:01,212

don't consider necessary at this time.

650

00:38:01,312 --> 00:38:04,832

I don't propose to read that out unless you think it would be helpful.

651

00:38:04,872 --> 00:38:05,452

No.

652

00:38:06,492 --> 00:38:07,812

So we'll just proceed on that basis.

653

00:38:07,872 --> 00:38:11,602

We won't be submitting those that were listed in our letter at deadline one, but

654

00:38:11,772 --> 00:38:12,762

like we say in the letter, if

655

00:38:13,572 --> 00:38:17,242

substantive issues do arise in the future, then we're happy to prepare statements

656

00:38:17,272 --> 00:38:20,672

of common ground at that time. The applicant is happy with the

657

00:38:21,572 --> 00:38:25,492

approach proposed by Lincolnshire County Council to combine the fire and rescue

658

00:38:25,632 --> 00:38:28,032

and Lincolnshire County Council SOCG.

659

00:38:29,192 --> 00:38:31,252

So no comments in respect of that.

660

00:38:32,112 --> 00:38:35,812

We did just have one point of clarity on the accompanied site

661

00:38:35,872 --> 00:38:38,252
inspection. So

662

00:38:39,492 --> 00:38:43,392
our understanding of the submissions at procedural deadline A was

663

00:38:43,432 --> 00:38:45,392
that there were no other requests.

664

00:38:45,752 --> 00:38:49,292
So on that basis, just to clarify, is the examining authority

665

00:38:49,432 --> 00:38:51,232
asking that we no longer have to submit a-

666

00:38:53,712 --> 00:38:54,061
An agenda

667

00:38:54,091 --> 00:38:55,792
... an agenda at deadline one?

668

00:38:55,841 --> 00:38:55,841
Yeah.

669

00:38:55,872 --> 00:38:56,152
Okay, great.

670

00:38:56,732 --> 00:38:57,332
That is correct-

671

00:38:57,392 --> 00:38:57,402
Yeah

672

00:38:57,402 --> 00:39:01,392
... given that we only had that one request and that we can do it as
an

673

00:39:01,452 --> 00:39:04,832
access required site visit. In this instance, we don't need any
further

674

00:39:04,852 --> 00:39:05,412
information.

675

00:39:05,692 --> 00:39:06,172
Yeah. Great.

676

00:39:06,452 --> 00:39:08,692
Also, can I just confirm, we are happy.

677

00:39:09,292 --> 00:39:13,072
I can confirm that the XA is happy with the approach with the
statement of

678

00:39:13,112 --> 00:39:15,862
common ground to incorporate the fire and rescue-

679

00:39:16,512 --> 00:39:17,132
Okay. Perfect

680

00:39:17,192 --> 00:39:18,932
... in that statement of common ground. So that's fine.

681

00:39:19,412 --> 00:39:21,212
Great. We'll proceed on that basis. Thank you.

682

00:39:21,292 --> 00:39:22,692
And no other comments from the applicant.

683

00:39:24,652 --> 00:39:27,992
And then on that basis, we'll move on to agenda item six.

684

00:39:30,112 --> 00:39:33,892
Thank you. We've not been notified that anyone wishes to raise any

685

00:39:33,952 --> 00:39:36,152
other business that is relevant to this hearing.

686

00:39:36,192 --> 00:39:38,742
Does anybody have any other relevant matters

687

00:39:39,652 --> 00:39:40,692
they wish to raise now?

688
00:39:45,292 --> 00:39:47,212
Ms. Malkin, do you want to come forward?

689
00:39:51,032 --> 00:39:51,112
I

690
00:39:55,872 --> 00:39:58,692
don't know whether this will be admissible or not, but I'll give it
a go.

691
00:39:59,032 --> 00:39:59,572
I'll let you know.

692
00:40:01,272 --> 00:40:05,252
Can we have an assurance that any decision reached after the
examination is

693
00:40:05,292 --> 00:40:09,272
only based on planning matters and not on government policy
concerning net

694
00:40:09,432 --> 00:40:11,972
zero and the debatable ways to achieve it?

695
00:40:12,732 --> 00:40:16,472
One examining authority recently recommended approval on the basis
of an urgent

696
00:40:16,552 --> 00:40:19,972
need for a nationally significant infrastructure project in

697
00:40:20,032 --> 00:40:22,281
Lincolnshire so to support the UK's transition-

698
00:40:22,292 --> 00:40:26,032
I'm afraid I am going to have to stop you there.

699
00:40:26,712 --> 00:40:30,692
Whilst I'm more than happy to hear what you have to say, that

information will

700

00:40:30,732 --> 00:40:34,252

be better heard this afternoon's open floor

701

00:40:34,292 --> 00:40:34,872

hearing.

702

00:40:34,952 --> 00:40:37,912

Right. Can I submit that in writing for this afternoon?

703

00:40:38,072 --> 00:40:39,292

You can indeed.

704

00:40:39,382 --> 00:40:39,382

Yeah.

705

00:40:39,392 --> 00:40:42,892

You can either. If you are planning on speaking this afternoon, you can add that

706

00:40:42,972 --> 00:40:45,232

in, or you can just add it into your written submissions.

707

00:40:45,312 --> 00:40:45,932

Okay. Thank you.

708

00:40:46,372 --> 00:40:46,792

Thank you.

709

00:40:48,212 --> 00:40:49,272

Is there anybody else?

710

00:40:51,812 --> 00:40:51,892

No.

711

00:40:52,732 --> 00:40:55,002

I will therefore move to close the hearing.

712

00:40:56,031 --> 00:40:56,572

Thank you

713

00:40:57,971 --> 00:41:01,412

for attending. May I remind you that the timetable for the

714

00:41:01,432 --> 00:41:04,552

examination requires that parties provide any post-hearing

715

00:41:04,592 --> 00:41:08,542

documents on or before deadline one, which is Tuesday the 22nd of

716

00:41:08,592 --> 00:41:09,152

September.

717

00:41:09,952 --> 00:41:13,892

And as we have already said, the recording of this meeting will be placed on the

718

00:41:13,912 --> 00:41:17,212

Inspectorate's website as soon as possible after this

719

00:41:17,272 --> 00:41:20,452

meeting. Thank you all very much for attending today and for your

720

00:41:20,492 --> 00:41:24,152

participation. We will consider all of the comments and

721

00:41:24,272 --> 00:41:28,062

responses made carefully, and our rule eight letter will follow as

722

00:41:28,112 --> 00:41:29,832

soon as possible after this meeting.

723

00:41:29,922 --> 00:41:33,672

And I'm sure that nobody needs reminding, but we have an open floor

724

00:41:33,712 --> 00:41:37,122

hearing this afternoon, which is due to commence at half past 2:00, with

725

00:41:37,152 --> 00:41:41,142

registration starting at 2:00. The event will be available like

726

00:41:41,172 --> 00:41:44,732

this one to watch on a live stream, and the link can be found on our website.

727

00:41:45,332 --> 00:41:49,172

If anyone proposing to attend this afternoon's open floor hearing has

728

00:41:49,252 --> 00:41:53,092

got any questions or queries, please can you direct those to our case

729

00:41:53,192 --> 00:41:56,682

team. And then we have issue specific hearing one on

730