

Holding the PM virtually, although a practical solution to a linear application, is not ideal. The communication in the Rule 6 letter regarding the PM is also confusing. For example; the instruction to "Please contact the case team.....if you require any support or assistance to attend the preliminary meeting either virtually or in person."...when the format of the PM is not offering an option to attend in person? Verbal communication in person can also foster understanding and trust, and this interactive approach helps to build valuable and professional, personal connections, especially early in the relationship between those taking part.

It is good that the OFH1 and OFH2 are being offered as in person/hybrid. It is disappointing that the ISHs are proposed to be virtual only and I hope this will be reconsidered for at least some of them which would benefit from an in person format. Being a linear application the approach could be taken to either hold a single topic ISH or grouped issues ISH relating to the Suffolk Onshore scheme, and then replicate the same issue(s) into an ISH(s) for the Kent Onshore scheme, (in effect, creating these into separate in person/hybrid ISHs close to the location of the schemes) rather than a succession of on-line remote meetings on an issue(s) affecting both areas.

The rationale for this as well as enabling local expertise (statutory organisations and knowledgeable individuals) to assist ExA in person, is although the topic may be the same, the impact - due to the distinct setting and receptors, will be very different. It would allow for the appropriate focus, time and depth of examination that is needed, on each element. This model would also support local supply chain economics (through venue and accommodation hire for ExA) and reduce carbon footprint for participants (likely to be greater in number than ExA team) to travel.

My direct experience during two previous NSIP DCO Hearings was that virtual hearings although removed the need for travel were very isolating, and had a negative impact on my mental health and well-being. I also doubted if my contribution was heard, as I felt invisible to the ExA, and it was hard to connect with them as a professional team. It is also very challenging physically (and evidenced as potentially damaging to your health) and emotionally exhausting to concentrate for long periods of time, looking at a digital screen so additional breaks may be needed. On a practical basis it is extremely difficult to view maps or plans at the same time as contribute to the discussion and assist the ExA in their tasks. Thank you for your kind consideration.