Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Meridian Solar Farm
Hearing:	Issue Specific Hearing 4 (ISH4) – Part 3
Date:	12 November 2026

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

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1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:03,440
It's now 2:00 o'clock and time to resume this

2
00:00:03,500 --> 00:00:04,740
issue-specific hearing.

3
00:00:07,420 --> 00:00:08,740
If we could move to

4
00:00:10,280 --> 00:00:11,720
item agenda

5
00:00:14,100 --> 00:00:18,080
six, sorry, socioeconomics. And I'd like to hit bullet

6
00:00:18,180 --> 00:00:21,040
one and two together, please. So turning to the applicant,

7
00:00:22,340 --> 00:00:26,160
could you expand on how the outline skills supply chain and

8
00:00:26,240 --> 00:00:28,800
employment plan, which I'm going to refer to as the

9
00:00:29,640 --> 00:00:31,460
outline skills plan moving forward,

10
00:00:32,701 --> 00:00:36,080
which has examination library reference REP

11
00:00:36,460 --> 00:00:40,420
3056, would maximize local benefit, and

12
00:00:40,480 --> 00:00:44,320
also how local supply chains would specifically benefit please?

13
00:00:45,480 --> 00:00:48,460
Taylor Power for the applicant, and I'm going to pass over to Ms.

14
00:00:48,540 --> 00:00:51,460
Esther Howell, who is our socioeconomic expert on these matters.

15
00:00:53,160 --> 00:00:55,160
Esther Howell for the applicant. So,

16
00:00:56,020 --> 00:00:59,200
the deadline three version of the outline skills plan,

17
00:00:59,980 --> 00:01:03,820
which is version two of the documents, has strengthened the wording

18
00:01:04,600 --> 00:01:07,500
of the original plan, in many places.

19
00:01:07,900 --> 00:01:11,680
So for example, in a response to a comment from the Meridian Action

20
00:01:11,780 --> 00:01:12,120
Group,

21
00:01:13,080 --> 00:01:16,700
at deadline three, the wording on opportunity three, STEM

22
00:01:16,760 --> 00:01:20,160
education and careers, has been strengthened to state that
activities

23
00:01:20,640 --> 00:01:24,520
will target local schools, secondary schools, colleges

24
00:01:24,580 --> 00:01:27,760
listed in the document rather than could target those.

25
00:01:29,020 --> 00:01:29,480
And,

26
00:01:30,540 --> 00:01:34,180
the aim of that wording change is essentially to

27

00:01:34,240 --> 00:01:36,380
convert an aspiration into a

28
00:01:37,180 --> 00:01:38,600
commitment really.

29
00:01:40,300 --> 00:01:43,620
We've also similarly changed wording,

30
00:01:44,520 --> 00:01:48,260
such as the applicant will consider requiring contractors to

31
00:01:48,320 --> 00:01:51,760
do ABC, to the applicant will require

32
00:01:51,840 --> 00:01:52,680
contractors.

33
00:01:55,460 --> 00:01:58,820
So again, it's just providing more detail, providing more

34
00:01:58,880 --> 00:02:02,240
confidence that these commitments will be delivered.

35
00:02:03,980 --> 00:02:07,060
There's reference inserted to a

36
00:02:09,280 --> 00:02:13,240
heritage expert in response to a comment from Lincolnshire County

37
00:02:13,320 --> 00:02:17,080
Council as one of the potential roles which could be required on the

38
00:02:17,120 --> 00:02:18,860
scheme and potentially procured locally.

39
00:02:20,020 --> 00:02:23,920
There's specific details around local business support events

40
00:02:24,040 --> 00:02:26,400
under opportunity six, which we've inserted

41
00:02:27,040 --> 00:02:30,820
networking events such as meet the contractor and meet the

42
00:02:30,840 --> 00:02:32,680
developer, and again, just to

43
00:02:33,500 --> 00:02:34,020
provide

44
00:02:35,220 --> 00:02:38,020
evidence of where the applicant's corporate group has

45
00:02:39,080 --> 00:02:41,760
delivered school engagement

46
00:02:42,600 --> 00:02:45,760
programs and attended such networking events on other schemes.

47
00:02:46,120 --> 00:02:49,900
Again, just to provide evidence and confidence that those measures
will be

48
00:02:49,940 --> 00:02:50,640
taken forward.

49
00:02:51,560 --> 00:02:52,300
And just to

50
00:02:53,540 --> 00:02:54,940
step back and recap

51
00:02:55,800 --> 00:02:59,620
how this plan would lead to local benefits for the supply chain.

52
00:02:59,720 --> 00:03:02,900
So requirement 20 of the draft DCO REP

53
00:03:03,280 --> 00:03:07,160
308 sets out that no part of the development may commence until the

54
00:03:08,100 --> 00:03:11,980
skills supply chain and employment plan, so that the final plan, which must

55
00:03:12,020 --> 00:03:15,980
be substantially in accordance with the outline plan, has been approved by

56
00:03:16,060 --> 00:03:19,900
the district council. And how that will work is the

57
00:03:19,960 --> 00:03:23,800
final plan will confirm the outcomes which will be

58
00:03:24,020 --> 00:03:27,640
delivered by the scheme, and then those employment and

59
00:03:27,720 --> 00:03:31,160
skills or social value targets will, where relevant, be passed on

60
00:03:31,240 --> 00:03:34,680
to contractors, to the principal contractor, and subsequently down

61
00:03:35,080 --> 00:03:38,780
through the supply chain, and delivered by the contractors, and that's how the

62
00:03:38,820 --> 00:03:39,960
outcomes will be achieved.

63
00:03:41,740 --> 00:03:45,680
And with relevance to the local supply chain, so the

64
00:03:45,720 --> 00:03:49,440
next agenda item. So, this is covered specifically under

65
00:03:49,520 --> 00:03:53,060
opportunity six, business support and procurement strategy within the outline

66
00:03:53,140 --> 00:03:53,860

skills plan.

67
00:03:55,000 --> 00:03:56,060
And this

68
00:03:57,620 --> 00:04:00,480
explains how the applicant will effectively,

69
00:04:01,280 --> 00:04:04,920
and in a timely way, communicate local opportunities

70
00:04:05,000 --> 00:04:07,820
for contracts to local suppliers.

71
00:04:08,800 --> 00:04:12,720
And the aim is to maximize the access of local businesses to those contracts,

72
00:04:12,760 --> 00:04:14,660
and therefore to maximize the local benefits.

73
00:04:14,720 --> 00:04:18,041
So these measures are about trying to make sure that

74
00:04:18,680 --> 00:04:22,600
as local to the scheme as possible, be it schools or

75
00:04:22,640 --> 00:04:26,260
businesses, the benefits will be felt.

76
00:04:27,220 --> 00:04:29,680
There's a list of potential

77
00:04:30,720 --> 00:04:34,240
equipment and services listed in the skills plan, which might be

78
00:04:34,280 --> 00:04:38,020
required. Some of them are going to be more relevant to the local

79
00:04:38,820 --> 00:04:40,000
supply chain than others.

80
00:04:40,820 --> 00:04:44,580
So where skills are quite specialized, it's likely that they're more likely

81
00:04:44,660 --> 00:04:47,440
to need procurement from outside the local area.

82
00:04:47,520 --> 00:04:50,660
But things like civils works, drainage, landscape,

83
00:04:51,700 --> 00:04:53,300
security, fencing,

84
00:04:54,260 --> 00:04:55,600
construction laborers,

85
00:04:56,980 --> 00:05:00,940
construction of buildings, those are services and goods that

86
00:05:00,980 --> 00:05:02,420
could be procured locally.

87
00:05:04,260 --> 00:05:07,120
And again, just going back to opportunity six,

88
00:05:08,340 --> 00:05:11,880
again, we've inserted details in there to specific

89
00:05:12,500 --> 00:05:12,820
local

90
00:05:14,080 --> 00:05:18,040
supplier groups which the applicant is aware of and would like

91
00:05:18,060 --> 00:05:21,800
to collaborate with, such as South Holland Business Association, Business

92
00:05:21,880 --> 00:05:22,580
Lincolnshire,

93
00:05:24,460 --> 00:05:28,380
the Meet the Buyer and Meet the Developer events held by Lincolnshire Chamber of

94
00:05:28,440 --> 00:05:28,960
Commerce.

95
00:05:30,320 --> 00:05:34,200
And again, opportunities through industry publications and social

96
00:05:34,260 --> 00:05:38,140
media to communicate the opportunities associated by the scheme to the local supply

97
00:05:38,200 --> 00:05:38,560
chain.

98
00:05:39,700 --> 00:05:43,320
And again, as spelt out in that document, the applicant would

99
00:05:43,960 --> 00:05:47,860
be open to collaboration in the fields of research and development to

100
00:05:47,920 --> 00:05:51,740
share experience and expertise around the clean energy sector as

101
00:05:51,780 --> 00:05:52,000
well.

102
00:05:53,120 --> 00:05:56,880
Thank you. What work, if any, have you undertaken with the local

103
00:05:56,940 --> 00:05:58,580
supply chains so far?

104
00:06:02,304 --> 00:06:06,264
So as part of this plan, we ourselves haven't taken

105
00:06:06,324 --> 00:06:07,684

any external

106
00:06:08,584 --> 00:06:10,364
consultation with agencies,

107
00:06:11,384 --> 00:06:13,684
with local businesses, local agencies.

108
00:06:14,064 --> 00:06:17,644
I don't know if the applicant has any

109
00:06:17,724 --> 00:06:21,604
information on existing relationships within the local area.

110
00:06:22,004 --> 00:06:22,384
But

111
00:06:23,304 --> 00:06:26,244
within the outline skills plan,

112
00:06:27,264 --> 00:06:31,204
section 5.4 talks about external engagement and the fact that that will

113
00:06:31,264 --> 00:06:35,224
be a very important part of the work post-consent.

114
00:06:35,564 --> 00:06:38,904
We'll be engaging with the local authority, with local business

115
00:06:38,964 --> 00:06:41,524
organizations that we might be signposted to,

116
00:06:42,784 --> 00:06:44,484
et cetera, in order to

117
00:06:45,484 --> 00:06:47,144
build those local relationships.

118
00:06:47,984 --> 00:06:51,404
Is that all going to occur should the project get consent,

119
00:06:51,744 --> 00:06:54,184
post-consent? That might be one for you.

120
00:06:54,964 --> 00:06:56,344
Yeah. Taylor Power for the applicant.

121
00:06:57,144 --> 00:07:00,984
My understanding is that the intention is for this to primarily occur

122
00:07:01,244 --> 00:07:04,884
post-consent, but I can pass to Mr Vernon, who can speak to initial

123
00:07:04,944 --> 00:07:07,604
conversations that the applicant's had with local businesses.

124
00:07:07,904 --> 00:07:09,004
Thank you. That would be useful.

125
00:07:09,344 --> 00:07:11,404
Thank you. David Vernon for the applicant.

126
00:07:12,104 --> 00:07:15,364
Just through the consultation and through the lifetime of the project thus far,

127
00:07:15,444 --> 00:07:19,024
we've had a number of approaches from local contractors along the lines of,

128
00:07:19,624 --> 00:07:23,124
as has been mentioned in landscaping, fencing, security,

129
00:07:23,704 --> 00:07:27,604
and we are keeping those organizations on file and up to date

130
00:07:27,644 --> 00:07:28,904
with where we are on the project.

131
00:07:29,944 --> 00:07:33,044

The majority of the engagement will come post-consent, though, where we will

132
00:07:33,124 --> 00:07:36,904
obviously get back in touch with those organizations and, as we've already

133
00:07:36,944 --> 00:07:37,384
explained,

134
00:07:39,244 --> 00:07:42,584
do more programs of engagement with the local supply chain.

135
00:07:44,684 --> 00:07:45,224
Thank you.

136
00:07:46,884 --> 00:07:50,844
Is there anybody in the room that would wish to comment on that approach?

137
00:07:50,904 --> 00:07:53,044
Lincolnshire County Council, have you got any comments?

138
00:07:54,744 --> 00:07:56,164
Kate Hills for the county council.

139
00:07:57,904 --> 00:08:01,624
At the moment, we don't have specific comments because as it stands, the

140
00:08:01,664 --> 00:08:02,104
plan's

141
00:08:02,904 --> 00:08:05,564
quite high level still and needs the details.

142
00:08:05,964 --> 00:08:07,104
Certainly, we

143
00:08:08,104 --> 00:08:11,924
will have within our economic development team contacts

144
00:08:12,184 --> 00:08:14,164
and networks that I think

145
00:08:15,064 --> 00:08:16,924
should be used and pulled upon

146
00:08:19,324 --> 00:08:19,944
in due course.

147
00:08:21,104 --> 00:08:22,784
Is that something you think

148
00:08:24,164 --> 00:08:26,064
that communication should start now?

149
00:08:26,144 --> 00:08:29,684
Obviously, this is all second-guessing

150
00:08:30,844 --> 00:08:32,485
a decision by the Secretary of State.

151
00:08:32,784 --> 00:08:36,664
But is that something that both parties feel they should be communicating

152
00:08:36,725 --> 00:08:38,584
on now, or are you happy to leave it,

153
00:08:39,704 --> 00:08:41,605
if it was consented to, post-consent?

154
00:08:48,244 --> 00:08:49,524
Yeah, post-consent is fine.

155
00:08:50,724 --> 00:08:53,904
Taylor Power for the applicant. Also, just to clarify, I'm aware that this is one

156
00:08:53,944 --> 00:08:57,624
of the points we talked about in the DCO hearing two days ago in respect

157
00:08:57,724 --> 00:09:00,524
of the county council's request to be a consultee on this plan.

158
00:09:00,544 --> 00:09:04,264
And so this is a matter that we're picking up with the council's lawyers,

159
00:09:04,984 --> 00:09:06,084
in respect of potential

160
00:09:06,904 --> 00:09:10,644
details we can add to the requirements, to ensure that the

161
00:09:10,684 --> 00:09:11,724
county council feeds in.

162
00:09:12,864 --> 00:09:14,324
Thank you. Were there some-

163
00:09:14,604 --> 00:09:17,684
Yes. Paul Smith, local resident. Just to quickly ask, what

164
00:09:18,144 --> 00:09:20,604
guarantees could or indeed should be given

165
00:09:21,424 --> 00:09:25,084
that a certain percentage of work would go to local suppliers and

166
00:09:25,144 --> 00:09:29,084
contractors post-consent in terms of security

167
00:09:29,144 --> 00:09:30,264
fencing, landscaping,

168
00:09:32,784 --> 00:09:35,504
aggregate supply, concrete supply, so on and so forth?

169
00:09:36,224 --> 00:09:40,184
Thank you. I don't believe there is a figure in your outline skills plan, but

170
00:09:40,264 --> 00:09:42,044
I'll let you answer that question.

171
00:09:43,104 --> 00:09:45,104
Yeah. Esther Howell for the applicant. Correct.

172
00:09:45,124 --> 00:09:48,424
There's no figures at the moment around targets, be it for

173
00:09:48,964 --> 00:09:52,884
local recruitment, local spend, STEM outreach at the moment.

174
00:09:53,624 --> 00:09:57,584
And that, in our view, is appropriate because that is the work that

175
00:09:57,624 --> 00:10:01,584
would be done for the final skills plan, which would be signed off by the

176
00:10:01,624 --> 00:10:05,364
local authority. I think it's premature to put those figures in there

177
00:10:05,444 --> 00:10:09,244
now before we've had the discussions with the council, with local

178
00:10:09,324 --> 00:10:12,204
stakeholders about what the local needs and the local priorities are.

179
00:10:12,644 --> 00:10:13,484
And in addition,

180
00:10:15,244 --> 00:10:18,424
a lot of the social outcomes would be delivered by the contractor.

181
00:10:19,403 --> 00:10:23,004
So it would be a matter of passing the requirements to the

182
00:10:23,044 --> 00:10:24,984

contractor through the procurement process.

183
00:10:25,064 --> 00:10:28,744
And so again, it's not really appropriate to do that work now.

184
00:10:28,824 --> 00:10:31,684
We don't have the detail available, and there hasn't been the

185
00:10:32,804 --> 00:10:34,984
market engagement with the potential contractor.

186
00:10:35,304 --> 00:10:38,704
And that engagement would, I think, be really important to the process to make sure

187
00:10:38,764 --> 00:10:42,584
that any targets which are included in the plan and the outcomes

188
00:10:42,624 --> 00:10:46,244
which are pinned down in the final plan are the right ones.

189
00:10:47,504 --> 00:10:49,224
Should that not be given pre-consent?

190
00:10:50,584 --> 00:10:51,744
Taylor Power for the applicant.

191
00:10:51,804 --> 00:10:52,224
An amount?

192
00:10:52,744 --> 00:10:56,644
Sorry, just to add some further context to that, the intention from the

193
00:10:56,704 --> 00:10:59,624
applicant, as set out in the plan, is that there will be clear

194
00:11:00,204 --> 00:11:04,024
targets that are set in the final version, and the

195
00:11:04,984 --> 00:11:08,804

planning authority and their role in approving the final plan will ensure that

196
00:11:08,824 --> 00:11:10,664
there are clear targets. It's just that,

197
00:11:11,944 --> 00:11:15,664
for the reasons Ms Howell set out, we don't want to set those targets now in case

198
00:11:15,704 --> 00:11:17,104
they're not relevant anymore in

199
00:11:18,104 --> 00:11:21,624
six or so years' time when we might be constructing the scheme.

200
00:11:21,704 --> 00:11:25,384
And so the intention is to give that flexibility to the

201
00:11:27,064 --> 00:11:30,404
undertaker and the councils at the time to set the best targets at the time for the

202
00:11:30,444 --> 00:11:34,064
community. But it's not the intention that there will be no targets that the

203
00:11:34,124 --> 00:11:36,544
applicant will have to comply with if there's-

204
00:11:36,864 --> 00:11:38,204
Mr. Smith, I realize that may

205
00:11:38,243 --> 00:11:41,444
not- So there's no guarantee that anything will be given pre-consent?

206
00:11:42,364 --> 00:11:42,464
The-

207
00:11:42,704 --> 00:11:46,684
Any kind of guarantee pre-consent that a proportion of work will be

208
00:11:46,724 --> 00:11:48,024
given to local contractors.

209
00:11:48,064 --> 00:11:51,984
So currently as it stands, there's an outlined skills plan, and which

210
00:11:52,224 --> 00:11:55,644
you may or may not have read, but if you have read it, you can see what the

211
00:11:55,704 --> 00:11:59,244
applicant is proposing to do. That is secured by a

212
00:11:59,264 --> 00:12:01,564
requirement in the draft DCO.

213
00:12:02,223 --> 00:12:04,044
Okay. And then the final version would-

214
00:12:04,084 --> 00:12:04,304
Right

215
00:12:04,403 --> 00:12:06,284
... I understand, contain the details.

216
00:12:06,423 --> 00:12:07,104
Uh-huh. And that's binding?

217
00:12:07,848 --> 00:12:11,748
Yes, it's a requirement that the content of that plan has to be

218
00:12:11,808 --> 00:12:12,348
complied with.

219
00:12:12,408 --> 00:12:13,028
Okay, thank you.

220
00:12:13,168 --> 00:12:13,288
Thank

221
00:12:13,307 --> 00:12:13,628
you. For clarifying.

222
00:12:14,308 --> 00:12:14,888
Mr. Malkin.

223
00:12:17,008 --> 00:12:19,888
So I've got quite a bit to say on this, but it's in

224
00:12:19,968 --> 00:12:23,768
two parts. First of all, just deal with job creation.

225
00:12:25,048 --> 00:12:28,848
Unless Meridian have updated their figures and we're not aware of

226
00:12:28,888 --> 00:12:29,048
them,

227
00:12:30,348 --> 00:12:34,268
the figures we've seen for job creation are fairly meaningless if

228
00:12:34,308 --> 00:12:38,248
they fail to take into account jobs lost as a result

229
00:12:38,308 --> 00:12:41,848
of the lands not being farmed and not producing vegetables and

230
00:12:41,908 --> 00:12:45,668
grain, and the down-the-line jobs this creates in terms of

231
00:12:45,728 --> 00:12:49,488
growing fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicide production and

232
00:12:49,588 --> 00:12:53,208
supply, produce, transportation, preparation and packing, et

233
00:12:53,268 --> 00:12:56,968
cetera. Meridian has claimed that not one single

234

00:12:57,088 --> 00:13:00,568
full-time equivalent job is currently associated with

235
00:13:00,748 --> 00:13:04,188
1,067 hectares of what they themselves term

236
00:13:04,308 --> 00:13:06,368
predominantly agricultural land.

237
00:13:07,068 --> 00:13:09,688
This assumption appears ridiculous.

238
00:13:10,408 --> 00:13:14,068
They claim that there will be a gross 10 permanent

239
00:13:14,188 --> 00:13:17,588
jobs, but then a net gain of 11, which seems

240
00:13:17,648 --> 00:13:21,308
nonsensical. The logic there would point to the current employment for

241
00:13:21,368 --> 00:13:25,148
managing more than 1,000 hectares of farmland at minus one.

242
00:13:26,648 --> 00:13:30,228
A quick search reveals trusted government figures for

243
00:13:30,288 --> 00:13:34,128
full-time equivalents associated with this volume of farmland

244
00:13:34,608 --> 00:13:38,348
and the additional full-time equivalents generated down the line by

245
00:13:38,388 --> 00:13:40,868
those employed to process the grown produce.

246
00:13:42,108 --> 00:13:45,788
And they are 4 to 10 full-time equivalent directly on the

247
00:13:45,828 --> 00:13:46,188

land,

248
00:13:46,988 --> 00:13:50,888
but as many as 400 to 675 full-time

249
00:13:50,948 --> 00:13:54,908
equivalents for potatoes, carrots, onions, and brassicas.

250
00:13:55,428 --> 00:13:59,148
And those figures come from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

251
00:13:59,248 --> 00:14:02,888
standard labor requirements. So are these figures wrong?

252
00:14:03,368 --> 00:14:06,808
And why is Meridian sticking to its zero analysis?

253
00:14:07,108 --> 00:14:11,008
And then if I can, after this, I'll come onto the skills supply chain

254
00:14:11,048 --> 00:14:12,068
and employment plan.

255
00:14:14,508 --> 00:14:16,228
Can I pass to the applicant, please?

256
00:14:16,288 --> 00:14:17,807
Sure. Esther Howe for the applicant.

257
00:14:17,888 --> 00:14:18,147
So,

258
00:14:19,628 --> 00:14:23,008
the approach we've taken in the environmental impact assessment is to

259
00:14:23,788 --> 00:14:27,748
look at what the land is currently used for, not to

260

00:14:27,828 --> 00:14:31,648
apply theoretical benchmarks about what that land might

261
00:14:31,668 --> 00:14:33,768
produce if it were producing a certain

262
00:14:34,588 --> 00:14:37,528
kind of crop. So we touched on this earlier.

263
00:14:37,748 --> 00:14:41,668
In terms of direct job, our direct jobs, our understanding is that

264
00:14:41,708 --> 00:14:45,668
the landowners in the scheme have voluntarily put their land into the scheme,

265
00:14:45,728 --> 00:14:48,288
presumably as a form of diversification.

266
00:14:49,668 --> 00:14:53,128
And there aren't any tenant farmers who are going to be thrown off the land.

267
00:14:53,548 --> 00:14:57,348
And in terms of indirect jobs, so supply chain benefits and what's

268
00:14:57,408 --> 00:14:58,988
currently being produced on the land,

269
00:15:00,088 --> 00:15:02,448
a quarter of it is not producing any crops at all.

270
00:15:02,928 --> 00:15:06,668
The crops that are being produced are not high-value vegetables

271
00:15:06,768 --> 00:15:08,068
that are employing a lot of people.

272
00:15:08,128 --> 00:15:11,828
They're cereals, a lot of which is going for animal consumption

273

00:15:11,908 --> 00:15:13,248
rather than human consumption.

274
00:15:14,428 --> 00:15:15,868
And so while I

275
00:15:17,848 --> 00:15:21,688
am clear that yes, we haven't covered the local supply chain and the downstream

276
00:15:22,128 --> 00:15:26,048
impacts of the agricultural land use within our chapter

277
00:15:26,108 --> 00:15:27,008
in any detail,

278
00:15:28,168 --> 00:15:32,068
I do still feel that that is a proportionate approach in that

279
00:15:32,108 --> 00:15:35,328
based on what we know about the site as it's currently being used,

280
00:15:36,408 --> 00:15:40,388
the impact of taking that land out of agricultural use would not be

281
00:15:40,428 --> 00:15:43,548
significant. And for that reason, we haven't done that additional work.

282
00:15:44,588 --> 00:15:48,308
And as described earlier, we don't feel that taking some

283
00:15:48,728 --> 00:15:52,608
regional-level benchmarks about the value of crops that are being produced or

284
00:15:52,688 --> 00:15:52,968
some

285
00:15:54,988 --> 00:15:58,848
kind of generic DEFRA benchmarks about the amount of

286
00:15:58,908 --> 00:15:59,988
labor it takes to

287
00:16:01,488 --> 00:16:03,388
produce a certain crop are

288
00:16:04,568 --> 00:16:06,908
an appropriate way of doing the environmental assessment.

289
00:16:06,948 --> 00:16:10,608
We followed the typical approach as described earlier, which is

290
00:16:10,648 --> 00:16:14,208
considering how the land is currently used, how that land use is going to changed.

291
00:16:15,408 --> 00:16:15,588
Yeah.

292
00:16:16,728 --> 00:16:20,608
But just to qualify on behalf of the applicant further to the action point earlier

293
00:16:20,648 --> 00:16:24,328
today, we are thinking about this and will come back in writing if there is

294
00:16:24,387 --> 00:16:27,408
further detail that we can provide, taking the point from Ms.

295
00:16:27,447 --> 00:16:31,368
Howe that it might not necessarily be in the form that's been requested, but

296
00:16:31,828 --> 00:16:35,748
rather a proportionate and further detailed analysis in a form that the applicant

297
00:16:35,788 --> 00:16:37,428
thinks is appropriate for the scheme.

298

00:16:37,768 --> 00:16:39,628
I think some additional information.

299
00:16:39,928 --> 00:16:42,608
I take your point about you not able to comment on what that would be.

300
00:16:42,648 --> 00:16:45,808
I think some additional information would be helpful at this point.

301
00:16:46,868 --> 00:16:47,608
You mentioned about

302
00:16:48,988 --> 00:16:52,948
farm diversification. I think it was Lincolnshire

303
00:16:53,008 --> 00:16:54,828
County Council, forgive me if I'm wrong,

304
00:16:56,088 --> 00:16:59,948
asked a question at EXQ1. I asked the question whether or

305
00:16:59,968 --> 00:17:01,548
not you considered this to be

306
00:17:02,568 --> 00:17:04,288
a form of diversification.

307
00:17:05,929 --> 00:17:09,248
And I believe the answer was, in your view, that is not correct.

308
00:17:09,288 --> 00:17:13,148
I just wondered if you could expand, if it is yourselves. If it's not, I apologize.

309
00:17:13,748 --> 00:17:14,288
It was ma'am.

310
00:17:16,128 --> 00:17:16,248
Thank

311

00:17:16,307 --> 00:17:20,068
you. Yes. The DEFRA definition of diversification does not

312
00:17:20,128 --> 00:17:23,729
cover the renting of land to a third party

313
00:17:24,248 --> 00:17:27,488
for a use. If a farmer was developing a solar

314
00:17:28,568 --> 00:17:29,608
farm on his own

315
00:17:30,428 --> 00:17:33,608
land, then that is a diversification of the business.

316
00:17:34,248 --> 00:17:37,628
Simply renting the land out isn't

317
00:17:37,728 --> 00:17:41,228
entrepreneurial, therefore DEFRA don't regard that as

318
00:17:41,288 --> 00:17:42,308
diversification.

319
00:17:43,128 --> 00:17:44,688
Essentially, it's a land use change.

320
00:17:47,268 --> 00:17:49,328
Thank you. Do you wish to come back on that?

321
00:17:51,208 --> 00:17:52,508
Yes. Esther Howe for the applicant.

322
00:17:52,648 --> 00:17:56,408
I take the point about the definition of diversification, but I

323
00:17:56,448 --> 00:17:58,868
think the fundamental point hasn't changed.

324
00:17:58,908 --> 00:18:02,068
The point is that this farmer has voluntarily

325
00:18:02,728 --> 00:18:06,528
decided to use that land not for farming, but for

326
00:18:06,588 --> 00:18:10,548
renting it out, because presumably it's felt that that is a better

327
00:18:10,588 --> 00:18:13,448
way of generating revenue than the current land use.

328
00:18:14,948 --> 00:18:15,608
So that's-

329
00:18:16,516 --> 00:18:19,796
That's the fundamental point, I think.

330
00:18:25,256 --> 00:18:25,716
It's

331
00:18:27,096 --> 00:18:30,376
the landowner's own decision to voluntarily do that

332
00:18:31,456 --> 00:18:32,836
in terms of how they manage their

333
00:18:33,836 --> 00:18:34,636
land, their asset.

334
00:18:35,396 --> 00:18:36,196
That's fine. And we obviously-

335
00:18:36,436 --> 00:18:39,476
I've heard it referred to in certain contexts as a form of

336
00:18:39,516 --> 00:18:42,476
diversification to rent your land out for solar.

337
00:18:42,636 --> 00:18:44,276
So that may or may not technically-

338

00:18:44,336 --> 00:18:46,716
And that's fine. We have two parties with differing views.

339
00:18:46,756 --> 00:18:50,016
That is what it is. But yeah, thank you. Mr.

340
00:18:50,036 --> 00:18:52,696
Malkin, did you want to come back about the skills plan?

341
00:18:54,296 --> 00:18:56,436
Yes. Just before we leave that subject.

342
00:18:57,076 --> 00:19:00,936
That may be the case now, but we're talking about the next 40 years, of

343
00:19:00,996 --> 00:19:04,836
course. So the situation as far as the landowner's concerned may

344
00:19:04,916 --> 00:19:08,696
change. At the moment, he's got at the back of his mind that this land is going to

345
00:19:08,736 --> 00:19:11,516
be used for solar, not for growing crops.

346
00:19:12,276 --> 00:19:16,256
Should the recommendation and the Secretary of State decide

347
00:19:16,296 --> 00:19:20,276
that the solar proposal can't go ahead, there might well be a change of

348
00:19:21,095 --> 00:19:24,996
heart, and that land may then be used to produce

349
00:19:25,056 --> 00:19:25,416
crops

350
00:19:26,336 --> 00:19:29,796
at the rate at which these full-time equivalent figures suggest.

351
00:19:31,376 --> 00:19:34,376
But yeah, just to come onto the supply chain.

352
00:19:36,056 --> 00:19:39,816
We feel that there are significant flaws in this plan, and

353
00:19:39,856 --> 00:19:43,156
they swirl around the definition of local.

354
00:19:43,756 --> 00:19:47,456
The study area has been set as a 60-minute drive time from the

355
00:19:47,556 --> 00:19:51,376
scheme, but this includes an area way beyond the boundaries of South

356
00:19:51,416 --> 00:19:55,096
Holland. Within the 60-minute drive time area are Peterborough,

357
00:19:55,256 --> 00:19:58,756
Huntingdon, Corby, Kettering, Cambridge, Lincoln, and King's Lynn.

358
00:19:59,596 --> 00:20:03,316
What would be more pertinent would be a study area within the bounds
of South

359
00:20:03,356 --> 00:20:07,116
Holland if we're to be convinced about the economic benefits to

360
00:20:07,216 --> 00:20:08,916
areas more local to the scheme.

361
00:20:09,756 --> 00:20:13,656
The 60-minute drive time study area means much of the economic

362
00:20:13,696 --> 00:20:17,636
benefits felt by the 855 full-time equivalent staff

363
00:20:17,696 --> 00:20:21,676
per day will be taken out of the scheme locality and the South

364

00:20:21,736 --> 00:20:25,356
Holland area. In fact, the picture worsens when Meridian

365
00:20:25,416 --> 00:20:29,196
concedes that 60% of staff would reside outside the study

366
00:20:29,296 --> 00:20:33,176
area. Conversely, Meridian can and does give figures for South

367
00:20:33,216 --> 00:20:36,976
Holland alone, making the point that the site is within the South
Holland

368
00:20:37,036 --> 00:20:40,956
District Council administrative boundary and giving figures for

369
00:20:41,016 --> 00:20:44,756
South Holland's economic activity rate, level four

370
00:20:44,916 --> 00:20:47,476
degree qualification, and levels of deprivation.

371
00:20:48,316 --> 00:20:51,876
It does seem as though the wider travel to work area has been
deliberately

372
00:20:51,916 --> 00:20:54,376
chosen to inflate the employment benefits.

373
00:20:55,196 --> 00:20:58,476
Gross value added to the 60-minute travel area is set at

374
00:20:58,496 --> 00:21:02,356
£8.9 million per annum, but there's no breakdown

375
00:21:02,416 --> 00:21:05,936
to illustrate how much will be added to the South Holland area

376
00:21:06,436 --> 00:21:09,016
or even more pertinent, the scheme impact area.

377

00:21:10,096 --> 00:21:13,736
We're grateful that there has been a change

378
00:21:14,336 --> 00:21:17,896
to opportunities that will be available now.

379
00:21:19,256 --> 00:21:22,736
But we just want to know, will the opportunity three STEM

380
00:21:22,796 --> 00:21:26,616
education and careers be changed to target

381
00:21:26,696 --> 00:21:29,496
named schools and colleges in the South Holland area?

382
00:21:30,416 --> 00:21:33,816
And a reference to using a community benefit fund for

383
00:21:33,916 --> 00:21:37,796
education and skills is very wooly, such

384
00:21:37,856 --> 00:21:38,876
as to be worthless.

385
00:21:40,836 --> 00:21:44,736
Then Meridian "will investigate measures

386
00:21:44,816 --> 00:21:48,736
to promote take-up of jobs by local people." We'd sooner

387
00:21:48,796 --> 00:21:52,376
see the word investigate dropped so that that becomes a bit more

388
00:21:52,456 --> 00:21:53,076
focused.

389
00:21:54,176 --> 00:21:57,816
And again, must define local. Is this the 60-minute drive

390
00:21:57,896 --> 00:22:01,796
time study area, so not really local or just South

391
00:22:01,856 --> 00:22:05,836
Holland? And the same applies to local businesses

392
00:22:05,896 --> 00:22:08,856
and local partners under opportunity six.

393
00:22:08,976 --> 00:22:12,356
We just need a definition of local there.

394
00:22:12,916 --> 00:22:16,596
And can we have clear clarification about where

395
00:22:16,636 --> 00:22:19,436
business rates collected for this scheme will go?

396
00:22:20,776 --> 00:22:24,336
Is this an annual amount to be paid, and is it

397
00:22:24,376 --> 00:22:27,396
retained and used locally, and if so, how much?

398
00:22:29,376 --> 00:22:33,356
Thank you. Just turning to the applicant and when you respond,

399
00:22:33,435 --> 00:22:36,576
we're going to talk about funding at bullet four.

400
00:22:36,635 --> 00:22:37,276
So if you could just

401
00:22:38,296 --> 00:22:41,016
not respond on funding just at this point. But yeah.

402
00:22:41,056 --> 00:22:43,156
Do you have any comments following-

403
00:22:43,436 --> 00:22:43,717
Yes. Mr.

404

00:22:43,855 --> 00:22:45,516
Malkin. As to how for the applicant. So,

405
00:22:47,596 --> 00:22:50,616
I've hopefully jotted down the points.

406
00:22:52,096 --> 00:22:55,916
So the 60-minute drive time is used,

407
00:23:00,556 --> 00:23:04,496
that is because we look at the economic impacts of the scheme using that as

408
00:23:04,556 --> 00:23:08,416
a principal study area, because that is a typical drive time,

409
00:23:08,856 --> 00:23:12,356
and we are genuinely thinking, interested in

410
00:23:12,936 --> 00:23:16,756
how many people who live locally will be able to access the scheme and work

411
00:23:16,796 --> 00:23:20,476
there and how many can't. How many will need to come from further

412
00:23:20,536 --> 00:23:21,056
afield.

413
00:23:22,356 --> 00:23:23,136
It's not to

414
00:23:24,396 --> 00:23:27,956
skew the findings or the recommendations of the skills plan in any way.

415
00:23:28,976 --> 00:23:32,336
We feel that's a realistic description of the travel to work area,

416
00:23:33,716 --> 00:23:37,296
and it plays into other parts of our assessment too, for example, the

417
00:23:37,356 --> 00:23:40,216
assessment of impacts on visitor accommodation.

418
00:23:41,776 --> 00:23:44,856
And we don't want to be unrealistic and claim that

419
00:23:46,816 --> 00:23:50,796
95% of the jobs constructing the scheme can be taken up by

420
00:23:50,836 --> 00:23:53,676
local people because that would be overclaiming the benefits, and we wouldn't want

421
00:23:53,696 --> 00:23:54,316
to do that.

422
00:23:55,496 --> 00:23:57,856
So that's what the 60% figure is about.

423
00:23:58,196 --> 00:24:02,116
And then when it comes to the definition of local and what we mean by that in the

424
00:24:02,176 --> 00:24:02,916
skills plan,

425
00:24:04,336 --> 00:24:08,116
again, appreciate at some points it's probably rather vague and

426
00:24:08,156 --> 00:24:11,836
not clear, but again, the plan will be signed off

427
00:24:11,916 --> 00:24:15,736
ultimately by South Holland District Council, and part of formulating the final

428
00:24:15,776 --> 00:24:19,616
plan will be talking closely to the council, to Lincolnshire Council, to local

429

00:24:19,676 --> 00:24:23,596
stakeholders to understand where our resources are going to be best focused

430
00:24:23,636 --> 00:24:25,116
in maximizing local benefit.

431
00:24:26,296 --> 00:24:29,136
That could be very local to the scheme. It could be further afield.

432
00:24:29,216 --> 00:24:32,976
We will be led by the people on the ground in that.

433
00:24:33,456 --> 00:24:33,636
We-

434
00:24:35,188 --> 00:24:38,688
I think that's probably right. We will try and maximize benefits as close to the

435
00:24:38,728 --> 00:24:42,028
scheme as we can, and we're not saying we're going to

436
00:24:42,808 --> 00:24:46,768
go out to an hour's catchment to do that. That's not what we're saying.

437
00:24:46,828 --> 00:24:50,447
It's just that that assumption about leakage is part of the economic impact

438
00:24:50,488 --> 00:24:51,108
assessment.

439
00:24:54,388 --> 00:24:56,748
And with regard to the local schools, absolutely.

440
00:24:57,148 --> 00:24:59,008
We've listed in table 4.1

441
00:24:59,928 --> 00:25:02,888
within the skills plan the schools most local to the site.

442
00:25:03,328 --> 00:25:06,967
Very happy to prioritize those if that's genuinely felt where the

443
00:25:07,008 --> 00:25:10,968
benefit should be. If they're the best

444
00:25:11,028 --> 00:25:15,008
target beneficiaries, I think that would make sense.

445
00:25:15,828 --> 00:25:18,888
Just in terms of the baseline data and the fact that some of it is at South Holland

446
00:25:18,948 --> 00:25:22,808
District Council level, that's purely because the

447
00:25:22,868 --> 00:25:23,728
geographical

448
00:25:24,908 --> 00:25:28,888
data that we have, the geographical fit of the data available is at the South

449
00:25:28,908 --> 00:25:31,648
Holland District Council level for no other reason.

450
00:25:31,728 --> 00:25:35,368
It would take quite a lot of work to disaggregate the data and put it back together

451
00:25:36,028 --> 00:25:39,408
at a 60-minute drive time level, which we haven't felt is proportionate.

452
00:25:39,727 --> 00:25:43,528
The idea of that baseline is to set the scene and the context, not

453
00:25:43,568 --> 00:25:46,468
necessarily to go into a vast amount of detail.

454

00:25:48,828 --> 00:25:49,648
And

455
00:25:51,008 --> 00:25:54,448
we're not going to touch on the community benefit fund here, I think.

456
00:25:56,948 --> 00:26:00,188
And I think the other point about the business rates

457
00:26:01,748 --> 00:26:05,708
is that, yeah, I don't know if it's a question which Lincolnshire

458
00:26:05,748 --> 00:26:08,448
Council, the councils might be able to answer more clearly.

459
00:26:08,788 --> 00:26:11,148
But my understanding is at the moment, a certain level

460
00:26:12,328 --> 00:26:13,128
is retained.

461
00:26:14,128 --> 00:26:17,948
Business rates are collected. A certain proportion is retained to be re-spent

462
00:26:18,028 --> 00:26:21,828
at a local level. I think there's currently government proposals to try and

463
00:26:21,868 --> 00:26:23,128
increase that local level.

464
00:26:24,048 --> 00:26:26,428
But we'll see where we get to at the time.

465
00:26:27,208 --> 00:26:30,428
But yeah, I don't have the specific details on that to hand at the moment.

466
00:26:33,048 --> 00:26:35,368
I'm not sure if that covers all the points raised.

467
00:26:35,508 --> 00:26:37,428
I think that covered borrowing funding.

468
00:26:37,488 --> 00:26:40,748
Do that cover-- I think that was all of the main points you raised.

469
00:26:41,688 --> 00:26:45,088
Yeah. Just to say then, can we interpret that as a

470
00:26:45,148 --> 00:26:47,068
commitment that

471
00:26:48,428 --> 00:26:52,328
job creation and supply chains will be focused

472
00:26:53,228 --> 00:26:56,888
firstly and primarily in the South Holland area, and then further

473
00:26:56,948 --> 00:26:59,808
afield within the 60-minute travel area if you have to?

474
00:27:01,768 --> 00:27:05,728
Yes. As far as I'm concerned. And maybe we can then take that as an

475
00:27:05,808 --> 00:27:08,368
action and see if we can make that clearer within

476
00:27:09,548 --> 00:27:10,068
the plan.

477
00:27:11,168 --> 00:27:11,768
I think that

478
00:27:13,488 --> 00:27:15,508
at the end of the day, there is going to be a balance

479
00:27:16,628 --> 00:27:20,088
on the ground. Can you get the suppliers that are needed

480

00:27:20,128 --> 00:27:22,328
within South Holland district or not?

481
00:27:22,468 --> 00:27:26,148
Quite possibly not, and there might be instances where there is a need to go

482
00:27:26,188 --> 00:27:28,348
beyond that. But I think the fact that

483
00:27:29,668 --> 00:27:33,368
endeavors will be made to find suppliers who are as local to the scheme as possible

484
00:27:34,488 --> 00:27:35,628
is quite clear.

485
00:27:36,128 --> 00:27:39,128
I think that, from my reading, is the general thread.

486
00:27:39,708 --> 00:27:43,408
Currently, it's an outline plan. Please correct me if I'm interpreting that wrong,

487
00:27:43,448 --> 00:27:45,508
but I think that is the general thread

488
00:27:46,648 --> 00:27:46,888
currently.

489
00:27:46,948 --> 00:27:48,248
Yes. Taylor Power for the applicant.

490
00:27:48,288 --> 00:27:49,188
And I just further note,

491
00:27:50,328 --> 00:27:54,228
that's also helped by it being signed off by South Holland District Council so

492
00:27:54,288 --> 00:27:58,108
that it can advocate for that local area as opposed to Lincolnshire

County

493
00:27:58,188 --> 00:27:58,528
Council.

494
00:28:01,048 --> 00:28:02,728
Very neatly. I was just about to ask Mr.

495
00:28:02,928 --> 00:28:06,368
Dewar, which of South Holland District Council, whether he's got any

496
00:28:06,508 --> 00:28:10,228
comments he would like to make on the outline skills

497
00:28:10,328 --> 00:28:10,568
plan.

498
00:28:12,828 --> 00:28:16,588
Yeah. Hi. Good afternoon. Sam Dewar, planning consultant for the council.

499
00:28:17,768 --> 00:28:18,468
No, I'm happy

500
00:28:20,648 --> 00:28:22,008
with what the applicant said actually

501
00:28:23,208 --> 00:28:25,888
so far with regards to securing that post-consent.

502
00:28:26,668 --> 00:28:30,068
We didn't have any particular comments in previous consultation responses on that

503
00:28:30,088 --> 00:28:32,708
particular draft. So we're generally happy with that.

504
00:28:33,528 --> 00:28:33,968
Thank you.

505
00:28:34,448 --> 00:28:38,308

Thank you. Is there anybody else in the room who'd like to comment on the outline

506
00:28:38,408 --> 00:28:40,528
skills plan at this point, or online?

507
00:28:42,828 --> 00:28:46,608
No. Okay, we'll move on to bullet

508
00:28:46,828 --> 00:28:50,648
three. Bullet three and five actually kind of look at cumulative

509
00:28:50,727 --> 00:28:53,248
issues, so I'm quite happy to

510
00:28:54,068 --> 00:28:55,107
take it as a whole.

511
00:28:58,588 --> 00:29:02,548
To the applicant, several developments may be in construction and operation at the

512
00:29:02,628 --> 00:29:06,008
same time as the Meridian development, should it get

513
00:29:06,048 --> 00:29:09,608
consent. I'd just like to know how the

514
00:29:09,688 --> 00:29:12,828
impact on potential labor force

515
00:29:14,068 --> 00:29:17,448
within the Lincolnshire County has been taken into consideration when you've

516
00:29:17,488 --> 00:29:21,328
drafted the outline plan, and what, if any,

517
00:29:21,828 --> 00:29:23,148
implications this may have.

518

00:29:25,528 --> 00:29:28,748
Esther Howe for the applicant. So just in terms of what those

519
00:29:28,808 --> 00:29:30,248
implications might be,

520
00:29:31,068 --> 00:29:34,728
clearly, as we've set out, there are going to be benefits for the local

521
00:29:34,788 --> 00:29:38,668
economy and the local supply chain arising from this scheme and from other

522
00:29:38,748 --> 00:29:42,728
schemes as well, because there'll be a consistent pipeline of projects, of NCIPS

523
00:29:42,768 --> 00:29:45,308
coming through. And if suppliers are able to

524
00:29:46,608 --> 00:29:50,488
gear up for that, there's an opportunity to expand their turnover and take

525
00:29:50,548 --> 00:29:53,388
advantage of that. And that's what the skills plan will

526
00:29:54,728 --> 00:29:55,828
aim to facilitate.

527
00:29:57,188 --> 00:30:00,968
I think it is possible that there could be adverse implications

528
00:30:01,088 --> 00:30:01,268
if

529
00:30:02,248 --> 00:30:04,768
supply can't keep up with demand and certain

530
00:30:05,868 --> 00:30:09,528
consumers or sectors find that there's a shortage of some services

or

531
00:30:09,588 --> 00:30:09,908
goods

532
00:30:11,548 --> 00:30:14,448
because of all these projects going on in the vicinity.

533
00:30:16,068 --> 00:30:20,048
And I think we haven't done any detailed

534
00:30:20,108 --> 00:30:23,048
work on that as part of the cumulative assessment in terms of that potential

535
00:30:23,128 --> 00:30:24,308
adverse impact

536
00:30:25,468 --> 00:30:26,988
But again, going back to the

537
00:30:27,968 --> 00:30:30,368
skills plan, Rep 305,

538
00:30:31,208 --> 00:30:33,088
and what it says there about external

539
00:30:34,088 --> 00:30:38,008
consultation, external engagement being key to the delivery

540
00:30:38,108 --> 00:30:41,348
post-consent. So, through engagement with the

541
00:30:41,408 --> 00:30:45,068
councils as well as local business organization and if

542
00:30:45,108 --> 00:30:47,848
relevant, promoters of other schemes, of other NSIPs,

543
00:30:49,208 --> 00:30:50,368
the applicant will be

544
00:30:51,668 --> 00:30:55,568
happy to collaborate with those other stakeholders to share information

545
00:30:55,648 --> 00:30:59,508
about forthcoming contracts, timing of workforce requirements, scale of workforce

546
00:30:59,648 --> 00:31:02,648
requirements, et cetera. And that joined-up approach will

547
00:31:03,468 --> 00:31:06,968
ensure that or help avoid any

548
00:31:07,068 --> 00:31:10,808
adverse implications on the supply chain and promote

549
00:31:11,048 --> 00:31:13,308
the maximization of the benefits.

550
00:31:14,028 --> 00:31:17,648
Thank you, because currently as drafted, the outline skills plan doesn't make--

551
00:31:18,188 --> 00:31:21,768
it's written in isolation for your potential project, which is totally

552
00:31:21,808 --> 00:31:23,868
understandable. But from my reading, there is no--

553
00:31:25,968 --> 00:31:28,568
basically, as you've alluded to, there may be

554
00:31:29,407 --> 00:31:32,008
demand issues on local contractors.

555
00:31:32,228 --> 00:31:36,168
What do you do if your plan says, "We're going to try and have just

556

00:31:36,208 --> 00:31:40,108
local content"? What happens if that local content simply isn't

557
00:31:40,168 --> 00:31:42,988
available? I'm not asking you to answer that question.

558
00:31:43,028 --> 00:31:46,968
What I am asking is whether or not that needs to

559
00:31:47,008 --> 00:31:50,868
be taken into consideration in terms of the content of your plan,

560
00:31:50,928 --> 00:31:54,868
whether that is something you can take away and consider, and
whether

561
00:31:54,888 --> 00:31:58,028
or not there needs to be a review of the skills plan.

562
00:31:59,168 --> 00:32:02,528
Yes. As to half of that, I suggest that

563
00:32:03,128 --> 00:32:06,528
work and that thinking could be done at post-consent stage and would
be done at

564
00:32:06,568 --> 00:32:10,468
post-consent stage as part of the final plan when we would aim to

565
00:32:10,508 --> 00:32:11,948
have those conversations

566
00:32:12,928 --> 00:32:14,988
with the council, with local agencies,

567
00:32:16,148 --> 00:32:17,768
with potential

568
00:32:19,128 --> 00:32:21,268
market engagement, with potential contractors,

569

00:32:22,408 --> 00:32:24,728
to understand what the potential issues are.

570
00:32:25,588 --> 00:32:29,328
And then, as I think you're implying, if it's not appropriate to aim for

571
00:32:29,388 --> 00:32:32,468
a high percentage of local employment because we know that's not going to be

572
00:32:32,548 --> 00:32:36,128
feasible, then that won't be included in the final plan as a

573
00:32:36,168 --> 00:32:36,668
target.

574
00:32:38,368 --> 00:32:42,348
That'll be reflected in any targets and metrics which are included in

575
00:32:42,368 --> 00:32:43,068
the final plan.

576
00:32:44,468 --> 00:32:48,428
Thank you. Can I just turn to South Holland again to see if you have any

577
00:32:48,468 --> 00:32:51,168
comments on that approach, whether it seems suitable or not?

578
00:32:54,088 --> 00:32:57,128
Yeah. Hi, good afternoon. Sam Drew for South Holland Council.

579
00:32:57,588 --> 00:33:01,108
Yes, we previously commented that we're happy with that approach as well.

580
00:33:01,208 --> 00:33:03,888
So yeah, content with what they've said. Thank you.

581
00:33:05,668 --> 00:33:08,588

Thank you. Is there anybody else in the room who'd like to pass comment

582
00:33:09,608 --> 00:33:10,068
on that?

583
00:33:11,868 --> 00:33:11,988
No.

584
00:33:13,388 --> 00:33:17,108
Okay. I'll move on to bullet number four, and this

585
00:33:17,188 --> 00:33:19,328
is to Lincolnshire County Council.

586
00:33:20,248 --> 00:33:24,188
I note in one of your deadline three submissions, which is comments on

587
00:33:24,208 --> 00:33:25,568
deadline two documents,

588
00:33:26,428 --> 00:33:29,868
which has examination library reference Rep 379,

589
00:33:30,388 --> 00:33:33,588
that the authority's suggesting an annual funding contribution of

590
00:33:33,608 --> 00:33:37,568
£50,000 index linked to be provided for the lifetime of the

591
00:33:37,608 --> 00:33:41,568
project to provide a funding mechanism by which the

592
00:33:41,608 --> 00:33:44,228
objectives of the skills plan can be delivered.

593
00:33:45,008 --> 00:33:47,988
Could you just expand on that thinking for me, please?

594
00:33:48,888 --> 00:33:52,468

The necessity, how it would be secured, how it would work in practice.

595
00:33:53,748 --> 00:33:55,868
Yes, of course. Kate Hills for the County Council.

596
00:33:56,488 --> 00:33:56,788
So,

597
00:33:59,528 --> 00:34:00,448
let me get my thoughts straight.

598
00:34:03,768 --> 00:34:04,108
Sorry.

599
00:34:04,868 --> 00:34:07,728
No, that's fine. Take your time. That's absolutely fine.

600
00:34:08,968 --> 00:34:09,808
So yeah. So

601
00:34:10,868 --> 00:34:14,768
the money would be secured to ensure that the skills plan

602
00:34:14,848 --> 00:34:15,629
is implemented.

603
00:34:18,328 --> 00:34:22,188
We've read it alongside the community benefit fund and feel they're two very

604
00:34:22,248 --> 00:34:24,328
different documents with two very different

605
00:34:25,468 --> 00:34:26,368
sets of outputs.

606
00:34:27,629 --> 00:34:31,208
One being much more community-based, the other being much more economy-based.

607

00:34:32,968 --> 00:34:33,308
So,

608
00:34:36,848 --> 00:34:40,609
as we see, we would likely be delivery partners through the Skills Hub,

609
00:34:40,708 --> 00:34:41,669
Business Lincolnshire,

610
00:34:42,488 --> 00:34:45,268
and a couple of other teams within that economic development function.

611
00:34:45,649 --> 00:34:48,808
It would sort of go towards that implementation,

612
00:34:50,649 --> 00:34:52,528
and also the monitoring of

613
00:34:54,448 --> 00:34:57,968
the targets, which might actually be by South Holland, but

614
00:34:58,008 --> 00:34:59,628
that's part of that package.

615
00:35:00,728 --> 00:35:03,528
It's actually a conversation

616
00:35:04,488 --> 00:35:06,348
that we've had with a number of other

617
00:35:07,668 --> 00:35:11,308
NSIP schemes, in particular on Hackington Fen, where

618
00:35:11,768 --> 00:35:14,568
it was agreed and sort of discussed around

619
00:35:15,628 --> 00:35:19,348
the most appropriate route to secure the monies would be through a Section 106,

620
00:35:20,388 --> 00:35:23,888
because it wasn't felt that the money could be secured by way

621
00:35:23,988 --> 00:35:27,508
of a requirement or sort of control within the plan.

622
00:35:33,548 --> 00:35:34,168
And then,

623
00:35:35,928 --> 00:35:38,488
so yeah, very much as we said within our

624
00:35:39,408 --> 00:35:40,728
initial response and at

625
00:35:41,588 --> 00:35:45,428
ISH1, that this is to secure that

626
00:35:46,628 --> 00:35:50,408
actual implementation and it not get lost so that the benefits are felt

627
00:35:52,748 --> 00:35:53,468
for South Holland.

628
00:35:54,208 --> 00:35:54,708
Thank you.

629
00:35:56,168 --> 00:35:58,208
Would the applicant like to comment?

630
00:35:59,108 --> 00:36:00,728
Yes. Taylor Powell for the applicant.

631
00:36:01,968 --> 00:36:05,488
As alluded to in part by Lincolnshire County Council there, I think the concern

632
00:36:05,528 --> 00:36:09,368
from the applicant's perspective is that it's not appropriate

633
00:36:09,568 --> 00:36:13,268
or even necessarily lawful for such a fund to be

634
00:36:13,308 --> 00:36:17,208
secured by requirements. And in this regard, I would point the examining

635
00:36:17,248 --> 00:36:20,628
authority to the post-issue specific hearing one note

636
00:36:21,108 --> 00:36:25,088
regarding the lawfulness of securing the community benefit fund

637
00:36:25,568 --> 00:36:27,568
and the reference that that note makes to the-

638
00:36:28,656 --> 00:36:32,016
The long history of case law in respect of

639
00:36:32,296 --> 00:36:35,916
material planning considerations when it comes to securing funds like this.

640
00:36:37,756 --> 00:36:41,056
But I suppose beyond the securing

641
00:36:41,096 --> 00:36:41,776
mechanism,

642
00:36:42,576 --> 00:36:46,396
I think the other concern the applicant has is that the justification for the

643
00:36:46,436 --> 00:36:50,296
sum isn't clear. It's not transparent what it's intended that money will

644
00:36:50,336 --> 00:36:54,196
be spent on. In particular, given it refers to the lifetime

645
00:36:54,256 --> 00:36:54,896

of the scheme,

646
00:36:56,876 --> 00:37:00,836
if you read through the plan, clearly a lot of the focus of the scheme is

647
00:37:00,876 --> 00:37:02,796
on the construction phase, when there might be

648
00:37:03,796 --> 00:37:06,376
plenty of opportunities for external local suppliers.

649
00:37:06,456 --> 00:37:06,556
But

650
00:37:07,536 --> 00:37:11,516
the commitment as put forward by the County Council seeks

651
00:37:11,556 --> 00:37:15,456
£50,000 a year per annum for the lifetime, and so it's not clear

652
00:37:15,496 --> 00:37:19,196
what the intention would be in respect of the operational 40 years of the

653
00:37:19,216 --> 00:37:23,156
scheme when it's somewhat established and there's a clear staff

654
00:37:23,196 --> 00:37:24,016
that are working there.

655
00:37:25,916 --> 00:37:26,816
So on that basis,

656
00:37:27,616 --> 00:37:30,956
I think there's a question around what the

657
00:37:31,596 --> 00:37:34,636
planning basis is from the council to secure that.

658
00:37:35,236 --> 00:37:38,776

But I would also pass over to Ms. Howe to explain it from the

659
00:37:39,516 --> 00:37:42,636
applicant's perspective, and she can refer to the details.

660
00:37:42,736 --> 00:37:42,936
But

661
00:37:43,936 --> 00:37:47,016
the commitments are secured within the skills plan,

662
00:37:47,616 --> 00:37:50,416
and the applicant is going to have to

663
00:37:51,816 --> 00:37:55,636
deliver those in accordance with that plan, as overseen by South Holland

664
00:37:55,676 --> 00:37:57,796
District Council. And what I'll pass to Ms.

665
00:37:57,836 --> 00:37:59,916
Howe to just speak to briefly is that

666
00:38:00,776 --> 00:38:04,116
the types of commitments that are committed to in that plan are not

667
00:38:06,016 --> 00:38:09,896
done without a cost, and I'll let her speak to that from her experience when it

668
00:38:09,936 --> 00:38:12,096
comes to implementing such plans.

669
00:38:12,576 --> 00:38:16,396
Could you also pass comment on the suggestion that it would be secured via a

670
00:38:16,436 --> 00:38:18,496
Section 106? I don't know whether that's you

671

00:38:19,376 --> 00:38:19,836
or your colleague.

672
00:38:20,496 --> 00:38:22,756
Yeah, sure. I can speak to this in the first instance.

673
00:38:24,096 --> 00:38:27,916
We can speak separately in

674
00:38:28,876 --> 00:38:30,016
respect of the

675
00:38:30,976 --> 00:38:34,836
Section 106, because we did also address that within the post-issue specific

676
00:38:34,876 --> 00:38:38,796
hearing one note. So I'd refer, in respect of the lawfulness of the discussion in

677
00:38:38,856 --> 00:38:42,736
that note. But the applicant would expect that

678
00:38:42,796 --> 00:38:46,016
it would be with South Holland District Council, given it's the relevant planning

679
00:38:46,276 --> 00:38:50,056
authority in that instance, rather than Lincolnshire County Council, if a Section

680
00:38:50,156 --> 00:38:51,456
106 was to be agreed.

681
00:38:52,456 --> 00:38:56,136
And the engagement that the applicant has had with South Holland District Council

682
00:38:56,856 --> 00:38:59,616
hasn't indicated that that's an intention from that council.

683
00:39:00,856 --> 00:39:03,696

But yes, the applicant would consider that's the appropriate council, particularly

684
00:39:03,736 --> 00:39:07,496
given, as we've heard today, the concerns about the local area

685
00:39:07,536 --> 00:39:10,156
benefiting from this rather than the broader county.

686
00:39:10,876 --> 00:39:11,876
But I'll pass to Ms. Howe-

687
00:39:12,036 --> 00:39:12,357
Thank you ...

688
00:39:12,395 --> 00:39:13,296
in respect of the plan.

689
00:39:14,156 --> 00:39:15,096
As to have the applicant,

690
00:39:16,076 --> 00:39:20,056
just linking it back to the outlined skills plan, I think it's important to

691
00:39:20,116 --> 00:39:23,056
note that the implementation of the plan

692
00:39:24,856 --> 00:39:26,996
will require substantial resource

693
00:39:28,156 --> 00:39:29,116
from the applicant,

694
00:39:30,396 --> 00:39:32,596
and add cost to the project as well.

695
00:39:33,956 --> 00:39:37,856
There's writing the final skills plan and the work to do that, but more

696

00:39:38,096 --> 00:39:41,976
then substantial will be the fact that these commitments are written into

697
00:39:42,016 --> 00:39:43,016
contracts of

698
00:39:43,996 --> 00:39:47,776
contractors and will need to be deliver, and that will have a

699
00:39:48,096 --> 00:39:52,016
cost to it in terms of staff time and also increasing costs

700
00:39:52,076 --> 00:39:55,976
of the project. And that's not quantified within the skills plan,

701
00:39:56,376 --> 00:40:00,256
but that will be the case. It'll be

702
00:40:00,316 --> 00:40:02,616
more expensive to

703
00:40:04,296 --> 00:40:08,276
try and recruit, use a local company potentially, or recruit a

704
00:40:08,316 --> 00:40:09,976
local person, or

705
00:40:11,116 --> 00:40:14,276
use apprentices rather than experienced workers,

706
00:40:15,136 --> 00:40:18,976
do schools outreach, et cetera. These will all add time

707
00:40:19,036 --> 00:40:22,776
and cost to the project. So I think it's just, yeah, important to

708
00:40:22,836 --> 00:40:23,756
note that there is,

709
00:40:24,976 --> 00:40:28,736

via the implementation of this plan, there is already an implicit cost there for

710
00:40:28,776 --> 00:40:29,376
the applicant.

711
00:40:30,676 --> 00:40:33,236
Thank you. Just turning back to Lincolnshire in the room.

712
00:40:34,716 --> 00:40:38,136
In terms of providing additional justification for

713
00:40:38,856 --> 00:40:42,736
the fund, is that something you'd be able to take away and put in writing

714
00:40:42,776 --> 00:40:43,596
for deadline four?

715
00:40:44,416 --> 00:40:44,896
Yes, of course.

716
00:40:45,116 --> 00:40:48,716
Yeah. So we could have that action point. Sorry, Lincolnshire online now this time.

717
00:40:48,756 --> 00:40:50,816
I realize you've got your hand up as well.

718
00:40:52,476 --> 00:40:54,716
Yeah. Joel Semakula, Lincolnshire County Council.

719
00:40:55,216 --> 00:40:56,496
Madam, it's dealing with that point

720
00:40:57,476 --> 00:41:01,376
exactly. We've received the applicant's position

721
00:41:01,416 --> 00:41:04,916
in that post ISH1 note, and there's a clear dispute between us and the applicant

722
00:41:04,976 --> 00:41:08,896
relating to the lawfulness of Lincolnshire County Council's

723
00:41:08,936 --> 00:41:11,416
request here and further information required

724
00:41:12,296 --> 00:41:15,936
in terms of that justification. Our starting point, of course, is that this is

725
00:41:16,316 --> 00:41:19,016
one of the benefits relied on by the applicant, and if that's going to be

726
00:41:19,956 --> 00:41:22,976
given weight in the balance, it's something that has to be properly secured.

727
00:41:23,036 --> 00:41:25,456
But taking away what we've heard today,

728
00:41:26,636 --> 00:41:27,636
we really

729
00:41:28,456 --> 00:41:32,276
do need to provide a proper full response to that legal case and set out

730
00:41:33,736 --> 00:41:37,656
our own position there for you to consider, which we'll do, and

731
00:41:37,696 --> 00:41:40,176
then provide any additional information regarding that justification.

732
00:41:41,636 --> 00:41:43,096
I think we've said by deadline four.

733
00:41:44,616 --> 00:41:45,396
Thank you very much.

734

00:41:47,356 --> 00:41:49,036
I'm just going to turn to South Holland, Mr.

735
00:41:49,456 --> 00:41:53,176
Malkin, and then I'll come to you. So South Holland, do you have anything to

736
00:41:53,256 --> 00:41:53,496
add

737
00:41:54,916 --> 00:41:56,536
in respect of a proposed fund?

738
00:42:02,716 --> 00:42:05,896
Yeah. Sorry. I'm having a few connection issues. No, we don't have anything to add.

739
00:42:05,936 --> 00:42:07,056
We're happy with that. Thank you.

740
00:42:07,976 --> 00:42:09,596
Thank you. Mr. Malkin?

741
00:42:11,496 --> 00:42:15,196
Yes. There may be arguments to be had about the legality

742
00:42:15,976 --> 00:42:18,396
or otherwise of setting up community funds.

743
00:42:19,036 --> 00:42:19,336
But

744
00:42:20,296 --> 00:42:23,456
projects of this sort, as a matter of goodwill

745
00:42:23,876 --> 00:42:27,836
towards local residents impacted by developments such

746
00:42:27,896 --> 00:42:28,276
as this-

747

00:42:29,776 --> 00:42:30,416
are shown

748
00:42:31,296 --> 00:42:35,096
that sort of goodwill with community funding for

749
00:42:35,576 --> 00:42:39,556
my definition of local projects, such as maintaining the

750
00:42:39,596 --> 00:42:40,656
village hall or

751
00:42:41,476 --> 00:42:44,136
providing sports facilities and that sort of thing.

752
00:42:44,656 --> 00:42:48,036
Will there be any sort of that goodwill shown by Meridian?

753
00:42:49,655 --> 00:42:50,416
Would you like to respond?

754
00:42:50,896 --> 00:42:53,456
Yes. Taylor Power for the applicant. I might pass to Mr.

755
00:42:54,016 --> 00:42:57,756
David Vernon, who can speak to the community benefit fund that is being offered by

756
00:42:57,796 --> 00:42:58,396
the applicant.

757
00:42:59,196 --> 00:43:02,976
Yeah. Thank you. David Vernon on behalf of the applicant.

758
00:43:04,596 --> 00:43:08,516
Yeah. As we've been clear with from stage one consultation

759
00:43:08,576 --> 00:43:12,516
all the way through the sort of process, there will be a community benefit

760

00:43:12,576 --> 00:43:15,416
fund offered by the scheme.

761
00:43:16,596 --> 00:43:20,336
There are three avenues to that. One is through

762
00:43:20,376 --> 00:43:21,496
with parish councils,

763
00:43:22,316 --> 00:43:25,916
and I've been discussing with them for now two, three years on the

764
00:43:25,956 --> 00:43:29,476
detail of that and continue to have meetings regarding the fund.

765
00:43:31,016 --> 00:43:34,036
There will be a second avenue through a third-party administered

766
00:43:34,676 --> 00:43:38,196
community initiative fund, which will be third party managed.

767
00:43:39,176 --> 00:43:43,036
And so there will be a board of representatives there, where

768
00:43:43,116 --> 00:43:46,836
anybody within a defined area, and we are still at the inception

769
00:43:47,156 --> 00:43:50,076
point with all of it. So there'll be terms of reference drafted,

770
00:43:51,336 --> 00:43:54,856
where we will be able to define where people will be able to apply
for that money

771
00:43:54,916 --> 00:43:58,796
from, and then working with the likes of the local authority, South
Holland

772
00:43:58,876 --> 00:44:02,696
and Lincolnshire as well on a more, we've termed it, a strategic
fund,

773
00:44:02,776 --> 00:44:04,496
but looking at what else can be done

774
00:44:05,396 --> 00:44:08,596
on wider strategic points to assist locally as well.

775
00:44:08,656 --> 00:44:12,376
So there absolutely will be funds available there that local

776
00:44:12,416 --> 00:44:14,876
people close to the project will be able to apply to.

777
00:44:17,376 --> 00:44:19,616
Thank you. Mr. Malkin, does that answer your question?

778
00:44:19,856 --> 00:44:19,996
Yeah.

779
00:44:20,036 --> 00:44:23,616
Does anybody else have any comments on funding in relation to

780
00:44:23,676 --> 00:44:24,476
socioeconomics?

781
00:44:25,916 --> 00:44:29,396
No. I'll move on to bullet five. This is to

782
00:44:30,536 --> 00:44:33,816
both kind... Lincolnshire, as you're in the room, and then I'll turn
to

783
00:44:34,456 --> 00:44:38,416
South Holland as well. As with this morning, with agriculture soils,

784
00:44:38,556 --> 00:44:41,236
I'm aware of your position in respect of cumulative

785
00:44:42,076 --> 00:44:45,596
effects as detailed in various documents, including your local
impact reports.

786
00:44:46,096 --> 00:44:49,436
Other than asking if you have any further comments in terms of

787
00:44:49,496 --> 00:44:51,916
cumulative issues or,

788
00:44:53,116 --> 00:44:56,856
the approach taken in the environmental statement on

789
00:44:56,916 --> 00:45:00,836
cumulative effects. I don't have any specific questions for you, but I

790
00:45:00,856 --> 00:45:04,596
would like to give you this opportunity if you would like to raise any

791
00:45:04,656 --> 00:45:05,476
cumulative issues.

792
00:45:06,716 --> 00:45:08,976
Thank you. Katie Hills for the County Council.

793
00:45:09,936 --> 00:45:13,756
I don't think we have anything specifically additional to raise.

794
00:45:13,916 --> 00:45:15,016
Just to reiterate

795
00:45:16,136 --> 00:45:19,616
the comments that we've made sort of through the process, in particular in relation

796
00:45:19,696 --> 00:45:23,356
to the 60-minute drive time, which we spoke about at

797
00:45:23,436 --> 00:45:24,096
ISH1,

798
00:45:24,916 --> 00:45:26,756
and obviously some of the schemes that

799
00:45:27,736 --> 00:45:31,376
could potentially be included in the cumulative impact where those drive

800
00:45:31,436 --> 00:45:32,296
times overlap,

801
00:45:33,236 --> 00:45:36,056
so you're getting sort of pressure coming from more than one direction.

802
00:45:38,316 --> 00:45:41,956
Thank you. Same question to South Holland District Council, if you have

803
00:45:42,016 --> 00:45:44,476
anything additional in terms of cumulative.

804
00:45:47,696 --> 00:45:51,096
Yes. Hi, good afternoon. Sam Tuer for South Holland District Council.

805
00:45:51,536 --> 00:45:55,396
No, nothing further than what was mentioned in yesterday's session. Thank you.

806
00:45:56,176 --> 00:46:00,096
Thank you. Is there anybody in the room who would like to discuss any cumulative

807
00:46:00,476 --> 00:46:01,576
issues, or online?

808
00:46:03,156 --> 00:46:03,276
No.

809
00:46:04,116 --> 00:46:07,236
Well, that ends my questions on

810
00:46:07,536 --> 00:46:11,476
socioeconomics. So we'll move to agenda item seven, which is any

811
00:46:11,536 --> 00:46:15,416
other matters. Mr. Smith, I believe you indicated this morning that

812
00:46:15,476 --> 00:46:15,876
you had

813
00:46:16,856 --> 00:46:19,036
something to discuss under this agenda item.

814
00:46:19,876 --> 00:46:21,336
Not myself. It might have been somebody else.

815
00:46:21,436 --> 00:46:23,256
I think that was me, Mr. Reins.

816
00:46:23,296 --> 00:46:25,436
Sorry, Mr. Reins. Please-

817
00:46:26,976 --> 00:46:27,056
Yes

818
00:46:27,055 --> 00:46:27,636
... please go ahead.

819
00:46:27,696 --> 00:46:28,296
I've got some

820
00:46:29,156 --> 00:46:32,656
sort of comments I'd like to make to put these solar farms in a
wider

821
00:46:32,716 --> 00:46:33,656
context, really.

822
00:46:34,976 --> 00:46:37,116
At the first hearing, Meridian

823
00:46:38,036 --> 00:46:39,536
quoted urgency as

824
00:46:41,156 --> 00:46:43,656
a need for the large-scale projects.

825
00:46:44,296 --> 00:46:47,316
And again, it was urgency yesterday on

826
00:46:48,196 --> 00:46:49,356
building on the floodplain

827
00:46:50,496 --> 00:46:54,476
as overriding reason why they're doing that because of the urgency

828
00:46:54,536 --> 00:46:55,176
of the project.

829
00:46:57,796 --> 00:47:01,476
Like I say, I would like to talk a little bit about the urgency, its effect on

830
00:47:02,496 --> 00:47:06,476
climate change or solar farms' effect on climate change, and

831
00:47:06,576 --> 00:47:09,216
some alternative sites for solar panels.

832
00:47:10,136 --> 00:47:11,576
Does this relate to

833
00:47:13,076 --> 00:47:14,556
socioeconomics or is it wide?

834
00:47:14,876 --> 00:47:16,396
It's just a general, wider-

835
00:47:16,475 --> 00:47:16,556
Right. Okay

836
00:47:16,575 --> 00:47:19,316
... wider thing. But this is why I've left it to any other business.

837

00:47:19,696 --> 00:47:21,456
No, that's fine.

838
00:47:22,276 --> 00:47:25,996
Okay. We've had a long hot summer. It's clear that climate change is

839
00:47:26,036 --> 00:47:26,496
happening.

840
00:47:27,956 --> 00:47:31,716
And I'm not a climate change denier, but we must not have a knee-jerk

841
00:47:31,836 --> 00:47:35,316
or ill-informed reaction to these events in the

842
00:47:35,756 --> 00:47:38,996
belief that our actions will make a significant difference.

843
00:47:39,276 --> 00:47:40,036
They will not.

844
00:47:41,956 --> 00:47:45,456
The UK produces around 0.7% of global carbon dioxide

845
00:47:45,496 --> 00:47:49,396
emissions. Generation of electricity is around 10% of

846
00:47:49,456 --> 00:47:50,716
that 0.7%.

847
00:47:52,076 --> 00:47:55,496
As a country, we are committed to net zero by 2050,

848
00:47:56,096 --> 00:47:59,616
with the aim of keeping global temperature rise to two degrees centigrade.

849
00:48:00,536 --> 00:48:04,276
If all of our electricity was produced from zero carbon sources from tomorrow,

850
00:48:04,896 --> 00:48:08,876
its contribution to keeping that rise to two degrees centigrade would

851
00:48:08,916 --> 00:48:11,976
be 0.07% of that two degrees, which is

852
00:48:13,256 --> 00:48:16,256
between one and two thousandths of a degree centigrade.

853
00:48:17,596 --> 00:48:20,216
That's the maximum that we can achieve.

854
00:48:22,056 --> 00:48:22,416
We have

855
00:48:23,236 --> 00:48:26,916
time to make good, considered decisions because of this very

856
00:48:27,076 --> 00:48:30,856
small effect on a measurement that really matters, which is the temperature

857
00:48:30,936 --> 00:48:31,276
rise

858
00:48:33,416 --> 00:48:36,856
This is not an argument for doing nothing, but we must be aware of our

859
00:48:36,916 --> 00:48:40,176
limitations and proceed on a rational and considered basis.

860
00:48:42,536 --> 00:48:46,136
Alternative sites for solar panels and batteries must not be

861
00:48:46,596 --> 00:48:50,556
confined to which field we can put them in, which is a sort of approach we've

862
00:48:50,576 --> 00:48:51,796

had at this hearing.

863
00:48:53,836 --> 00:48:55,536
We must have more creative thinking.

864
00:48:56,876 --> 00:49:00,836
They need to be on domestic and business roofs, over car parks, on warehouses,

865
00:49:00,916 --> 00:49:04,136
in brownfield and industrial sites, and I'm aware they've looked for brownfield

866
00:49:04,196 --> 00:49:05,835
sites and there's none locally,

867
00:49:06,916 --> 00:49:09,136
but that probably excludes a whole area.

868
00:49:10,476 --> 00:49:13,696
When combined with battery storage, I know from my own experience how

869
00:49:13,756 --> 00:49:16,036
transformative they can be, significantly

870
00:49:17,116 --> 00:49:21,056
reducing electricity imported from the grid, reducing overall demand,

871
00:49:21,876 --> 00:49:24,536
and with corresponding consumer cost savings.

872
00:49:25,416 --> 00:49:27,996
Any excess power is exported and used locally.

873
00:49:28,656 --> 00:49:32,636
When these resources are combined in virtual power plants, the grid can

874
00:49:32,656 --> 00:49:34,916
be supported in times of high demand.

875
00:49:37,196 --> 00:49:40,656
This alternative use of solar and batteries, together with demand-side

876
00:49:40,696 --> 00:49:44,576
flexibility, is the engineering solution to the transition in the electricity

877
00:49:44,696 --> 00:49:48,096
sector, negating the need for large-scale solar farms,

878
00:49:48,976 --> 00:49:51,936
and requires a change of thinking and approach.

879
00:49:52,636 --> 00:49:56,476
It would not only benefit consumers directly but also provides long-term and

880
00:49:56,596 --> 00:49:58,676
skilled jobs in all areas of the country.

881
00:49:59,536 --> 00:50:03,436
Large-scale solar farms are required to go through the NSIP process, hence why

882
00:50:03,476 --> 00:50:04,256
we're here today.

883
00:50:05,316 --> 00:50:08,056
They also face significant public opposition.

884
00:50:09,476 --> 00:50:12,016
In contrast, rooftop solar is not opposed.

885
00:50:12,076 --> 00:50:14,196
It is widely seen as a common-sense approach.

886
00:50:14,696 --> 00:50:17,236
In most cases, requires no involvement of planning.

887

00:50:17,756 --> 00:50:20,376
Mr. Owens, I'm sorry to interrupt you.

888
00:50:20,676 --> 00:50:20,836
Yeah.

889
00:50:21,116 --> 00:50:24,656
You're, in effect, giving me a closing statement which is slightly

890
00:50:25,096 --> 00:50:26,376
off agenda.

891
00:50:26,656 --> 00:50:26,896
True.

892
00:50:26,936 --> 00:50:29,056
Which is fine. Do you have much more?

893
00:50:29,296 --> 00:50:31,656
No, I can move on to my conclusion now.

894
00:50:31,696 --> 00:50:31,856
That-

895
00:50:31,936 --> 00:50:33,236
I'm almost there

896
00:50:33,455 --> 00:50:34,816
... couple of minutes at maximum, please.

897
00:50:34,836 --> 00:50:35,356
Yeah, maximum.

898
00:50:35,356 --> 00:50:35,576
Thank you.

899
00:50:35,616 --> 00:50:36,136
No problem.

900
00:50:41,975 --> 00:50:45,556
I'll just say, by allowing large-scale solar farms to be run by

commercial

901
00:50:45,656 --> 00:50:48,476
companies that take the bulk of the grid capacity for

902
00:50:48,556 --> 00:50:52,536
solar generation and battery storage for the sole

903
00:50:52,596 --> 00:50:56,136
purpose of making profits out of the consumer is not the way

904
00:50:56,196 --> 00:50:57,996
forward. It will freeze out domestic

905
00:50:58,896 --> 00:51:01,816
and business consumers from having the opportunity of

906
00:51:01,876 --> 00:51:04,536
benefiting directly from this technology.

907
00:51:05,536 --> 00:51:09,436
In conclusion, the need for urgent action in this field is not

908
00:51:09,496 --> 00:51:13,216
as desperate as some would have us believe when the actual effect we
can

909
00:51:13,296 --> 00:51:16,396
have as a nation on climate change is considered.

910
00:51:17,096 --> 00:51:20,656
The alternative sites of benefits including significantly reducing

911
00:51:20,676 --> 00:51:24,316
electricity bills for the consumer where solar panels and/or
batteries are

912
00:51:24,356 --> 00:51:28,256
installed, reduced demand, no local opposition, no

913
00:51:28,396 --> 00:51:32,376

NSIP process required, the opportunity to participate in virtual

914
00:51:32,416 --> 00:51:36,116
power plants, reduction in transmission losses through local generation

915
00:51:36,236 --> 00:51:40,176
use, less infrastructure required, retaining farmland for food

916
00:51:40,216 --> 00:51:42,456
production and thereby food security.

917
00:51:42,596 --> 00:51:46,556
So I just wanted to make those points to give a bit of background to where we are

918
00:51:46,616 --> 00:51:49,716
and what effect these solar farms can actually have. So that's all.

919
00:51:49,756 --> 00:51:50,856
Thank you very much for hearing me.

920
00:51:51,076 --> 00:51:52,896
Thank you. Will you put that in writing?

921
00:51:53,116 --> 00:51:53,876
I will do, yes.

922
00:51:57,236 --> 00:51:57,676
Andrew Malcolm.

923
00:51:58,596 --> 00:51:58,896
Are we-

924
00:52:00,276 --> 00:52:01,136
These are on the agenda.

925
00:52:01,556 --> 00:52:02,876
It is on the agenda?

926
00:52:03,056 --> 00:52:03,116

Yeah.

927
00:52:03,136 --> 00:52:03,756
What... Right.

928
00:52:04,036 --> 00:52:04,416
Sort of.

929
00:52:06,056 --> 00:52:09,496
No, in all seriousness, I'm more than happy to be lenient.

930
00:52:09,556 --> 00:52:09,996
Well, they-

931
00:52:10,596 --> 00:52:13,156
Can you tell me what you're about to talk about?

932
00:52:13,376 --> 00:52:17,316
Yeah. They reference two of the questions that were in your document
that

933
00:52:17,376 --> 00:52:17,576
was

934
00:52:19,016 --> 00:52:20,296
published. Um-

935
00:52:20,696 --> 00:52:21,476
On the agenda?

936
00:52:22,356 --> 00:52:26,196
Well, question 10.0.1, which is about the greenhouse gas

937
00:52:26,256 --> 00:52:26,716
assessment.

938
00:52:26,956 --> 00:52:29,716
No, that's in the examination questions.

939
00:52:29,836 --> 00:52:33,536
If you could put that in writing in your submission for

940
00:52:33,596 --> 00:52:34,296
deadline four.

941
00:52:34,396 --> 00:52:37,996
Okay. And the other one was question 19.0.1, fire

942
00:52:38,036 --> 00:52:38,396
water.

943
00:52:38,956 --> 00:52:41,156
Again, please do put that in writing. Mr.

944
00:52:41,476 --> 00:52:43,436
Smith, are you attempting to say that-

945
00:52:43,456 --> 00:52:44,416
Well, yes, in reference to

946
00:52:45,396 --> 00:52:49,196
section three today, as David just articulated, there's no doubt
that

947
00:52:49,256 --> 00:52:52,795
climate change is happening, and we need to do all we can to
mitigate that in terms

948
00:52:52,856 --> 00:52:56,736
of zero carbon generation. We also need

949
00:52:56,776 --> 00:52:59,116
to mitigate in terms of

950
00:53:00,016 --> 00:53:03,756
our lack of ability to import crops and food should climate

951
00:53:03,816 --> 00:53:04,236
change-

952
00:53:04,316 --> 00:53:08,076
I'm very sorry to interrupt you. Again, please could you put that in

writing?

953
00:53:08,136 --> 00:53:08,876
Most certainly.

954
00:53:08,916 --> 00:53:09,196
Thank you.

955
00:53:09,236 --> 00:53:09,916
Thank you for listening.

956
00:53:10,556 --> 00:53:14,476
Could I just make a two-paragraph closing statement

957
00:53:14,576 --> 00:53:14,696
on-

958
00:53:14,816 --> 00:53:15,496
No, I'm not. I'm

959
00:53:16,616 --> 00:53:17,356
really sorry.

960
00:53:18,856 --> 00:53:22,756
We have been quite lenient. It's not that we don't want to hear what you

961
00:53:22,796 --> 00:53:26,716
have to say. It's just a matter of fairness for everybody else who is

962
00:53:26,756 --> 00:53:30,196
participating. Please do put it in writing, and it will

963
00:53:30,676 --> 00:53:34,436
be treated exactly the same as if you had spoken to me

964
00:53:34,476 --> 00:53:34,756
today.

965
00:53:35,076 --> 00:53:35,356

Thank you.

966
00:53:35,536 --> 00:53:37,716
Thank you. I'll turn to the applicant.

967
00:53:37,776 --> 00:53:41,596
Is there anything you wish to say in response to what you've heard?

968
00:53:42,336 --> 00:53:43,636
Yes. Taylor Power for the applicant.

969
00:53:43,696 --> 00:53:47,056
I'll just say something very briefly, which is just to clarify that the

970
00:53:47,096 --> 00:53:50,396
references to urgency throughout the hearings over the last few days,

971
00:53:51,456 --> 00:53:55,296
by the applicant, have not been an individual assertion but

972
00:53:55,356 --> 00:53:59,096
rather in reference to the national policy set out under NPSEN1,

973
00:53:59,856 --> 00:54:03,676
under which this decision is made, and that policy is what

974
00:54:03,736 --> 00:54:07,536
sets the urgent need for new renewable energy, and it's on that

975
00:54:07,576 --> 00:54:09,856
policy that the applicant's relying.

976
00:54:09,956 --> 00:54:12,156
But just in order to be helpful to Mr.

977
00:54:12,316 --> 00:54:16,056
Owens and to the other members of MAG that are here today, I would also direct

978

00:54:16,156 --> 00:54:16,336
you,

979
00:54:17,316 --> 00:54:21,156
at deadline four to the further statement of need that is being produced, further

980
00:54:21,196 --> 00:54:24,976
to the examining authority's written questions, which will give

981
00:54:25,036 --> 00:54:28,736
even more information on that justification from the applicant's perspective and

982
00:54:28,776 --> 00:54:29,616
might be helpful

983
00:54:30,416 --> 00:54:32,556
to understanding the applicant's position on that.

984
00:54:34,556 --> 00:54:35,596
Thank you very much.

985
00:54:36,976 --> 00:54:40,276
Before we close, can I just check if there's anybody else in the room that wishes

986
00:54:40,336 --> 00:54:43,656
to raise any other matters on what we've discussed today

987
00:54:44,976 --> 00:54:47,056
or online? No. Right. We'll move

988
00:54:48,096 --> 00:54:49,816
to agenda item eight.

989
00:54:50,716 --> 00:54:53,996
A number of action points have been recorded today, and these will be published as

990
00:54:54,076 --> 00:54:57,296
usual on the project webpage as soon as possible.

991
00:54:57,916 --> 00:55:01,796
So this actually brings us to the end of issue-specific hearing four, and

992
00:55:01,856 --> 00:55:04,256
also the end of the timetabled hearings.

993
00:55:05,316 --> 00:55:08,856
As a panel and case team, we'd like to extend our thanks to all

994
00:55:08,916 --> 00:55:12,536
parties who've taken the time and effort to participate, and we really do

995
00:55:12,596 --> 00:55:16,296
value everybody's input. As a reminder, please note that all

996
00:55:16,336 --> 00:55:20,056
written summaries from those who have spoken today are invited for deadline

997
00:55:20,256 --> 00:55:22,236
four, which is the 27th of November.

998
00:55:22,756 --> 00:55:26,536
So thank you all once again. The time is now 3:55,

999
00:55:27,096 --> 00:55:30,856
and this issue-specific hearing is now closed. 2:55.

1000
00:55:31,296 --> 00:55:31,456
Sorry.

1001
00:55:32,456 --> 00:55:36,196
I've skipped forward. It's 2:55, and the issue-specific

1002
00:55:36,256 --> 00:55:37,876
hearing is now closed. Thank you.