Planning Inspectorate

Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2)

Wednesday 28 to Friday 30 January 2026

Supplementary agenda additional questions

In preparation for this hearing, the ExA has a number of questions which it considers require relatively straightforward responses, clarification and/ or the submission of additional information/ evidence. Rather than use the time at the hearing to get this information verbally, the ExA has listed these questions in the table below and would ask that responses be submitted at **deadline 4, Tuesday 10 February 2026** unless otherwise specified**.** If anyone considers that the ExA need to explore these matters orally, then there will be the opportunity to raise this with the ExA during the hearing in Item 2 of the agenda.

Number	Subject	Response by	Question/ Clarification
General			
ISH2.01.	Planning and Infrastructure Act	Applicant, local authorities and interested parties (IP)	The Government's Planning and Infrastructure Act received Royal Assent on Thursday 18 December 2025. The applicant, local authorities and all IPs are invited to submit comments on the new Act in relation to any implications for the examination of this application.
ISH2.02.	National Policy Statements	Applicant, local authorities and IPs	The following National Policy Statements (NPS) were designated on 6 January 2026: EN-1, EN-3, EN-5. Considering paragraph 1.6.3 of EN-1 (2026) whilst the revised NPS's will only have effect in relation to those applications for development consent accepted for examination after 6 January 2026 they are capable of being important and relevant considerations in the decision-making process for this application. **Applicant:** Review the application documents (in particular but not limited to ES part 1, chapter 2 Regulatory and Planning Context [APP-043]) in light of the newly designated NPSs and provide any updates and amendments as necessary. **Local authorities and interested parties**: Submit any comments in relation to any implications of the newly designated NPSs for the examination of this application.

Number	Subject	Response by	Question/ Clarification
Ecology and biodiversity			
ISH2.03.	ES Appendix 2.2.B Suffolk Wintering Bird Report [PDA-025]	Applicant	[PDA-025] ES Appendix 2.2.B includes a compendium of Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) data from Kent and not Suffolk, or the table is titled incorrectly. Provide a corrected version of the appendix in an updated report.
ISH2.04.	Natural England standing advice	Applicant	NE [REP3-117] table 4 highlights that it will no longer provide bespoke advice on air quality and signposted to its 'Standard Advice for Air Quality Impacts in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)'. Annex 1 of [REP3-117] provides NE's sequential approach to air quality assessments. The applicant should provide a response to annex 1 that outlines how the project has addressed these matters.
ISH2.05.	Minster Marshes extent	Save Minster Marshes	Provide a map that delineates the full extent of the Minster Marshes.
Marine mammals			
ISH2.06.	Technical guidance for assessing effects of anthropogenic sound on marine mammal hearing.	Applicant	Table 4.18 in the Marine Mammals Chapter [REP3-022] states that updated United States National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) guidance, which was out to consultation at the time of writing, provided a revised hearing range for very high frequency cetaceans and for seals in water. The ExA requests that an update is provided as to the status of the NMFS guidance and if appropriate an updated assessment based on the revised hearing range of the effects of anthropogenic sound on marine mammals.
ISH2.07.	Outline Marine Mammal Mitigation Plan (oMMMP)	Applicant	Can the applicant update the oMMMP to ensure that the correct Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) guidance is referred to, as advised by JNCC in [REP3-090].
ISH2.08.	Data sharing for underwater noise effects and mitigation	Applicant	Provide an explanation as to whether provision for data sharing is required or included in the oMMMP [REP1-025]. Amend if necessary.
ISH2.09.	JNCC guidelines	Applicant	The applicant has updated MM01 and MM02 of the Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) [REP3-078] to refer to JNCC guidelines. It refers to both 2020 and 2025 guidance but there is no reference list provided. Provide a reference list for clarity.

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ISH2.010.	Marine mammal in-combination assessment	JNCC and Natural England (NE)	Provide comments on the updated marine mammal in-combination assessment in Version E of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Report [REP3-028].
ISH2.011.	Southern North Sea Special Area of Conservation (SNS SAC)	Applicant	Confirm the percentage of the SNS SAC's habitat that would be affected by the proposed works (including the buffer around the cable)
ISH2.012.	SNS SAC	Applicant	JNCC consider the format of the in-combination assessment means it is not possible to consider potential impacts at a site or conservation objective level. Can the applicant provide clarity on potential impacts in an updated assessment.
ISH2.013.	SNS SAC	JNCC and NE	The applicant has provided further narrative on the implications of the use of the Winter SCANS 2025 harbour porpoise abundance data. It concluded ([REP3-069] 1MM7) that the revised baseline did not change the overall outcomes of the assessment as the numbers estimated to be disturbed were still significantly lower than the threshold criteria for impacts to harbour porpoise SACs. Do you agree with this conclusion, and if not explain why.
ISH2.014.	SNS SAC	Applicant	Explain why airborne sounds and visual disturbance is not considered for harbour porpoise of the SNS SAC in paragraphs 4.3.29 to 4.3.32 of the HRA Report [REP3-028].
ISH2.015.	Errata	Applicant	Paragraph 1.4.1 of [REP3-022] refers to three surveys but four have been carried out. Correct and check chapter to ensure accuracy.
Marine physical environment			
ISH2.016.	Total hydrocarbon content (THC) data	Applicant	The Marine Management Organisation's response to ExQ1 1PE3 [REP3-094] highlights that Marine Chapter 1, paragraph 1.7.83 [REP3-020] references THC data collected in 2022 along the proposed offshore cable route and states that it cannot comment on THC as these results were not provided. Provide this data.
Landscape and visual			
ISH2.017.	Errata	Applicant	Design Principles – Suffolk [APP-366] paragraph 1.3.5 is unfinished or there is missing text, similar problems on the following 3 pages.
ISH2.018.	Errata	Applicant	ES part 2 Suffolk chapter 1 Landscape and Visual [APP-048] page 83 para 1.8.9 'Friccori' third bullet point from top of page.

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			Page 82 of the same document, para 1.8.9 4th bullet point wording does is not legible and includes a typographical error.
ISH2.019.	Settlement Sensitivity Assessment Volume 2	Applicant	This document has been referred to in Applicant's Response to Suffolk Energy Action Solutions (SEAS) Relevant Representation - Michelle Bolger Expert Landscape Consultancy (MBELC) Report 2025 [REP3-074]. If the applicant considers that it is relevant to the consideration of landscape and visual matters by the ExA, a copy or relevant extracts should be provided.
ISH2.020.	South East Marine Plan seascape policy	Applicant	Have the effects of the development, including cumulative, been considered in relation to the seascape policy? If they have not, either explain why it is not necessary or provide an assessment.
ISH2.021.	Alde Estuary	Applicant	Provide a detailed response to the relevant representation [RR-0091] from the Alde and Ore Association which states that the zone of theoretical visibility shows that the converter building and substation will be visible from the Alde estuary and that the study area should have included the estuary. If there are potential viewpoints from the estuary, explain whether they have been considered in the landscape and visual impact assessment. If they have not, either explain why it is not necessary or provide an assessment.
ISH2.022.	Advance mitigation planting	Applicant/relevant planning authorities	Requirement 6 of the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) [REP3-006] does not secure advanced planting, as it only prevents the authorised development from commencing, so could not be enforced for advanced planting. It therefore needs to be secured separately in the dDCO. Could advance mitigation planting be added to pre-commencement operations in article 2, with a requirement that pre-commencement operations cannot be carried out until details of advance planting are approved with a timetable for their implementation? Suggest some wording.
ISH2.023.	Pylons	Applicant	If as set out in the applicant's response to first written questions [REP3-069] in response to 1LVIA16 the pylons did not include the additional 6m allowed for in the limits to deviation, how can the ExA be sure that the worst-case scenario has been assessed? Is the 6m vertical limit to deviation reasonable?

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ISH2.024.	Native woodland planting mix	Applicant	In relation Suffolk County Council's (SCC) request for hornbeam to be included in the woodland planting mix in table 5.1 of the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan – Suffolk [CR1-045], raised in its Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP1-131], include hornbeam in the planting mix or provide a detailed explanation for its omission.
ISH2.025.	Trees over cables	Applicant	In the applicant's response to 1LVIA15 of the ExA's first written questions [REP3-069], it sets out that it is problematic to install cables below existing trees. Provide a detailed explanation of the implications of this for existing trees that are shown to be retained in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment [APP-294] and [APP-295] within the limits to deviation for HDD cable installation.
ISH2.026.	Cumulative effects with the Suffolk Water Transfer Project	Applicant	One of the route options would cross the River Fromus in a similar location and cross the Saxmundham converter station site. What would be the implications for the proposed landscape mitigation?
ISH2.027.	Replacement tree planting	Applicant	Provide a clarification and justification for the ratio for replacement tree planting, raised in SCC's LIR [REP1-130], or signpost to where this matter is addressed in the applicant's documentation.
Design			
ISH2.028.	Limit to deviation for Fromus Bridge	Applicant/relevant planning authorities	Provide suggested wording for adding this to article 5 of the dDCO.
Climate change			
ISH2.029.	Use of SF_6 in switchgear	Applicant	In light of the applicant's response to ExQ 1AQ1 [REP3-069] and acknowledgement that use of SF_6 switchgear may be required, provide a complete response to the points raised in paragraphs 2.9.62 to 2.9.65 of National Policy Statement EN-5 for Electricity Networks Infrastructure. This should demonstrate how monitoring and control of fugitive SF6 emissions would be secured.
Shipping and navigation			
ISH2.030.	Concurrent restricted ability to manoeuvre (RAM) operations in the Sunk	Applicant/relevant stakeholders	Is SN12 of REAC [REP3-078] sufficiently effective as a commitment to avoid concurrent RAM operations with other projects in the Sunk area, or do concurrent RAM operations need to be precluded through the dDCO/ Deemed Marine Licence (DML). If so, provide

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			suggested wording for the inclusion of such a provision in the dDCO/ DML.
ISH2.031.	Interaction with Gridlink cables	Applicant	In the response to the ExA's first written question 1OSU2 [REP3-069], it is stated that the proposed cable route would be moved into deeper waters to the east within the order limits. Provide an explanation of how this routing would be effectively secured.
ISH2.032.	Errata	Applicant	The applicant's response to other submissions at deadline 2 [REP3-064] appears to have incorrect text in the applicant's comments on pages 71 and 72 in relation to points 6.1 and 6.2.
The draft Development Consent Order			
ISH2.033.	Article 2 (interpretation) "outline offshore overarching written scheme of investigation"	Applicant	In response to ExA question 1GEN16 the applicant stated that for consistency it was content to adjust article 2 and not refer to the method statement, by deleting the words 'or Marine Archaeological Method Statement' but would first welcome the views of the relevant marine stakeholders [REP3-069] Applicant to obtain views and amend article 2 if necessary.
ISH2.034.	Article 2 (interpretation)	Applicant	Onshore Construction Environmental Management Plan has been added but not the Offshore Construction Environmental Management Plan. Applicant to review and amend Article 2 if necessary.
ISH2.035.	Article 3(4)	Applicant	Remove the words 'and to Schedule 3 (Requirements)' as per the response to ExA question 1GEN20 [REP3-069].
ISH2.036.	Article 26	Applicant	The Bramford to Twinstead made order article 24 includes the same wording as the Sea Link article 26 for paragraphs (1) to (4). Add paragraphs (5) and (6) from the Bramford to Twinstead made order that are not included within Sea Link article 26 as per response to ExA question 1GEN37 [REP3-069].
ISH2.037.	Schedule 16 DML Part 2 Condition 4 Pre-construction plans and documentation paragraph 4.(1)	Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and any other relevant stakeholders	In response to ExA question 1GEN16 the applicant amended the wording in Schedule 16 DML Part 2 Condition 4 Pre Construction Plans and Documentation paragraph 4(1) to include the words "in general accordance with" [REP3-006]. Provide comments as to whether the wording is satisfactory, or suggest alternative wording.
ISH2.038.	Schedule 16 DML – Part 2 condition 4(4)	MMO	In response to ExA question 1GEN58 the MMO has stated it does not agree with the wording of this condition [REP3-094]. Please submit suggested alternative drafting.