Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Meridian Solar Farm
Hearing:	Issue Specific Hearing 3 (ISH3) – Part 1
Date:	11 November 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.

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1
00:00:07,520 --> 00:00:11,440
Good morning, everyone. It is now 10:00 and time for this hearing to begin.

2
00:00:12,220 --> 00:00:16,180
I'd like to welcome you all to this issue-specific hearing for the Meridian Solar

3
00:00:16,200 --> 00:00:20,060
Farm project. Can I just confirm that everyone can hear me clearly?

4
00:00:22,800 --> 00:00:26,400
And can I also confirm the live streaming and recording of the event has commenced?

5
00:00:26,640 --> 00:00:27,100
Thank you.

6
00:00:27,960 --> 00:00:31,740
So good morning. My name is Mrs. Murphy, and I am a chartered town planner and a

7
00:00:31,780 --> 00:00:35,740
chartered environmentalist. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State to be

8
00:00:35,800 --> 00:00:38,400
a member of the panel of inspectors to examine this application.

9
00:00:39,020 --> 00:00:42,260
I'm now going to pass over to the other panel members to introduce themselves.

10
00:00:44,140 --> 00:00:46,900
Good morning. My name is Beth Davis.

11
00:00:47,060 --> 00:00:50,080
I'm a chartered geologist, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be

12

00:00:50,120 --> 00:00:51,100
a member of this panel.

13
00:00:52,340 --> 00:00:54,180
Good morning. My name is Ms. Casini.

14
00:00:54,240 --> 00:00:57,380
I'm a chartered town planner, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to

15
00:00:57,400 --> 00:01:01,360
be the lead member of the panel to examine this application.

16
00:01:03,260 --> 00:01:07,000
And together, we constitute the examining authority, or ExA, for this

17
00:01:07,080 --> 00:01:07,780
application.

18
00:01:09,120 --> 00:01:11,460
Also present today are members of the case team.

19
00:01:11,840 --> 00:01:15,760
The case manager is Ms. Mulgoon, and she is supported at the venue by

20
00:01:15,800 --> 00:01:19,360
Mr. Stevens and Ms. Woodruff, and also colleagues online.

21
00:01:20,180 --> 00:01:23,500
If you have any questions or concerns about today's event, please contact one of

22
00:01:23,520 --> 00:01:25,460
the case team located at the back of the room.

23
00:01:26,980 --> 00:01:30,400
In addition, we have technicians from TM Services with us today, and they are here

24
00:01:30,460 --> 00:01:33,080

to manage the recording and the live streaming of the event.

25
00:01:34,280 --> 00:01:37,200
I will deal with a few housekeeping matters for those attending in person.

26
00:01:38,420 --> 00:01:41,160
Can everyone please set all their devices and phones to silent?

27
00:01:42,520 --> 00:01:45,960
There are no fire alarms planned for today, so if you hear an alarm, please leave

28
00:01:45,980 --> 00:01:46,460
the building.

29
00:01:47,300 --> 00:01:51,260
There are three exits in this room, and if you make your way outside from one

30
00:01:51,300 --> 00:01:55,240
of these to the fire assembly point on the grass in front of the back car park,

31
00:01:55,420 --> 00:01:56,660
which is viewable from the room.

32
00:01:58,020 --> 00:02:01,400
In terms of timings, we're going to aim to adjourn for a short break around

33
00:02:01,420 --> 00:02:04,840
11:30, and lunch will be around 1:00.

34
00:02:04,880 --> 00:02:06,900
If needed, we'll have a short break this afternoon.

35
00:02:07,200 --> 00:02:10,780
And if you need any additional breaks or any other support during the hearing,

36
00:02:11,300 --> 00:02:12,540

please alert the case team.

37
00:02:13,460 --> 00:02:15,640
We will also be holding a two-minute silence at

38
00:02:15,700 --> 00:02:19,340
11:00. This meeting will follow the agenda

39
00:02:19,380 --> 00:02:23,220
published on the National Infrastructure Planning website on the 30th of October,

40
00:02:23,460 --> 00:02:26,700
2026, which has examination library reference

41
00:02:26,820 --> 00:02:28,680
EV7001.

42
00:02:29,900 --> 00:02:32,320
The applicant will also display the agenda on screen.

43
00:02:33,640 --> 00:02:37,020
A recording of today's hearing will be made available on the Meridian Solar Farm

44
00:02:37,100 --> 00:02:40,720
project section of the National Infrastructure Planning website as soon as

45
00:02:40,760 --> 00:02:42,640
possible after the hearing is finished.

46
00:02:43,540 --> 00:02:47,440
With this in mind, please ensure that you

47
00:02:47,520 --> 00:02:50,800
speak clearly into the microphone, stating your name and who you are

48
00:02:50,840 --> 00:02:52,620
representing each time you speak.

49

00:02:53,480 --> 00:02:55,020
If you are not at the table with

50
00:02:56,120 --> 00:03:00,020
a microphone, there is a roving microphone, so please wait for one to be brought

51
00:03:00,080 --> 00:03:01,700
to you before you speak.

52
00:03:03,040 --> 00:03:06,760
A link to the Planning Inspectorate's privacy notice was provided in the

53
00:03:06,800 --> 00:03:10,560
notification for this hearing. We assume everyone here today has

54
00:03:10,640 --> 00:03:14,240
familiarized themselves with this document, which establishes how the

55
00:03:14,300 --> 00:03:17,940
personal data of our customers is handled in accordance with the principles set

56
00:03:18,060 --> 00:03:22,020
out in data protection laws. Please speak

57
00:03:22,060 --> 00:03:24,140
to the case team if you have any questions about this.

58
00:03:25,240 --> 00:03:29,220
Does anyone have any questions regarding the technology or housekeeping before we

59
00:03:29,260 --> 00:03:29,660
move on?

60
00:03:31,460 --> 00:03:31,540
No.

61
00:03:32,860 --> 00:03:34,800

So we're now going to move on to introductions.

62
00:03:35,660 --> 00:03:39,520
So can I first ask the applicant to please introduce its team and

63
00:03:39,580 --> 00:03:40,800
including any advisors?

64
00:03:43,400 --> 00:03:45,420
Good morning. My name is Taylor Power.

65
00:03:45,560 --> 00:03:49,300
I'm a managing senior associate at Pinsent Masons, and I'm here on behalf of the

66
00:03:49,380 --> 00:03:53,000
applicant. I don't propose to step through all of the

67
00:03:53,280 --> 00:03:57,180
members of the applicant team, but will instead introduce them as the matters arise

68
00:03:57,200 --> 00:03:57,920
that they speak to.

69
00:03:59,900 --> 00:04:03,640
Thank you, Ms. Power. So now I'm going to turn to people who have given notice of

70
00:04:03,660 --> 00:04:07,180
their intention to speak to introduce themselves and also confirm which

71
00:04:07,240 --> 00:04:10,480
agenda item or items they would like to speak on.

72
00:04:11,000 --> 00:04:13,920
So I have registered, first of all, Lincolnshire County Council.

73
00:04:14,180 --> 00:04:15,460
Would you like to introduce yourselves?

74
00:04:16,079 --> 00:04:19,161
Yes. Good morning, madam. Thank you. My name is Andrew Barton.

75
00:04:19,260 --> 00:04:22,900
I'm a principal infrastructure officer at Lincolnshire County Council.

76
00:04:23,760 --> 00:04:27,120
I'm joined today by Marika White on my left here,

77
00:04:27,620 --> 00:04:29,840
from County Council's legal services.

78
00:04:29,880 --> 00:04:30,380
And behind me,

79
00:04:31,340 --> 00:04:34,840
Mr. Darren Clark, who is the council's infrastructure

80
00:04:34,900 --> 00:04:38,580
ecologist. There are another two people online who I suggest

81
00:04:38,640 --> 00:04:40,460
we introduce at the appropriate time.

82
00:04:41,700 --> 00:04:45,600
But could I also introduce Mr. Joel Semakula, who's also

83
00:04:45,660 --> 00:04:46,960
online and representing

84
00:04:47,920 --> 00:04:48,360
the council

85
00:04:49,420 --> 00:04:51,360
in capacity as counsel? Thank you.

86
00:04:52,600 --> 00:04:53,400
Thank you very much.

87

00:04:54,400 --> 00:04:55,440
Do we have Mr.

88
00:04:56,440 --> 00:04:58,880
Dewar from South Holland District Council online?

89
00:05:00,600 --> 00:05:03,220
Yes. Good morning. My name is Sam Dewar.

90
00:05:03,440 --> 00:05:06,940
I'm an appointed planning consultant working on behalf of South

91
00:05:07,000 --> 00:05:07,440
Holland.

92
00:05:08,680 --> 00:05:12,220
I'm joined today by Mr. Tom Rawlings, our landscape consultant.

93
00:05:13,420 --> 00:05:15,320
We wish predominantly to speak on

94
00:05:16,760 --> 00:05:20,680
item seven. However, there will be some crossover

95
00:05:21,640 --> 00:05:24,560
potentially with item number five.

96
00:05:25,460 --> 00:05:27,020
But we'll just have to see how

97
00:05:28,140 --> 00:05:29,620
the discussion goes. Thank you.

98
00:05:30,760 --> 00:05:34,740
Thank you very much. So next on my list is South Holland

99
00:05:34,860 --> 00:05:36,280
Internal Drainage Board.

100
00:05:38,120 --> 00:05:42,000
Good morning. My name is Judith Stout, and I work for the Water

101
00:05:42,040 --> 00:05:45,800
Management Alliance, here on behalf of South Holland Internal Drainage

102
00:05:45,880 --> 00:05:46,180
Board.

103
00:05:47,380 --> 00:05:48,560
I'm here with two colleagues.

104
00:05:49,420 --> 00:05:49,740
Carl?

105
00:05:51,140 --> 00:05:53,880
Carl Vines. I'm the area manager for the South Holland Drainage Board.

106
00:05:56,180 --> 00:05:59,820
Ella Thorp, senior sustainable development officer, processing the planning and

107
00:05:59,880 --> 00:06:02,000
consent side of the application.

108
00:06:03,956 --> 00:06:04,856
And if I could just add,

109
00:06:06,396 --> 00:06:09,376
we're attending today to observe.

110
00:06:09,416 --> 00:06:12,976
We are not expecting to speak, but we're obviously here if there were any questions

111
00:06:12,996 --> 00:06:13,716
for us. Thank you.

112
00:06:17,296 --> 00:06:18,036
Thank you very much.

113

00:06:19,736 --> 00:06:22,596
I have the Environment Agency next, I believe,

114
00:06:23,636 --> 00:06:24,176
online.

115
00:06:25,396 --> 00:06:27,996
Yes. Good morning, madam. My name is Liz Locke.

116
00:06:28,216 --> 00:06:31,516
I'm here to speak on behalf of the Environment Agency.

117
00:06:32,556 --> 00:06:36,496
I bring with me my colleagues, Sasha Lavers and

118
00:06:36,836 --> 00:06:40,196
Phil Sale, who are both also online,

119
00:06:41,276 --> 00:06:44,676
and we will be speaking on item six. Thank you.

120
00:06:47,476 --> 00:06:48,336
Thank you very much.

121
00:06:49,496 --> 00:06:50,776
I next have InterGen.

122
00:06:55,216 --> 00:06:56,076
Are InterGen

123
00:06:57,716 --> 00:06:58,256
online?

124
00:06:59,136 --> 00:06:59,976
Good morning, madam.

125
00:07:00,876 --> 00:07:03,376
Emily Tetty Jones for InterGen.

126
00:07:05,276 --> 00:07:09,176
Emily Tetty Jones, Atfield Fisher as lawyers for InterGen.

127
00:07:09,336 --> 00:07:11,516
Apologies. We also have

128
00:07:12,336 --> 00:07:16,056
online Pat Lydon, who is InterGen's

129
00:07:16,296 --> 00:07:19,816
engineer. We envisage speaking at item

130
00:07:20,216 --> 00:07:20,616
five,

131
00:07:21,476 --> 00:07:25,036
but we may also have points to add at item three

132
00:07:25,316 --> 00:07:27,996
if time permits. Thank you very much.

133
00:07:28,596 --> 00:07:31,676
I'll hand over to Pat Lydon to introduce himself.

134
00:07:35,016 --> 00:07:37,376
Yes. Good morning, madam, and everyone else.

135
00:07:37,996 --> 00:07:39,176
My name's Pat Lydon.

136
00:07:40,216 --> 00:07:42,436
I'm InterGen's pipeline consultant.

137
00:07:42,856 --> 00:07:45,816
I was involved in writing most of the United Kingdom

138
00:07:46,436 --> 00:07:50,116
Offshore Pipeline Operators Association's standards in

139
00:07:50,176 --> 00:07:52,016
regards to electrical interference.

140

00:07:58,336 --> 00:07:59,276
Thank you very much.

141
00:08:00,616 --> 00:08:03,896
I next have Mr. Malkin for Meridian Action Group.

142
00:08:05,796 --> 00:08:08,816
Yes, hello. I'm Andrew Malkin from Meridian Action Group.

143
00:08:09,676 --> 00:08:13,075
I think we might have something to say on almost every agenda item,

144
00:08:13,256 --> 00:08:15,456
depending on the other evidence that's given.

145
00:08:16,176 --> 00:08:19,116
I'm here today with David Raines and Simon Smith.

146
00:08:20,496 --> 00:08:23,556
Mr. Malkin, can we just remind you to speak into the microphone-

147
00:08:24,156 --> 00:08:24,216
Oh

148
00:08:24,475 --> 00:08:25,216
... when you're speaking. Thank you.

149
00:08:25,576 --> 00:08:28,896
I was assured that this would pick us up without me having to move it.

150
00:08:33,917 --> 00:08:36,917
Thank you for confirming that, Mr. Malkin. And you mentioned Mr.

151
00:08:37,236 --> 00:08:39,276
Raines is with you. Can I just confirm, Mr.

152
00:08:39,476 --> 00:08:40,276
Raines, are you speaking

153
00:08:41,956 --> 00:08:45,156

as an individual or on behalf of Meridian Action Group?

154
00:08:45,636 --> 00:08:49,276
My name is David Raines. For today, I'm a concerned

155
00:08:49,316 --> 00:08:52,256
local resident, and I shall be speaking on my own behalf,

156
00:08:53,216 --> 00:08:56,256
as well as probably chipping in for Meridian as well.

157
00:08:57,456 --> 00:08:57,796
Thank you.

158
00:09:02,056 --> 00:09:05,456
I next have Sir John Hayes, I believe online.

159
00:09:06,976 --> 00:09:07,456
Hello.

160
00:09:08,376 --> 00:09:09,936
Yes. Thank you.

161
00:09:10,856 --> 00:09:14,716
I will be addressing grid connection, site selection, and

162
00:09:14,796 --> 00:09:18,396
landscape and visual matters, which cut across a number of the

163
00:09:18,496 --> 00:09:20,016
items on your agenda, I think.

164
00:09:22,636 --> 00:09:23,696
Thank you very much.

165
00:09:24,616 --> 00:09:24,996
And

166
00:09:25,896 --> 00:09:29,476
lastly, I have down National Grid

167
00:09:29,696 --> 00:09:31,276
Energy Transmission, NGET.

168
00:09:34,536 --> 00:09:38,196
Good morning, madam. My name is Howard

169
00:09:38,276 --> 00:09:42,196
Bassford. I am a solicitor and partner at the law firm DLA Piper

170
00:09:42,276 --> 00:09:46,056
UK LLP. I appear on behalf of National Grid

171
00:09:46,116 --> 00:09:47,516
Electricity Transmission.

172
00:09:49,116 --> 00:09:52,936
I am also attended by Mr. Nicholas Williams, who is a solicitor

173
00:09:52,976 --> 00:09:56,836
at DLA Piper UK LLP, and Mr. David Watkins from

174
00:09:56,896 --> 00:09:58,956
National Grid Electricity Transmission itself.

175
00:10:00,616 --> 00:10:01,016
One moment.

176
00:10:01,736 --> 00:10:04,876
I anticipate that we will speak on items

177
00:10:05,516 --> 00:10:07,796
three and potentially four and five.

178
00:10:10,836 --> 00:10:12,176
Thank you very much for confirming that.

179
00:10:13,856 --> 00:10:17,516
I'd like to ask if there is anybody else in the room today who
wishes to speak,

180

00:10:18,056 --> 00:10:19,656
to let us know at this point.

181
00:10:22,536 --> 00:10:22,715
No?

182
00:10:24,156 --> 00:10:27,876
And is there anybody else who is attending virtually

183
00:10:27,916 --> 00:10:28,896
wishing to speak?

184
00:10:29,836 --> 00:10:31,036
They could raise their hand.

185
00:10:34,116 --> 00:10:34,336
No?

186
00:10:37,236 --> 00:10:37,456
So,

187
00:10:39,136 --> 00:10:42,396
following that, we have been made aware that Sir John Hayes wishes
to speak at

188
00:10:42,416 --> 00:10:43,836
today's hearing, as he's just said,

189
00:10:44,656 --> 00:10:47,656
but that he has parliamentary business at 12 o'clock.

190
00:10:48,216 --> 00:10:52,196
Therefore, we are suggesting that Sir John speaks at this point
before we move

191
00:10:52,236 --> 00:10:55,816
on to any agenda items if there are no objections to

192
00:10:55,876 --> 00:10:56,316
this.

193

00:10:58,256 --> 00:10:59,776
No, I'll take that that's okay.

194
00:11:00,796 --> 00:11:04,236
Following Sir John speaking, the applicant will be given the opportunity to

195
00:11:04,276 --> 00:11:07,936
respond, but at the appropriate points in the agenda items, if that's all right.

196
00:11:08,396 --> 00:11:10,536
Thank you. So, Sir John,

197
00:11:11,476 --> 00:11:15,436
before you commence speaking, please can I remind you that there's no

198
00:11:15,496 --> 00:11:19,416
need to repeat any earlier submissions that you have made by yourself, as we will

199
00:11:19,476 --> 00:11:23,416
take these into account, and to focus on matters that have been set out in

200
00:11:23,476 --> 00:11:27,036
today's agenda and the new submissions made by the applicant.

201
00:11:27,636 --> 00:11:28,976
So if you'd like to go ahead.

202
00:11:30,396 --> 00:11:34,236
Thank you, madam, and I'm grateful for your indulgence in allowing me to

203
00:11:34,316 --> 00:11:34,596
speak

204
00:11:35,756 --> 00:11:36,176
first.

205

00:11:37,176 --> 00:11:40,896
There are three areas that I wanted to cover, as I suggested a few moments

206
00:11:40,976 --> 00:11:41,456
ago.

207
00:11:42,476 --> 00:11:46,416
The first is grid connection, which was dealt with substantially at the hearings in

208
00:11:46,476 --> 00:11:47,116
September,

209
00:11:48,656 --> 00:11:52,396
and when National Grid comprehensively set out the unsuitability of the plans,

210
00:11:52,476 --> 00:11:55,616
given Dalling do not seem to have a guarantee of necessary grid connection.

211
00:11:56,276 --> 00:11:59,776
Since then, madam, I have met NESO,

212
00:12:00,236 --> 00:12:03,076
and they made it clear to me there is no certainty of a grid connection at the

213
00:12:03,136 --> 00:12:06,936
present time, and the present number of large solar applications

214
00:12:06,976 --> 00:12:09,316
exceeds the number of available grid connections.

215
00:12:09,976 --> 00:12:13,952
In Given which, of course, other considerations will

216
00:12:14,012 --> 00:12:17,992
come to the fore in gauging which of those applications is

217
00:12:18,072 --> 00:12:22,012

most clearly in line with national and local policy.

218
00:12:22,672 --> 00:12:25,692
At National Grid, we're clear that Downing's idea of a grid connection is

219
00:12:25,732 --> 00:12:28,592
presumptive, called this application speculative.

220
00:12:28,612 --> 00:12:31,632
And I think it's not unreasonable to

221
00:12:32,772 --> 00:12:34,372
characterize it accordingly,

222
00:12:35,192 --> 00:12:38,672
and incompatible with the Grimsby to Walpole pylon project.

223
00:12:39,052 --> 00:12:42,292
We have our own views about that pylon project, which I won't rehearse here because

224
00:12:42,332 --> 00:12:45,572
it wouldn't be appropriate. But there are clearly

225
00:12:45,632 --> 00:12:49,452
contradictions between this application and

226
00:12:49,532 --> 00:12:53,412
that project. Given that we don't have grid connection and don't appear likely to

227
00:12:53,472 --> 00:12:56,272
get one, given National's current position, I

228
00:12:57,392 --> 00:13:00,952
wonder if the applicant can explain in what ways this application could be

229
00:13:01,112 --> 00:13:03,312
anything other than speculative.

230
00:13:04,172 --> 00:13:07,932
On site selection, the site, as you know, Madam, will be built entirely on

231
00:13:07,972 --> 00:13:11,852
Grade I and II farmland. I won't go into that in detail because I did previously

232
00:13:11,872 --> 00:13:15,112
and, as you say, have emphasized that in my written

233
00:13:15,172 --> 00:13:18,832
submissions. However, in September, Downing could not

234
00:13:18,872 --> 00:13:22,832
explain to the planning officers why they had chosen this site given the loss of

235
00:13:22,892 --> 00:13:26,872
agricultural land. And I wonder if Downing can be clear now at this hearing

236
00:13:27,572 --> 00:13:31,532
why this site was selected, given that topography,

237
00:13:31,712 --> 00:13:33,172
flood risk, and land use,

238
00:13:35,132 --> 00:13:38,992
which they mentioned last time, are all at odds with this

239
00:13:39,412 --> 00:13:39,992
development.

240
00:13:40,932 --> 00:13:44,832
In September, we saw clarification that Downing had looked at

241
00:13:44,852 --> 00:13:48,752
alternative sites within 15 kilometers of Western Marsh, and whether

242
00:13:48,792 --> 00:13:52,612

this includes brownfield land. Can Downing today confirm they rejected

243
00:13:52,672 --> 00:13:56,372
suitable brownfield sites, and which sites they looked at that

244
00:13:56,412 --> 00:13:59,992
weren't Grade I and II farmland? And I wonder if they can

245
00:14:00,052 --> 00:14:03,252
confirm how the land will return to its original agricultural use,

246
00:14:04,112 --> 00:14:07,872
given that these solar panels will be there for a considerable time and

247
00:14:07,892 --> 00:14:11,332
presumably cleaned and serviced in the meantime.

248
00:14:11,392 --> 00:14:13,812
That's bound to have a detrimental effect on soil.

249
00:14:14,212 --> 00:14:15,852
I wonder if they can comment further on that.

250
00:14:16,432 --> 00:14:20,311
Again, that wasn't raised last time, but needs to, I

251
00:14:20,372 --> 00:14:21,612
think, emphasize this one.

252
00:14:24,132 --> 00:14:27,952
The September hearing also asked for further evidence of

253
00:14:27,992 --> 00:14:31,972
where Downing have moved planned pylons to reduce the impact on

254
00:14:32,052 --> 00:14:34,432
agricultural land. I wonder if that could be clarified.

255
00:14:35,192 --> 00:14:38,632

Most of the proposed site is in flood zone risk three.

256
00:14:38,712 --> 00:14:39,172
Again,

257
00:14:40,732 --> 00:14:44,532
I wonder if Downing can detail why this location was chosen

258
00:14:44,592 --> 00:14:48,352
given the flood risk, and provide further information accordingly.

259
00:14:48,832 --> 00:14:52,492
And then finally, on landscape and visual effect, Downing have said that the

260
00:14:52,572 --> 00:14:56,132
pylon towers for this project would be 66

261
00:14:56,192 --> 00:15:00,072
meters high, and yet also said that overhead cabling was not

262
00:15:00,152 --> 00:15:03,972
significant. Why do the towers need to be so high on the

263
00:15:04,032 --> 00:15:05,472
flat Fenland landscape?

264
00:15:06,352 --> 00:15:09,212
National Grid and Internal Drainage will speak for themselves, but as you know,

265
00:15:09,272 --> 00:15:11,272
they've both raised concerns about the pylons.

266
00:15:12,152 --> 00:15:16,092
This project causes an overbearing industrial physical presence on the unspoiled

267
00:15:16,132 --> 00:15:19,752
Fenland landscape, affecting properties across Crowland, Sheepwash

268

00:15:19,872 --> 00:15:22,292
Stowe, Postle and Whaplode Drove, Holbeach St.

269
00:15:22,412 --> 00:15:25,012
John's, Gedney Hill, Fleet, Cubitt, and others.

270
00:15:25,712 --> 00:15:29,372
Residents are effectively impacted more severely due to the

271
00:15:29,472 --> 00:15:31,272
cumulative effect of other

272
00:15:32,172 --> 00:15:35,972
projects in the same area, including the pylons I

273
00:15:36,052 --> 00:15:39,772
mentioned. Beyond that, Madam, I have set out

274
00:15:41,252 --> 00:15:45,232
in considerable detail my profound and serious objections

275
00:15:45,252 --> 00:15:48,732
to this application, which I feel is speculative, and

276
00:15:48,832 --> 00:15:52,652
fails to meet any of the necessary requirements

277
00:15:52,992 --> 00:15:55,292
of either national or local policy.

278
00:15:55,612 --> 00:15:59,232
And I simply draw attention, finally, to the South East

279
00:15:59,412 --> 00:16:03,112
Lincolnshire Local Plan, which says that in respect of energy development,

280
00:16:03,232 --> 00:16:06,652
quote, "Lower quality agricultural land should be used, and the natural environment

281

00:16:06,652 --> 00:16:10,572
and biodiversity should be protected and enhanced." It also

282
00:16:10,652 --> 00:16:13,632
says that higher quality agricultural land will be protected.

283
00:16:14,812 --> 00:16:18,252
And so I fail to understand, Madam,

284
00:16:18,652 --> 00:16:22,092
how this application meets any of those

285
00:16:22,132 --> 00:16:26,072
requirements or national planning policy, and I will leave

286
00:16:26,112 --> 00:16:29,692
my remarks at that so that others have plenty of time to comment. Thank you.

287
00:16:32,011 --> 00:16:33,932
Thank you very much, Sir John.

288
00:16:35,312 --> 00:16:39,052
You're welcome to remain and listen to the hearing as

289
00:16:39,372 --> 00:16:40,832
you so wish. So

290
00:16:42,112 --> 00:16:45,652
following that, and as I said before, if you want to respond at each agenda item,

291
00:16:46,112 --> 00:16:49,912
we will now move on then to item three and the grid

292
00:16:49,972 --> 00:16:50,412
connection.

293
00:16:51,412 --> 00:16:54,752
Thank you. So yeah, item three, we're going to look at grid connection.

294
00:16:56,032 --> 00:16:59,352
Because we have a lot to get through today, I'm going to try and merge bullets one

295
00:16:59,392 --> 00:16:59,972
and two.

296
00:17:02,492 --> 00:17:06,412
We've read in detail, and obviously heard the information supplied by both the

297
00:17:06,492 --> 00:17:07,912
applicant and NGET

298
00:17:09,032 --> 00:17:12,992
on the position. Now, this is our last week of hearings,

299
00:17:13,552 --> 00:17:16,952
and it does not appear that the position is moving

300
00:17:17,712 --> 00:17:21,593
between the two parties. So bearing in mind that we have read and

301
00:17:21,652 --> 00:17:25,172
heard what you've said, I would like both parties to provide a brief

302
00:17:25,252 --> 00:17:28,732
summary of their respective positions to date.

303
00:17:29,512 --> 00:17:33,112
And then in respect of identifying a grid connection by the close of the

304
00:17:33,172 --> 00:17:37,052
examination, can both parties provide me with their thoughts

305
00:17:37,132 --> 00:17:39,632
on this, please? So I'm going to start with NGET,

306
00:17:40,712 --> 00:17:42,992
please, first, and then I'll turn to the applicant.

307
00:17:49,332 --> 00:17:53,012
Thank you, Madam. Howard Bassford on

308
00:17:53,352 --> 00:17:56,012
behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission.

309
00:17:57,072 --> 00:17:57,832
I apologize, but

310
00:17:58,812 --> 00:18:00,372
necessarily I'm going to

311
00:18:01,212 --> 00:18:01,732
rehearse

312
00:18:02,952 --> 00:18:06,292
a number of matters on which you've already heard me, and of course,
on which we

313
00:18:06,352 --> 00:18:08,352
have made submissions.

314
00:18:10,212 --> 00:18:13,992
National Grid, first of all to say, is agnostic about

315
00:18:14,092 --> 00:18:17,592
the principle of the Meridge and solar farm

316
00:18:18,568 --> 00:18:22,528
Overall, of course, we are obliged to provide connections

317
00:18:22,648 --> 00:18:24,788
where gate two offers have been

318
00:18:26,088 --> 00:18:29,668
issued to connectees, but that is

319
00:18:30,008 --> 00:18:31,448
not the case here.

320
00:18:33,528 --> 00:18:37,268
So that is about the principle of the main site of

321
00:18:37,528 --> 00:18:40,668
the solar farm. The area of

322
00:18:40,988 --> 00:18:44,948
contention for National Grid is, of course, the grid connection,

323
00:18:45,868 --> 00:18:46,308
and

324
00:18:49,208 --> 00:18:52,888
it is worth reflecting that when the applicant

325
00:18:53,348 --> 00:18:56,208
seeks to use what one might consider

326
00:18:56,268 --> 00:18:59,568
industry-standard solutions, such as protective provisions,

327
00:19:00,268 --> 00:19:00,748
those

328
00:19:02,008 --> 00:19:05,468
might previously have applied before connections reform,

329
00:19:06,188 --> 00:19:09,668
and they might previously operate acceptably

330
00:19:10,228 --> 00:19:14,168
where there is a broad measure of agreement between parties

331
00:19:14,848 --> 00:19:18,588
as to the engineering solution that can

332
00:19:20,008 --> 00:19:20,508
address

333
00:19:21,608 --> 00:19:25,588

the connection of a generating station, such as the Meridian

334
00:19:25,668 --> 00:19:28,788
Solar project, to the transmission system

335
00:19:29,288 --> 00:19:32,088
operated by and by National Grid.

336
00:19:33,868 --> 00:19:34,108
So,

337
00:19:35,048 --> 00:19:38,848
with those two observations, I then go on to say that

338
00:19:38,948 --> 00:19:42,448
the proposal of the applicant has

339
00:19:42,908 --> 00:19:46,868
a number of issues. First of all, where we are not aligned

340
00:19:47,428 --> 00:19:48,428
with each other. First of all,

341
00:19:50,848 --> 00:19:54,368
the proposals interfere with National Grid's

342
00:19:54,468 --> 00:19:57,708
ability properly to plan the development and delivery

343
00:19:58,488 --> 00:20:01,848
of the national electricity transmission system.

344
00:20:03,028 --> 00:20:06,468
The normal way that National Grid does this is that on the

345
00:20:06,528 --> 00:20:10,468
basis of committed connections, gate

346
00:20:10,528 --> 00:20:14,368
two offers, it designs and makes provision for

347
00:20:14,428 --> 00:20:16,868
parties to connect at substations.

348
00:20:18,128 --> 00:20:21,268
It then reserves the bays where the

349
00:20:23,008 --> 00:20:26,988
connectees connect to the bus bars in the substation,

350
00:20:27,428 --> 00:20:30,508
and therefore are able to connect to the nets.

351
00:20:32,148 --> 00:20:32,408
If

352
00:20:33,248 --> 00:20:34,208
there is a free-for-all

353
00:20:35,148 --> 00:20:39,128
because applicants for development consent decide where they

354
00:20:39,188 --> 00:20:43,068
want to connect, and the locations, and the manner, and the

355
00:20:43,148 --> 00:20:47,068
timing of their connection, then National Grid can't plan how

356
00:20:47,108 --> 00:20:50,588
it's going to deliver critical national infrastructure such as
Grimsvid

357
00:20:50,628 --> 00:20:51,128
Walpole,

358
00:20:52,988 --> 00:20:56,248
Western Marsh, East Leicestershire, and those projects are

359
00:20:56,308 --> 00:20:57,008
affected.

360

00:20:57,928 --> 00:20:58,188
So

361
00:20:59,908 --> 00:21:03,848
planning is affected. Major point, cannot have that level

362
00:21:03,908 --> 00:21:07,728
of interference with the normal operation of National Grid and the way

363
00:21:08,128 --> 00:21:12,108
that it plans its undertaking, and the

364
00:21:12,148 --> 00:21:14,288
way it deals with other connectees.

365
00:21:14,888 --> 00:21:18,828
It's not appropriate for an applicant to elbow its way to the front of

366
00:21:18,868 --> 00:21:21,168
the queue and decide where it wants to connect.

367
00:21:22,388 --> 00:21:25,928
The second thing I'm going to draw to your attention is that the

368
00:21:26,288 --> 00:21:28,388
delivery of a project

369
00:21:29,568 --> 00:21:32,908
such as Grimsvid Walpole requires it to

370
00:21:32,968 --> 00:21:34,448
have a clear run.

371
00:21:35,928 --> 00:21:38,148
What is proposed by the applicant,

372
00:21:39,028 --> 00:21:42,848
absent proper control by National Grid of

373

00:21:42,888 --> 00:21:44,668
the order in which things take place,

374
00:21:46,128 --> 00:21:46,268
is

375
00:21:47,108 --> 00:21:50,508
liable to interfere with delivery of critical national infrastructure,

376
00:21:51,208 --> 00:21:54,308
and that would occur where, for instance,

377
00:21:55,048 --> 00:21:58,928
possession was taken of the High Road gap before National Grid wanted

378
00:21:59,008 --> 00:21:59,288
to

379
00:22:00,388 --> 00:22:04,088
deliver its own project in that area, and National Grid

380
00:22:04,408 --> 00:22:08,188
would then be stymied. The energization of Grimsvid Walpole and all the

381
00:22:08,248 --> 00:22:12,048
projects that rely upon it, and there are other very large projects,

382
00:22:12,148 --> 00:22:12,888
larger than

383
00:22:15,548 --> 00:22:19,448
Meridian Solar, which rely upon Grimsvid Walpole, that would

384
00:22:19,488 --> 00:22:21,788
be stymied, and that is not appropriate.

385
00:22:23,388 --> 00:22:27,348
So that queue jump in relation to the

386
00:22:27,408 --> 00:22:28,448
working areas,

387
00:22:29,588 --> 00:22:32,848
not just at High Road, but also in and around substations, is

388
00:22:32,928 --> 00:22:35,827
important. And that this isn't just

389
00:22:37,468 --> 00:22:39,568
a question of convenience and coordination.

390
00:22:39,628 --> 00:22:43,108
The CDM regulations mean that the

391
00:22:43,808 --> 00:22:47,768
proper management and delivery of working areas has to be undertaken

392
00:22:47,808 --> 00:22:48,548
in a proper way.

393
00:22:49,988 --> 00:22:53,528
The next thing to observe is that

394
00:22:53,628 --> 00:22:57,408
the design is not an agreed design.

395
00:22:57,468 --> 00:23:00,308
National Grid is not content that the

396
00:23:00,868 --> 00:23:04,168
Meridian design for its alignment

397
00:23:04,608 --> 00:23:06,528
properly takes account of the need to

398
00:23:07,448 --> 00:23:11,068
construct, operate, and maintain National

399
00:23:11,148 --> 00:23:12,408

Grid's incipient

400
00:23:13,828 --> 00:23:17,048
Grimsvid Walpole project, particularly at the High Road gap.

401
00:23:18,228 --> 00:23:22,068
So there is disagreement as to the design and disagreement as to whether the design

402
00:23:22,148 --> 00:23:25,748
can, at this stage, be made acceptable, and that, in turn, will

403
00:23:25,788 --> 00:23:26,768
depend upon whether

404
00:23:27,708 --> 00:23:31,488
a connection offer ever is extended to Meridian

405
00:23:31,588 --> 00:23:32,048
Solar.

406
00:23:34,148 --> 00:23:38,028
At this stage, we don't believe that that's possible to fix using protective

407
00:23:38,068 --> 00:23:41,708
provisions. On a without prejudice basis, we continue to

408
00:23:42,608 --> 00:23:44,848
negotiate those with the applicant,

409
00:23:45,908 --> 00:23:49,588
but we are not satisfied that the protective provisions are

410
00:23:49,648 --> 00:23:51,028
currently appropriate

411
00:23:52,008 --> 00:23:52,528
either.

412
00:23:55,288 --> 00:23:55,928

If you

413
00:23:56,788 --> 00:23:59,568
were to decide to press on,

414
00:24:00,548 --> 00:24:04,008
then you would, bearing in mind the use of protective provisions, have to

415
00:24:05,368 --> 00:24:08,808
come to a conclusion as an examining panel that

416
00:24:10,328 --> 00:24:10,568
the

417
00:24:11,728 --> 00:24:15,208
approach which the applicant is promoting is safe

418
00:24:16,588 --> 00:24:20,168
and capable of being delivered in a manner that protects the national

419
00:24:20,228 --> 00:24:23,768
electricity transmission when Grimsvid Walpole is constructed.

420
00:24:25,480 --> 00:24:28,940
I would suggest that that is not a

421
00:24:29,020 --> 00:24:32,740
question best resolved in examination and

422
00:24:32,940 --> 00:24:36,140
where it is difficult for you to form a

423
00:24:36,200 --> 00:24:40,160
conclusion. National Grid's view is that at present it's not

424
00:24:40,220 --> 00:24:43,960
possible to say that that can safely be achieved, and

425
00:24:44,340 --> 00:24:46,820

we don't think you should come to a conclusion on that either.

426
00:24:48,680 --> 00:24:52,140
The next point I would draw to your attention is the point specifically on

427
00:24:52,160 --> 00:24:55,060
potential provisions. I've already made observations on that.

428
00:24:55,200 --> 00:24:58,240
As I say, they are not fully agreed.

429
00:24:59,400 --> 00:25:03,260
We appreciate the effort that the applicant is making to negotiate those,

430
00:25:03,340 --> 00:25:06,520
but as I say, they are not agreed. And then finally,

431
00:25:07,660 --> 00:25:09,780
in relation to the

432
00:25:11,640 --> 00:25:15,260
question of whether a Gate 2 offer should be assumed or should be

433
00:25:15,300 --> 00:25:19,000
assumed in the imminent future, the critical issue, as

434
00:25:19,060 --> 00:25:22,780
National Grid understands it, there, is one of strategic alignment,

435
00:25:23,420 --> 00:25:27,120
and at this stage, there is nothing to say

436
00:25:27,220 --> 00:25:31,020
to prejudge the expected view

437
00:25:31,140 --> 00:25:31,940
of NISO

438
00:25:32,940 --> 00:25:36,440

when it comes to a view on strategic alignment.

439
00:25:37,040 --> 00:25:37,260
The

440
00:25:38,500 --> 00:25:42,380
period that the applicant has noted over which NISO

441
00:25:42,440 --> 00:25:45,060
may change its position is as far ahead as 2050.

442
00:25:45,800 --> 00:25:49,720
We don't think that that gives you sufficient certainty at this stage to

443
00:25:50,440 --> 00:25:54,100
form a firm view as to the delivery

444
00:25:54,180 --> 00:25:58,100
appropriateness and location of a grid

445
00:25:58,140 --> 00:26:01,460
connection for the Meridian Solar

446
00:26:01,900 --> 00:26:05,780
scheme. Therefore, we don't think you can conclude that the grid connection

447
00:26:05,860 --> 00:26:09,660
is appropriate and deliverable, and we believe you should not

448
00:26:09,760 --> 00:26:11,580
authorize this grid connection.

449
00:26:12,960 --> 00:26:16,220
I think that covers the salient points of National Grid's position.

450
00:26:16,580 --> 00:26:20,020
Needless to say, there are points of detail, and of course, we can elaborate upon

451

00:26:20,080 --> 00:26:22,140
those further in writing for you.

452
00:26:25,020 --> 00:26:28,620
Thank you. That was very useful. I'd like to turn to the

453
00:26:28,700 --> 00:26:32,600
applicant to hear your position and obviously any comments you have

454
00:26:32,660 --> 00:26:33,840
from what you've just heard.

455
00:26:35,220 --> 00:26:37,740
Thank you, Madam. Taylor Power for the applicant.

456
00:26:38,780 --> 00:26:42,420
So thank you, Mr. Basford. Having heard those submissions and having read the

457
00:26:42,440 --> 00:26:45,780
written submissions of NJET over the past few deadlines,

458
00:26:46,560 --> 00:26:50,020
as the applicant understands it, the predominant remaining areas of disagreement

459
00:26:50,060 --> 00:26:51,900
between NJET and the applicant are,

460
00:26:53,020 --> 00:26:56,660
first, whether it's appropriate for the applicant as a scheme with a Gate 1

461
00:26:56,720 --> 00:27:00,400
offer to make assumptions about its grid connection location and proceed to submit

462
00:27:00,440 --> 00:27:04,240
a planning application in advance of receiving a final Gate 2 offer.

463
00:27:06,520 --> 00:27:10,280
I note, I might loop back around to that point when I talk about the

464
00:27:10,720 --> 00:27:14,380
likelihood of receiving a Gate 2 offer within the timeframe of the scheme at the

465
00:27:14,440 --> 00:27:14,820
end of

466
00:27:16,240 --> 00:27:20,160
the response to these questions. But I would note, in respect

467
00:27:20,240 --> 00:27:24,120
of Mr. Basford's comments about NJET's preferred

468
00:27:24,160 --> 00:27:27,960
approach to have confirmed connections in place

469
00:27:28,040 --> 00:27:31,800
first and design on that basis, if it would assist, I

470
00:27:31,860 --> 00:27:35,120
can pass to Ms. Burns once I run through the summary,

471
00:27:35,820 --> 00:27:39,580
who can speak to the list of projects that NJET provided in its latest submission

472
00:27:39,640 --> 00:27:43,540
as being the key projects that Grimsby to Walpole relies upon

473
00:27:43,960 --> 00:27:47,880
in respect of justifying its scheme

474
00:27:48,240 --> 00:27:52,080
and how a large majority of these have Gate 1 offers as well.

475
00:27:52,380 --> 00:27:55,440
So if that is the preferred approach of NJET, then

476
00:27:56,860 --> 00:28:00,420
the question is how it will be submitting next year on the basis

that many of the

477
00:28:00,440 --> 00:28:03,040
projects it says it relies upon have Gate 1 offers too.

478
00:28:03,220 --> 00:28:04,420
That would be useful to understand.

479
00:28:04,440 --> 00:28:05,160
Yeah, thank you.

480
00:28:06,440 --> 00:28:10,260
The second point that the applicant understands in respect of the remaining

481
00:28:10,320 --> 00:28:13,980
areas of disagreement is whether the applicant's scheme would materially

482
00:28:14,040 --> 00:28:17,720
frustrate Grimsby to Walpole by securing a design which could not be delivered

483
00:28:17,760 --> 00:28:21,660
without an unacceptable technical clash with Grimsby to Walpole's future

484
00:28:21,700 --> 00:28:22,160
design.

485
00:28:23,200 --> 00:28:27,120
And so I note that National Grid has put in several written submissions into

486
00:28:27,160 --> 00:28:30,340
the examination over the past three deadlines, outlining the technical

487
00:28:30,460 --> 00:28:34,420
specifications that it would require for interactions with its assets,

488

00:28:35,180 --> 00:28:38,680
and would require the scheme to meet in order to not frustrate Grimsby to Walpole.

489
00:28:39,160 --> 00:28:42,740
So the applicant has really carefully considered these and

490
00:28:42,999 --> 00:28:44,680
gone away and done further

491
00:28:45,520 --> 00:28:49,440
internal design work to see whether it can meet these technical

492
00:28:49,560 --> 00:28:53,500
specifications. And so in that regard, I'll pass to my colleague,

493
00:28:53,740 --> 00:28:57,640
Mr. Tom Fowler, who can speak to this from an overhead

494
00:28:57,680 --> 00:29:01,640
line design perspective as to whether we can meet the standards

495
00:29:01,680 --> 00:29:03,120
which NJET has set out.

496
00:29:04,880 --> 00:29:07,580
Thank you, Taylor. Tom Fowler on behalf of the applicant.

497
00:29:07,880 --> 00:29:09,740
So I'm going to touch on two points today.

498
00:29:09,820 --> 00:29:13,060
The first one is going to be the standoff distances, and the second will be hazards

499
00:29:13,100 --> 00:29:16,660
and safety, which has come across in all the written submissions to date.

500
00:29:16,760 --> 00:29:20,360
So firstly, there's still some uncertainty regarding the standoff

501
00:29:20,400 --> 00:29:23,380
distances that have been put forward by National Grid and how they

502
00:29:24,240 --> 00:29:28,180
were derived at. So in the first written representation, reference was

503
00:29:28,240 --> 00:29:32,120
made to a 1.1 tower height standoff distance for the tallest structure in

504
00:29:32,160 --> 00:29:35,780
that section. And then in their response to deadline one

505
00:29:35,840 --> 00:29:39,720
submissions, which is Rep 2024, they suggested a standoff distance

506
00:29:39,740 --> 00:29:43,660
that would be the tower height plus vertical LOD times 150%, which

507
00:29:43,700 --> 00:29:45,840
is where the 92.25 meters came from.

508
00:29:46,480 --> 00:29:50,120
So we're continuing to request further clarification on what scenarios those

509
00:29:50,160 --> 00:29:51,740
different design parameters would apply to.

510
00:29:52,620 --> 00:29:53,520
So that's the first point.

511
00:29:54,440 --> 00:29:55,960
Despite this sort of confusion,

512
00:29:56,880 --> 00:30:00,800
we've used these parameters to consider the pinch points across the scheme

513
00:30:00,840 --> 00:30:03,820

to determine whether there's going to be a feasible design which can achieve these

514
00:30:03,880 --> 00:30:05,500
standoffs that National Grid have been putting forward.

515
00:30:06,520 --> 00:30:09,960
We've conducted an internal study, which has assessed the feasibility of routing

516
00:30:10,000 --> 00:30:13,760
two parallel overhead lines from north of the A151 pinch point

517
00:30:14,460 --> 00:30:18,380
through to Broadgate, which covers largely the stretch of overhead

518
00:30:18,440 --> 00:30:19,640
lines where they route in parallel.

519
00:30:20,320 --> 00:30:23,740
And we tested a range of standoff distances from 75 meters, which is

520
00:30:23,760 --> 00:30:25,620
the applicant's current standoff distance

521
00:30:27,020 --> 00:30:30,300
used in the indicative DCO alignment, up to

522
00:30:30,480 --> 00:30:33,780
92.25 meters, which is the distance requested by National Grid.

523
00:30:34,380 --> 00:30:37,480
And the study found that two overhead lines can be routed feasibly

524
00:30:38,956 --> 00:30:42,716
At both 75 meters and 92.25 meter standoff distances.

525
00:30:43,456 --> 00:30:46,856
So the limits of deviation for the two overhead lines would slightly overlap

526

00:30:47,216 --> 00:30:49,196
inwards towards each other where they're in parallel.

527
00:30:49,636 --> 00:30:52,676
And in some of those scenarios, the available LOD on the outside of the

528
00:30:53,956 --> 00:30:55,636
applicant's alignment would be reduced.

529
00:30:56,116 --> 00:30:59,316
So the applicant is willing to commit to a reduced lateral LOD,

530
00:31:00,256 --> 00:31:03,176
to ensure that two overhead lines could be routed in parallel at the

531
00:31:03,416 --> 00:31:05,116
92.25-meter standoff

532
00:31:08,056 --> 00:31:09,896
that is being put forward by National Grid.

533
00:31:10,516 --> 00:31:14,336
So in conclusion, there is a feasible design solution at 92.25

534
00:31:14,376 --> 00:31:18,236
meters, which is the requested standoff, that will have absolutely

535
00:31:18,276 --> 00:31:21,856
no impact on National Grid's lateral limits of deviation, so they will maintain

536
00:31:21,896 --> 00:31:23,376
full flexibility through that section.

537
00:31:25,076 --> 00:31:27,076
We propose to provide a

538
00:31:28,076 --> 00:31:31,916
technical study at deadline four that outlines this position and the designs that

539
00:31:31,956 --> 00:31:32,856
we've put forward,

540
00:31:33,916 --> 00:31:36,716
which should give you more clarity on why we think that will work.

541
00:31:37,856 --> 00:31:39,716
And then moving on to hazards and safety.

542
00:31:39,816 --> 00:31:42,916
So National Grid have stated that overhead lines closer than

543
00:31:43,075 --> 00:31:46,896
92.25 meters would introduce residual hazards that

544
00:31:46,916 --> 00:31:50,416
would ultimately impede their ability to maintain their assets in a safe manner,

545
00:31:50,916 --> 00:31:54,176
and that would leave residual hazards for the project's lifetime, therefore

546
00:31:54,236 --> 00:31:57,356
compromising their ability to operate, maintain, and decommission their assets.

547
00:31:58,136 --> 00:32:01,816
So as outlined by the applicant in previous written responses, there are

548
00:32:01,896 --> 00:32:05,556
numerous 132 kV up to 400 kV overhead lines

549
00:32:05,956 --> 00:32:09,176
well within this close parallel distance across the United Kingdom,

550
00:32:09,836 --> 00:32:13,776
some which are as close to 20 meters either side of National Grid assets that

551

00:32:13,836 --> 00:32:14,616
exist in the UK.

552
00:32:16,256 --> 00:32:19,736
So some of these assets, the examples that we've given are owned by National Grid,

553
00:32:19,796 --> 00:32:21,216
so both overhead lines are owned by National Grid.

554
00:32:21,256 --> 00:32:24,856
But there are also instances where separate transmission and distribution network

555
00:32:24,916 --> 00:32:28,896
operators own these assets. So therefore, such residual hazards that are being

556
00:32:28,956 --> 00:32:32,576
referenced by National Grid already exist across the network, and no

557
00:32:32,636 --> 00:32:36,116
explanation has been given by National Grid as to why these hazards could not be

558
00:32:36,176 --> 00:32:39,036
managed through the same operational maintenance and safety procedures that are

559
00:32:39,076 --> 00:32:42,196
already in place across the United Kingdom and the transmission network.

560
00:32:43,696 --> 00:32:46,776
In summary as well, we, as an applicant, are willing to collaborate with National

561
00:32:46,836 --> 00:32:50,756
Grid during the construction and operational phases to overcome and mitigate any

562
00:32:50,796 --> 00:32:54,656
hazards of which are also relevant to our assets, because

563
00:32:54,676 --> 00:32:56,056
we're also in close parallel to them.

564
00:32:56,836 --> 00:33:00,716
And it should be noted that where the two overhead lines exist, they will only be

565
00:33:00,736 --> 00:33:03,696
in parallel for the lifetime of our project, which is 40 years.

566
00:33:04,276 --> 00:33:08,176
Pylons and their foundations are designed to exceed this lifespan considerably,

567
00:33:08,656 --> 00:33:12,256
and it's only likely that the fittings, conductors, insulators may

568
00:33:12,316 --> 00:33:13,276
require replacement

569
00:33:14,136 --> 00:33:17,816
in that lifetime, and should that be required, there is sufficient space to conduct

570
00:33:17,856 --> 00:33:18,356
these works.

571
00:33:20,416 --> 00:33:20,736
Thank you.

572
00:33:20,775 --> 00:33:24,516
Thank you. Sorry, has this information been communicated to NGET

573
00:33:25,376 --> 00:33:25,756
at all?

574
00:33:27,516 --> 00:33:31,356
Taylor Powell for the applicant. So there has been communications between

575

00:33:31,496 --> 00:33:35,336
NGET and the applicant in the previous design collaboration

576
00:33:35,376 --> 00:33:39,296
workshops, and this work has been done additional since

577
00:33:39,336 --> 00:33:42,716
then. NGET has refused on all attempts of

578
00:33:42,756 --> 00:33:46,556
engagement to discuss matters of design, so we haven't been able to sit down with

579
00:33:46,576 --> 00:33:49,476
them, have a meeting, and discuss these matters of design.

580
00:33:50,616 --> 00:33:53,596
The intention is that we put them formally into the examination.

581
00:33:53,696 --> 00:33:57,276
If NGET wants to have a meeting, the applicant is more than happy and would really

582
00:33:57,316 --> 00:33:59,336
like to have that design meeting with NGET.

583
00:34:00,236 --> 00:34:00,356
Yeah.

584
00:34:01,396 --> 00:34:03,476
Thank you. That's helpful. Do you have any further

585
00:34:03,895 --> 00:34:04,496
comments? Yes, sorry.

586
00:34:05,656 --> 00:34:09,417
Just the final point. So we've covered the disagreement in respect

587
00:34:09,476 --> 00:34:11,496
of proceeding with a gate one offer.

588

00:34:11,836 --> 00:34:15,656
We've covered whether there is actually a technical clash.

589
00:34:16,336 --> 00:34:20,216
And so finally, I think the final area of disagreement between the parties is in

590
00:34:20,236 --> 00:34:23,816
respect of how the DCO can manage this and whether it can be

591
00:34:23,857 --> 00:34:26,616
appropriately managed through protective provisions.

592
00:34:28,316 --> 00:34:31,616
Hearing from Mr. Basford earlier, he was suggesting that,

593
00:34:32,857 --> 00:34:36,756
NGET's preferred design approach is to prepare its design with no conflicts

594
00:34:36,816 --> 00:34:36,957
and

595
00:34:37,937 --> 00:34:41,236
not have to consider such interactions in respect of committed protective

596
00:34:41,256 --> 00:34:45,116
provisions. I think most infrastructure projects would suggest that would

597
00:34:45,156 --> 00:34:48,296
be their preferred design approach to have a clear run and not have to consider

598
00:34:48,336 --> 00:34:52,236
other interactions. But in reality, that's just not how the

599
00:34:52,256 --> 00:34:55,656
design of complex major infrastructure projects works,

600
00:34:56,056 --> 00:34:59,316

particularly where those infrastructure projects are being delivered as a means of

601
00:34:59,675 --> 00:35:00,696
interacting with and

602
00:35:01,896 --> 00:35:05,636
connecting a large range of other schemes as Grimsby to Walpole will

603
00:35:05,676 --> 00:35:05,936
be.

604
00:35:07,616 --> 00:35:11,556
NGET clearly haven't been willing to do that design work now,

605
00:35:11,936 --> 00:35:15,876
but the reality is that NGET has had the Meridian Alignment for nine

606
00:35:15,956 --> 00:35:19,796
months and will have another six or more months before they submit

607
00:35:20,116 --> 00:35:24,016
their DCO application. So they do have the ability to

608
00:35:24,056 --> 00:35:28,016
adjust their design accordingly, and as has been set out, the applicant

609
00:35:28,456 --> 00:35:32,016
is willing to make additional restrictions on its design to

610
00:35:32,056 --> 00:35:35,676
ensure that they retain their full flexibility in terms of limits of

611
00:35:35,716 --> 00:35:39,676
deviation. So from the applicant's perspective, like all other

612
00:35:39,976 --> 00:35:43,756
interactions between major infrastructure projects, protective provisions

613

00:35:43,996 --> 00:35:47,456
are the established means of managing

614
00:35:47,656 --> 00:35:47,996
such

615
00:35:49,136 --> 00:35:52,856
interactions between projects. And, the applicant does not agree

616
00:35:53,136 --> 00:35:56,256
with Mr. Basford's comments that the NESO connection reform process has

617
00:35:56,296 --> 00:36:00,136
fundamentally changed the nature of how DCOs deal

618
00:36:00,176 --> 00:36:01,696
with interacting infrastructure.

619
00:36:02,876 --> 00:36:06,416
So on that basis, as noted at yesterday's hearings, the applicant received

620
00:36:06,536 --> 00:36:09,836
NGET's comments back on the protective provisions last Friday.

621
00:36:10,496 --> 00:36:11,216
The applicant will

622
00:36:12,056 --> 00:36:15,776
progress these as quickly as it can with NGET, would appreciate the ongoing

623
00:36:15,956 --> 00:36:19,536
engagement by NGET, and hopefully with the

624
00:36:19,576 --> 00:36:23,516
assurances that there is a technical feasible solution here,

625
00:36:24,536 --> 00:36:28,376
like any other interacting infrastructure project, this is a

626
00:36:28,436 --> 00:36:31,836
matter that can be dealt with via protective provisions, and

627
00:36:31,916 --> 00:36:35,516
incorporate any matters that NESO needs,

628
00:36:35,936 --> 00:36:39,036
in respect of protecting its design within those protective provisions.

629
00:36:40,476 --> 00:36:44,196
Thank you. I am going to go back to NGET in a minute, but I believe my colleague

630
00:36:44,236 --> 00:36:45,036
has a question.

631
00:36:46,520 --> 00:36:48,760
Thank you. I just want to clarify a couple of things with Mr.

632
00:36:49,020 --> 00:36:51,580
Fowler, if that's okay. You mentioned that the

633
00:36:52,760 --> 00:36:55,900
study that you're doing is mainly looking between

634
00:36:57,040 --> 00:37:01,000
the A151 and Broadgate, so it's not covering the pinch point

635
00:37:01,040 --> 00:37:04,500
that's just immediately north of the A151 near the

636
00:37:04,600 --> 00:37:07,040
water

637
00:37:08,120 --> 00:37:09,520
infrastructure. Is that correct?

638
00:37:09,980 --> 00:37:12,660
Tom Fowler, on behalf of the applicant. Yes, it covers that section as well.

639
00:37:12,700 --> 00:37:13,040
It does cover-

640
00:37:13,060 --> 00:37:15,620
North of the Anglian Water sewage treatment works. Yes.

641
00:37:15,760 --> 00:37:19,640
Thank you. And then you mentioned that the limits of deviation, then

642
00:37:19,940 --> 00:37:23,840
you're willing to narrow them, so that will then result in a

643
00:37:23,900 --> 00:37:26,140
change to, for example, figure

644
00:37:27,600 --> 00:37:31,500
2.7, and then the other figure is, I think, a 2.3 for

645
00:37:31,560 --> 00:37:33,220
the grid connection route. Is that correct?

646
00:37:33,860 --> 00:37:35,420
Tom Fowler, on behalf of the applicant. Yes.

647
00:37:35,500 --> 00:37:38,980
So any reductions would be within our current LOD and order limits, and that would

648
00:37:39,020 --> 00:37:41,360
be reflected on the updated documents. Yep.

649
00:37:41,400 --> 00:37:42,140
Thank you for confirming.

650
00:37:43,400 --> 00:37:47,360
Thank you. Mr. Basford, is there anything you would like to add from what you've

651
00:37:47,400 --> 00:37:48,680
heard from the applicant?

652
00:37:51,319 --> 00:37:54,880
Thank you, Madam. Howard Basford, on behalf of National Grid Electricity

653
00:37:54,940 --> 00:37:58,200
Transmission. Thank you very much for those points from

654
00:37:58,640 --> 00:38:00,120
Meridian and from LSTC.

655
00:38:02,300 --> 00:38:02,620
The

656
00:38:04,360 --> 00:38:05,860
first thing I'd observe is that

657
00:38:07,560 --> 00:38:09,060
it is always open

658
00:38:10,120 --> 00:38:13,680
to parties such as Meridian to approach National Grid

659
00:38:13,720 --> 00:38:16,860
Electricity Transmission with design proposals.

660
00:38:18,140 --> 00:38:19,560
However, the

661
00:38:21,320 --> 00:38:25,180
position put forward by Mr. Fowler in

662
00:38:25,240 --> 00:38:26,560
relation to

663
00:38:27,760 --> 00:38:30,600
Meridian and its grid connection here is news to us,

664
00:38:31,660 --> 00:38:34,420
as fairly Ms. Power has identified.

665
00:38:35,220 --> 00:38:38,700
This means that we are not able to respond to it now in detail.

666
00:38:38,760 --> 00:38:42,440
We need to see it. Deadline four is some way away, and we are

667
00:38:42,500 --> 00:38:44,140
somewhat ambushed by this.

668
00:38:45,940 --> 00:38:46,200
Had

669
00:38:47,300 --> 00:38:47,860
Meridian

670
00:38:49,260 --> 00:38:49,920
intended

671
00:38:51,240 --> 00:38:54,660
to work in a way that could be accommodating this location, it was open to it to

672
00:38:54,680 --> 00:38:58,360
have provided this sooner. It has always known National Grid's position in

673
00:38:58,400 --> 00:39:01,840
relation to these locations and these connections, and

674
00:39:02,940 --> 00:39:06,460
we would welcome early sight of that and not to wait to deadline four.

675
00:39:06,500 --> 00:39:09,820
In fact, if we could receive that paper today, it's plainly available to Mr.

676
00:39:09,880 --> 00:39:11,760
Fowler, that would be most useful.

677
00:39:14,460 --> 00:39:17,300

In terms of hazards and safety, Mr.

678
00:39:17,520 --> 00:39:19,200
Fowler has referred to

679
00:39:20,180 --> 00:39:22,400
other locations on the transmission system.

680
00:39:22,880 --> 00:39:25,800
The fact that something has happened before is not a reason that it should happen

681
00:39:25,860 --> 00:39:26,320
again.

682
00:39:27,540 --> 00:39:31,500
National Grid's position is clear on this, and there is no reason to

683
00:39:31,580 --> 00:39:35,560
enhance risk unnecessarily. And so

684
00:39:36,760 --> 00:39:40,600
I would make a preliminary observation that the fact that something has happened

685
00:39:40,640 --> 00:39:43,840
historically is not a justification for baking in further

686
00:39:44,340 --> 00:39:46,860
risk at this stage.

687
00:39:50,360 --> 00:39:54,240
In relation to the management of

688
00:39:54,860 --> 00:39:56,900
risk through protective provisions,

689
00:39:57,800 --> 00:40:00,280
the point is not that Connections Reform has

690
00:40:01,160 --> 00:40:03,060

fundamentally changed the position.

691
00:40:03,460 --> 00:40:07,160
The point is that Connections Reform has fundamentally changed the position

692
00:40:07,760 --> 00:40:09,440
in relation to Meridian Solar.

693
00:40:10,840 --> 00:40:14,360
The point can be distinguished. Meridian Solar does not have

694
00:40:14,520 --> 00:40:16,980
a connection that can be identified.

695
00:40:17,020 --> 00:40:20,220
It's not a position where there is a single substation option.

696
00:40:20,260 --> 00:40:24,240
It's not a position where there is a site with

697
00:40:24,340 --> 00:40:26,140
existing transmission infrastructure

698
00:40:27,520 --> 00:40:31,080
that is sufficient for its needs, and it's not a position where the

699
00:40:32,160 --> 00:40:35,920
proposed solution would result in a single connection node,

700
00:40:36,400 --> 00:40:39,760
which could be presumptive in a positive way.

701
00:40:40,400 --> 00:40:44,260
Therefore, I don't think we can say that

702
00:40:48,200 --> 00:40:51,980
the protective provisions resolve that particular issue here.

703
00:40:52,400 --> 00:40:56,200
We also can't say that, and my position has been slightly

704
00:40:56,240 --> 00:41:00,000
mischaracterized by Ms. Power, that National Grid wishes to position

705
00:41:00,060 --> 00:41:00,280
its

706
00:41:01,940 --> 00:41:04,900
approach as being one where there are no conflicts.

707
00:41:05,860 --> 00:41:07,620
It is a position where National Grid

708
00:41:08,980 --> 00:41:10,640
has to manage conflicts,

709
00:41:11,560 --> 00:41:15,320
and here is primus inter pares. It has to be

710
00:41:15,400 --> 00:41:19,120
able to manage its project on which others rely.

711
00:41:19,760 --> 00:41:20,100
So

712
00:41:21,020 --> 00:41:23,260
the fact that National Grid could adjust its design

713
00:41:24,200 --> 00:41:26,800
is a point that, whilst

714
00:41:27,660 --> 00:41:31,360
true in an abstract sense, is not something which has been

715
00:41:31,420 --> 00:41:35,400
assessed and which National Grid can necessarily accomplish without

716
00:41:37,080 --> 00:41:40,660
environmental effects, which are not currently anticipated

717

00:41:41,100 --> 00:41:45,080
by the existing National Grid design, which it has to be able to evolve,

718
00:41:45,140 --> 00:41:48,780
as I've explained, in a manner that will meet its obligations to all

719
00:41:48,860 --> 00:41:51,440
connectees, not just Meridian Solar.

720
00:41:51,820 --> 00:41:55,520
And again, we come back to the position where Meridian Solar is queue

721
00:41:55,600 --> 00:41:59,100
jumping here and trying to move out with the established

722
00:42:00,260 --> 00:42:03,160
statutory process for achieving grid connections.

723
00:42:06,960 --> 00:42:10,280
In terms of Ms. Power's

724
00:42:10,680 --> 00:42:13,240
initial observation in relation to

725
00:42:14,140 --> 00:42:16,400
gate two offer, she refers to it as a final gate two offer,

726
00:42:19,400 --> 00:42:20,560
with an implication that

727
00:42:21,600 --> 00:42:25,520
the process is moving inexorably to the

728
00:42:25,580 --> 00:42:27,660
grant of a gate two offer, which is

729
00:42:28,940 --> 00:42:32,380
within grasping distance. I don't think we can assume that,

730

00:42:32,940 --> 00:42:33,360
and that

731
00:42:34,240 --> 00:42:36,300
implication is unhelpful here,

732
00:42:37,400 --> 00:42:37,920
because

733
00:42:38,780 --> 00:42:42,460
as I have set out, there is no reason

734
00:42:42,860 --> 00:42:46,840
before you to suppose that strategic alignment will be achieved
within

735
00:42:46,860 --> 00:42:49,080
the lifespan of the scheme, and therefore

736
00:42:50,220 --> 00:42:54,100
That National Grid and others should plan on that basis in

737
00:42:54,140 --> 00:42:58,040
relation to this particular element of the grid connection.

738
00:42:58,720 --> 00:43:02,440
And then finally, the observation that Gate 1 offers are

739
00:43:02,480 --> 00:43:03,700
relied upon by National Grid.

740
00:43:04,560 --> 00:43:08,160
Gate 1 offers are in mind for National Grid, but

741
00:43:08,760 --> 00:43:12,460
Grimsby to Walpole is not just a connections

742
00:43:12,500 --> 00:43:15,340
project, it is also a boundary reinforcement project.

743
00:43:15,520 --> 00:43:17,320

It's necessary to ensure power flows

744
00:43:18,580 --> 00:43:19,500
are properly managed

745
00:43:20,520 --> 00:43:24,440
as part of the national electricity transmission system, and hence the

746
00:43:25,640 --> 00:43:26,980
Gate 1 project

747
00:43:28,640 --> 00:43:32,000
status for a number of its connectees

748
00:43:32,680 --> 00:43:32,980
is

749
00:43:34,560 --> 00:43:38,320
a matter which is in mind, but is not critical

750
00:43:38,420 --> 00:43:40,060
to project planning from that point of view.

751
00:43:40,320 --> 00:43:44,280
As I say, it's also performing a function which is

752
00:43:45,040 --> 00:43:48,580
of critical importance to the grid in terms of balancing power flows.

753
00:43:49,840 --> 00:43:52,640
I think that covers the points on which I have to come back just now, but of

754
00:43:52,680 --> 00:43:53,360
course, we can

755
00:43:55,520 --> 00:43:58,360
flesh those out for you in our written submission. Thank you.

756

00:43:59,020 --> 00:44:02,720
Thank you. Just before you go, Mr. Basford, I understand the reason

757
00:44:02,780 --> 00:44:05,840
why meetings haven't been held with the applicant.

758
00:44:05,880 --> 00:44:07,840
You've explained the position.

759
00:44:09,980 --> 00:44:13,480
Given the issues that have been faced on this project, is there any

760
00:44:13,540 --> 00:44:17,300
likelihood of the two parties being able to sit down together to

761
00:44:17,340 --> 00:44:21,220
communicate regarding this issue, or is it just going to be as we

762
00:44:21,280 --> 00:44:23,720
continue in writing between both parties?

763
00:44:27,800 --> 00:44:31,660
It's difficult to seem dog in a manger about

764
00:44:31,700 --> 00:44:34,460
this and say, "No, we absolutely refuse to

765
00:44:35,640 --> 00:44:36,640
speak to the

766
00:44:38,420 --> 00:44:42,220
applicant." What I will do is to

767
00:44:42,360 --> 00:44:43,460
revert to the client,

768
00:44:45,300 --> 00:44:49,120
National Grid Electricity Transmission, and we will consider the

769
00:44:50,240 --> 00:44:53,960
extent to which we can engage in the context of

770
00:44:54,060 --> 00:44:57,140
the discussions of the protective provisions.

771
00:44:57,580 --> 00:45:00,940
I think that is the most that I can say at this stage.

772
00:45:01,360 --> 00:45:05,000
So if I can take that away, that would be most helpful

773
00:45:05,100 --> 00:45:06,680
to my client.

774
00:45:07,440 --> 00:45:10,180
That's fine. If we can record that as an action point.

775
00:45:10,220 --> 00:45:13,100
And I do understand the situation, but thank you.

776
00:45:14,700 --> 00:45:18,680
Turning back to the applicant, will it be possible to get the
information

777
00:45:18,740 --> 00:45:20,700
to NGET before deadline four?

778
00:45:21,820 --> 00:45:22,900
Taylor Power for the applicant.

779
00:45:23,780 --> 00:45:24,320
Yes, so

780
00:45:25,160 --> 00:45:27,180
very much want to respond to Mr. Basford's comment.

781
00:45:27,260 --> 00:45:30,400
It wasn't the intention of the applicant to ambush NGET.

782
00:45:30,480 --> 00:45:33,680
We had just understood from all of the communications to date that
they

783
00:45:34,180 --> 00:45:37,600
weren't willing to take on any further information or engage with us.

784
00:45:38,200 --> 00:45:41,080
But very heartening to hear that might no longer be the case.

785
00:45:41,500 --> 00:45:45,440
We are finalizing turning the internal study into

786
00:45:45,520 --> 00:45:47,900
something that can be presented externally because we weren't

787
00:45:48,900 --> 00:45:52,740
necessarily intending on sending it, but we'll do that as fast as we

788
00:45:52,800 --> 00:45:56,600
can and can get that across to NGET in advance, particularly

789
00:45:57,040 --> 00:45:59,320
if that means we can have that conversation.

790
00:46:01,000 --> 00:46:04,280
That would be useful, and if that is delivered to

791
00:46:04,960 --> 00:46:07,240
NGET in time, if we could get your response, Mr.

792
00:46:07,580 --> 00:46:11,320
Basford, for deadline four, depending obviously when you receive the

793
00:46:11,340 --> 00:46:13,880
information, that would assist the EXO greatly.

794
00:46:14,460 --> 00:46:16,200
And I also see that you've got your hand up.

795
00:46:16,220 --> 00:46:18,560
Would you like to come back on another point?

796
00:46:21,400 --> 00:46:25,280
Just for clarity, I'm not instructed that we are able to engage, but I will

797
00:46:25,340 --> 00:46:26,160
ask the question.

798
00:46:28,600 --> 00:46:32,460
I cannot commit to revert at deadline four because

799
00:46:32,520 --> 00:46:33,820
this is entirely new information.

800
00:46:33,840 --> 00:46:37,640
The applicant has had since December 2025 to work this up and

801
00:46:38,440 --> 00:46:42,220
has managed to do it by now. I appreciate, because I'm engaged

802
00:46:42,600 --> 00:46:46,280
with it myself, that planning a transmission line can take a while, so

803
00:46:46,920 --> 00:46:50,280
I make no criticism of that. But of course, we've only just received this, and

804
00:46:50,320 --> 00:46:51,700
deadline four is the next

805
00:46:52,600 --> 00:46:56,460
deadline. So I think it would be appropriate to say that we can respond

806
00:46:56,500 --> 00:46:57,560
by deadline five

807
00:46:59,520 --> 00:47:03,300
at earliest. But we look forward to receiving it as soon as possible, and we

808

00:47:03,360 --> 00:47:07,099
will endeavor to respond sooner if we

809
00:47:07,159 --> 00:47:07,440
can.

810
00:47:08,320 --> 00:47:10,659
Thank you. I appreciate that from both parties.

811
00:47:11,020 --> 00:47:12,100
I am going to open

812
00:47:13,180 --> 00:47:16,160
up to the floor now. Or is there anything else you'd like to add?

813
00:47:16,720 --> 00:47:19,521
Taylor Power for the applicant. There were just a couple of additional points. That's

814
00:47:19,619 --> 00:47:20,580
fine. Yeah. Including on the...

815
00:47:23,080 --> 00:47:27,020
I'm aware we didn't come back on the agenda point around the

816
00:47:27,060 --> 00:47:29,820
Gate 2 offer and whether that would be achievable.

817
00:47:30,640 --> 00:47:32,100
I did just want to clarify then,

818
00:47:32,900 --> 00:47:36,560
the applicant hasn't been in the position to work up this design since December

819
00:47:36,600 --> 00:47:38,280
last year. We only received the

820
00:47:39,760 --> 00:47:43,640
comments around the 92-meter standoff in the context of this examination.

821
00:47:43,740 --> 00:47:47,420
So we have tried to work this up as fast as we can, just to be fair to Mr.

822
00:47:47,660 --> 00:47:49,480
Fowler in terms of the work that's been done.

823
00:47:50,640 --> 00:47:52,440
I did just want to check in on two points.

824
00:47:52,460 --> 00:47:56,360
So on the question and the agenda regarding whether

825
00:47:56,400 --> 00:47:59,420
the applicant considers it would receive a Gate 2 offer by the close of

826
00:47:59,440 --> 00:48:03,060
examination, just to confirm, the applicant doesn't

827
00:48:03,120 --> 00:48:06,260
expect it would receive a Gate 2 offer by the close of examination.

828
00:48:07,460 --> 00:48:11,380
I can pass to Mr. Coates if there are any questions as to why it

829
00:48:11,440 --> 00:48:14,740
doesn't believe that, but I'm also aware we've put in written submissions on this

830
00:48:14,800 --> 00:48:15,180
point.

831
00:48:16,260 --> 00:48:20,200
So I suppose the only point I have is, have you heard anything about the

832
00:48:20,260 --> 00:48:24,240
date, any future dates for the Gate 2 application process

833
00:48:25,140 --> 00:48:25,820

coming forward?

834
00:48:26,780 --> 00:48:29,860
Yeah. I can pass to Mr. Coates on this. I think it's...

835
00:48:30,200 --> 00:48:31,140
Yeah, I'll pass to you.

836
00:48:31,180 --> 00:48:32,880
You did. I think you did respond in

837
00:48:33,980 --> 00:48:37,180
EXQ about it, but I just wondered if there'd been any updates since that.

838
00:48:38,300 --> 00:48:39,940
Chris Coates on behalf of the applicant.

839
00:48:40,860 --> 00:48:44,700
NESO have not confirmed any dates yet for the opening of the

840
00:48:44,740 --> 00:48:48,220
next window. We understand from initial engagement that this is

841
00:48:48,280 --> 00:48:52,000
expected to begin at the close of the initial reform

842
00:48:52,080 --> 00:48:56,000
process. The final offers from that process are due to go out in the

843
00:48:56,020 --> 00:48:59,860
end of quarter one of 2027. We understand from the original

844
00:48:59,920 --> 00:49:03,880
proposals for connections reform that NESO intend to run two

845
00:49:03,980 --> 00:49:07,840
annual windows to allow projects that are either new or have Gate

846
00:49:07,960 --> 00:49:09,840
1 offers to apply for Gate 2 status.

847
00:49:09,900 --> 00:49:13,800
So there will be a surplus of windows in the coming years that the

848
00:49:13,860 --> 00:49:15,900
applicant can apply for Gate 2 status.

849
00:49:17,028 --> 00:49:17,808
Thank you. That's useful.

850
00:49:18,828 --> 00:49:22,228
Thank you. And just then the second part of that question, as the applicant

851
00:49:22,288 --> 00:49:24,648
understands, is what the implications of that are.

852
00:49:25,728 --> 00:49:29,628
So in respect of the assessment of this application,

853
00:49:31,048 --> 00:49:34,468
we've set this out in various written submissions, but it's the applicant's

854
00:49:34,488 --> 00:49:38,448
position that the relevant tests do not require that final connection agreement

855
00:49:38,488 --> 00:49:42,188
to be in place. Instead, they require the applicant to show there's

856
00:49:42,248 --> 00:49:46,168
no obvious reason why its grid connection should not be feasible, and

857
00:49:46,208 --> 00:49:49,147
the applicant considers that it can evidence this,

858
00:49:49,968 --> 00:49:53,288
in the basis that it's set out in its various written submissions that there's no

859
00:49:53,328 --> 00:49:56,388
obvious reason why it should not receive a Gate 2 offer in the future.

860
00:49:57,468 --> 00:50:01,348
And there's also no obvious reason why that connection offer should not

861
00:50:01,388 --> 00:50:05,188
be to Weston Marsh Substation B, and that it can't technically deliver

862
00:50:05,248 --> 00:50:07,648
it. And that will be supported by these

863
00:50:09,588 --> 00:50:13,368
further technical submissions that the applicant will put in for deadline four and

864
00:50:13,748 --> 00:50:17,308
give to NJ in advance if it can prepare that in time.

865
00:50:18,348 --> 00:50:22,188
Should the applicant be wrong and have assumed the wrong location for the grid

866
00:50:22,208 --> 00:50:25,908
connection, it would be up to the applicant to either seek to

867
00:50:25,948 --> 00:50:29,668
vary a DCO in the future or otherwise seek separate permissions to

868
00:50:29,708 --> 00:50:31,828
deliver its connection to a new location.

869
00:50:32,628 --> 00:50:36,448
And should the applicant not receive a Gate 2 offer at all in

870
00:50:36,508 --> 00:50:39,928
the implementation period, noting the applicant's

871

00:50:39,968 --> 00:50:43,548
confidence that this is not the case, that it does believe that

872
00:50:43,608 --> 00:50:45,948
these assumptions it's made are reasonable,

873
00:50:46,968 --> 00:50:50,708
the scheme wouldn't be delivered, given, as explained at various points, the

874
00:50:50,748 --> 00:50:53,368
final investment decision relies on the connection agreement.

875
00:50:53,688 --> 00:50:57,468
So that would've been at the applicant's complete commercial risk that those

876
00:50:57,528 --> 00:51:01,368
scenarios happen. But I suppose the more positive

877
00:51:01,448 --> 00:51:05,428
story is that the applicant doesn't believe that to be

878
00:51:05,548 --> 00:51:09,508
a likely outcome of this scenario and does believe it has set out why it

879
00:51:09,568 --> 00:51:13,228
is both technically feasible and feasible in the context of the connection

880
00:51:13,268 --> 00:51:13,688
reform.

881
00:51:14,708 --> 00:51:18,248
No, that was going to be one of my questions, as maybe uncomfortable as it

882
00:51:18,348 --> 00:51:22,268
is to ask what the scenario would be if no grid connection

883
00:51:23,368 --> 00:51:25,568

was built. Thank you. Thank you for answering that.

884
00:51:27,228 --> 00:51:30,568
I'm going to turn to Lincolnshire County Council first.

885
00:51:30,768 --> 00:51:31,788
Do you wish to add-

886
00:51:32,128 --> 00:51:32,528
Madam-

887
00:51:32,748 --> 00:51:34,888
Oh, sorry, Mr. Basford. Apology.

888
00:51:35,008 --> 00:51:35,168
Madam-

889
00:51:35,188 --> 00:51:35,848
Mr. Basford.

890
00:51:36,128 --> 00:51:39,528
Apologies. Howard Basford on behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission.

891
00:51:43,308 --> 00:51:47,088
It's important to recognize that the question for this examination is not just

892
00:51:47,148 --> 00:51:48,028
the absence

893
00:51:49,008 --> 00:51:52,108
of a connection offer, but it is

894
00:51:52,848 --> 00:51:56,168
that the connection offer may not be the one

895
00:51:56,908 --> 00:52:00,148
that the applicant wants. It may be in an

896
00:52:00,208 --> 00:52:03,908

entirely different location. It may be at one of the

897
00:52:04,808 --> 00:52:07,888
other substations on Grimsby to Walpole.

898
00:52:08,528 --> 00:52:10,588
And so the applicant is

899
00:52:10,668 --> 00:52:14,588
trying to get

900
00:52:14,628 --> 00:52:17,808
you to conclude that it will always

901
00:52:18,388 --> 00:52:22,328
have an acceptable grid connection solution, or

902
00:52:22,408 --> 00:52:26,308
that the only solution, and you should authorize it, is

903
00:52:26,348 --> 00:52:30,328
the one that it has applied for. And that is making

904
00:52:30,388 --> 00:52:32,348
it really difficult for National Grid to plan

905
00:52:33,568 --> 00:52:37,548
its project because it is

906
00:52:37,608 --> 00:52:38,288
being given

907
00:52:39,768 --> 00:52:43,228
effectively a fait accompli by the applicant when the

908
00:52:43,988 --> 00:52:47,248
body that should be managing this is NESO

909
00:52:48,168 --> 00:52:49,948
and National Grid.

910
00:52:51,268 --> 00:52:54,788
So it isn't simply a question of whether or not a grid

911
00:52:54,848 --> 00:52:58,748
connection offer at Gate 2 is issued, but the

912
00:52:58,828 --> 00:53:02,568
nature of that offer and the connection date and the

913
00:53:02,608 --> 00:53:03,328
location.

914
00:53:04,328 --> 00:53:08,088
It is more complicated than the position that you are being given.

915
00:53:10,908 --> 00:53:13,008
Thank you, Mr. Basford. I'm going to

916
00:53:14,128 --> 00:53:16,068
turn to Lincolnshire County Council.

917
00:53:19,328 --> 00:53:20,908
Joel Samakula.

918
00:53:22,128 --> 00:53:22,208
Yeah.

919
00:53:22,248 --> 00:53:23,448
Lincolnshire County Council.

920
00:53:24,248 --> 00:53:28,228
Madam, I don't seek to repeat the submissions or the debate of which much time has

921
00:53:28,248 --> 00:53:30,568
already been spent in this examination.

922
00:53:31,008 --> 00:53:34,127
You have our written position as set out at Section 8

923

00:53:35,048 --> 00:53:38,747
of our local impact report and also reiterated again at deadline two,

924
00:53:39,468 --> 00:53:43,068
that's Rep 2022, and also in our

925
00:53:43,088 --> 00:53:44,808
deadline three comments at Rep

926
00:53:45,228 --> 00:53:47,608
3-079.

927
00:53:49,008 --> 00:53:52,328
Our overarching point of course being that we have a fundamental concern about the

928
00:53:52,348 --> 00:53:53,348
deliverability of this

929
00:53:54,208 --> 00:53:58,168
scheme and we support the submissions, or rely

930
00:53:58,188 --> 00:54:01,328
on the submissions of NGET as have already been raised,

931
00:54:01,768 --> 00:54:05,608
and the difficulties here. And of course, we heard yesterday

932
00:54:05,668 --> 00:54:06,428
that one of

933
00:54:07,788 --> 00:54:11,748
the ways we thought this could be dealt with within the DCO was via a

934
00:54:11,788 --> 00:54:15,448
pre-commencement requirement.

935
00:54:15,968 --> 00:54:18,368
Now, I just want to correct the position, that's the only point I want to expand on

936
00:54:18,888 --> 00:54:21,888
here, regarding what was said yesterday about that

937
00:54:22,488 --> 00:54:25,528
requirement. We were asked whether we'd actually proposed any

938
00:54:26,028 --> 00:54:28,488
wording, and I said yesterday we hadn't.

939
00:54:28,628 --> 00:54:31,768
Just for your note in dealing with one of the action items for yesterday, because

940
00:54:31,867 --> 00:54:33,628
I think it's the only time we'll get the chance to deal with it

941
00:54:34,808 --> 00:54:38,628
in these hearings this week. We have actually put forward that wording, it

942
00:54:38,728 --> 00:54:42,568
was my error there, at page 137 of the

943
00:54:42,588 --> 00:54:46,468
local impact report. And it simply would prevent commencement of the

944
00:54:46,508 --> 00:54:47,988
authorized development, including any

945
00:54:48,908 --> 00:54:52,748
permitted preliminary works until consent has been secured for a connection

946
00:54:52,808 --> 00:54:56,748
into the Weston Marsh substation, or such alternative connection as may

947
00:54:56,788 --> 00:54:58,128
be approved.

948

00:54:59,268 --> 00:55:00,208
We've made reference

949
00:55:01,548 --> 00:55:04,668
in the LIR to Springwell and

950
00:55:05,868 --> 00:55:07,368
this being the request of the XA

951
00:55:08,228 --> 00:55:09,728
there, although that was not taken forward by the

952
00:55:10,788 --> 00:55:11,508
Secretary of State.

953
00:55:12,508 --> 00:55:14,028
My understanding is that matter is currently

954
00:55:15,248 --> 00:55:16,708
before the High Court

955
00:55:18,056 --> 00:55:20,336
In a permission hearing, I think that's taking place today.

956
00:55:20,516 --> 00:55:24,356
We'll, of course, update the examination authority when we hear further information

957
00:55:24,396 --> 00:55:25,596
about that, and also deal with

958
00:55:27,996 --> 00:55:31,656
the relevant tests, and I'll continue to push for this

959
00:55:32,196 --> 00:55:35,936
requirement. But other than that, unless I can answer any specific questions about

960
00:55:36,536 --> 00:55:39,756
the county council's position, that's as far as I think I can take it for

961
00:55:40,176 --> 00:55:40,596
now.

962
00:55:41,956 --> 00:55:43,116
Thank you. That's useful.

963
00:55:44,736 --> 00:55:47,296
Does the applicant wish to respond to anything?

964
00:55:47,396 --> 00:55:51,056
Taylor Power for the applicant. Just to note, we would've made a response to that

965
00:55:51,496 --> 00:55:55,396
drafting in the LAR responses, but we can consider it again as part of our

966
00:55:55,456 --> 00:55:59,436
discussions generally on the DCO with LCC and discuss it further with them.

967
00:56:00,056 --> 00:56:03,716
Excellent. I am aware of the time. We are approaching

968
00:56:04,516 --> 00:56:08,256
11 o'clock. But is there anybody else in the room who wishes to speak on this

969
00:56:08,316 --> 00:56:08,796
matter?

970
00:56:11,056 --> 00:56:11,456
Thank you.

971
00:56:13,036 --> 00:56:16,876
It is now 10:56, so I will stop you as we approach--

972
00:56:17,176 --> 00:56:18,616
Not now, you've got a couple of minutes.

973
00:56:18,656 --> 00:56:21,835

I'll probably stop you about 10:59, so a few minutes.

974
00:56:21,876 --> 00:56:25,776
What we might do is hear from your submission, then we'll have the

975
00:56:25,816 --> 00:56:29,456
two minutes silence, and then we'll hear from the applicant. Please go ahead.

976
00:56:30,416 --> 00:56:31,156
Thank you, madam.

977
00:56:31,456 --> 00:56:33,596
Andrew Malkin from Meridian Action Group.

978
00:56:34,836 --> 00:56:36,876
We welcome the panel

979
00:56:37,816 --> 00:56:41,376
asking for an overview of the prospect of a location for a good connection

980
00:56:41,416 --> 00:56:45,336
being identified by the close of the examination and

981
00:56:45,376 --> 00:56:47,456
the implications if this doesn't occur.

982
00:56:48,216 --> 00:56:50,976
Just for clarification, when would that be?

983
00:56:51,616 --> 00:56:55,516
The close of the next two days, or the close of the examination in

984
00:56:55,576 --> 00:56:56,096
total?

985
00:56:56,936 --> 00:56:59,236
Close of the examination, deadline nine.

986
00:57:00,296 --> 00:57:00,776

Okay. Yeah.

987
00:57:01,756 --> 00:57:03,336
Just a couple of questions on that then.

988
00:57:04,136 --> 00:57:07,876
If there is still no agreement on grid connection, does that

989
00:57:07,936 --> 00:57:11,176
mean then, Meridian, that this project is dead in the water?

990
00:57:12,356 --> 00:57:15,316
Or are there other plans that we're so far not aware of?

991
00:57:16,756 --> 00:57:17,016
And

992
00:57:18,396 --> 00:57:21,516
if in the unlikely event that this panel recommends

993
00:57:21,836 --> 00:57:24,796
approval and the Secretary of State rubberstamps that,

994
00:57:25,796 --> 00:57:29,016
will Meridian continue on its declared timescale?

995
00:57:30,076 --> 00:57:30,896
And if it does

996
00:57:32,296 --> 00:57:36,196
start construction or any other works that it needs to do before it

997
00:57:36,236 --> 00:57:38,336
gets that agreement on grid connection,

998
00:57:39,176 --> 00:57:42,936
will it turn out that this is either a massive white elephant, or

999
00:57:42,976 --> 00:57:46,476
will Downing then be able to claim constraint

1000
00:57:46,576 --> 00:57:50,496
payments in the same way that wind farms are able to do that when

1001
00:57:50,516 --> 00:57:53,296
they're not allowed to transmit the power they generate?

1002
00:57:55,496 --> 00:57:58,936
Thank you. You do have a couple of minutes. Do you want to respond?

1003
00:57:59,416 --> 00:58:01,956
Sorry. Yes, Taylor Power for the applicant.

1004
00:58:02,996 --> 00:58:06,976
So just to confirm on the questions as I understood it, so if there's

1005
00:58:07,036 --> 00:58:10,836
no agreement on grid connection by the end of examination, no, the applicant's

1006
00:58:10,856 --> 00:58:14,276
position is not that the project is dead.

1007
00:58:14,956 --> 00:58:18,676
Rather, the position from the applicant is that there are several examples of

1008
00:58:19,016 --> 00:58:22,956
energy DCOs that have proceeded to consent, and the applicant's

1009
00:58:22,976 --> 00:58:26,636
provided these examples in the past so I won't repeat them in this

1010
00:58:26,676 --> 00:58:27,156
hearing,

1011
00:58:30,596 --> 00:58:34,176
whereby consent has been granted, a final grid connection

1012
00:58:35,396 --> 00:58:39,056
agreement has been secured later, and then it's been delivered once

that

1013
00:58:39,116 --> 00:58:43,096
agreement has been secured. So we discussed that in detail yesterday in respect

1014
00:58:43,156 --> 00:58:45,096
of the Grampian style clause.

1015
00:58:46,056 --> 00:58:46,956
So I would refer

1016
00:58:47,916 --> 00:58:49,116
Meridian Action Group back to the

1017
00:58:50,036 --> 00:58:52,056
hearing notes from yesterday once they're released.

1018
00:58:53,296 --> 00:58:54,436
In respect of the

1019
00:58:55,316 --> 00:58:58,836
delay in timescale and how that's been considered, the applicant's ES has

1020
00:58:58,876 --> 00:59:02,656
considered delays in implementation in line with

1021
00:59:02,696 --> 00:59:06,616
the seven-year implementation period proposed for the scheme and

1022
00:59:06,656 --> 00:59:10,216
has assessed the ES effects if construction were to occur later.

1023
00:59:11,156 --> 00:59:14,036
I think those were the main points, and I think I'll stop there for the timing.

1024
00:59:14,736 --> 00:59:18,676
Yeah. Thank you very much. The time is now approaching 11

1025

00:59:18,716 --> 00:59:22,696
o'clock. So before we continue, I'd like to invite everyone to

1026
00:59:22,796 --> 00:59:26,416
stand if they are able and wish to, and observe a two-minute

1027
00:59:26,496 --> 00:59:30,336
silence in remembrance of those who've lost their lives in conflicts

1028
00:59:30,836 --> 00:59:33,735
and to honor those who have served and continue to serve.

1029
00:59:34,496 --> 00:59:36,776
We will now pause for two minutes of silence.

1030
00:59:37,956 --> 00:59:39,596
Two minutes of silence will begin

1031
00:59:39,656 --> 01:01:16,236
now.

1032
01:01:26,806 --> 01:01:28,626
Thank you. I think,

1033
01:01:29,905 --> 01:01:30,466
Ms. Tetley Jones, you had

1034
01:01:31,526 --> 01:01:31,806
your hand up?

1035
01:01:31,846 --> 01:01:34,647
Thank you, Madam. Emily Tetley Jones for InterGen. I

1036
01:01:34,645 --> 01:01:35,306
just wanted to point out

1037
01:01:36,406 --> 01:01:38,726
that we did have comments

1038
01:01:39,925 --> 01:01:43,446
on the issue of pipeline risk raised earlier

1039
01:01:43,606 --> 01:01:46,686
by Mr. Founder, and also similarly for InterGen

1040
01:01:47,606 --> 01:01:50,666
as for Njet, the issue of suitability of

1041
01:01:51,265 --> 01:01:54,046
PPs, given the various uncertainties and engagement to date on

1042
01:01:54,206 --> 01:01:57,086
technical data, especially in view, obviously, of the cumulative effects of the

1043
01:01:57,186 --> 01:01:57,266
various

1044
01:01:57,666 --> 01:02:59,006
projects

1045
01:02:59,166 --> 01:03:02,646
in the area. But with your leave, we'd suggest that we

1046
01:03:02,726 --> 01:03:05,906
address that together in one

1047
01:03:06,706 --> 01:03:09,986
fell swoop at item five,

1048
01:03:10,746 --> 01:03:12,066
if you're happy with that.

1049
01:03:13,326 --> 01:03:14,986
That's fine. Thank you very much.

1050
01:03:17,906 --> 01:03:18,546
Mr. Raines,

1051
01:03:19,626 --> 01:03:20,766
are you

1052
01:03:21,746 --> 01:03:22,886
making representations

1053
01:03:23,866 --> 01:03:24,866
as an individual?

1054
01:03:25,066 --> 01:03:27,126
As an in- I... Yes, David Raines.

1055
01:03:27,246 --> 01:03:27,286
Yep.

1056
01:03:27,606 --> 01:03:28,266
Local resident.

1057
01:03:28,286 --> 01:03:28,446
Thank you.

1058
01:03:29,126 --> 01:03:32,966
Could I just ask the applicant what gives them confidence they will

1059
01:03:33,006 --> 01:03:34,106
get a Gate 2 offer,

1060
01:03:35,026 --> 01:03:38,166
considering NESO have said they're not in strategic alignment?

1061
01:03:39,346 --> 01:03:41,826
I think I did ask that question

1062
01:03:42,026 --> 01:03:45,246
in our first round of questions, but I will

1063
01:03:46,146 --> 01:03:49,146
hand back over to the applicant, maybe if you could respond.

1064
01:03:50,686 --> 01:03:53,766
Yes, madam. I will pass over to my colleague, Mr.

1065
01:03:53,986 --> 01:03:56,986

Coates, who can give a brief explanation of this for you, Mr. Raines.

1066
01:03:59,126 --> 01:04:01,726
Thank you very much. Chris Coates, on behalf of the applicant.

1067
01:04:02,286 --> 01:04:05,786
There's several factors that will go into strategic alignment, as

1068
01:04:06,426 --> 01:04:10,066
Mr. Raines correctly says, currently in the first Gate 2 offer

1069
01:04:10,146 --> 01:04:13,966
process, it was deemed that the applicant's project did

1070
01:04:14,006 --> 01:04:14,566
not meet

1071
01:04:15,606 --> 01:04:19,566
Gate 2 strategic alignment. What will be changing in future gate

1072
01:04:19,606 --> 01:04:23,306
windows, although at the present moment, the applicant does not have

1073
01:04:23,366 --> 01:04:27,186
communicated certainty on this from NESO, is that there

1074
01:04:27,226 --> 01:04:30,786
will be projects currently with Gate 2 offers that

1075
01:04:30,806 --> 01:04:31,426
potentially

1076
01:04:32,366 --> 01:04:36,106
drop out and no longer proceed, that we refer to that as project attrition.

1077
01:04:36,146 --> 01:04:40,086
We've seen that as recently as yesterday with a large solar project

1078
01:04:40,526 --> 01:04:44,366

being refused, and there will be other projects like this that mean that some of

1079
01:04:44,406 --> 01:04:47,966
the contracted Gate 2 capacity falls away and

1080
01:04:47,986 --> 01:04:51,826
potentially leaves room for other Gate 2 capacity to come

1081
01:04:51,866 --> 01:04:52,966
forward for projects like

1082
01:04:53,806 --> 01:04:55,446
Meridian Solar. In addition to that,

1083
01:04:56,426 --> 01:05:00,306
the applicant is confident that in the future, albeit

1084
01:05:00,346 --> 01:05:04,306
again, we do not have a confirmed timescale, there will be increases to

1085
01:05:04,346 --> 01:05:08,066
the permitted capacity allowed for renewable technologies such as solar

1086
01:05:08,526 --> 01:05:12,486
and onshore wind, and that is in accordance with the future energy

1087
01:05:12,566 --> 01:05:16,526
scenarios communicated by NESO as well, that communicate there

1088
01:05:16,566 --> 01:05:17,066
is to be

1089
01:05:17,986 --> 01:05:21,586
an energy landscape in the future with a larger proportion of solar.

1090
01:05:21,666 --> 01:05:22,986
So with those

1091

01:05:24,126 --> 01:05:24,966
factors all

1092
01:05:26,226 --> 01:05:29,606
combined together is what gives the applicant confidence

1093
01:05:30,286 --> 01:05:32,386
on receiving a Gate 2 offer in the future.

1094
01:05:32,946 --> 01:05:35,446
Alongside that is NESO's communicated

1095
01:05:36,606 --> 01:05:40,566
procedure for the reordering of the Gate 2 queue, where NESO

1096
01:05:40,606 --> 01:05:44,406
themselves are the ones that have communicated the strategy of its

1097
01:05:44,626 --> 01:05:48,486
first ready and first connected now, where in their connection methodology,

1098
01:05:48,546 --> 01:05:49,866
they've highlighted projects

1099
01:05:50,666 --> 01:05:54,046
with land rights only, and no planning will

1100
01:05:54,566 --> 01:05:58,026
be actually behind projects that have land rights and planning.

1101
01:05:58,426 --> 01:06:02,186
It is not a procedure they've set out, but they have been very clear on how their

1102
01:06:02,266 --> 01:06:05,926
queue will be formed. Projects that have submitted planning and have land rights

1103
01:06:06,466 --> 01:06:09,446
will be first in that queue for Gate 2 offers.

1104
01:06:09,486 --> 01:06:12,446
So again, combining Meridian Solar's position,

1105
01:06:13,326 --> 01:06:17,126
having a planning application submitted alongside the other factors for the future

1106
01:06:17,626 --> 01:06:19,266
of how those capacities will be

1107
01:06:20,306 --> 01:06:24,206
built out and developed is what gives the applicant confidence of receiving a

1108
01:06:24,246 --> 01:06:24,746
Gate 2 offer.

1109
01:06:27,026 --> 01:06:30,306
Thank you, Mr. Raines. Does that answer your... Thank you.

1110
01:06:31,166 --> 01:06:34,986
Is there anybody else in the room or online who wishes to comment on grid

1111
01:06:35,066 --> 01:06:35,546
matters?

1112
01:06:37,786 --> 01:06:38,306
Mr. Malkin?

1113
01:06:41,206 --> 01:06:44,746
I didn't get an answer from Meridian about the prospect for

1114
01:06:44,786 --> 01:06:48,646
constraint payments. Whatever the circumstance, can they give us an assurance that

1115
01:06:49,086 --> 01:06:52,886
there will not be a bid for constraint payments, which is a matter for bill

1116

01:06:52,926 --> 01:06:54,126
payers and the public purse?

1117
01:06:57,146 --> 01:06:59,246
Yeah, thank you. Chris Coates on behalf of the applicants.

1118
01:06:59,706 --> 01:07:00,806
Where those constraint

1119
01:07:01,666 --> 01:07:05,286
payments can currently be seen in the network, as the gentleman referenced,

1120
01:07:05,366 --> 01:07:09,286
is in the north of Scotland with the onshore wind farms that are constrained by

1121
01:07:09,326 --> 01:07:12,706
National Grid. Those are projects that are already connected to the network that

1122
01:07:12,746 --> 01:07:16,546
are constrained. The difference with Meridian Solar, regardless if a decision

1123
01:07:16,586 --> 01:07:17,866
was taken to build out, is

1124
01:07:18,766 --> 01:07:22,466
we would not be able to be eligible for any payments like those constraint

1125
01:07:22,506 --> 01:07:22,906
payments,

1126
01:07:23,826 --> 01:07:27,686
as we would not be connected to the network in the scenario that you've described.

1127
01:07:27,766 --> 01:07:31,446
So we wouldn't be eligible to receive those without a Gate 2 grid

1128

01:07:31,526 --> 01:07:35,286
connection, and then thereafter, a constraint imposed upon us by

1129
01:07:35,386 --> 01:07:35,906
National Grid.

1130
01:07:37,256 --> 01:07:37,516
Thank you.

1131
01:07:38,816 --> 01:07:40,496
Does that answer? Yeah, of course.

1132
01:07:42,276 --> 01:07:45,956
I don't believe there is anybody else wanting to talk about it.

1133
01:07:46,136 --> 01:07:50,056
Did you have anything to respond to Sir John's comments

1134
01:07:50,136 --> 01:07:50,456
earlier?

1135
01:07:52,336 --> 01:07:56,176
Taylor Power for the applicant. Looking back, no, I think we've
covered

1136
01:07:56,236 --> 01:07:57,756
most of those in the discussion today.

1137
01:07:57,816 --> 01:08:01,296
The only other thing I had on my list was when yourself, madam,

1138
01:08:01,476 --> 01:08:04,436
mentioned you would be interested in hearing from my colleague, Ms.

1139
01:08:04,536 --> 01:08:06,236
Burns, in respect of the list of-

1140
01:08:07,216 --> 01:08:07,516
Sorry, yes

1141
01:08:07,695 --> 01:08:10,276

... projects. So if you were still interested, I can pass to her.

1142
01:08:10,756 --> 01:08:13,376
Yeah. My apologies, that slipped my mind. Thank you, Ms. Burns.

1143
01:08:14,396 --> 01:08:16,257
No problem. Thank you. Ms. Burns for the applicant.

1144
01:08:16,816 --> 01:08:20,797
So I just wanted to highlight the reliance that Grimsby to Walpole places

1145
01:08:20,856 --> 01:08:24,576
on the Gate One projects like Meridian Solar continuing to

1146
01:08:24,637 --> 01:08:27,797
come forward. And I just want to draw attention to

1147
01:08:28,776 --> 01:08:32,696
an excerpt from the strategic options report produced by NGET that

1148
01:08:32,736 --> 01:08:36,056
was contained within its Deadline 3 submission, which is Rep

1149
01:08:36,376 --> 01:08:40,036
3087, and in that excerpt, it

1150
01:08:40,137 --> 01:08:43,816
identifies projects that Grimsby to Walpole would support

1151
01:08:43,896 --> 01:08:47,837
coming forward. And I recognize that assessment is based on

1152
01:08:47,896 --> 01:08:50,456
an earlier version of what's called the tech register,

1153
01:08:51,356 --> 01:08:53,056
and predates connections reform.

1154
01:08:53,996 --> 01:08:57,956
However, it's been produced as part of its Deadline 3 response, and

therefore,

1155
01:08:58,055 --> 01:09:01,816
I can deduce that that still remains current unless they say

1156
01:09:01,896 --> 01:09:02,476
otherwise.

1157
01:09:04,056 --> 01:09:07,656
And just a review of that November 2026 tech

1158
01:09:07,717 --> 01:09:11,156
register, I understand it's updated, I think, on a weekly basis,

1159
01:09:11,976 --> 01:09:15,816
confirms that a number of the projects that NGET has identified as

1160
01:09:15,856 --> 01:09:19,156
being supported by Grimsby to Walpole in its Deadline 3 submission

1161
01:09:19,717 --> 01:09:20,956
now have Gate One offers,

1162
01:09:22,996 --> 01:09:26,956
and that list may continue to evolve over time as projects come forward, change,

1163
01:09:26,996 --> 01:09:30,516
or fall away, and move through that gate process that Mr.

1164
01:09:30,736 --> 01:09:31,876
Coates has described.

1165
01:09:33,376 --> 01:09:37,137
And I think this demonstrates that many of the present stage of gate offers, the

1166
01:09:37,177 --> 01:09:40,797
large majority of the schemes which support the needs case for Grimsby to

1167

01:09:40,837 --> 01:09:44,156
Walpole hold Gate One offers like the scheme does.

1168
01:09:44,177 --> 01:09:47,316
And I don't want to sit here and talk about the need for Grimsby to Walpole, that's

1169
01:09:47,355 --> 01:09:50,976
not my intention, but I think it does highlight that strategic

1170
01:09:51,036 --> 01:09:54,916
transmission infrastructure like Grimsby to Walpole, which will provide additional

1171
01:09:55,136 --> 01:09:59,096
capacity in the grid network, continues to be planned and developed

1172
01:09:59,156 --> 01:10:01,896
against an evolving pipeline of generation projects,

1173
01:10:02,736 --> 01:10:05,576
as well as the boundary enforcement that Mr. Basford mentioned.

1174
01:10:06,636 --> 01:10:09,836
So if Grimsby to Walpole was to require all of these projects to

1175
01:10:10,416 --> 01:10:14,336
delay their own planning progress, and thereby potentially delaying their own

1176
01:10:14,376 --> 01:10:15,436
Gate Two readiness,

1177
01:10:16,496 --> 01:10:20,396
until it had secured planning permission, there wouldn't necessarily be a

1178
01:10:20,456 --> 01:10:23,776
ready pipeline of projects to justify its delivery.

1179
01:10:24,456 --> 01:10:28,256
So I just wanted to highlight that point in terms of the role of the

1180
01:10:28,296 --> 01:10:29,936
project in its Gate One offer.

1181
01:10:31,296 --> 01:10:32,696
Thank you very much. Mr. Basford?

1182
01:10:37,416 --> 01:10:40,656
Matt Basford, on behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission.

1183
01:10:40,696 --> 01:10:43,676
Not very surprisingly, we will come back on that

1184
01:10:44,536 --> 01:10:46,676
in gross detail in the

1185
01:10:49,056 --> 01:10:52,876
note of the hearing. However, what I

1186
01:10:53,056 --> 01:10:56,256
would observe first is two things.

1187
01:10:57,476 --> 01:11:01,456
The strategic

1188
01:11:01,516 --> 01:11:02,176
options report

1189
01:11:03,056 --> 01:11:06,876
is a snapshot. It's a view taken at a given time, and whilst
reference is

1190
01:11:06,936 --> 01:11:08,796
made to it, the

1191
01:11:09,936 --> 01:11:10,796
evidence that it

1192
01:11:12,576 --> 01:11:16,176
supports has the date on its

1193
01:11:16,256 --> 01:11:20,236
cover. National Grid constantly keeps under review, though, the

1194
01:11:21,056 --> 01:11:23,796
strategic options reports to ensure that they hold good.

1195
01:11:24,556 --> 01:11:28,376
The case for Grimsby to Walpole will fully be articulated,

1196
01:11:29,036 --> 01:11:32,716
as is appropriate, in the application for its development consent order.

1197
01:11:33,136 --> 01:11:33,356
So

1198
01:11:35,256 --> 01:11:35,796
it isn't

1199
01:11:36,816 --> 01:11:40,716
necessarily helpful to view the

1200
01:11:40,816 --> 01:11:44,676
strategic options report as the last word on

1201
01:11:44,756 --> 01:11:46,776
the components of the need for the project.

1202
01:11:48,556 --> 01:11:52,196
And the second thing is to say that there is, again, a mischaracterization of

1203
01:11:52,236 --> 01:11:56,016
what National Grid is saying. It is not the

1204
01:11:56,096 --> 01:11:56,516
case

1205
01:11:57,316 --> 01:12:00,096
that all projects should delay

1206
01:12:01,076 --> 01:12:02,636
until Grimsby to Walpole has its

1207
01:12:05,776 --> 01:12:06,776
development consent order.

1208
01:12:07,936 --> 01:12:11,296
Forgive me if I've not exactly characterized the point made against me,

1209
01:12:11,756 --> 01:12:11,936
but

1210
01:12:12,796 --> 01:12:13,556
the point is that

1211
01:12:14,616 --> 01:12:17,876
the process has to be managed, and what is happening in this

1212
01:12:17,936 --> 01:12:21,476
particular DCO application on behalf of Meridian Solar

1213
01:12:22,276 --> 01:12:23,636
is that the

1214
01:12:25,436 --> 01:12:28,836
statutory structures established

1215
01:12:29,596 --> 01:12:30,896
by Connections Reform

1216
01:12:31,776 --> 01:12:33,296
are being circumvented

1217
01:12:34,476 --> 01:12:37,276
by the DCO application, and that is not appropriate.

1218
01:12:38,536 --> 01:12:41,896
The connection offer is important here

1219

01:12:42,436 --> 01:12:45,736
because National Grid relies upon it for the proper planning

1220
01:12:46,676 --> 01:12:48,256
of its strategic infrastructure,

1221
01:12:49,256 --> 01:12:53,156
and it is, as I say, that Meridian Solar is

1222
01:12:53,256 --> 01:12:55,176
elbowing its way to the front of the queue.

1223
01:12:56,296 --> 01:12:59,736
It is assuming that its desire and design

1224
01:12:59,816 --> 01:13:03,116
for a connection at Western Marsh

1225
01:13:03,536 --> 01:13:03,896
B

1226
01:13:05,276 --> 01:13:08,836
supervenes when National Grid should be planning the

1227
01:13:08,876 --> 01:13:12,736
substation, not Meridian Solar. It's National Grid's substation on

1228
01:13:12,796 --> 01:13:16,156
National Grid's transmission system informed by NISO.

1229
01:13:16,896 --> 01:13:20,696
It is not Meridian's job to plan National Grid's

1230
01:13:20,756 --> 01:13:23,796
infrastructure, and that is the point here.

1231
01:13:24,116 --> 01:13:27,996
It isn't that National Grid should go first and get its

1232
01:13:28,056 --> 01:13:31,956
consents first. It is that when there is an interface, it should be

1233
01:13:31,996 --> 01:13:33,616
properly managed, which is not occurring.

1234
01:13:37,244 --> 01:13:40,604
Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add before we move on?

1235
01:13:41,464 --> 01:13:42,704
Taylor Powell for the applicant.

1236
01:13:44,123 --> 01:13:45,404
I think we've covered most matters.

1237
01:13:45,564 --> 01:13:48,804
I suppose from the applicant's perspective, it's just been very difficult,

1238
01:13:48,924 --> 01:13:52,624
if the position now from NGET is that

1239
01:13:53,104 --> 01:13:56,804
it's not that they oppose a Gate 1 project coming forward for

1240
01:13:56,864 --> 01:13:58,004
application, but

1241
01:13:58,884 --> 01:14:02,124
that project needs to be managed in a way that it doesn't interfere with NGET's

1242
01:14:02,164 --> 01:14:06,064
projects, it's been very difficult for the applicant to manage

1243
01:14:06,104 --> 01:14:08,464
it given NGET has refused to engage.

1244
01:14:08,504 --> 01:14:09,904
And so I think

1245
01:14:11,304 --> 01:14:12,204

the difficulty,

1246
01:14:13,264 --> 01:14:14,144
in respect of Mr.

1247
01:14:15,104 --> 01:14:15,904
Basford's comments,

1248
01:14:17,084 --> 01:14:19,924
just in terms of how we do that in practice.

1249
01:14:20,004 --> 01:14:23,744
But I think we pick that up directly with NGET and engagement going

1250
01:14:23,804 --> 01:14:27,264
forward, in respect of the protected provisions and this technical work, and we

1251
01:14:27,304 --> 01:14:30,184
report back on that at deadline four for the examining authority.

1252
01:14:30,984 --> 01:14:32,564
That would be useful. Mr. Basford,

1253
01:14:33,424 --> 01:14:34,204
is there anything else?

1254
01:14:35,044 --> 01:14:38,804
Obviously, this is a topic that we could... Sorry, you're on mute, Mr. Basford.

1255
01:14:38,844 --> 01:14:42,524
This is a topic we could talk about for a

1256
01:14:42,564 --> 01:14:45,724
considerable length of time. Is there anything else you wish to add?

1257
01:14:47,304 --> 01:14:49,384
Yes, there is an important point, madam. Apologies.

1258
01:14:49,804 --> 01:14:52,144

Howard Basford on behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission.

1259
01:14:53,324 --> 01:14:55,804
I must reserve the position of the company.

1260
01:14:56,104 --> 01:14:59,764
It is not appropriate to try and paint National

1261
01:14:59,824 --> 01:15:03,484
Grid into a corner by saying that my submissions have

1262
01:15:03,524 --> 01:15:06,804
established a principle for the way the company approaches

1263
01:15:07,284 --> 01:15:09,624
connections in life, connections reform.

1264
01:15:10,764 --> 01:15:12,924
And so it is not

1265
01:15:13,764 --> 01:15:15,564
appropriate to draw those conclusions.

1266
01:15:16,064 --> 01:15:19,664
We will set out more clearly the position in our written submission, but

1267
01:15:19,764 --> 01:15:23,384
absolutely must not draw a point of general principle from this.

1268
01:15:23,764 --> 01:15:23,984
And

1269
01:15:24,824 --> 01:15:26,724
the company cannot be in a corner on that. Thank you.

1270
01:15:29,004 --> 01:15:29,484
Thank you.

1271
01:15:30,684 --> 01:15:34,444
If there is nobody else, Mr. Basford, your hand is, is that a

historic

1272
01:15:34,504 --> 01:15:37,104
hand you have up online? Thank you.

1273
01:15:38,284 --> 01:15:41,964
If there is nobody else, we're going to now move on to agenda item

1274
01:15:42,144 --> 01:15:42,384
four.

1275
01:15:47,484 --> 01:15:50,524
Agenda item four is site selection and assessment of

1276
01:15:50,584 --> 01:15:51,484
alternatives.

1277
01:15:53,044 --> 01:15:56,624
The questions that we've got mainly relate to the strategic

1278
01:15:56,724 --> 01:15:59,484
site selection submission, which is Rep

1279
01:15:59,844 --> 01:16:03,744
2017. We might want to get that ready to

1280
01:16:03,804 --> 01:16:05,164
go up on the screen.

1281
01:16:06,084 --> 01:16:09,784
And the first figure that I'm going to refer to a bit later on is
figure

1282
01:16:10,064 --> 01:16:11,804
5.1, if you want to get that ready.

1283
01:16:12,644 --> 01:16:12,944
Thank you.

1284
01:16:14,744 --> 01:16:17,744
So my first question relates to the need for

1285
01:16:18,704 --> 01:16:21,604
750 megawatts to justify the site selection.

1286
01:16:22,744 --> 01:16:26,184
So there are numerous examples of reference to either the

1287
01:16:26,364 --> 01:16:30,304
need or the offer for 750 megawatts in

1288
01:16:30,344 --> 01:16:31,104
the document.

1289
01:16:32,984 --> 01:16:34,184
This includes

1290
01:16:35,124 --> 01:16:39,064
5.62, which states, "The location of the connection opportunity

1291
01:16:39,124 --> 01:16:42,824
is fundamental to defining a realistic area

1292
01:16:43,304 --> 01:16:46,404
within which alternative sites could meet the same development
need."

1293
01:16:49,844 --> 01:16:53,384
564 says, "Use of smaller sites had to be considered in the

1294
01:16:53,424 --> 01:16:56,744
context of the identified need of 750."

1295
01:16:58,204 --> 01:17:02,124
566 says, "The applicant did not identify any single area

1296
01:17:02,164 --> 01:17:05,824
of flood zone one land capable of accommodating development of the
scale

1297
01:17:05,904 --> 01:17:09,504
required to utilize the available 750 connection

1298
01:17:09,544 --> 01:17:10,324
opportunity."

1299
01:17:11,644 --> 01:17:15,344
And 622, "The scale of land required for the scheme was

1300
01:17:15,364 --> 01:17:18,624
predicated by the grid connection offer secured by the

1301
01:17:18,724 --> 01:17:19,464
applicant."

1302
01:17:21,564 --> 01:17:25,184
So the conclusion from that has to be that the 750 offer is

1303
01:17:25,284 --> 01:17:28,824
key to the site selection and assessment of the alternatives.

1304
01:17:30,104 --> 01:17:33,764
So given everything that we've just heard, and we understand that
the offer of

1305
01:17:34,004 --> 01:17:36,324
750 connection no longer exists,

1306
01:17:37,124 --> 01:17:40,884
given that, what are the implications for your justification of that
site

1307
01:17:40,944 --> 01:17:41,564
selection?

1308
01:17:46,384 --> 01:17:47,924
Cool. Ms. Burns for the applicant.

1309
01:17:49,744 --> 01:17:50,644
Just on the basis that the

1310
01:17:52,564 --> 01:17:54,624
project has since gone to a Gate 1 offer.

1311
01:17:54,663 --> 01:17:56,363
At the time of site selection,

1312
01:17:57,264 --> 01:18:00,964
we had that gate grid connection agreement in place for 750.

1313
01:18:01,844 --> 01:18:04,964
In light of that offer changing to a Gate 1,

1314
01:18:06,524 --> 01:18:09,364
I believe we've set it out in the grid connection statement.

1315
01:18:09,924 --> 01:18:13,844
The basis of its forward planning for the project going forward is

1316
01:18:13,884 --> 01:18:16,464
to assume that the connection agreement and the

1317
01:18:17,764 --> 01:18:21,284
size and the scale of the generation would remain the same, in the avoidance of

1318
01:18:21,844 --> 01:18:24,204
any other offer coming forward or clarity on that.

1319
01:18:25,324 --> 01:18:28,764
That's how the applicant has taken that approach going forward rather than

1320
01:18:29,284 --> 01:18:31,964
considering a smaller scale scheme.

1321
01:18:34,284 --> 01:18:38,044
So does the document that you submitted at

1322
01:18:38,324 --> 01:18:38,664
D...

1323
01:18:40,284 --> 01:18:43,524
Was it D2 it came in at? Rep

1324
01:18:43,564 --> 01:18:46,724
2017. Does that need updating in light of that?

1325
01:18:46,984 --> 01:18:50,964
Given the reliance that that document places on the fact that you did

1326
01:18:51,024 --> 01:18:54,744
have that offer, do we need to revise that in

1327
01:18:54,784 --> 01:18:56,204
light of the changed position?

1328
01:18:58,764 --> 01:19:02,704
I can update it to reflect that that has changed, but what that document

1329
01:19:02,744 --> 01:19:05,704
does is it highlights the process that the applicant went through at a strategic

1330
01:19:05,744 --> 01:19:07,084
level historically.

1331
01:19:08,024 --> 01:19:11,284
Those decisions were taken back from, I think it was 2021 and

1332
01:19:11,424 --> 01:19:14,644
2022, where it did have that grid connection agreement offer.

1333
01:19:14,704 --> 01:19:18,584
It hasn't then subsequently gone back in light of the Gate 1 and reestablished

1334
01:19:18,644 --> 01:19:20,284
its strategic site selection case.

1335
01:19:20,324 --> 01:19:22,944
So I do think the points within that document still stand.

1336

01:19:23,683 --> 01:19:26,964
I can make updates to it to make it clearer that subsequently, the

1337
01:19:27,764 --> 01:19:31,384
applicant has received a Gate 1 offer and why we believe those

1338
01:19:32,164 --> 01:19:36,144
parameters are still applicable and appropriate for the scheme on

1339
01:19:36,204 --> 01:19:37,344
a site selection basis.

1340
01:19:38,244 --> 01:19:40,804
Okay. I think that would be helpful, and there might be other amendments that you

1341
01:19:40,824 --> 01:19:43,224
want to make of it in light of the next set of questions.

1342
01:19:43,264 --> 01:19:43,364
Okay.

1343
01:19:43,404 --> 01:19:46,143
So if we could have that in by the next deadline, that would be great.

1344
01:19:46,143 --> 01:19:46,304
Yeah, that's fine.

1345
01:19:46,484 --> 01:19:46,804
Thank you.

1346
01:19:50,604 --> 01:19:54,364
My next question then was to explore this constraint that's been

1347
01:19:54,403 --> 01:19:57,744
incorporated in the site selection of the River Welland.

1348
01:19:58,644 --> 01:20:02,544
So it's been identified that it's a reason that the land to the west

1349

01:20:02,604 --> 01:20:06,284
was discounted. It's an important factor for not looking

1350
01:20:06,344 --> 01:20:09,084
across quite a large area in that direction.

1351
01:20:10,304 --> 01:20:13,024
However, we've only got that high-level statement,

1352
01:20:13,964 --> 01:20:17,924
and I wondered if you could explain in more detail why crossing the Welland is such

1353
01:20:17,984 --> 01:20:19,984
a significant barrier to development.

1354
01:20:29,204 --> 01:20:30,764
Chris Coates on behalf of the applicant.

1355
01:20:32,804 --> 01:20:35,924
Just to maybe go back one step. Well, obviously, as

1356
01:20:36,964 --> 01:20:40,824
madam's alluded to, there was the established point of connection

1357
01:20:41,164 --> 01:20:43,464
and then the site search area, which then

1358
01:20:44,924 --> 01:20:48,764
gave way to the land assessment, the land appraisal that was

1359
01:20:48,804 --> 01:20:49,004
done

1360
01:20:49,864 --> 01:20:53,564
thereafter. The applicant did consider sites to the west

1361
01:20:54,284 --> 01:20:55,864
of the River Welland, but

1362
01:20:56,664 --> 01:21:00,344

with the prospect of the extent of that crossing,

1363
01:21:00,424 --> 01:21:04,244
which the river itself is just over 40 meters wide, again

1364
01:21:04,284 --> 01:21:06,724
with an ancillary flood storage area,

1365
01:21:07,204 --> 01:21:10,924
what the applicant decided was a significant engineering

1366
01:21:11,024 --> 01:21:14,764
constraint for a connection either of the 400 kilowatt overhead line

1367
01:21:15,004 --> 01:21:15,884
or if

1368
01:21:16,724 --> 01:21:20,444
land to the west of the river served as part of the

1369
01:21:20,484 --> 01:21:23,044
wider scheme, which has been put forward by the applicant.

1370
01:21:23,784 --> 01:21:27,564
Crossing that within a 132 kV interarray

1371
01:21:27,644 --> 01:21:29,784
connection was another engineering constraint,

1372
01:21:30,844 --> 01:21:32,784
that the applicant saw was too significant.

1373
01:21:33,004 --> 01:21:36,324
And as well as that, the land put forward

1374
01:21:36,864 --> 01:21:37,984
within the scheme today,

1375
01:21:39,124 --> 01:21:42,924
of the four parcels totalling around between 1,000 to 1,200

1376
01:21:42,944 --> 01:21:43,384
hectares,

1377
01:21:44,184 --> 01:21:47,764
managed to overcome what those constraints, engineering

1378
01:21:47,824 --> 01:21:51,604
constraints, would have introduced by including land to the west of the

1379
01:21:51,644 --> 01:21:54,364
River Welland. But I'll hand over to Ms. Burns or Ms.

1380
01:21:54,844 --> 01:21:56,924
Power if there's any other further points on that.

1381
01:21:59,724 --> 01:22:00,524
No? Thank you.

1382
01:22:02,724 --> 01:22:06,044
So you say you did consider land to the west, and it's all been looked at in the

1383
01:22:06,104 --> 01:22:08,244
round. Where is that set out?

1384
01:22:09,744 --> 01:22:09,804
So

1385
01:22:11,764 --> 01:22:13,724
I don't believe, and Ms. Burns or Ms.

1386
01:22:13,784 --> 01:22:17,444
Power can correct me if I'm wrong, that the land to the west is

1387
01:22:18,404 --> 01:22:21,044
set out exactly, and there were other parcels.

1388
01:22:21,124 --> 01:22:24,524
I think, believe there is a parcel that was, albeit to the east of the

1389
01:22:25,284 --> 01:22:28,004
river, that is set out as considered but fell away.

1390
01:22:28,384 --> 01:22:29,704
We haven't included that, though.

1391
01:22:30,144 --> 01:22:33,624
If it would be helpful, in the amendments Ms.

1392
01:22:33,704 --> 01:22:37,624
Burns proposed to make, we could provide some of that information, albeit it was

1393
01:22:37,684 --> 01:22:41,504
at a very introductory stage of the project, and the level of

1394
01:22:41,524 --> 01:22:42,584
detail would reflect that.

1395
01:22:43,184 --> 01:22:46,384
Yeah. That would be helpful, and it fits into some of my later questions about

1396
01:22:46,644 --> 01:22:46,904
other

1397
01:22:47,764 --> 01:22:49,644
sites that you've considered in more detail.

1398
01:22:50,044 --> 01:22:53,784
I think coming back to the River Welland as a constraint, I've got no problem that

1399
01:22:53,824 --> 01:22:57,464
it is a constraint. Obviously, it's a large river to get

1400
01:22:57,584 --> 01:22:57,864
over.

1401
01:22:59,404 --> 01:23:03,304

But some evidence that that would actually make the scheme unviable or

1402
01:23:03,344 --> 01:23:07,284
that it makes it unattractive compared to the other options in the round would be

1403
01:23:07,324 --> 01:23:10,784
very helpful for us as well, because at the moment, I've only got one statement

1404
01:23:10,804 --> 01:23:13,124
that says it's difficult to get over the river.

1405
01:23:14,884 --> 01:23:15,184
Thanks.

1406
01:23:17,044 --> 01:23:18,204
If we go to

1407
01:23:20,624 --> 01:23:22,264
figure 5.1,

1408
01:23:30,144 --> 01:23:34,004
it was obviously a long line of options as to

1409
01:23:34,044 --> 01:23:35,964
where the substation might go,

1410
01:23:36,804 --> 01:23:39,204
and the one to the east is actually beyond the River Nene.

1411
01:23:39,284 --> 01:23:42,944
So the question I had for you was, had the substation been on that

1412
01:23:43,044 --> 01:23:45,764
side, would you have then got over the River Nene

1413
01:23:48,024 --> 01:23:50,124
when you were doing your options assessment?

1414

01:23:51,864 --> 01:23:55,423
And that's in the context of whether or not the River Welland is an

1415
01:23:55,524 --> 01:23:58,664
absolute barrier or whether or not it was possible to get over it.

1416
01:24:13,924 --> 01:24:16,644
If it's okay, we'd rather take it away and just come back in writing to make sure

1417
01:24:16,684 --> 01:24:16,804
we're-

1418
01:24:17,164 --> 01:24:17,544
Yeah, that's fine

1419
01:24:17,603 --> 01:24:17,825
... on that. Thank

1420
01:24:17,823 --> 01:24:19,384
you. If you could add that on. Thank you.

1421
01:24:20,384 --> 01:24:23,144
So we now want to turn to the strength of evidence that alternatives have been

1422
01:24:23,184 --> 01:24:25,324
considered, and that fits into the

1423
01:24:26,304 --> 01:24:28,524
question that you had before. So you've already alluded to the fact that you'll

1424
01:24:28,564 --> 01:24:31,044
give us some more on this, but just to flesh it out.

1425
01:24:31,564 --> 01:24:35,304
At 4.3.3, you do say that other considerations needed to be taken into

1426
01:24:35,344 --> 01:24:39,244
account, and you list a number of factors, including designated

1427
01:24:39,324 --> 01:24:41,444
sites, settlements, physical constraints.

1428
01:24:41,984 --> 01:24:45,684
You say that at 5.16, the best publicly available

1429
01:24:45,724 --> 01:24:49,484
information was taken into account, and you considered the

1430
01:24:49,504 --> 01:24:51,684
distribution of settlements at 5.8.3.

1431
01:24:53,364 --> 01:24:57,264
And in the conclusions at 5.6.5, you say that you did conclude that there were no

1432
01:24:57,584 --> 01:25:00,224
lower-risk sites or combination of lower-risk sites.

1433
01:25:01,084 --> 01:25:04,604
From those statements, it is apparent that you have done a

1434
01:25:04,644 --> 01:25:08,144
strategic-level exercise. But unfortunately, we've only got those

1435
01:25:08,204 --> 01:25:11,844
high-level statements, and it would be very helpful if we had more on that.

1436
01:25:11,904 --> 01:25:15,004
So if you could provide that in the context of what I've just read, that would be

1437
01:25:15,044 --> 01:25:15,824
very helpful.

1438
01:25:16,704 --> 01:25:20,124
Ms. Burns for the applicant. Yes, we can update the report to provide more detail.

1439

01:25:21,024 --> 01:25:24,584
I just do want to manage expectations in the sense that we don't have,

1440
01:25:25,064 --> 01:25:27,284
let's say, a discrete shortlist of alternative sites.

1441
01:25:27,444 --> 01:25:29,264
I know some projects will have

1442
01:25:30,284 --> 01:25:34,244
considered sites in various locations and also has been more generally

1443
01:25:34,364 --> 01:25:37,344
areas in that respect. So I just wanted to make that clear.

1444
01:25:38,396 --> 01:25:41,956
And that there isn't any prescriptive requirement within the NPS to do so.

1445
01:25:42,036 --> 01:25:43,076
But we will update

1446
01:25:43,876 --> 01:25:45,896
the document in deadline four to be clearer.

1447
01:25:46,136 --> 01:25:49,136
That's understood. I think it would be helpful from our point of view to have a

1448
01:25:49,776 --> 01:25:53,696
clearer breakdown of exactly what it is was done, because you allude to the fact

1449
01:25:53,716 --> 01:25:57,136
that you've done the work. So submit it. That'd be helpful. Thank you.

1450
01:25:59,536 --> 01:26:02,856
Picking up on Lincolnshire County Council's point about

1451

01:26:03,416 --> 01:26:06,376
schemes where smaller land parcels have been linked together, and they've given us

1452
01:26:06,416 --> 01:26:07,716
some examples of that.

1453
01:26:08,876 --> 01:26:11,416
And they've questioned why this approach wasn't applied here.

1454
01:26:12,096 --> 01:26:15,656
And I can see at 554 that you

1455
01:26:15,716 --> 01:26:18,876
suggest that you were aiming for sites of 120 hectares to

1456
01:26:19,096 --> 01:26:21,416
160 hectares. So to

1457
01:26:22,356 --> 01:26:26,196
answer Lincolnshire's question, is there anywhere in the

1458
01:26:26,236 --> 01:26:30,076
submitted documents where we can see where plots of such a size were

1459
01:26:30,116 --> 01:26:33,256
assessed when considering site selection and

1460
01:26:33,336 --> 01:26:34,356
alternatives?

1461
01:26:37,356 --> 01:26:40,896
Ms. Burns for the applicant. Not in terms of exact specific smaller sites.

1462
01:26:41,976 --> 01:26:43,876
But if it would be helpful, my colleague, Mr.

1463
01:26:44,096 --> 01:26:45,276
Coates, could give an overview of

1464

01:26:46,496 --> 01:26:50,296
the size of the sites considered and why that was appropriate, and then I could

1465
01:26:50,356 --> 01:26:51,816
talk about how that aligns with policy.

1466
01:26:51,896 --> 01:26:54,976
But if you'd rather us do that in writing, we could do so as well.

1467
01:26:55,216 --> 01:26:57,956
I think as we've got the counselor here, it would be interesting to hear.

1468
01:26:59,916 --> 01:27:00,016
Yeah.

1469
01:27:01,536 --> 01:27:04,176
Yeah, thank you. Chris Coates on behalf of the applicant.

1470
01:27:05,456 --> 01:27:08,736
As Ms. Burns alluded to, I'll set out just very briefly the four main

1471
01:27:09,796 --> 01:27:11,496
reasons as to why we considered

1472
01:27:12,316 --> 01:27:13,776
fewer larger parcels over

1473
01:27:15,296 --> 01:27:18,476
more potentially spread out smaller parcels. But as Ms.

1474
01:27:18,556 --> 01:27:21,296
Burns said, we'll respond in further detail in writing.

1475
01:27:21,356 --> 01:27:21,436
So,

1476
01:27:22,656 --> 01:27:26,056
as madam correctly highlighted, we looked for

1477
01:27:27,056 --> 01:27:30,956
land parcels in excess of 100 hectares that were close together, four

1478
01:27:31,016 --> 01:27:33,016
main reasons. Number one was deliverability.

1479
01:27:34,416 --> 01:27:37,556
Every additional landowner adds another commercial negotiation

1480
01:27:38,056 --> 01:27:39,816
that could stall or fail. Fewer

1481
01:27:41,356 --> 01:27:44,896
and larger holders reduce that risk and reduce the risk to the program.

1482
01:27:45,556 --> 01:27:47,976
Efficient use of land was one of the main ones.

1483
01:27:48,716 --> 01:27:52,316
Every field itself will lose land naturally to buffers

1484
01:27:52,856 --> 01:27:53,816
from hedgerows,

1485
01:27:54,976 --> 01:27:58,096
on-site planning and environmental considerations,

1486
01:27:59,296 --> 01:28:01,496
proximity to neighboring receptors.

1487
01:28:02,376 --> 01:28:06,036
Small parcels lose proportionally a lot more of their area in

1488
01:28:06,056 --> 01:28:09,896
regards to those edges than a scheme built from larger parcels.

1489
01:28:10,616 --> 01:28:13,776
Less infrastructure overall. Having a more cohesive

1490
01:28:14,616 --> 01:28:18,196
solar development area reduces the amount of inter-array cabling

1491
01:28:18,236 --> 01:28:19,356
required versus a more

1492
01:28:20,316 --> 01:28:23,056
spread out and smaller parcels that would be interconnected.

1493
01:28:24,316 --> 01:28:27,596
So that was one of the key reasons. And also flexibility.

1494
01:28:28,216 --> 01:28:31,936
The larger landholdings give us more flexibility to

1495
01:28:31,976 --> 01:28:32,236
be

1496
01:28:33,296 --> 01:28:35,696
conscientious of and aware of on-site and local

1497
01:28:36,756 --> 01:28:38,416
planning and environmental considerations.

1498
01:28:38,456 --> 01:28:42,056
That's how I believe we set out that some Grade 1 land and

1499
01:28:42,636 --> 01:28:43,856
Parcel C was removed, some

1500
01:28:44,656 --> 01:28:47,996
high flood risk land has been set into habitat management.

1501
01:28:48,476 --> 01:28:51,136
So they're just some of the reasons, but as Ms.

1502
01:28:51,196 --> 01:28:54,796
Burns alluded to, we'll come back in more detail on that point.
Thank you.

1503

01:28:58,496 --> 01:28:59,916
Brilliant. Thank you. And just, Ms.

1504
01:29:00,276 --> 01:29:03,776
Burns for the applicant, just in terms of what policy says around

1505
01:29:04,976 --> 01:29:07,156
the scale and size of sites.

1506
01:29:08,296 --> 01:29:12,216
So EN3 sets out at paragraph 2.10.9 that solar

1507
01:29:12,256 --> 01:29:16,236
farms typically require between 1.6 and 2.25 hectares

1508
01:29:16,276 --> 01:29:19,916
per megawatt of output. However, that will vary depending on

1509
01:29:20,576 --> 01:29:21,596
project requirements.

1510
01:29:22,676 --> 01:29:26,436
And if we were to apply that to a scheme of 750

1511
01:29:26,476 --> 01:29:30,216
megawatt capacity, you'd be looking for around 1,200

1512
01:29:30,296 --> 01:29:34,276
to 1,688 hectares. However, in this case, the

1513
01:29:34,336 --> 01:29:38,216
applicant sought to identify landholdings, a collection of

1514
01:29:38,256 --> 01:29:41,676
landholdings that could be assembled in the range of 1,000 to

1515
01:29:41,816 --> 01:29:44,676
1,200 for the solar development area.

1516
01:29:45,216 --> 01:29:49,176
And for the reasons Mr. Coates has listed, there's different

complexities that

1517
01:29:49,236 --> 01:29:52,876
come with having lots of smaller parcels versus larger landholdings.

1518
01:29:54,475 --> 01:29:57,456
And also in terms of having larger landholdings, it does assist with some of the

1519
01:29:58,215 --> 01:30:02,136
site section design process that we managed to reduce some of the scale of the site

1520
01:30:02,176 --> 01:30:02,756
to reflect

1521
01:30:04,856 --> 01:30:08,716
various constraints as well. So I think that's given us an opportunity to do

1522
01:30:08,836 --> 01:30:09,076
so.

1523
01:30:09,616 --> 01:30:13,496
Yeah. That's understood. And I think we understand why lots

1524
01:30:13,576 --> 01:30:17,216
of little parcels aren't going to be ideal, and you've

1525
01:30:17,296 --> 01:30:21,176
explained that clearly. The question I have, where you said that you're

1526
01:30:21,196 --> 01:30:25,136
looking for a minimum of 120 to 160 is, where can

1527
01:30:25,176 --> 01:30:25,676
we see that

1528
01:30:26,716 --> 01:30:28,776
parcels of that size were considered?

1529
01:30:29,796 --> 01:30:33,676
Mr. Barton, did you want to say anything on that from Lincolnshire's

1530
01:30:33,976 --> 01:30:36,576
point of view? Because it's a question that you've asked several times now.

1531
01:30:37,276 --> 01:30:40,056
Yes. Thank you, madam. Andrew Barton, Lincolnshire County Council.

1532
01:30:40,156 --> 01:30:43,336
If I could just defer to Joel, if that's okay.

1533
01:30:43,456 --> 01:30:44,016
I think he's

1534
01:30:45,076 --> 01:30:46,236
okay to take this question. Thank

1535
01:30:46,435 --> 01:30:47,136
you. Mr. Semakula?

1536
01:30:49,956 --> 01:30:51,976
Yes, indeed. Joel Semakula,

1537
01:30:52,816 --> 01:30:54,336
Lincolnshire County Council.

1538
01:30:55,936 --> 01:30:59,916
Madam, you quite rightly raised our concern here regarding the

1539
01:31:00,416 --> 01:31:03,116
approach to alternatives and what is said in

1540
01:31:04,316 --> 01:31:05,516
national policy about

1541
01:31:06,316 --> 01:31:08,776
where you have development of regional or national importance,

1542

01:31:09,856 --> 01:31:13,516
that the area of search, of course, may extend beyond local boundaries and it may

1543
01:31:13,556 --> 01:31:17,336
be appropriate to split a proposal across a number of lower risk

1544
01:31:17,716 --> 01:31:20,416
sites. We provided the example of Cottam,

1545
01:31:21,696 --> 01:31:25,536
which is a scheme that we have experience with, which has

1546
01:31:25,596 --> 01:31:26,676
adopted this approach.

1547
01:31:27,676 --> 01:31:29,116
And our concern therefore,

1548
01:31:29,996 --> 01:31:33,676
is that where you had an approach shaped principally by a preferred

1549
01:31:34,056 --> 01:31:38,016
parcel size of 120 to 160 hectares,

1550
01:31:38,396 --> 01:31:39,836
and also by the availability of

1551
01:31:41,036 --> 01:31:41,976
land through voluntary

1552
01:31:43,096 --> 01:31:46,776
agreement. That on its own doesn't demonstrate

1553
01:31:47,016 --> 01:31:50,656
that the proper approach to alternatives here has been taken.

1554
01:31:50,696 --> 01:31:54,636
And so we're asking the question really as to some clarity

1555
01:31:55,096 --> 01:31:55,536

as to

1556
01:31:56,836 --> 01:31:59,256
where we can find evidence around

1557
01:32:00,856 --> 01:32:04,496
those considerations, even at the 120 to 160 phase, to properly

1558
01:32:04,536 --> 01:32:06,056
understand the applicant's approach here.

1559
01:32:09,166 --> 01:32:11,146
Thank you. Did you want to respond to that?

1560
01:32:13,106 --> 01:32:16,006
Ms. Burns for the applicant. I think we'll come back in writing in terms of the

1561
01:32:16,165 --> 01:32:18,946
evidence point, but I just did want to pick up on the point around the local

1562
01:32:18,986 --> 01:32:22,026
authority boundaries, and that hasn't been a consideration

1563
01:32:23,266 --> 01:32:26,946
or a restriction, let's say, in terms of whether a site was or was not

1564
01:32:27,626 --> 01:32:31,466
suitable. That wasn't part of the criteria that we've listed, and we

1565
01:32:31,526 --> 01:32:34,806
have just used that 15-kilometer kind of rough search area.

1566
01:32:35,546 --> 01:32:35,906
Thank you.

1567
01:32:36,806 --> 01:32:38,966
Ms. Tetley Jones, you've got your hand up online.

1568

01:32:43,226 --> 01:32:47,086
Emily Tetley Jones for InterGen with just a quick

1569
01:32:47,226 --> 01:32:47,666
point.

1570
01:32:48,786 --> 01:32:51,566
We would also query on InterGen's behalf

1571
01:32:54,426 --> 01:32:56,066
as to the reasoning

1572
01:32:57,406 --> 01:32:57,786
that

1573
01:32:58,686 --> 01:33:02,506
crossing the River Welland was considered to be a constraint,

1574
01:33:02,986 --> 01:33:06,806
but crossing a live pressurized gas

1575
01:33:07,006 --> 01:33:07,586
pipeline

1576
01:33:08,886 --> 01:33:11,926
was not. We can't see any reference in

1577
01:33:12,065 --> 01:33:15,666
REP2-017 to

1578
01:33:15,706 --> 01:33:16,506
considerations

1579
01:33:17,766 --> 01:33:21,326
concerning crossing the pipeline, which, as we mentioned

1580
01:33:21,366 --> 01:33:24,686
yesterday, is critical to national

1581
01:33:24,746 --> 01:33:28,726
emergency supply, and would invite a

1582
01:33:28,746 --> 01:33:30,946
response on that point. Thank you.

1583
01:33:33,906 --> 01:33:37,226
Ms. Burns for the applicant. It's okay if we could come back in writing at deadline

1584
01:33:37,306 --> 01:33:39,926
four, just because it won't be just one specific utility.

1585
01:33:39,966 --> 01:33:41,766
It needs to be looked in the context of the entire

1586
01:33:43,586 --> 01:33:45,506
utilities and other features in that area as well.

1587
01:33:45,526 --> 01:33:46,306
That'd be great. Thank you.

1588
01:33:46,986 --> 01:33:50,306
Taylor Powell for the applicant. Just to add to that as well, I think the focus of

1589
01:33:50,386 --> 01:33:54,106
that site selection report has been on the site selection of the solar development

1590
01:33:54,206 --> 01:33:56,426
area and not necessarily of the grid connection.

1591
01:33:56,466 --> 01:34:00,386
And at the time that the site selection for the solar development area was being

1592
01:34:00,426 --> 01:34:03,886
established, as we've already discussed, we didn't know where the

1593
01:34:04,506 --> 01:34:06,046
likely connection point would be.

1594

01:34:06,086 --> 01:34:06,626
And so,

1595
01:34:07,786 --> 01:34:11,686
while of course as part of the grid connection route design

1596
01:34:11,786 --> 01:34:15,266
process, matters like gas pipelines and other infrastructure

1597
01:34:15,286 --> 01:34:17,906
interactions has been taken into account in that routing,

1598
01:34:19,286 --> 01:34:21,826
that wasn't presumably a driving force or...

1599
01:34:22,226 --> 01:34:25,586
Well, no, I can say it wasn't a driving force for the site selection of the solar

1600
01:34:25,626 --> 01:34:29,526
development area because we didn't know for certain whether we would be going up

1601
01:34:30,366 --> 01:34:33,506
to that side of Weston at that point, because we had that broad connection

1602
01:34:33,526 --> 01:34:37,446
location. So I don't necessarily think that it would be something that we would add

1603
01:34:37,486 --> 01:34:39,186
to the report just for clarification.

1604
01:34:39,226 --> 01:34:41,486
It might be something we come back in writing in respect of

1605
01:34:42,366 --> 01:34:44,146
the response on submissions for InterGen.

1606
01:34:45,986 --> 01:34:46,806
Okay, thank you.

1607
01:34:48,006 --> 01:34:49,466
Avoidance of flood zones.

1608
01:34:50,426 --> 01:34:52,886
Can we get figure 53 up on the screen, please?

1609
01:34:55,946 --> 01:34:59,726
At 647 of the report, the applicant states that where possible, they

1610
01:34:59,806 --> 01:35:03,566
favored land that was near to or encompassed the

1611
01:35:03,646 --> 01:35:06,146
edge of the mapped flood zones.

1612
01:35:08,546 --> 01:35:11,926
And we can see from the figure that there's a lot of fluvial flooding in the area.

1613
01:35:12,266 --> 01:35:16,086
But given that statement that you've favored land that was near to or

1614
01:35:16,126 --> 01:35:18,886
encompassed the edge of the mapped flood zones,

1615
01:35:22,806 --> 01:35:26,306
can you explain to us how that's been achieved?

1616
01:35:41,306 --> 01:35:42,826
Chris Coates on behalf of the applicant.

1617
01:35:43,606 --> 01:35:45,686
As you can see from the mapping, near the

1618
01:35:47,006 --> 01:35:50,666
anticipated connection point, most of the land is flood zone three,

1619
01:35:52,226 --> 01:35:53,886
sourcing the Environment Agency's map.

1620
01:35:54,606 --> 01:35:54,826
Flood

1621
01:35:55,746 --> 01:35:58,866
zone one land is in smaller scattered pockets, and

1622
01:36:00,566 --> 01:36:04,326
the single or combination of those were not sufficient to deliver

1623
01:36:05,026 --> 01:36:08,686
750 megawatts and to host the infrastructure to

1624
01:36:09,366 --> 01:36:09,826
do that.

1625
01:36:11,846 --> 01:36:12,126
So

1626
01:36:13,406 --> 01:36:14,006
essentially,

1627
01:36:15,066 --> 01:36:18,806
I understand that map doesn't necessarily have the red line boundary
of the site or

1628
01:36:18,846 --> 01:36:21,406
the solar development area on it, unfortunately.

1629
01:36:21,506 --> 01:36:25,445
But it would show that many of the main parcels within

1630
01:36:25,486 --> 01:36:26,445
the solar development area

1631
01:36:27,406 --> 01:36:27,766
sit

1632
01:36:28,746 --> 01:36:29,766
on-site some of those

1633
01:36:30,666 --> 01:36:34,486
sort of border areas where it goes from flood zone three to flood zone

1634
01:36:34,566 --> 01:36:34,866
one. And

1635
01:36:36,106 --> 01:36:39,846
so whilst that is not perhaps the best illustration, we would be happy to provide

1636
01:36:39,886 --> 01:36:43,426
that as a separate figure in follow-up correspondence to illustrate, and it would

1637
01:36:43,466 --> 01:36:43,826
perhaps

1638
01:36:44,926 --> 01:36:46,426
evidence the point slightly better.

1639
01:36:47,006 --> 01:36:50,906
Yes, I think putting the site and the order limits on that map would be

1640
01:36:50,966 --> 01:36:54,866
extremely helpful. But also to the point that you said that you

1641
01:36:55,326 --> 01:36:58,946
went out of your way to favor land that was near to or

1642
01:36:58,966 --> 01:37:02,666
encompassed the edge of the mapped flood zones, I think some evidence of that would

1643
01:37:02,706 --> 01:37:04,146
be very helpful as well.

1644
01:37:04,426 --> 01:37:05,006
Yes, absolutely.

1645

01:37:05,986 --> 01:37:09,326
From what we've discussed, there are several sort of key considerations.

1646
01:37:09,446 --> 01:37:13,346
I think when we come back in writing for deadline four, we'll include

1647
01:37:13,386 --> 01:37:13,766
that as well.

1648
01:37:13,986 --> 01:37:14,406
Thank you.

1649
01:37:14,466 --> 01:37:14,726
Thanks.

1650
01:37:16,066 --> 01:37:19,606
And in terms of working to avoid flood risk areas where possible, and this is a

1651
01:37:19,646 --> 01:37:23,486
related point, the report says that the original plot of land

1652
01:37:23,666 --> 01:37:27,546
offered to the applicant was parcel D1, which I understand is

1653
01:37:27,606 --> 01:37:28,946
flood zone 3B.

1654
01:37:36,206 --> 01:37:39,626
Ms. Burns for the applicant. Sorry, could I just check, you say land parcel

1655
01:37:39,666 --> 01:37:40,326
D1?

1656
01:37:40,426 --> 01:37:41,486
Yes, I think so.

1657
01:37:42,066 --> 01:37:45,406
I don't believe that to be correct. I believe we had land parcel D.

1658
01:37:45,506 --> 01:37:49,006
I believe land parcel D1 is to the north of the South Holland main

1659
01:37:49,086 --> 01:37:49,546
drain.

1660
01:37:51,486 --> 01:37:54,206
Yes, that's correct. As Ms. Burns says,

1661
01:37:55,246 --> 01:37:57,586
parcel D, as it's denoted, is the whole

1662
01:37:58,386 --> 01:38:01,866
land parcel around 240 hectares in size.

1663
01:38:01,926 --> 01:38:05,686
So whilst we acknowledge that to the north of the South Holland main

1664
01:38:05,766 --> 01:38:09,306
drain, that is designated as flood zone 3B, the wider

1665
01:38:09,346 --> 01:38:10,366
extents of-

1666
01:38:12,286 --> 01:38:16,146
Land parcel D I don't believe are designated entirely as flood zone 3b.

1667
01:38:16,846 --> 01:38:20,706
No, but flood zone 3b for that northern part, and it's either flood zone 3 or

1668
01:38:20,986 --> 01:38:22,966
2 for a chunk of the rest of it, I think.

1669
01:38:23,066 --> 01:38:26,566
So given that, how does basing the scheme around that

1670
01:38:26,606 --> 01:38:30,566
location meet your stated objective of avoiding the flood zones

where possible?

1671
01:38:47,846 --> 01:38:51,246
Ms. Spence for the applicant. I think we'll need to come back to you on that just

1672
01:38:51,286 --> 01:38:53,926
in writing once we've got that figure with the

1673
01:38:55,006 --> 01:38:57,026
order limits in front of us to confirm.

1674
01:38:57,546 --> 01:39:01,426
So I think that northern part of the parcel is flood zone 3b, but

1675
01:39:01,766 --> 01:39:03,566
is quite a long elongated

1676
01:39:04,746 --> 01:39:06,346
land parcel where some of it isn't.

1677
01:39:07,866 --> 01:39:10,946
Yeah. It's understanding the original site selection in the context of the

1678
01:39:10,986 --> 01:39:14,186
requirement to avoid flood risk where you can.

1679
01:39:15,066 --> 01:39:18,806
Your parcel D is largely in flood

1680
01:39:18,886 --> 01:39:22,446
zone, so I want to understand the logic of then taking that forward as the

1681
01:39:22,486 --> 01:39:24,506
basis for your site selection.

1682
01:39:27,106 --> 01:39:30,186
Was there anybody else who wanted to comment or

1683

01:39:30,666 --> 01:39:33,906
question the site selection in the

1684
01:39:33,966 --> 01:39:35,706
context of flooding?

1685
01:39:39,766 --> 01:39:40,806
Meridian Action Group.

1686
01:39:41,086 --> 01:39:42,866
Yes. Andrew Malkin, Meridian Action Group.

1687
01:39:44,606 --> 01:39:48,366
Just referencing the 63-page document that the panel

1688
01:39:49,066 --> 01:39:52,986
distributed that had a very long list of questions for

1689
01:39:53,066 --> 01:39:53,846
all parties.

1690
01:39:54,846 --> 01:39:57,606
Question 19.0.11

1691
01:39:58,246 --> 01:40:01,526
indicated that flood zone 3b is not suitable for energy

1692
01:40:01,606 --> 01:40:05,486
infrastructure with the developers themselves saying that not

1693
01:40:05,526 --> 01:40:08,866
being able to develop on this land would make the project not
viable.

1694
01:40:09,566 --> 01:40:12,066
This project, by their own admission, cannot proceed.

1695
01:40:12,786 --> 01:40:16,766
If Meridian seeks to override NPS EN1, it

1696
01:40:16,786 --> 01:40:20,646

has so far failed to demonstrate how it will comply with national planning rules

1697
01:40:21,026 --> 01:40:23,626
to manage and mitigate flood risks.

1698
01:40:24,726 --> 01:40:28,686
Thank you, Mr. Malkin. You've preempted one of my questions under agenda item

1699
01:40:28,826 --> 01:40:31,726
six. Are you happy to wait until then to discuss it?

1700
01:40:32,546 --> 01:40:34,826
Was there anyone else that wanted to comment on the flooding? Mr.

1701
01:40:35,026 --> 01:40:36,266
Barton for the council?

1702
01:40:37,446 --> 01:40:40,886
And the Environment Agency, did you have anything that you wanted to raise in the

1703
01:40:40,926 --> 01:40:41,726
context of the

1704
01:40:42,586 --> 01:40:44,186
strategic scale

1705
01:40:45,426 --> 01:40:47,466
flood risk and site selection?

1706
01:40:51,206 --> 01:40:52,826
Liz Locke for the Environment Agency.

1707
01:40:52,926 --> 01:40:56,886
No, we're happy to comment on item six. Thank you.

1708
01:40:57,526 --> 01:40:57,886
Thank you.

1709

01:40:59,326 --> 01:41:03,186
And then the last part of site selection

1710
01:41:03,346 --> 01:41:07,026
is avoidance of grade one land. So can you put up figure 5.2,

1711
01:41:07,126 --> 01:41:07,546
please?

1712
01:41:09,626 --> 01:41:13,586
5.5.6 states that the land parcels selected sought to

1713
01:41:13,646 --> 01:41:16,346
avoid the highest grade agricultural land,

1714
01:41:17,486 --> 01:41:21,326
and the agricultural land is illustrated on figure 5.2, which thank you, you've

1715
01:41:21,366 --> 01:41:22,406
just put up on the screen.

1716
01:41:24,846 --> 01:41:28,106
Please could the applicant talk us through how the highest grade agricultural land

1717
01:41:28,146 --> 01:41:30,226
was avoided using this map?

1718
01:41:37,286 --> 01:41:38,626
Chris Coates on behalf of the applicant.

1719
01:41:38,666 --> 01:41:42,466
At the search stage, the national mapping as evidenced on the screen

1720
01:41:42,566 --> 01:41:46,346
showed that almost all of the land around the connection point was likely

1721
01:41:46,386 --> 01:41:50,246
best and most versatile with the most of the grade one land,

1722
01:41:51,106 --> 01:41:55,086
nearest to Spalding and nearest the connection point, and almost no

1723
01:41:55,186 --> 01:41:59,106
grade four or five land present, which is typical for this locality.

1724
01:42:00,586 --> 01:42:04,406
Just to touch on it while we're here is no brownfield site came close or

1725
01:42:04,446 --> 01:42:07,346
available in size with the largest local brownfield

1726
01:42:08,706 --> 01:42:10,186
site around two and a half hectares.

1727
01:42:10,426 --> 01:42:10,606
So

1728
01:42:12,126 --> 01:42:15,546
bringing that back to BMV and agricultural land, avoiding

1729
01:42:15,826 --> 01:42:18,506
BMV entirely was not possible at this scale.

1730
01:42:18,546 --> 01:42:22,446
We sought to minimize its inclusion within the solar

1731
01:42:22,506 --> 01:42:26,146
development area. As you can see on the screen, there were some areas

1732
01:42:27,206 --> 01:42:31,126
removed where we could, and parcel C particularly is

1733
01:42:31,186 --> 01:42:34,306
taken out of development and kept in as habitat management.

1734
01:42:34,946 --> 01:42:36,866
So as far as the solar development area,

1735
01:42:37,926 --> 01:42:41,826
we've sought where possible to minimize as much as possible the use

1736
01:42:41,906 --> 01:42:42,706
of grade one land.

1737
01:42:46,826 --> 01:42:50,626
Thank you. Did anyone else have any questions regarding avoidance

1738
01:42:51,086 --> 01:42:54,126
of agricultural land at a site selection level?

1739
01:42:56,446 --> 01:42:58,266
Mr. Malkin for Meridian Action Group.

1740
01:43:00,026 --> 01:43:02,486
Yeah. I'm referencing again question

1741
01:43:02,706 --> 01:43:06,366
1.0.4 from the 63-page document that the

1742
01:43:06,426 --> 01:43:07,206
panel issued.

1743
01:43:08,006 --> 01:43:11,846
The Planning Inspectorate draws attention to an update to the
National Planning

1744
01:43:11,946 --> 01:43:15,846
Policy Framework, which so far as new energy infrastructure

1745
01:43:15,886 --> 01:43:19,666
on greenfield, rural, and farmland is concerned, is not a

1746
01:43:19,726 --> 01:43:21,626
friend to those living in the countryside.

1747
01:43:22,306 --> 01:43:26,086
Despite the framework easing the way for developers, it still
provides

1748
01:43:26,146 --> 01:43:29,986
some protections for specifically, quotes, "Top tier

1749
01:43:30,066 --> 01:43:33,826
land, high quality, best and most versatile agricultural land,

1750
01:43:34,326 --> 01:43:38,046
typically grades 1, 2, and 3A," close

1751
01:43:38,106 --> 01:43:41,806
quotes, which remain protected to maintain domestic food

1752
01:43:41,866 --> 01:43:45,746
security. Large-scale ground-mounted solar arrays

1753
01:43:45,766 --> 01:43:49,066
are heavily steered by the planning guidance towards grades

1754
01:43:49,786 --> 01:43:53,726
3B, 4, or 5 agricultural land or previously developed

1755
01:43:53,806 --> 01:43:57,506
brownfield sites. There is some agreement that a substantial

1756
01:43:57,586 --> 01:44:01,046
percentage of the Meridian site is BMV land.

1757
01:44:01,826 --> 01:44:05,686
We hear time and again that only 0.1% of land in the UK is

1758
01:44:05,746 --> 01:44:09,666
taken for solar. This includes all land, mountains,

1759
01:44:09,866 --> 01:44:12,566
bogs, marsh, parks, even city centers.

1760
01:44:13,086 --> 01:44:16,586
But the concentration in Lincolnshire, where there is the best
quality

1761

01:44:16,746 --> 01:44:19,606
food-producing land, is up to 8%.

1762
01:44:22,036 --> 01:44:22,816
Thank you, Mr. Malkin.

1763
01:44:23,956 --> 01:44:27,056
We're going to pick up agricultural matters tomorrow,

1764
01:44:28,336 --> 01:44:31,916
issue-specific hearing, so you might want to come along to that and hear the

1765
01:44:31,956 --> 01:44:34,096
discussion, because that relates to those points.

1766
01:44:35,336 --> 01:44:36,956
Did you want to respond to anything there,

1767
01:44:38,436 --> 01:44:42,256
bearing in mind that we'll probably discuss those topics tomorrow?

1768
01:44:43,176 --> 01:44:44,096
Not from my perspective, no.

1769
01:44:46,296 --> 01:44:49,416
That's everything from me. Was there anything you wanted to say in response to Sir

1770
01:44:49,496 --> 01:44:52,956
John's submission earlier? Anna. Thanks.

1771
01:44:54,576 --> 01:44:56,396
Ms. Burns for the applicant. I note

1772
01:44:57,456 --> 01:45:01,296
Sir John Hayes mentioned a point around brownfield development, and as Mr.

1773
01:45:01,356 --> 01:45:04,816
Coates explained, that the applicant did consider the brownfield

1774
01:45:04,856 --> 01:45:05,776
register at

1775
01:45:06,776 --> 01:45:10,396
the appropriate point in time, and the size of sites was about 2.5

1776
01:45:10,436 --> 01:45:14,316
hectares, so not suitable for its requirements in terms of

1777
01:45:14,376 --> 01:45:17,576
developing a utility scale solar farm on brownfield.

1778
01:45:18,616 --> 01:45:19,056
Thank you.

1779
01:45:20,296 --> 01:45:22,096
Mr. Semakula, you've got your hand up.

1780
01:45:24,836 --> 01:45:26,615
Joel Semakula, Lincolnshire County Council, Madam.

1781
01:45:26,656 --> 01:45:30,016
I just want to signpost here regarding our concerns

1782
01:45:30,856 --> 01:45:34,576
as far as the approach to alternatives in considering the impact on

1783
01:45:34,616 --> 01:45:35,396
BMV land.

1784
01:45:37,476 --> 01:45:40,236
You've already heard our points regarding the reliance on small parcels and

1785
01:45:41,396 --> 01:45:42,956
the approach to relying on voluntary agreements.

1786
01:45:43,255 --> 01:45:46,896
I won't repeat those here, but we'll deal with this again when we come to speak

1787
01:45:46,936 --> 01:45:50,596
about cumulative effects, and also, no doubt that our

1788
01:45:50,616 --> 01:45:53,636
submissions will arise again at ISH5 tomorrow.

1789
01:45:56,056 --> 01:45:59,816
Thank you, Mr. Semakula. Was there anything anybody else wanted to ask or comment

1790
01:45:59,896 --> 01:46:00,096
on

1791
01:46:01,096 --> 01:46:03,336
in regard of strategic site selection?

1792
01:46:04,496 --> 01:46:05,096
Mr. Raines?

1793
01:46:07,296 --> 01:46:09,056
Yes, I'll just make that it's David Raines-

1794
01:46:09,096 --> 01:46:11,236
Can I just check you're talking on behalf of yourself rather than-

1795
01:46:11,316 --> 01:46:13,316
Yes. It's David Raines, local resident.

1796
01:46:15,096 --> 01:46:18,616
The statement has just been made that the BMV land couldn't be avoided.

1797
01:46:18,956 --> 01:46:22,936
That's only because it is assumed that the connection

1798
01:46:22,996 --> 01:46:24,256
is going to be at Western Marsh.

1799
01:46:25,656 --> 01:46:29,356
Its whole thing is predicated on the fact that that's where the connection is and

1800
01:46:29,396 --> 01:46:31,036
the 15-kilometer radius.

1801
01:46:32,276 --> 01:46:36,076
Once you remove that, which the National Grid has spoken around at length, then

1802
01:46:36,516 --> 01:46:38,916
you can remove BMV land by going elsewhere.

1803
01:46:39,376 --> 01:46:43,096
It's only the location which is predetermined that you can't

1804
01:46:43,156 --> 01:46:44,176
avoid BMV land.

1805
01:46:46,716 --> 01:46:47,516
Thank you, Mr. Raines.

1806
01:46:48,796 --> 01:46:49,736
Did you want to respond to that?

1807
01:46:50,136 --> 01:46:51,716
Yes. Taylor Power for the applicant.

1808
01:46:52,416 --> 01:46:55,336
I suppose I do just want to clarify on this point that

1809
01:46:56,836 --> 01:47:00,156
the documents and the assessment that's been set out in terms of site selection

1810
01:47:00,196 --> 01:47:03,996
reflects the position that was taken at the time, at which point the applicant did

1811
01:47:04,036 --> 01:47:06,616
have a connection agreement with National Grid.

1812
01:47:07,216 --> 01:47:10,376

While it's of course acknowledged that the

1813
01:47:10,796 --> 01:47:14,776
connections process has changed since, the applicant's position is that

1814
01:47:15,316 --> 01:47:19,116
that connections process didn't trigger the applicant to then go back and

1815
01:47:20,136 --> 01:47:24,096
come up with its own assumption of what a future connection

1816
01:47:24,136 --> 01:47:27,496
might be, that it might be less than 750, that it might be in a completely

1817
01:47:27,536 --> 01:47:31,356
different location. The applicant considers that there wouldn't be a

1818
01:47:31,396 --> 01:47:35,096
strong basis on which to do so, because there would be no other evidence to

1819
01:47:35,116 --> 01:47:38,956
direct it to arbitrarily make a decision on what an alternative

1820
01:47:39,016 --> 01:47:41,776
scenario in terms of megawattage or location would be.

1821
01:47:42,276 --> 01:47:45,816
So the applicant's approach has been to presume that its Gate

1822
01:47:46,295 --> 01:47:49,996
2 application, which continues to seek 750 megawatts at

1823
01:47:51,036 --> 01:47:54,496
an area in Western Marsh, and that's what the Gate 1 offer currently

1824
01:47:54,536 --> 01:47:55,196
reflects

1825
01:47:55,996 --> 01:47:59,936
the applicant is applying for, remain the same constraints

1826
01:48:00,016 --> 01:48:03,516
that are being considered in respect of site selection, and so it didn't trigger a

1827
01:48:03,556 --> 01:48:07,196
complete new site selection iterative

1828
01:48:07,276 --> 01:48:09,996
process where it goes back and re-looks at everything again.

1829
01:48:11,096 --> 01:48:14,256
Completely understand that that's not the position which National Grid or perhaps

1830
01:48:14,336 --> 01:48:17,396
Meridian Action Group are suggesting the applicant should have taken, but that is

1831
01:48:17,416 --> 01:48:18,876
the position the applicant has taken.

1832
01:48:27,196 --> 01:48:29,256
Thank you. Mr. Basford, you've got your hand up.

1833
01:48:32,176 --> 01:48:35,216
Hi. Basford on behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission.

1834
01:48:35,276 --> 01:48:37,836
Just a very quick point, Madam. The

1835
01:48:39,016 --> 01:48:40,756
statement has just been made that

1836
01:48:43,436 --> 01:48:43,816
a Gate

1837
01:48:44,616 --> 01:48:47,556
2 offer is presumed based on the Gate 1 offer.

1838
01:48:48,276 --> 01:48:49,636
Critical point is that Gate 1

1839
01:48:51,256 --> 01:48:54,756
offers, to the extent they're offers, are not location

1840
01:48:54,896 --> 01:48:58,676
specific. So there is no assumed location in the

1841
01:48:58,716 --> 01:48:59,256
Gate 1

1842
01:49:00,196 --> 01:49:01,876
for a connection.

1843
01:49:03,036 --> 01:49:03,416
Just

1844
01:49:05,716 --> 01:49:06,476
I'll assume that.

1845
01:49:07,656 --> 01:49:09,396
Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Basford.

1846
01:49:10,796 --> 01:49:13,116
Was there anyone else before I conclude on this agenda item?

1847
01:49:14,376 --> 01:49:15,296
Apologies, Madam.

1848
01:49:15,616 --> 01:49:15,836
Taylor.

1849
01:49:15,896 --> 01:49:19,656
Taylor Power for the applicant. Just to confirm, the applicant's
Gate 1

1850
01:49:19,716 --> 01:49:23,636
offer does specify Western Marsh, and we can evidence that

1851
01:49:23,696 --> 01:49:27,036
for the examining authority if that assists. So I'm not sure where Mr.

1852
01:49:27,196 --> 01:49:29,616
Basford has had that information from.

1853
01:49:29,636 --> 01:49:32,436
But at least in respect of the applicant's Gate 1 offer, it specifies Western

1854
01:49:32,496 --> 01:49:32,776
Marsh.

1855
01:49:33,116 --> 01:49:35,676
I think if there's debate over that, it would be helpful if you could submit the

1856
01:49:35,736 --> 01:49:38,916
evidence of that into the examination.

1857
01:49:38,996 --> 01:49:42,096
Is that an action point to capture? Thank you.

1858
01:49:42,896 --> 01:49:43,476
For D4.

1859
01:49:45,136 --> 01:49:47,016
Any other questions on this matter? Mr.

1860
01:49:47,396 --> 01:49:51,016
Basford, is your hand up because you want to speak again or because it's a

1861
01:49:51,056 --> 01:49:51,836
legacy hand?

1862
01:49:54,536 --> 01:49:55,796
Basford on behalf of

1863
01:49:56,936 --> 01:49:57,516