



Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

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| Project: | Sea Link |
| Hearing: | Transcript of Preliminary Meeting (PM) - Part 1 |
| Date: | 5 November 2025 |

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

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:05:16 - 00:00:40:18

Good morning. Before I begin, can I just confirm with the case team that I can be heard clearly and the live stream of this event has commenced. Thank you. The time is now 10:00, and I would like to welcome you all to this preliminary meeting for the application by National Grid Electricity Transmission for an order granting development consent for the sealing project. The proposed development comprises the reinforcement of the electricity transmission network between Kent and Suffolk. This would be achieved by a high voltage direct current link between the proposed Friston substation in Suffolk and the existing Richborough to Canterbury.

00:00:40:21 - 00:01:08:11

Four 400 kV overhead line close to Richborough in Kent. The proposed development would also require the construction and operation of converter stations and substations in Suffolk and Kent. My name is Sarah Holmes. I am a planning inspector and a chartered civil engineer, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the lead member of the panel to examine this application. I'm now going to ask my fellow panel members who have been appointed by the Secretary of State to examine this project to introduce themselves.

00:01:10:22 - 00:01:16:04

Good morning. My name is Stephen Ranney. I am a planning inspector and a chartered term planner.

00:01:16:16 - 00:01:22:11

Good morning. My name is Nancy Thomas. I am a planning inspector and a chartered town planner.

00:01:23:00 - 00:01:35:28

Good morning. My name is Doctor Richard Hunt. I'm a planning inspector and a chartered environmentalist. Good morning. My name is Luke Regan. I am a planning inspector and a chartered transport planner.

00:01:37:16 - 00:02:09:04

I can confirm that all members of the examining authority have made a formal declaration of interest, and there are no known conflicts of interest. With regard to examining this application, together we constitute the Examiners Authority or the Isa for this application. There are other colleagues from the Planning Inspectorate. With us today you will have all spoken to Caroline Allen and Happy occur. Our case officers in the joining conference. I would also like to introduce Louise Halloway, the case manager for the project. She is supported by our case manager, Ameena Khan and our case officer, Emma Smith.

00:02:09:12 - 00:02:27:21

In addition, there are technicians from CVS international who are attending solely for the purposes of managing the recording and live streaming of the hearing. If you have any questions regarding the application process in general, could I ask that you please email the case team who will be happy to help? I will now hand over to Doctor Hunt who will deal with the arrangements for this meeting.

00:02:29:15 - 00:03:00:14

I'll start with a few housekeeping matters which are specific to a virtual event. As some of you may not have attended such an event before. Firstly, can I ask that all audible notifications for electrical electronic devices be switched off? Please make sure that your cameras are switched off and that your microphones are switched to mute unless you are speaking. This will help to reduce background noise. No requests to be made for any special measures or arrangements to enable participation in the hearing. If you do need assistance, please speak to the case team.

00:03:01:27 - 00:03:22:28

Please note that the chat function in teams is not being used today, so please do not send any messages via the chat as it is not being monitored. If at any point in the meeting you can't hear us or you wish to speak can ask that you turn your camera on if it is turned off and use the raised hand function in teams. There may sometimes be a delay before we can acknowledge this.

00:03:24:27 - 00:03:56:25

Miss Allen and Miss Court will have explained what to do if you lose your connection. If there are more significant connection problems, we are able to adjourn for a short period. We'll take a short break after about an hour and a half. If medical or other reasons anyone requires a break at a specific time, could you please let the case team know and we can hopefully adjust the program to meet your needs for the purpose of identification and for the benefit of those who may listen to the digital recording later. Could I ask that? At every point at which you speak, you state your name.

00:03:57:08 - 00:04:02:03

If you're representing an organization or individual, please state who it is that you represent.

00:04:03:26 - 00:04:09:06

Does anybody have any questions or concerns about the technology or the general management of today's event?

00:04:12:20 - 00:04:51:09

Thank you. This hearing is being recorded. The digital recording will be made available on the project page of the National Infrastructure website. If you take part in the hearing, it is important that you understand that your comments will be recorded and that the digital recording will be published and retained, usually for a period of five years, from the Secretary of State's decision. As such, the Planning Inspectorate is subject to the General Data Protection Regulations. It is very unlikely that the WSA will ask you to put sensitive or personal information, such as your personal email addresses and economic, financial, cultural or health related matters into the public domain.

00:04:51:11 - 00:05:29:03

Indeed, we would actively encourage you not to do that. However, if for some reason you feel that it's necessary for you to refer to sensitive personal information, we would encourage you to speak to our

case team in the first instance. We would then explore with you whether the information could be provided in a written format, which could then be appropriately redacted before being published. Please bear in mind that the only official record of the proceedings is the digital recording that will be placed on the project page of the National Infrastructure website. Tweets, blogs and similar communications arising out of this meeting will not be accepted as evidence in the examination of this application.

00:05:29:22 - 00:05:30:18

Thank you.

00:05:32:07 - 00:05:51:13

This meeting will follow the agenda set out in the rule six letter. If you have a copy of that letter to hand, the agenda is at annex A. Could I now ask the applicant to share it on the screen as well? We're currently on item one of the agenda. I can see there is a hand up. Uh, the initials FM or MF. Sorry.

00:05:57:23 - 00:06:28:10

Yes. Good morning, Planning Inspectorate team. Ladies and gentlemen. Officers. Counsellors. Colleagues, I'm sorry to interrupt at this point, but I would like to just let you know two things. Um, as an experience from someone joining this important meeting virtually, when each planning inspector is speaking, it does not come up with their name underneath. It just says Planning Inspectorate. Oh one. It'd be really helpful because, um, to see the name of the person speaking.

00:06:28:12 - 00:07:02:12

So we are registered under our names, but you do not appear to be. And secondly, may I just say thank you very much, um, for this opportunity. However, when you say, does anyone have anything to ask before I move on, you do need to allow a little bit more time because I couldn't get unmuted and put my hand up before you had moved on. So. So I do apologize. It is this virtual environment, I'm afraid. But we do need a little bit more lag time before you look to see if anyone has raised their hands.

00:07:02:14 - 00:07:03:23

Thank you so much.

00:07:04:18 - 00:07:23:01

Uh, thank you for your comments. It's it's noted. Obviously, we did pause to allow comment. Uh, we will keep an eye on, uh, hands raised. Um, in terms of the names, I think we have all introduced ourselves, I'm afraid we can't amend that at this particular point in time. So.

00:07:26:05 - 00:07:36:05

Yeah, there are names in front of us. So if you are looking at your screens, you should be able to see our names on, uh, nametags in front of us. Hopefully.

00:07:37:24 - 00:07:46:09

We can only see your head and shoulder some pride when it goes into close up the long shot. We can't see the table to read it, I'm afraid.

00:07:51:24 - 00:07:52:27

Noted. Thank you.

00:07:54:17 - 00:08:24:20

I'm afraid there's nothing we can do about that at this point in time. Um, but there are only five of us, and we have introduced ourselves, so hopefully that will be sufficient for the purposes of the remainder of the meeting. Um, the rule six letter and the agenda are also available on the projects page of the National Infrastructure website. They can also be found in the examination library at reference PD 008. We'll introduce the agenda items in turn and make any introductory comments on them.

00:08:25:08 - 00:08:59:13

Following that, we'll invite the interested parties who've registered to speak on that item to comment. We will then invite comments from other parties. If at any point you wish to speak about an item on the agenda, we ask that you use the Microsoft Teams hand raising function. If you do not manage to ask your questions or raise your point at the relevant point of the meeting. There will be an opportunity at the end of the meeting for you to raise this under agenda item six. Any other matters? We anticipate that the preliminary meeting will take up to two hours to complete. Should the preliminary meeting take the full allotted time, we may need to take a mid-morning break.

00:08:59:21 - 00:09:19:17

If this happens, you'll need to switch off your camera and microphone for the duration of the break, and we will have to stop the live stream in order to give us clear recording files as a result. At the point, we recommence the meeting and restart the live stream. You will need to refresh your browser page to view the restarted stream. We will remind you of these arrangements should we need to adjourn.

00:09:21:13 - 00:09:23:23

Are there any comments on the procedure for speaking?

00:09:31:05 - 00:09:59:00

I can see that no hands have gone up, so I'll move on. This is a working meeting, and we intend to run it fairly and efficiently, allowing everyone who wishes to do so to participate. However, we'll endeavor to make sure that your, your and our contributions are as to the point and is focused as possible so that we make the best use of the time available and allow everyone who wishes to speak an opportunity to do so. We hope that you'll support us in this endeavor.

00:10:00:15 - 00:10:31:24

Notes of today's meeting are being taken, and these will be placed on the project page of the National Infrastructure website, alongside the digital recording, as soon as practicable after the close of the preliminary meeting. For the purposes of the notes and recordings, when you do speak. Could you state your name? And if you're representing someone whom it is you represent? Please bear in mind that the only official record of today's proceedings are the Inspectorate notes and the digital recordings. Tweets, blogs and similar communications arising out of this meeting will not be accepted as evidence in the examination of this application.

00:10:32:25 - 00:11:09:04

The case team have provided me with a list of the interested parties who have expressed a wish to be heard today. At this point in the agenda, I would normally ask everyone to introduce themselves and the agenda item they wish to speak on, but given the number of participants and in the interests of time, I will instead ask the applicant councils and the main statutory organisations that intend to speak to introduce themselves. And I will then read out the remaining parties names for those people, for the applicants, councils and the main statutory organisations. When I say your name, please switch on your camera and microphone, introduce yourself stating your name, your title, Mr.

00:11:09:06 - 00:11:19:00

and Mrs. Miss etc. and who it is you represent. For example, Mr. Joe Bloggs, local resident and first, can I ask the applicant to introduce themselves?

00:11:21:11 - 00:11:51:12

Thank you. Yes. Good morning. I appear for the applicant. My name is Sarah Carrier, King's counsel. I'm a barrister at Francis Taylor Building. Um, and I can be addressed as Miss Shaikh. I do also have members of my team with me here, and I'll introduce them now in case they need to contribute to assist you. Uh, there is, um, to my immediate left, there is Mr. Adrian Pierson, who is the project director. To my immediate right is Mr.

00:11:51:14 - 00:12:08:29

Seb Stevens, who is a senior project manager. To his right is Mr. James Parker, partner at BCP, who is the instructing external solicitor for the applicant. And then to my extreme left there is Miss Ali Leader and she is the senior consensus specialist.

00:12:13:07 - 00:12:20:02

Thank you, Miss Shake. Now, can I ask the local authorities and councils to introduce themselves if we start with them, Suffolk County Council.

00:12:25:21 - 00:12:26:08

Sir.

00:12:26:19 - 00:12:49:27

Hopefully I can be heard. Um, my name is Michael Bedford, King's counsel. Uh, I'm appearing for Suffolk County Council. Although there are some other members of the Suffolk County Council team here, um, and part of this virtual meeting, I don't expect they will need to speak, so I won't introduce those to you unless you particularly wish me to do so. Thank you.

00:12:51:03 - 00:13:00:07

Thank you, Mr. Bedford. No. That's fine. Um, can I just ask the applicant if they could possibly take down the agenda so that we can see the parties more clearly? Thank you.

00:13:00:13 - 00:13:01:26

Yes, we'll do that now.

00:13:06:06 - 00:13:08:18

Next we have East Suffolk Council.

00:13:11:12 - 00:13:12:03

Good morning.

00:13:12:05 - 00:13:36:11

I appear for East Suffolk Council. My name is Mark Westman Smith, King's counsel and barrister at Francis Taylor Building. And I have with me today Brian Greenwood, who is a partner at Clyde and Co LLP, and Graham Studley, who is the principal planner and solar lead at East Suffolk Council. Thank you.

00:13:37:07 - 00:13:41:05

Thank you. Now, if I could have Thanet District Council.

00:13:46:17 - 00:13:50:25

Good morning everyone. Ian Livingstone, Mr. Livingstone district council.

00:13:54:21 - 00:14:00:22

Thank you. Next we have Friston parish and substation action savvy Suffolk.

00:14:05:18 - 00:14:16:01

Hello. My name is. I do apologize, I've had problems with my laptops. I'm on my phone this morning. Um, my name is Michael Mahoney and I represent Friston Parish Council. There's nobody else here with me today.

00:14:17:06 - 00:14:20:09

Thank you. We have great Glenna and parish council.

00:14:34:06 - 00:14:37:20

We'll come back to Greg Lemon. Miles parish council.

00:14:41:15 - 00:14:47:27

Good morning. My name is Richard Cooper, and I'm representing Aylesford Parish Council.

00:14:48:25 - 00:14:51:19

Thank you, Snape town council.

00:15:04:24 - 00:15:06:29

We'll move on to Woodbridge Town Council.

00:15:10:05 - 00:15:13:21

Good morning. I'm Robin Sanders, representing Woodbridge town council.

00:15:14:11 - 00:15:22:27

Hey, Mr. Sanders. Um, I think that is all of the council's in attendance. Therefore, we can move on to the statutory bodies. We have the Environment Agency.

00:15:24:23 - 00:15:27:24

Sorry. There is a hand raised, uh, the initials G.B..

00:15:31:00 - 00:15:36:21

Good morning to you. I'm Geraldine Barker and representing South London Town Council.

00:15:40:10 - 00:15:41:09

Thank you, Miss Barker.

00:15:41:15 - 00:15:42:11

Thank you.

00:15:45:02 - 00:15:48:17

Now we can move on to the Environment Agency.

00:15:50:24 - 00:15:54:24

Good morning. I'm Morgan Harrington. I'm representing the Environment Agency.

00:15:56:26 - 00:16:01:14

Thank you. Uh, next. London gateway port limited.

00:16:04:20 - 00:16:05:05

Good morning.

00:16:05:07 - 00:16:05:22

Sir.

00:16:05:24 - 00:16:15:16

My name is Francis Gerald. I can be addressed as Mr. Tyrrell. I am a partner at Goddard LLP. Law firm. We are instructed by and represent London Gateway Ports Limited.

00:16:16:14 - 00:16:20:14

Thank you. Uh, National highways.

00:16:22:23 - 00:16:32:13

Good morning again, sir. Uh, Jeremy Bloom. Uh, I have representing National Highways on this project. I'm happy to be addressed as Mr. Bloom.

00:16:33:13 - 00:16:36:23

Thank you. Port of London. Authority.

00:16:39:06 - 00:16:54:27

Yes, I'm Mrs. Vicky Fowler. I'm a solicitor and partner at Gowling L.G., representing the Port of London Authority, and I'm joined by Ms. Lucy Owen, who's deputy development director at the Port of London Authority. Thank you.

00:16:57:00 - 00:17:02:03

Thank you. We have Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths national landscape partnership.

00:17:14:00 - 00:17:17:19

And we'll move on to Suffolk Constabulary.

00:17:29:04 - 00:18:15:03

I'll now read out the interested parties that are also in attendance at the session. So we have James Burton and Fiona Gilmour from Suffolk Energy Action Solutions, Peter Lorenzo and Carol O'Shea from Save Minster Marshes, Peter Hewitt from IP 17 Good Neighbour Scheme, Richard Thompson from CBRE, Kent Teresa Thorne, from White Arch Residential Retirement Park, Emma Waller, from Kent Wildlife Trust, Henry Young, from Britain, Pears Arts and the Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation Maxine Ansell, Luigi Beltran de Linda Byway, Marianne Fellows, Keith Hintze, Carl Piersall, Ian Searle and Adrian Smith.

00:18:15:28 - 00:18:22:06

Can I just confirm that I've either heard from or listed everyone who wishes to speak about the procedure for examination at today's event?

00:18:25:06 - 00:18:29:18

Uh, Mr. Bloom, I think that is JB.

00:18:32:18 - 00:19:04:00

No, sir. It's Mr. Burton of counsel for Suffolk Energy Action Solutions. And I'm extremely sorry to ask this. Um, not of you, but of your support staff. But, um, the two members of the uh, Seas Corps team who were meant to be here, and you've mentioned one of them, Miss Gilmore, um, are struggling to join and are wondering if they might prevail upon your support staff to resend them a link. I'm terribly sorry to ask this.

00:19:04:22 - 00:19:08:04

Uh, I can certainly ask the case team if that's possible. Yeah.

00:19:08:06 - 00:19:09:15

I'm grateful. Thank you.

00:19:09:17 - 00:19:27:15

Thank you. Um, I note that there have been a few names of people that, uh, have not responded. Um, I'll just ask Case Team as well to confirm whether they are present or not. Um, is there anyone else that wishes to speak?

00:19:30:09 - 00:19:36:11

No. In that case, I'll now pass back to Miss Holmes to take us through agenda item two.

00:19:46:00 - 00:20:21:02

Thank you. Um, item two on the agenda is the examining authority's remarks about the examination process in annex B of annual six letter. We set out in detail the purpose of the meeting and how we intend to carry out the examination for expediency. I'm assuming that everyone has read it, and therefore I do not propose to spend time reading it out now. The proposed development is a nationally significant infrastructure project, or CIP, for the purposes of the Planning Act, 2008. It is for this reason that the application falls to be determined by the Secretary of State for Energy security and net zero.

00:20:21:10 - 00:20:52:14

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that it's the Secretary of State who will make the decision on the application, not the examining authority. It is important to us that you are clear in your understanding of the examination process, and if there's anything you're unsure about, then please do ask. And your first point of contact should be the case team. Let me explain briefly what this meeting is about. This morning we will focus on how we intend to examine this application. We will only be discussing the procedural aspects of the examination. So we're not taking evidence.

00:20:52:16 - 00:21:31:24

And we will not discuss the merits or concerns that you may have about this application. Those matters will only be considered following the close of this meeting. The first opportunity for you to talk to us about your issues with this project is at this afternoon's open floor hearing. We've had a number of people ready to speak, and agendas have been published with speaker and in orders. Please speak to the case team if you've not registered to speak at an open floor hearing and think you may wish to do so. Next week we have our first issue specific hearing. We hold issue specific hearings to allow us to ask questions and explore topics which we feel could not be examined as easily through written questions alone.

00:21:32:09 - 00:22:13:15

The hearing next week is to allow us to explore and ask specific questions, which will mainly be directed to the applicant to ensure that we have a clear understanding of some of the fundamental issues at an early stage in the examination. The agenda for this meeting was published on the 23rd of October, and can be found in the examination library with reference EV 3.01. We also published the supplementary agenda for this hearing with the examination library reference EV 302. This supplementary agenda is basically a list of questions or clarifications related to the topics we want to discuss in the hearing, which we consider need relatively straightforward responses, so may not need to be discussed in the hearing itself.

00:22:14:21 - 00:22:45:12

I would like to highlight that due to the focus and specific questions we have for issue specific hearing one, it will not be the most appropriate hearing to allow parties to raise wider concerns or questions. Nor will there be time to do so. The open floor hearings would be the best place for you to raise these, so please do register to speak at the open floor hearings if you haven't already. If you are registered to speak as you specific hearing one. But upon reading the agenda, I'm in light of what I've just said about the specific nature of this hearing, you decide you do not need to speak.

00:22:45:14 - 00:23:00:12

Please let the case team know. Likewise, if you do wish to speak at the hearing and have not already registered, please also let the case team know. Hopefully by the end of this meeting, you'll be assured that there will be sufficient opportunities throughout the examination for you to express your views.

00:23:02:05 - 00:23:39:04

So there are two specific matters that I want to address. So first the change notification. I just want to briefly explain how the change process works in relation to an application of this kind. The applicant has submitted a notification to us that they are planning to make some changes to the application. The notification supplied a brief description of what the proposed changes would be, and detailed any effect they may have on the order limits. We responded to that acknowledgement to acknowledge the notification and to provide some initial advice to the applicant in relation to the procedural implications, and this was in a letter referred to as a rule nine letter.

00:23:39:16 - 00:24:12:06

I must stress that this response was not an acceptance of any changes. We will only consider if the proposed changes can be formally accepted and considered as part of this examination. If and when we are supplied with detailed information with respect to the changes proposed. This detailed information will also include the outcome of the consultation on the change which the applicant is currently conducting. It's not unusual for a change to be submitted for an application of this kind, and in this case, it appears that it will be submitted at an early stage in the examination.

00:24:12:18 - 00:24:45:27

We have told the applicants that if they can supply the detailed information on the changes they propose and the results of their consultation by deadline one A, which is currently the 26th of November, then we think there will be sufficient time in the examination to examine the change, including time for all parties to make representations on it. So until we formally accepted any changes, we will not be considering them in the examination. So that means they won't be discussed and raised at the issue specific hearing next week. And we do not need to hear our representation on you, on them from you at open floor hearings.

00:24:45:29 - 00:25:05:05

But please be assured that if we do accept any changes, we will ensure that there is enough time for you to raise any comments or concerns you may have and enough time for us to thoroughly examine them. Can I now ask the applicant to just give us an update on the targeted consultation that currently running, particularly in relation to who they have consulted?

00:25:07:00 - 00:25:38:12

Thank thank you ma'am. Yes. As you pointed out, the targeted consultation has commenced. It started on the 7th of October and is not concluded yet. It'll conclude on the 7th of November. Um, the applicant has received over 100 responses to that consultation, and obviously will wait until it concludes to start considering all of the impacts. I'm going to have to ask Miss Leader to just explain to you who we've we've consulted.

00:25:39:16 - 00:26:13:21

Thank you. Ali Leader for the applicant. Um, so the applicant has consulted all the parties that were set out in letter to the examining authority. And we've also consulted other parties, including prescribed consultees and local residents who are close to those changes. Um, so the changes proposed a river, minor nature and a fairly targeted. Um, so the consultation has been likewise and but the consultation documents are available on the website for anybody who would like to view them.

00:26:16:26 - 00:26:42:21

Thank you. Um, I think what we want to understand is, um, just could you just explain how you're publicizing the changes? Because we are conscious that there may have been people that haven't originally put in representations for this application as it is, but before the change, and may now want to be included, but might not be affected by the the order limits. Um, so how are you? How are you publicizing it? And what are you doing?

00:26:45:04 - 00:27:15:02

Uh, so the applicant has issued letters, um, both postal letters and by email to the parties that have been identified. Um, yeah. And it's and it's also available on the website. Um, so obviously, as the examining authority will understand, this is a non-statutory consultation and there will be opportunities for all parties to make representations on the final changes as submitted at the end of November. Throughout the examination, should they be accepted?

00:27:18:08 - 00:27:43:13

So what we what we'd like to ensure is that this is this change is publicised as widely as possible, so that anyone who might have an interest in the project will be made aware of it. Um, so I'm suggesting that at some point, sooner rather than later, you publicise in local newspapers, put out notices. Um, as you would for the for the application when it was originally submitted.

00:27:47:18 - 00:27:50:14

Thank you. And we'll take that away and action that.

00:27:52:14 - 00:27:58:17

Thank you. Can I also ask the applicant if you're still planning on submitting the formal change request for us by deadline?

00:27:58:19 - 00:27:59:07

One A

00:28:00:29 - 00:28:06:06

cyber shake for the applicant. Yes, ma'am. That is the intention.

00:28:09:09 - 00:28:15:01

Thank you. I've noticed there are a few hands up. Um, I'll take them in order. GB.

00:28:20:01 - 00:28:55:24

Yes. Good morning. Charity marker from Saxmundham Town Council. Uh, as far as we are aware, we have not received any formal notification, i.e. email or letter from the applicant in connection with the changes to the order limit. Um, this is very important because obviously we're very close to burial

implications on any work done on Benham Bridge has a direct impact on Saxmundham. And also part of the area was actually in the parish of Saxmundham.

00:28:55:26 - 00:28:56:21

Thank you.

00:28:57:26 - 00:29:08:24

Yes. Noted. And this is why the applicant has been asked to widely Publicise if you've not been included in the targeted consultation. Um, can I next hear from A.W.?

00:29:10:24 - 00:29:11:09

Hi.

00:29:11:11 - 00:29:12:29

Yeah, I'm Emma Waller, planning and.

00:29:13:01 - 00:29:13:16

Policy.

00:29:13:18 - 00:29:43:22

Officer representing Kent Wildlife Trust. Um, I just wanted to let you know that Kent Wildlife Trust, who are one of several landowners at Sandwich and Pequot Bay and also manage the nature reserve, did not hear about this targeted consultation despite, um, I think our name was on the list of, uh, interested parties that are meant to be consulted directly. We heard about this via word of mouth, and after several emails I sent to the Sea Link planning team. Um, I had no response, so just let me know.

00:29:43:24 - 00:29:48:21

Kent, all of us have not been notified of this consultation directly.

00:29:50:13 - 00:29:59:27

Thank you. Um, can I just ask the applicant to, um, check to ensure that people they do need to consult at this point have been consulted? Would you like to comment on that now.

00:30:00:15 - 00:30:10:06

Yes, sir. For the applicant, mum, Kent Wildlife Trust have been consulted and they have been contacted. I can ask Miss Leader to just explain that in a bit more detail.

00:30:13:17 - 00:30:30:25

Yes. So Kent Wildlife Trust were contacted both by email and by post, and we have double checked and that that post was not returned. Um, return to sender either from the email or the postal version. But I'm aware we are picking this up with Kent Wildlife Trust in the background.

00:30:31:17 - 00:30:45:21

So I'm the planning and policy officer for Kent Wildlife Trust, and have been doing and written all our consultation responses to the state, and I have not been notified. Um, we've not had a letter through the post and we've had no emails.

00:30:47:08 - 00:31:00:04

Okay. I think maybe if the applicant and Commonwealth could take this offline and find out what the issue is and why they've not been, whether they don't feel they've been consulted. Um, can I now hear from JB, I say art is the next hand I have.

00:31:02:11 - 00:31:02:29

Oh, hello.

00:31:03:01 - 00:31:05:26

I'm Rich Thompson on behalf of CBRE.

00:31:05:28 - 00:31:06:13

Kent.

00:31:06:15 - 00:31:16:06

Just to put on record, we also requested that we will not be notified of any future consultations, though we also only found out via word of mouth. Thank you.

00:31:17:16 - 00:31:23:02

Okay. And can I add that to the applicant's list of people just to check to make sure the right people have been consulted?

00:31:23:18 - 00:31:24:03

Yes.

00:31:24:22 - 00:31:27:21

Okay. Thank you. Can I let's hear from JB?

00:31:33:24 - 00:32:04:13

Yes. Thank you madam. Just to two points. Um, madam, you encourage the applicant and I would echo your encouragement to try to essentially do what it did with the application pre-application. Um, there have been, to my knowledge, no public meetings of any of any sort to discuss these changes. The second point is this, um, you rightly mentioned, um, and suggested and the applicant is going to take it away publication in local newspapers.

00:32:04:18 - 00:32:28:01

Um, the, the mental bridge changes do have the potential at least to have very wide ranging transport impacts. So I'd encourage the applicant to think carefully about how far it should cast the net in terms of those who might be affected by the various possible proposals concerning mental bridge. Thank you.

00:32:29:19 - 00:32:34:22

Thank you. And I'm sure the applicant has noted that. But can I now hear from TT.

00:32:40:21 - 00:32:42:09

Good morning, Theresa Thorne.

00:32:42:18 - 00:32:44:00

Representing white House.

00:32:44:02 - 00:32:46:25

Residents Association. Uh, we.

00:32:46:27 - 00:32:47:22

Never heard.

00:32:47:27 - 00:32:48:12

Or.

00:32:48:14 - 00:33:01:13

We didn't hear anything, um, about this consultation until we saw it on social media. And now we've received the letter on the 7th of October, so we have not been consulted at all. Thank you.

00:33:02:06 - 00:33:15:01

Okay. Thank you. Um, and again, the applicant, if you could just take away and check them who's been consulted. That would I'd appreciate that. Thank you. Um, I've got a hand from MF.

00:33:20:01 - 00:33:55:02

Thank you. Madam Marianne Fellowes, Ober resident. I can also confirm that no local libraries have received any notifications or materials to display. And as mentioned by Mr. Burton, there have also not been any drop in sessions or information days, um, in the local area. And as also mentioned, because it impacts traffic and transport and very much cumulative impact alongside the other projects already in um development or about to be consented.

00:33:55:09 - 00:34:31:21

Uh, this is very, very important. And in fact, I would also say that it was almost an important enough to pause. And I do acknowledge that you have said they'll need to be future opportunities for people to address these matters, as you do not want them discussed in the open floor hearings. One. Um, so there will be the need for open floor hearings into the future and issue specific hearings on the Bainbridge matter as an example, because of this, um, unprecedented major change being introduced at this time.

00:34:32:03 - 00:34:32:27

Thank you.

00:34:33:29 - 00:34:43:25

Now, please be assured that once the change is submitted to the examination, we will ensure that the open floor hearings and time for people to make their representations on it.

00:34:44:20 - 00:35:15:12

Can I just say, though, that, um, people who don't know they're going to be affected, as you mentioned, that weren't. That didn't register at the first stage. We'll need information and awareness raising to then be able to register, to then be able to assist yourselves in examining this matter. So we would request materials to public libraries. We would request, um, drop in sessions where people can provide information.

00:35:15:14 - 00:35:16:06

Thank you.

00:35:16:10 - 00:35:53:09

So just in terms of the local library, there isn't a requirement to put information in local libraries, but the applicant will ensure that it does publicize widely any changes, and there will be opportunities for us to examine it thoroughly and to hear from everyone who wants to make a representation. And I should also note that at the moment, all we've been given is very brief details about the changes and how it may affect the order limits until we've got the full information about what this change may look like. Um, I do think there's not there's not much we can sort of examine or not hear from at the moment, but there will be an examination.

00:35:53:11 - 00:36:10:25

Libraries are not. Libraries are not, um, it's not a requirement, but they are community hubs, especially for people who don't perhaps access information online. But town and parish councils as well, statutory authorities, I'm sure they'll do their best to circulate the information. Thank you.

00:36:10:28 - 00:36:20:02

Okay. Thank you. Okay. I don't see any more hands on that. Does the applicant just want to come in before we move on? On anything they've just heard?

00:36:20:25 - 00:36:30:22

Uh, yes. Uh, Cyrus Shaikh for the applicant. Um, can I can I just clarify that the newspaper notices? Um, are you requesting that those are done now or at the actual change request?

00:36:31:28 - 00:36:45:25

Um, I know there's no actual statutory requirement to do them until you've submitted the change request. Um, so you don't have to do it until then. But if you did want to do some sort of early publication, that might be helpful, bearing in mind there's a considerable interest in these changes.

00:36:46:02 - 00:36:47:16

Yes. Thank you. Understood.

00:36:52:28 - 00:37:26:12

Okay. So next I want to talk about the format for future hearings. So as I mentioned in our rule six letter, because this project covers such an extensive geographical area and to ensure an efficient and effective examination, it's likely that hearings late in the timetable will be held in a central location or virtually, rather than in Suffolk or Kent. In relation to this, we received the following comments. That procedural deadline a Suffolk County Council states that it's content for the examination to proceed on

the basis that the ESA will be flexible regarding the format of hearings, which will either be fully virtual or blended.

00:37:26:14 - 00:38:10:15

Events. The council has an overall preference for blended events rather than fully virtual events, so as to maximise the opportunity for participation by interested parties who are not comfortable or less comfortable with virtual working. However, the council stressed the importance of the technological support provided at venues where blended events are to ensure that those participating remotely are not disadvantaged. The council also suggests that where subsequent open floor or issue specific hearings contain items that are equally relevant to both Kent and Suffolk, a blended event is considered appropriate and that in a blended event located in central London could be logistically the most convenient to allow the opportunities for parties from each county to participate in person if they so choose.

00:38:11:08 - 00:38:51:28

East Suffolk Council is concerned to ensure that local interested parties would not be disadvantaged by the need to travel potentially very considerable distances to attend hearings in person. When a more inclusive and accessible means to facilitate this complex examination would be via virtual hearings or in-person for East Suffolk issues at Snape Maltings. East Suffolk Council therefore support an approach of either holding in-person hearings relating to matters which affect only East Suffolk, or which affect only Kent at venues within the relevant county, combined with virtual sessions or issue specific hearings on matters affecting both counties, or alternatively, hosting all issue specific hearings virtually.

00:38:52:28 - 00:39:25:22

Dover District Council supported the use of virtual methods for all issue specific hearings, especially if they are held in a more central location later in the examination. Kent Wildlife Trust recognizes the practical need for flexibility in hearing formats, but emphasizes that they consider in-person hearings within affected localities are essential for fair participation and accessibility. Kent Wildlife Trusts state that while virtual attendance could support inclusion, it should not replace face to face opportunities for local communities and stakeholders to engage directly with the process.

00:39:26:03 - 00:39:56:24

Kent Wildlife Trust therefore request that issue specific hearings on ecology, biodiversity and marine environmental matters be held in person in Kent with hybrid access for remote participants and virtual methods be reserved for procedural or technical sessions where appropriate. Save Mr. Marsh's welcomes the decision to hold in-person hearings near affected locations. However, it's concerned that the reliance on digital solutions may disadvantage elderly individuals and those with limited literacy or digital skills.

00:39:56:26 - 00:40:33:05

Southminster marshes states that the responsibility for supporting these individuals should not fall in the public, and considers that the applicant has not adequately addressed this issue. A number of other interested parties also raised a concern that proceedings were fully accessible for all people, including people who may not be able to gain access to a computer or struggle with computer literacy. The applicant states that whilst it recognizes the rationale behind holding later examination hearings in a

central location or virtually rather than Suffolk or Kent, it considers it important that the attendance to these events is as convenient for local residents as possible.

00:40:33:16 - 00:40:48:13

The applicant therefore states that it would prefer to see hearings held in both Suffolk and Kent Content wherever possible rather than a central location. It is also the applicant's view that it should be possible to arrange hearings so that they are held close to the location of the issues being discussed.

00:40:50:03 - 00:41:27:00

So we do understand the importance of hearing from people in the area local to the project, which is why we are holding hearings both this week and next week in Suffolk and Kent. However, there's not enough time in six months to keep travelling between Suffolk and Kent to hold specific hearings in each location and the additional duplication of discussions that would involve. It would also not be fair to hold blended events in one county where issues may be discussed that affect another county. And I'm sure you will appreciate that six months is actually not a long period of time to examine a project of this size, and we want to ensure that we can do a thorough job and use the time wisely.

00:41:27:12 - 00:42:07:12

Therefore, we will be holding the next set of hearings as blended events in London. Blended means that you can attend virtually or in person. However, we do understand the concerns raised in relation to accessibility and we want to ensure everyone can participate fully in this examination. I would therefore like to ask the applicant to consider setting up satellite venues in Suffolk and Kent for use during the week of the hearings held in London. This would mean that there are local venues one in Suffolk, one in Kent, where interested parties who may have accessibility issues can come and the technology would be provided for them to participate virtually, including giving evidence to the Tsar where appropriate.

00:42:08:08 - 00:42:40:12

We consider that it's vital that participation in this examination is accessible for all. We do understand that there would be a financial implication in relation to this request. However, we note that the applicant's applicants are expected to pay the costs associated with the examination of an application, and this application has particular geographical challenges which set it apart from most inserts that have been examined to date. I also note that there have been other recent examinations where this type of satellite facility has been provided by the applicant. For example, the Moana Offshore Wind Farm.

00:42:40:29 - 00:42:44:23

Can the applicant give an initial response to the principle of this approach, please?

00:42:46:11 - 00:43:21:10

Cyrus Shaikh for the applicant. Thank you ma'am. Yes, I can give an initial approach, but obviously I'll take it away with the team and come back to you with something more considered. Um, the applicant, I think, did right to, uh, pins on the 2nd of June, giving their response to this suggestion and set out a number of challenges that the applicant foresees with this approach. I won't go through them now, but I think that that the panel has got that letter and knows the issues raised, particularly about problem solving and having staff at different venues.

00:43:21:18 - 00:43:53:10

And also the question of costs, yes, is another issue as well. And the size of the project team. So the initial response is that this is not Um, feasible. And the applicant's clear preference is to hold the hearings in the, um, the two counties. Um, the applicant doesn't think there would be a great deal of overlap, because the issues do tend to be quite specific to Kent and Suffolk individually. Um, there would be some overlap in relation to the DCO.

00:43:53:26 - 00:44:07:24

Uh, we are particularly concerned about the compulsory acquisition hearings and the need for them to be at least held locally. Um, I think that's all I can say at this stage. Um, by way of a preliminary response.

00:44:10:07 - 00:44:36:16

Thank you. Um, so, yes, please go away and have a look at how you could actually make something work because we think it is impossible. It's very important that people can participate in Suffolk and Kent, and we are not able to travel between Suffolk and Kent for any, for the future hearings. Um, at the moment, especially not the ones in January. Um, it just takes too much time out of the six month timetable. Um, would anyone else like to comment on this?

00:44:38:21 - 00:44:40:06

Uh, yes. I've got. Mokay.

00:44:49:23 - 00:45:22:10

Thank you. Madam. That's, uh, Michael Bedford, um, uh, for Suffolk County Council. I think the K is just the way that it's abbreviated King's Council. So I'm afraid that's what you've got to put up with. Um, madam? Yes. Um, I think the concern that we have, um, is, am I to understand you to be indicating that from now on, the only blended events will be at venues in central London or a central location in London.

00:45:22:12 - 00:45:35:26

There will be no blended events held at a venue in either Suffolk or in either Kent. Regardless of the subject matter of that, um, uh, issue specific hearing.

00:45:36:27 - 00:46:08:01

The, uh, the plan at the moment is for the hearings that we have timetable for the end of January will be in London as blended events. Um, and which is why I've asked the applicant to consider setting up satellite venues for people who maybe struggle with accessibility for joining remotely. Um, subsequent hearings after that will be decided on, basically, depending on how the application is, how the examination is going and whether we need to hold hearings at all, or whether we can do it all in questions, and we'll decide later where they will be held. So this is for the ones in January.

00:46:09:27 - 00:46:47:20

Yeah. But as to the ones in January, I think we don't really at the moment have an indication of the subject matters of those hearings. So for example, uh, and if I just use this as an example, if the Exa were to consider it necessary to have an issue specific hearing to consider effects on the national landscape and other landscape matters that affect Suffolk. Your intention would be that if that happens

in the January hearings, those hearings would be at a central location in London and would not take place in Suffolk.

00:46:47:28 - 00:46:49:24

Is that. Have I understood that correctly?

00:46:49:26 - 00:47:15:19

That's correct. And the reason why we haven't published anything in terms of what we're covering those hearings yet, is because what we need to do is look at all the responses to the relevant representations, read the written representations that were due to get a look at the local impact reports. Write our first questions, get the answers to those, and at that point we'll decide what we need to discuss. Examine orally at that point, and until then, we won't know what those hearings will cover.

00:47:15:26 - 00:47:48:27

Oh, absolutely, madam, I take that point. But can I then just raise a concern? Um, I certainly accept the point about the geography of an examination where the works concerned are quite remote from each other. I have to say that certainly I know that the Planning Inspectorate faced similar challenges on a project with of at least the same scale. That's to say, the lower Thames crossing, which was obviously dealt with under the same regime.

00:47:48:29 - 00:48:23:12

And there the examining authority adopted an approach that where there were what might be called Essex related issues. They were held at a venue in Essex, I think, somewhere in the vicinity of um, uh, um, at Thurrock. And uh, there was also an opportunity for those who weren't attending in person to attend remotely at those events. Similarly for those issues that affected Kent.

00:48:23:29 - 00:48:55:15

Then there were issues specific hearings at a venue in Brands Hatch, I think I recall, so that that was convenient to those affected by the Kent impacts. And then there were also hearings at a venue at a hotel somewhere in London, I think, near Borough Market for what might be called neutral or non geographically specific sessions. And that would include things like the DCO, um, in terms of wording of, of control documents and so on.

00:48:55:24 - 00:49:27:17

But clearly the examining authority for that examination was able to cope with the logistics of travel between either side of the Thames Estuary and also a venue in London. And I have to say, I would be concerned on behalf of, um, Suffolk County Council and the communities it represents, if the only blended events hitherto sorry into the future. Were to take place at a London based venue rather than in Suffolk.

00:49:27:19 - 00:49:35:03

So I've set that concern out. I've given you an example of how it can be managed. I don't think I can take you any further at this stage.

00:49:36:15 - 00:50:00:28

Thank you. That's that's appreciated to hear your comments. Um, and this is about the January hearings. Hearings. Post January, we will consider what we need to examine and the best way of examine it. And I just want to reiterate that this is predominantly a written process anyway. So the hearings are only for us to be able to explore things orally that we think we can't do in written format. Um, I've got a hand up with the initials RC.

00:50:05:23 - 00:50:30:24

Thank you. Chair. Richard Cooper, representing Aylesford Parish Council. Can I just, as a representative of this parish council, say how important it is from our point of view that Suffolk issues Views are addressed separately from those of Kent with whom we sympathize, but they need to be addressed separately and as close to local communities as possible. Thank you.

00:50:32:27 - 00:50:35:12

Okay, now I have a hand up from MF.

00:50:42:09 - 00:51:12:23

Thank you madam. Marianne Fellows, Aldeburgh resident. Um, we of course understand this is your process and your task to examine. But we do look to you to make it as easy as possible for the public, organizational representatives, town and parish councils, um, and statutory authorities, as you've already heard from to engage as equal evidence givers. Um, we're here to assist you with our knowledge. Virtually is not easy.

00:51:13:01 - 00:52:04:12

You know, today is not easy. Even with satellite support to reduce the fear that one has of it. Failure and the isolation. You know, I'm here on my own. I feel quite, um, vulnerable, with no moral support. Even if we were in a satellite together, that would not be with yourselves. And I think, in the applicant's own words, this is a complex application. In your own words, it's one of great interest, and especially in the early days of our relationship with you, to build trust and greater understanding, especially after a really terrible experience that we have had, both through the early stages of the silent consultation and set against the daily trauma of what we're living with here in Suffolk already.

00:52:04:14 - 00:52:47:22

I would press you to really try to use your resources, which you have in the most effective way, because to enable this inquisitorial approach that you need to take with rigour and focus and openness. The issues in Suffolk and Kent are important, but they are different. Different receptors, different geographic, um, setting, different circumstances and impacts. I think the issue specific hearings especially do need to be focused in each area and offer in person with the opportunity for yourselves to be with us, to assist you.

00:52:48:09 - 00:53:16:07

Um, I do understand the issue of timeliness. It is not an easy task you face, especially with information changes still happening to the application, but I do believe that this would give you the best opportunity to do your role of examining this application. If you were able to do issue specific hearings specific to each area. Um. In person. Thank you. Okay.

00:53:16:09 - 00:53:21:07

Thank you. And now, can I hear from, uh, the next hand is Artie.

00:53:31:12 - 00:53:32:25

Okay, that. Hands up.

00:53:33:05 - 00:53:35:09

That was an old hand. Yeah.

00:53:35:12 - 00:53:39:18

No problem. No problem. And the next one I've got is J.B..

00:53:45:07 - 00:54:25:26

Thank you, madam James Burton for Suffolk Energy Action Solutions. Um, madam, without repeating, may I please endorse everything that Mr. Bedford Casey said? All very sensible as ever. Um, may I also, madam, um, firmly endorse your, um, excellent suggestion that, um, if there are to be, um, London based hearings that the applicant does strain its resources to ensure that those who just struggle to access both physically a London hearing and indeed access virtually have somewhere to go locally to engage.

00:54:26:02 - 00:54:53:14

Madam, we entirely note, um, what you say, um, about the hearings post January. Um, we know that that is to be decided. Um, but, um, could I, um, perhaps point to what Miss Fellows has set out as a very good example of, of why it is just so important for you to ensure the public see your engagement, um, at local level. Thank you. Ma'am.

00:54:55:26 - 00:55:36:28

Thank you. And can I just remind you all that we have got the open floor hearings events this week in Suffolk and next week in Kent, and where we do want to hear from people, and we will be there to to hear what people people's concerns. Okay. Thank you. So just like to move on to the more general observations I'd like to make about the examination process. In the interest of ensuring that it's as productive and as efficient as it can be. So I want to take the opportunity, as I've just said, to advise you, for people who might be unfamiliar with the development consent process, that the examination is a predominantly written process, and as a result, we expect the majority of information and evidence provided to us in writing.

00:55:37:10 - 00:56:02:19

As you will see from the draft examination timetable, which is annex D of the rule six letter. We've timetabled numerous deadlines where you'll be able to submit information into the examination. In the event that you do not feel you've been given the opportunity to make your representations at any meeting or hearing due to time constraints. Please do provide them in written format. There is no extra weight given to things that we hear orally over those that we get in writing.

00:56:04:21 - 00:56:35:14

So we're going to talk about the examination timetable shortly, but I'd just like to highlight the importance of ensuring that information is submitted in accordance with the set deadlines. The timetable can only be delivered if all parties meet the deadlines and provide submissions that are as

comprehensive as possible. Late submissions restrict the ability of other parties involved to be able to respond to information, which can lead to unfairness in the process. So it's therefore important for you all to note that if you do submit something late, there is always the possibility that it will not be accepted into the examination.

00:56:38:00 - 00:56:55:07

When there's disagreement between parties and matters, we're asking that all sides engage positively and in a timely manner to seek resolution as soon as possible, and this includes progressing statements of common ground as proactively as possible and demonstrating progress with land negotiations and protective provisions where relevant.

00:56:56:27 - 00:57:36:06

The final point I would like to mention is just to highlight the importance of the planning spec to its National Infrastructure Planning website. To this examination, on the Sealink project page, you will find information about this application, including the examination library which contains all the application documents, written submissions and procedural documents related to this project. Each time a deadline passes, the documents that have been submitted will be added to the examination library so that they are available for everyone to see. We would strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with this website, because the Examiner Authority will be using it to communicate with you and to provide access to documents throughout the examination.

00:57:37:00 - 00:57:55:18

It's really important that you're clear in the understanding of the process, and if there's anything you're unclear about or need clarity on, this is your opportunity to ask. However, if you do have any specific points regarding the draft timetable, can I ask that they're raised under item four of our agenda? So if you've got any questions in terms of the way we'd like to, we propose to examine this application.

00:58:01:02 - 00:58:02:15

So I have Avis.

00:58:20:04 - 00:58:22:09

I think we have our first.

00:58:28:28 - 00:58:30:17

And you wished me to start?

00:58:31:24 - 00:58:32:28

Yes, please.

00:58:33:03 - 00:59:03:09

Okay. Uh, my name is Robin Sanders, representing Woodbridge Town Council in Suffolk. And I'm the lead counselor on assessing and SRP projects impacting the town and surrounding area. The matter I'm raising, particularly with process, but also relates to the examination timetable, may be put as how and when do you discuss impact of the cart? When one of the horses you need to use has not been fully identified and selected by others, or do you discuss on the basis of the horse you know you have to hand. Now, put that into context.

00:59:03:15 - 00:59:39:20

Uh, there is a application currently about to be put in. It's a £63 million major highway infrastructure scheme along the main access road. Uh, to the Sealink site from the A14. This was reported on Monday in the press, and it will be ready for submission to a planning application and submitted on the 14th of November. That scheme is part funded by government and was confirmed in June 2025. Spending review the as yet undisclosed final scheme or more correctly, uh, the

00:59:41:16 - 00:59:58:15

apologies, the as yet undisclosed finance scheme, or more correctly, the 2024 consultant proposals, are briefly mentioned in the applicants document here. 008 in section 3.1, future network changes as a single bullet point.

00:59:58:17 - 01:00:15:08

Sorry, I don't want to apologize for interrupting, but this appears to be something that maybe needs to be raised at the open floor hearing. Um, at the moment, we're just looking at the procedure in terms of the exam, in terms of how we're actually examining things rather than talking about a detail and specific issues.

01:00:15:10 - 01:00:47:06

Right. Can I therefore go to to the, the, the matter I'm specifically raising? Uh, it's my understanding if a project is and this is related to this specific property, has not received planning determination, then it cannot be considered another planning application or perhaps a DCO. And therefore how is this DCL application and that planning application which runs concurrently be ordered, or will it be considered uh, during this DCO examination?

01:00:48:00 - 01:01:00:01

So if we can just clarify any matters that are related to cumulative impacts of other projects that may or may not be going ahead and will be considered during the Examination, through issue specific hearings and through my questions.

01:01:02:29 - 01:01:08:11

Okay. Thank you. The next person I have is m m.

01:01:12:21 - 01:01:43:18

Yes. Um, Michael Mani representing Friston Parish Council. Um, you will have seen the, um, uh, submission I made in relation to item two concerning scenario two. Um, the interest of time. I'm not going to repeat that here. Um, but essentially I want it to be clarified whether scenario two, which is the scenario whereby the Knight of the Scottish Power goes ahead, you are definitely going to examine that scenario or not.

01:01:43:20 - 01:02:13:18

And if you are, how we'll deal with the draft DCO because, um, the existing DPP of Scottish Power is very different from the draft DCO And National Grid doesn't seem to have paid any attention to the existing DCO, and I certainly do not want to have to do a line by line analysis of where the

differences are. So fundamentally, are you going to make a decision now, or are you going to leave that, for example, to issue one?

01:02:14:13 - 01:02:29:08

And this is a matter that we are raising in issue one, we will be asking the applicant which scenario or whether we need to consider both. If we are considering both, then they will both be thoroughly examined. But yeah, this will be discussed next week.

01:02:30:13 - 01:02:31:07

Thank you.

01:02:34:01 - 01:02:36:06

Okay, I don't see any more hands.

01:02:38:22 - 01:02:47:25

So that concludes our remarks about the examination process. I'm now going to hand over to Mrs. Thomas, who will take us through item three, which is the initial assessment of principal issues.

01:02:52:02 - 01:03:36:17

Thank you, Miss Holmes. Um, so turning now to item three, which is the initial assessment of principal issues, which we abbreviate to IRP. Um, for those of you with copies of our rule six letter, it would be useful to have annex C in front of you. But for those that don't. Um, could I request that that is that the, um, annex C is shown on the screen? Thank you. Could you. As it covers three pages, could you just slowly scroll through those, please, so that people can be reminded of what they say? So the Exa has produced this to let you know what we think the principal issues are.

01:03:36:23 - 01:04:11:05

After taking taking into account the application documents, the comments in the relevant representations and other submissions we have received. We have taken on board your comments received at procedural deadline a which I will cover later. So firstly, we have set out in annex C that the National Policy Statements or MPs and the issues contained within them will be an integral part of the examination. So we have set out examples of the generic impacts that will be covered.

01:04:11:07 - 01:04:46:11

And these are therefore part of the principal issues that we will consider. The purpose of the IRP is to identify broad subject matters, to guide us in forming a provisional view as to how the application is to be examined. It is not intended to be a comprehensive or exclusive list of the issues that will be subject to examination. The ECA will have regard to all important and relevant matters during the examination, and when it writes its recommendation to the Secretary of State after the examination has concluded.

01:04:48:00 - 01:05:12:19

So therefore, I would like to emphasize that the IAP is an initial view and does not stop us from examining other issues at later stages in the process. For example, issues related to any change to the application that may be submitted. The IAP will not be amended or republished, but please be assured

that all important issues will be thoroughly examined, even if they are not specifically identified in the IAP.

01:05:14:06 - 01:05:47:27

Um, the purpose of today is not to consider any detailed issues, so we will not be looking at the details of any impacts at this meeting. We will be pleased to hear about these types of comments at the open floor hearing sessions, the first one being this afternoon or indeed at later issues specific hearings. Um, could you just stop sharing the, um, the annex now, please? Thank you. So several interested parties have raised queries about the inclusion of various topics in the IRP.

01:05:47:29 - 01:05:53:24

I will go through these as follows. Um, Suffolk County Council.

01:05:57:25 - 01:06:20:23

Um, sorry. Suffolk County Council has queried whether biodiversity, net gain, um or being should be explicitly referred to in the IRP. In response, I would point out that there are provisions in relation to BNG in MPs, N1 and annex C makes reference to MPs N1, noting that it covers matters such as biodiversity.

01:06:25:21 - 01:07:01:03

In forest and parish councils. Queries the effects of the proposed development during operation and noise, fire risk, health and wellbeing are covered by the MPs and will therefore form part of our examination. In response to Mulford Parish Council comments, I would like to point out that the effects arising from interactions with other projects and coordination with other energy projects. Consideration of cumulative effects and whether sufficient and enforceable mitigation measures are proposed were all identified in the IIP as overarching or integral components.

01:07:03:02 - 01:07:17:13

The Environment Agency has raised pollution prevention regarding the construction and operation of the substation and converter station, and again, this is a matter that is covered with in MPs. N1

01:07:19:00 - 01:07:40:11

concerns have been raised by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency in relation to the inclusion of shipping and navigation matters. Annex sets out that the issues contained within MPs N3 will be an integral part of the examination and this covers shipping and navigation, so these matters will be thoroughly examined by the ECS.

01:07:41:27 - 01:08:15:18

The RSPB has suggested that in the list of matters that are included as overarching or integral components of the IRP, reference should be made to other relevant domestic legislation such as the Infrastructure Planning, Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017 and the Marine Act 2009. Um reference is made in MPs in one to the EIA regulations and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, and it is not necessary to list them in annex.

01:08:17:00 - 01:08:43:09

The RSPB has also queried the inclusion of functionally linked land. Um functionally linked land is referred to in the IAP and MPs. Ian One sets out the need for effects on Sites of Special Scientific Interest, protected species and habitats to be considered, as well as other matters. MPs, N1 and N3 also cover the need for monitoring of mitigation.

01:08:44:28 - 01:09:18:27

We have also had representations from London Gateway Port Limited and the Port of London Authority. We have read, of course, your relevant representations and will be interested to see your full written representations and the applicant's response in due course. Hopefully you will have seen that we have some shipping and navigation matters on the agenda for issue specific hearing one and some questions in our supplementary agenda, which I trust provide some reassurance that the x ray is aware of the issues and will thoroughly examine shipping and navigation.

01:09:20:04 - 01:09:51:20

Suffolk Energy Action Solutions, or C's, has queried whether transport effects, notably cumulative and linked impacts on tourism and the local economy, as well as effects on health where health and wellbeing all merit emphasis in their own right. The X8 I would like to assure you that these topics will be thoroughly examined. The grouping of these topics under construction effects does not reduce their importance. Cees has also queried whether noise and vibration will be covered.

01:09:52:18 - 01:10:29:15

These matters are referenced in relation to maps N1 and. Archaeology is also referenced through the Historic Environment and MPs N1 and explicitly an MPs n3. CS has also raised a query about the costs of the proposed development. In terms of funding, the Tsar will need to be satisfied that funds would be available for the proposed development. If the Secretary of State decides that the proposed development should go ahead. This would include the payment of compensation to persons affected by compulsory acquisition, temporary possession or a blight claim.

01:10:31:09 - 01:11:05:12

Um, I have. Lastly, I've been notified of a typographical error in the IRP as the national landscape is now called the Suffolk and Essex coast, and he's heaths national landscape. So thank you for pointing this out. Um, as I said, we don't have time to rehearse interested parties, individual comments at length this morning, and we cannot discuss the merits of the application at this meeting. But is there anything, um, anybody wants to raise in relation to the IRP before we move on?

01:11:08:11 - 01:11:14:20

I can see there are some hands raised. So firstly, um, j b, please.

01:11:17:12 - 01:11:24:05

Um, oh, there are two jobs. So sorry. It's James rather than Jeremy. Thank you.

01:11:24:15 - 01:11:55:15

Thank you very much, madam. Yes, I believe it's me, James Burton, on behalf of Suffolk Energy Action Solutions. Um, madam, I, um, I know that you and your fellow, um, authority members have this. But just to be absolutely clear, um, C's, uh, concern or one of its concerns regarding cost is, um,

is that the actual cost of the thing is correctly understood so it can go into the, um, benefits, dis benefits planning balance.

01:11:55:17 - 01:12:09:29

And we've referred to and I know you're aware of the different, apparently different figures for costings that come out of the applicant's request to Ofgem for early construction funding. Just just so that's clear. Thank you, madam.

01:12:10:11 - 01:12:11:05

Thank you.

01:12:13:12 - 01:12:16:09

Um, Marianne. Fellows, please.

01:12:22:14 - 01:12:25:08

Thank you, Miss Thompson. Thank you madam.

01:12:28:02 - 01:13:05:27

Um, I would say I understand that your, um, Annex C is not supposed to be the final list, but the groupings. How you put things under just six headings have made it quite difficult for people to believe that that you are going to examine things with the focus and the rigor that they need, especially things that, by the applicant's own words in their documents, have significant adverse impact, or the interested parties believe will have significant adverse impact if not fully examined and mitigated.

01:13:06:08 - 01:13:40:11

Um, I don't want to take your time to give you precise examples, and that is not the focus of today. But I would say, first of all, slightly disappointed that when you discovered there wasn't the number of open floor hearing slots requested to be this afternoon, all day Thursday and Friday that you dropped off Friday, rather than taking time today to extend into the afternoon and hear these important points which set the foundation of the next six months.

01:13:40:13 - 01:14:23:19

So you have, in effect, limited us to two hours when you it could have gone into the afternoon and we could have started the open for hearings tomorrow. So a little bit disappointed about that. But with regard to your, um, initial assessment of the principal overarching matters, I would say that they are not complete and they do not show the focus that is needed. Just a couple of examples, um, with regard to landscape and visual and the impact on the national landscapes, the applicant itself says that there's potential to alter the perception of the national landscapes from this project.

01:14:23:21 - 01:15:07:01

So that does need its own specific issue hearing. Um, Also traffic and transport and public rights of way. Traffic and transport is embedded within your category of construction effects, but the impact of the traffic will not just be during construction, it will be during operation and decommissioning as well. There is permanent features that will impact on our ability to navigate the area and traffic

cumulatively, with other projects constructed at the same time, decommissioned at the same time, operated at the same time, and then finally cumulative impact.

01:15:07:03 - 01:15:41:00

I cannot stress enough the significance that a that the focus needs to be on that. Um, it is major adverse impact, significant effects, um, for this area and in terms of how you examine things. Yes, you need to be timely, but I believe you would have a greater effect effectiveness for your time. If these are given the specific focus they need and grouped.

01:15:41:02 - 01:15:53:28

Grouping traffic under construction is not going to help. I'm afraid at all. It is a much wider community of impact and I'm sorry I'm a bit nervous today. I think I rambled a bit. I do apologize, Miss Thompson. Okay.

01:15:57:09 - 01:16:32:07

Thank you very much for your contributions. Um, I hope that I've been able to give you some reassurance that all matters are that are important and relevant will be thoroughly examined, regardless of whether they are specifically listed in the IRP. Um, and also your point about being time limited with the, um, preliminary preliminary meeting today, as we've said, it's not an opportunity for us to discuss the merits. It's purely to go through the items on the agenda, which are procedural matters.

01:16:32:09 - 01:16:41:06

Thank you. Um, so if we can hear from our next speaker and I can't see who that is, is that Jeremy Bloom?

01:16:41:08 - 01:17:16:00

It is the other day this time, yes. So, uh, Jeremy Bloom, thank you. Thank you, madam. Uh, Jeremy Bloom representing National highways. Um, so the although the strategic road network is, is quite remote from the immediate, um, uh, construction site of the proposed development, it's become apparent in reviewing the transport assessment that there may be a substantial impact from construction traffic on the strategic road network in Suffolk.

01:17:16:02 - 01:17:50:04

So it's only the Suffolk, um, side of the development that that we do have a potential concern about. Um, the description of the issues under the construction impacts, um, isn't entirely clear about traffic impacts and particularly the SRN. And given that the remoteness from the site, I was keen to make sure the, um, examining authority had visibility of this issue, um, so that it can be, um, duly examined as part of the, um, this process.

01:17:50:28 - 01:18:00:28

Thank you, Mr. Bloom. Thank you. Um, if I can now ask, is that Michael Bedford? Thank you. Casey.

01:18:02:09 - 01:19:00:04

Thank you, madam Michael Bedford, Suffolk County Council. Madam, I'm just, um, concerned to understand the rationale that, uh, has informed the approach to the IAP, because that might help us

understand in a sense, why certain things are in and certain things are not explicitly mentioned. I, um, appreciate that. As you said, that everything has to be examined in the context of the content of the policy guidance in the relevant national policy statements. Um, but then when I look at the fact that you've singled out certain matters for consideration, and I tried to say to myself, well, why are those matters singled out, even though they are also expressly dealt with within the, um, national policy statement? And if I take a neutral example, first, agricultural and soils, it could be said that everything that's in the IRP under that heading can be found in an MPs.

01:19:00:06 - 01:19:31:12

So why is it separately there? Now I say that's not an issue that Suffolk has raised. So that's why I've used it as an example just to illustrate the point. But it did seem to me that in other instances, whilst the generic topic may well be addressed in the NPS. The specifics relevant in a geographic sense to some impact of this scheme is something which ought to be separately identified. And again, I give an example.

01:19:31:14 - 01:20:08:08

You have very helpfully identified the impacts on the Bennell Bridge in Suffolk as one of the construction impacts that you are particularly wanting to examine. And obviously we welcome that, and we've raised that as a key concern in our relevant representations. But if I can just go to the point that Suffolk raised as to its concerns, we identified that there is a specific geographic area which is proposed for being compensation, and that's why we thought that that wasn't captured by your biodiversity comments, but we thought it merited it.

01:20:08:10 - 01:20:40:07

And if I can just trespass on one further point, which is also a geographically relevant point, we acknowledge that you rightly identify the national landscape in your IRP concerns under the design, landscape, heritage, and visual effects. We would just want to be reassured that the statutory duty in section 85 A1, which obviously falls on the examining authority in terms of reporting to the Secretary of State. I think the Secretary of State is directly subject to the duty.

01:20:40:13 - 01:21:09:04

I think you're probably not, but it's addressed in the M.P.s, and therefore you would be expected to report on it. We just want to be reassured that you have that firmly in mind, and that clearly will be part of your exploration of that issue. Thank you, madam, but I just return to my first point. It was just trying to understand why is it that some things which are apparently generic are in the IEP and other things are not okay?

01:21:09:06 - 01:21:40:05

Thank you, Mr. Bedford. Um, as I've already said, the IEP was our initial view. So it was purely to identify those issues that had arisen out of our initial reading of the application and the submissions that had been made. But please be assured that the IAP does not then dictate which issues are examined. Every issue that needs to be examined will be thoroughly examined by the expert as I have explained. Thank you. I think we had one more.

01:21:40:07 - 01:21:46:00

1 or 2 more. Hands up. Um, is it now, Morgan?

01:21:47:23 - 01:21:57:13

DK. Is it the initials DK? I can't see the full the full screen, unfortunately. Or is it. MH okay.

01:21:57:18 - 01:21:58:19

MH. No, I think.

01:21:58:25 - 01:22:00:04

Thank you. Sorry.

01:22:00:12 - 01:22:34:08

No worries. Thanks. Thank you. Ma'am. Uh, Morgan Harrington from the Environment Agency. My query follows after Michael Bedford's just clarifying sort of the process for Or how certain subjects are included or not. I appreciate what you said about pollution prevention, and that that would be considered under one overarching national policy statement for energy. My other query is a lot of our concerns about pollution related to operational matters, for example, the substation.

01:22:34:19 - 01:23:01:06

And I appreciate that under terrestrial and marine ecology and biodiversity that is mentioned under the operational effects of convert stations, substations, etc., specifically for biodiversity. So like as you've mentioned, birds, lighting and noise. I'm just curious, how would our concerns about pollution prevention fit in to that section of your your app?

01:23:03:09 - 01:23:42:05

Okay. If I could just explain that as I think I've just said, but I will explain maybe more clearly that the IAP, The issues that we will examine. Do not lead directly from the IRP, so we will if we feel we need to hold an issue specific hearing on a particular matter, then we will. We are not constrained by what we've identified in the IRP. Um, and obviously the majority of our examination is through a written process anyway, in which we will, um, examine all necessary and, um, relevant and important matters that need to be examined.

01:23:43:28 - 01:23:45:02

Okay. Thank you, ma'am.

01:23:45:05 - 01:23:49:22

Thank you. Um, I have initials D.K. now.

01:23:52:03 - 01:24:00:05

Uh, Francis Terrell from Alicia Garland. On behalf of the Gateway port, I should also clarify, uh, I'm using a colleague's computer, which is why it comes up with the initials DQ and not.

01:24:00:08 - 01:24:01:03

Oh, okay.

01:24:01:05 - 01:24:13:19

Apologies for any confusion that that might cause. Um, first, I just want to, uh, recall that Vonnegut report, uh, limited is grateful for the issue of the revised issue one, agenda

01:24:15:15 - 01:24:48:05

3001 and the accompanying question, XV 3002, which obviously puts shipping and navigation on that issue quite clearly. So thank you for that. Further to our letter on that point, um, I just wanted to I would also have a couple of queries with relation to the timing between the issues on that agenda and the questions, but I'll return to that under the next agenda item for this thing, because I think it sits under that. But I did want to also, just as I was recording. Thanks, echo. Mr. Bedford Case's points in relation to the IRP.

01:24:48:07 - 01:25:18:09

Um, as he as he so well set out all of the points that you have listed under the IRP, uh, are nevertheless set out within the NPS. So I think where people have raised important issues and obviously we've raised shipping and navigation. Um, we would be concerned that that would have a lesser status because it doesn't appear on the IRP notwithstanding, we hear what you say about it being within the NPS, which undoubtedly is as a very important and cogent issue. So, um, it seems to me an unusual position.

01:25:18:14 - 01:25:28:22

And I'd also note that other recent development consent order examinations in this very area at sea have listed shipping and navigation on the IRP as important points.

01:25:29:20 - 01:25:42:24

Okay. Thank you for the point. I don't think there's anything more at this point. I can say apart from to reassure you, that all matters will be that are important and relevant will be examined. Thank you. Um.

01:25:45:10 - 01:25:46:13

Good morning, Mrs. Thomas.

01:25:46:22 - 01:25:48:09

Julie, what is it?

01:25:48:12 - 01:25:49:26

Oh, I'm Julia Ewart.

01:25:49:28 - 01:25:51:08

I'm speaking on behalf of.

01:25:51:10 - 01:25:51:26

My.

01:25:51:28 - 01:26:00:06

Husband, who is a trustee at IPP 17 Good Neighbour Scheme. My consideration is probably infinitely more pedestrian.

01:26:00:15 - 01:26:34:02

I've been left with a list here of very sensible ideas with regards to the collaboration, which of course is incredibly important, and the fact that we are living in a moving feast here, as you will understand as you spend some time with us up here in Suffolk. What he's concerned about is in doing this piece of work is that you may miss the opportunities, and therefore he has sent set out incredibly sensible opportunities. And if we were to speak to anybody locally here, when we say Bennell, they throw their hands up in the air and they'd say, let's go down to Kelsall.

01:26:34:04 - 01:27:07:05

It's really important, therefore, that we do look at the broader picture and that you look at the broader picture, because I think what we've been talking about is plan A, but actually you might have to totally revisit something other that he says the examination should treat this as an opportunity to ensure that road design, safety and long term resilience are understood and need to be improved as part of the project's legacy. Who would I send these notes to? Given that I see that you're, uh, possibly slowing the meeting down somewhat.

01:27:07:07 - 01:27:10:26

Should we all make our contributions online and send them in?

01:27:23:27 - 01:27:40:14

So. Thank you. Sorry. The opportunity is at the open floor hearings to make a verbal submission. Or you can make a written submission for deadline one. If you have written material that you want to submit.

01:27:40:20 - 01:27:50:00

Yeah. Okay. What he has here is quite different to that which he'll say tomorrow because that is in more granular detail for that, that effect. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you.

01:27:50:27 - 01:27:56:15

Does anybody else have anything they want to say about this item on the agenda?

01:28:00:12 - 01:28:06:19

Okay, I see another hand. Um, is that, um, James Burton?

01:28:11:14 - 01:28:15:09

Or is that a legacy hand? Is that a current request?

01:28:16:06 - 01:28:52:21

Miss Thomas, I'm afraid it's me. Uh, sorry to trespass again. Um, without repeating anything and entirely endorsing it again. Everything that Mr. Bedford KC has said, I should say James Burton for Suffolk County, Jackson Solutions entirely endorsing everything that Mr. Bedford Casey has said. Um, you will you will hate me for making this suggestion, madam, but, um, the whole panel will. But you've heard the concerns and confusion, even amongst some extremely experienced professionals regarding what's important in the IP and what what's not.

01:28:53:01 - 01:29:35:04

Could I perhaps just invite the panel to give some consideration to whether there might be a written way that they could communicate to the public. Um, the, the the list of, uh, maybe a list of final print or not final, but a further list of principal issues. Just just so we don't have this recurring. And I'm sure you're going to encounter it at other hearings. There's recurring confusion about, well, this thing is specifically listed in the AP, and I know these other things are in the NPS, but are they important? And it's it's just it's just the thought it's intended in the spirit of assisting.

01:29:35:09 - 01:29:37:21

And I said, you're going to hang on before it, but there we go.

01:29:38:21 - 01:29:59:17

Thank you for the, um, suggestion. As I've said, we won't be issuing a revised IEP, but as I've already said, please be assured we will consider everything that is important and relevant will be thoroughly examined. Thank you. Um, I see one more hand. Um. Is that Marian Fellowes?

01:30:05:20 - 01:30:08:08

If you could turn your camera on if you wish to say something. Thank you.

01:30:08:10 - 01:30:11:08

Yes, thank you, Mrs. Thomas. Um.

01:30:12:02 - 01:30:14:11

Sorry. Could you just introduce yourself again?

01:30:15:21 - 01:30:46:26

Thank you. Thank you. Marianne Fellowes, Ober resident. Uh, this initial assessment, although, is, as you say, just a broad stroke approach is important because I believe it sets off a train of events in the sense of being a systematic process to enable you to then evaluate things, because decisions will be made to allocate timing and dates for issue specific hearings, um, groupings of hearings and where they're going to take place, as we mentioned earlier today.

01:30:47:07 - 01:31:26:05

Um, and it will enable the involvement of stakeholders in, in a topic or not. And I do understand that the process is, in theory, a written one. You know, an examination in writing. But I think issue specific hearings and the assessment of what matters are important, even to be examined in writing needs a little bit more flesh on the bones right now. I do welcome the suggestion from Mr. Burton, and I'm disappointed that you've said unequivocally, without consideration, with your colleagues over a period of time, that you will not issue a revised list.

01:31:26:07 - 01:32:00:03

There is actual precedence that can help you. Um, my experience directly being involved in both the Scottish Power Renewables East Anglia one, North East Anglia two, and the size of c dco. Was that a list of issue specific um matters? Initial assessment of overarching issues was actually helpful. Um and burying them under, as I say, six just main headings quite, quite randomly picked in a way.

01:32:00:06 - 01:32:31:03

When you look at the actual application, although it's founded in principle from the NTP documents, I understand that is not helpful. So I think at this stage of the hearing, the public myself, others do need to have confidence. And I know you said we will examine them, but if you're not going to reissue a list of what you are going to examine in the way that meets our expectation, then it does leave a great deal of uncertainty.

01:32:31:05 - 01:32:54:04

And, um, we need to trust you. We want to trust you. We want to assist you. And we're telling you clearly now, today, lots of people have said it. Lots of different levels of expert evidence have been given to you. But we do need a list of matters that are going to be regarded as important to be examined. Thank you.

01:32:55:08 - 01:33:14:07

Thank you. Um, as I've said, the need for issue specific hearings will be based on what we need to hold those hearings on. Um, and they are not constrained by what's in the IRP. So everything that is important and relevant will be thoroughly examined. Thank you.

01:33:17:01 - 01:33:42:24

If we don't have any more questions, I think this is an appropriate time for a 15 minute break. So, um, the meeting is adjourned and we will recommence at 1148. Um, we will need to stop the live stream to get a clear recording file. So when we recommence, you will need to refresh your browser. Um, and to continue watching after the break. Thank you.