



Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Event Transcript

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:05:23 - 00:00:36:18

It's 1 p.m. and at 2 p.m.. And I shall, uh, recommence this hearing. Uh, can I check with the case team that they can hear me? And the live stream and recording has commenced? Okay. Uh, so to help us with time, we are amending the agenda. Um, so we will start with benthic ecology and then to fish and shellfish, marine mammals, landscape and design, then cultural heritage. If you have time, then we will also cover marine physical environment.

00:00:36:21 - 00:00:46:11

If not, this will have to be moved to another day. Um, so, um, I shall firstly be asking questions on the topic of benthic ecology.

00:00:52:03 - 00:01:30:13

So firstly, um, I hope the applicant has been able to read the comments from Natural England at the last deadline. Uh, three 300 and 3AI believe regarding benthic ecology. Um, in this it is still the concern of Natural England. There needs to be further consideration of potential impact pathways. This includes, for example, the potential benthic impacts from sand wave leveling. I want to explore this more with Natural England, but unfortunately they're not in attendance today. Uh, what I would ask, though, as an action point, is that the applicant respond to each of the points raised by Natural England's benthic ecology deadline.

00:01:30:18 - 00:01:48:03

I think it was coming at three a submission, including where they state that a potential pathway has not been considered sufficiently. Um, that would be very useful for the examining authority and hopefully conclude some of the issues that remain with Natural England. Is that okay from yourselves?

00:01:48:10 - 00:01:51:13

Sorry for that. Yes, sir. Noted. And we'll we'll deal with those points.

00:01:51:15 - 00:02:25:14

I'm sure you probably would have anyway, but I think it would be particularly good, because I think some of those points are probably ones that can be, um, concluded. Uh, with Natural England. Um, and as we're getting through examination, that'd be good to do so. So, uh, moving on. Uh, naturally, there's relevant representation. Ah, 3920 stated its concern about the potential for a benthic halo effect into the Goodwin Sands Marine Conservation Zone, or MC Z, following placement of structures on the seabed near the designated site.

00:02:26:03 - 00:03:05:21

Uh, the applicant in our rep three zero 70 responded that any cable protection used by the proposed development would not create the environmental conditions that would cause halo effect to

development. Um, it might be that cable detection would not result in a large surface area for colonization in any one place, but it does seem that colonization could happen. Um, as such, how can the applicant be sure that there would be no halo effect within the MC Z, and is there any existing evidence that the applicant has used that can be submitted into the examination to to back this point up.

00:03:06:24 - 00:03:15:08

Sheet for the applicant? Um, thank you sir. I'm going to ask um, doctor, um, Jackie Hill, who is the marine ecology lead for the applicant to help you with that.

00:03:15:10 - 00:03:15:28

Okay.

00:03:16:00 - 00:03:16:18

Thank you.

00:03:16:20 - 00:03:47:15

Doctor Jackie Hill for the applicant. Um, yeah. This is a very interesting point. Um, I don't think we are denying that there is going to be potential colonisation of cable protection. That's a given. The important thing about halo effects is they require particular environmental conditions for them to occur. And that is for, uh, complex communities that cover a depth gradient in the water column that allows different species to exist.

00:03:47:24 - 00:04:32:16

Um, a lot of filter feeding organisms that feed from particles in the water and, sorry, pseudo feces lands onto the seabed and creates what's called a halo effect. It kind of increases the organic content on the sediment and allows different animals to live there. But that requires three four meter high structure. So all of the evidence that Natural England referred to, we've investigated. And halo effects have only ever been observed in, um, wind farm, uh, foundations, uh, artificial reefs that have been built three, four, five meters above the seabed, um, and shipwrecks.

00:04:32:18 - 00:04:48:08

So those are where those effects have been observed. So the kind of colonization you're going to get on cable protection are not going to have the kind of species or the the development of the community that would result in those effects. So it's it's just not a thing.

00:04:49:09 - 00:05:01:03

And is there are this some is there some sort of study or studies that that have been done. Which. Which you could refer to us. And also for Natural England's.

00:05:01:19 - 00:05:33:07

Uh, Jackie. Jackie Hill for the applicant. There are actually very few studies looking at, um. Effects of colonization of, uh, cable protection. I think because it's not a massive factor. Um, but there are studies that show halo effects. In a lot of studies. Um, but they don't replicate the conditions that you get for cable protection. And I think it's, you know, we're not saying because you don't see it. It's not

there. We're saying where you see it, there are very specific environmental conditions that allow those communities to develop.

00:05:33:09 - 00:05:35:21

That won't happen for cable protection.

00:05:37:03 - 00:05:54:14

Okay. Thank you. I understand. Um, on that point, really, how likely is it that the cable would be positioned immediately adjacent to the Marine Conservation Zone boundary? Um, would it be beneficial, say, to set the cable away from the conservation and Marine Conservation Zone boundary.

00:05:55:23 - 00:06:28:00

Jackie. Jackie Hall for the applicant. Um, so, as you know, we have a corridor. That cable can be laid anywhere within that corridor. We will be undertaking pre-construction surveys to look at the habitats within that corridor, uh, to see if there are particular sensitivities. Um, we would like to remain, um, retain maximum flexibility within that corridor to lay the cable in the place where we can minimize impacts. Clearly, if we're going to find something like a stable area reef or a muscle bed, we're not going to be putting the cable there.

00:06:28:02 - 00:06:47:29

So it will be all about looking at the sensitivities in pre-construction surveys. And I think a really important point is some of those very sensitive habitats that the MSC said protects things like area reefs are pretty dynamic. And so, you know, it's something you need to look at pre-construction.

00:06:48:18 - 00:06:56:18

And if there was a few different options for a route. Would it be preferential? To choose an option which isn't so close to the MC Z.

00:06:58:00 - 00:07:15:21

Or for the applicant? I think that's really an engineering decision. You know, looking at where the cable is going to go will be decided on the basis of the pre-construction surveys, taking into account both the engineering and the sensitivities. You know, it's not just biological sensitivities.

00:07:15:23 - 00:07:16:19

Understand.

00:07:19:08 - 00:07:49:08

So starting with cable connection protection. Um, would the applicant be prepared to commit to a type of table, uh, cable protection or multiple types, maybe, uh, that are most easily removable at decommissioning? And, um. Is it? And if it is considered preferential. By the examining authority, naturally there may be as well for cable protection to be removed at decommissioning. Is that also a commitment to the applicant is, uh, would be willing to make.

00:07:50:10 - 00:07:54:04

For the applicant. I think I'd like to pass that to my colleague, Mr. Ahmed.

00:07:56:12 - 00:08:31:28

Andrew Homewood for the applicant, there is a suite of cable protection measures. And I think you're referring to, uh, cable protection at crossings. So a rock berm or mattresses or cable protection within a trench rock backfill within a trench. So there's not a wide suite of methods or techniques we would use. And the leading factor in terms of our selection at this stage is deliverability to meet our requirements. Um, secondary to that would be uh, decommissioning, which are not currently a factor we consider.

00:08:34:09 - 00:08:53:09

But could it be a factor that you could consider within that? Um, sort of in the mix with deliverability, as you were saying, if you had a choice, say an equal choice between two methods, if one is more easily removable at decommissioning. Um, could that therefore be part of the process of your decision?

00:08:53:23 - 00:09:02:19

Andrew Homewood for the applicant. I think we'll take that one away. It's a multi-disciplinary sort of view you're asking for. Yeah. Um, and we'll respond in writing.

00:09:02:21 - 00:09:15:19

It's something that naturally has been brought up a few times. Um, and, and I think it's quite a common theme on, on a lot of similar, um, applications. So, um, yes, that would be good to hear back on that point.

00:09:19:23 - 00:10:08:20

I also note, I think a deadline for the applicant is looking to submit a cable specification and installation plan, so it could be all wound up in that sort of same document potentially. I would have thought. Um, also, is it possible that the applicant could provide a plan to give some indication as to where cable protection would likely be required for the offshore works? Um, I understand there's there's there have been certain amount of surveys and and um, brilliantly works so far when it comes to, um looking at the, the root, um, and whether there's certain parts of the cable corridor where the applicant might know, even at this stage, that cable protection is more likely than others.

00:10:08:22 - 00:10:12:19

Again, it's something that Natural England brought up in their last comments.

00:10:16:00 - 00:10:51:20

Andrew Homewood for the applicant. I think there's a definitive answer to that in respect of the planned works. Um, the primary cable protection is by lowering below seabed with rock backfill placed in the high risk areas at known locations, that is K p 38 to 58, KP 81.5 to KP 96. The remainder of the route is backfilled by natural processes. Natural backfill. So I think the issue here is about rock. So in respect of rock backfill in high risk areas, the kilometre point or cape is known.

00:10:55:06 - 00:11:25:09

There is also cable protection at crossings, so this would be undertaken using agreed designs, um at known crossing locations, and the project description provides two tables which outline the current

known in service and planned crossing locations, and therefore the number of uh um in-situ and planned crossings we are accounting for. Mhm. And therefore those locations are known.

00:11:27:13 - 00:11:53:09

What's not known is um, any block that might be required in the case of cable exposure. Yes. Well that's not anticipated by the applicants because of the primary means of lowering the cable below seabed. Um, that could be anywhere along the route. Save perhaps between the KP 3858 and 81 to 96, where we have a rock backfill in the high risk areas, which would preclude cable exposure.

00:11:58:12 - 00:12:29:08

The other unplanned use of rock could be where, in the unlikely scenario, we don't achieve full depth of lowering and a low height rock berm. Um, locally and over limited length might be placed. And again, that location is unknown. But the volumes we're talking about in terms of, um, unplanned use of protection and specifically rock are very limited in the context of the overall scheme and the length of the process.

00:12:29:24 - 00:12:54:01

I think I think one of the main points I think natural is probably getting to is that when where you can't, um, actually you can't get the sufficient depth and, and with that, because the geology where that might be more, uh, most likely. I think it did come up in Natural England's last comments. So if you're responding to that, then if you provide whatever detail you can on that, then then that will be helpful to us all. Thank you very.

00:12:54:03 - 00:12:55:03

Much. Thank you.

00:12:55:12 - 00:13:26:23

Um, the applicant has also proposed a benefit mitigation plan in certain circumstances. However, a key aspect of mitigation for benefit ecology would be to microsite around sensitive features if needed. As was noted by Natural England. Please explain why there isn't a clear commitment to microsite by the applicant. Couldn't see that in the latest version of the Reac. Um, but I don't know if that's been replaced because we're talking about benefit mitigation plans.

00:13:28:04 - 00:13:44:21

For the applicant. There is definitely a commitment in the Reac in relation to micro siting on the basis of reconstruction surveys. Um, there are a number that cover both installation engineering issues but also ethnic sensitivities.

00:13:44:23 - 00:13:56:10

And yeah, I did see it in relation to things like marine archaeology, for example. Um, and I think we presumed it would be part of it because it had been there maybe previously. Um.

00:13:58:29 - 00:14:03:18

But it might be just worthwhile just checking to see if it's there. Within the context.

00:14:03:20 - 00:14:06:16

Of I've seen it, I just can't find it in my notes.

00:14:06:22 - 00:14:20:23

No, that's fine. Just maybe just to make sure that it's within that, within the context of, of like, benefit ecology. Yeah. Um, because I did see it in relation to maybe a few other things that um, okay. That's fine. So um,

00:14:22:17 - 00:14:52:11

and also for the proposed benefit mitigation plans, could you maybe give me some examples of what type of mitigation could be included, um, and whether such mitigation should already be committed to within the risk anything individual because you've committed to these benefit mitigation plans with a pre commencement survey has shown that uh particularly sensitive um habitats or species. Uh, just get a bit of an indication of what that might include.

00:14:52:13 - 00:15:23:09

Yes. Of course. Jackie Hill for the applicant. Um, so the benthic mitigation plan would really be identifying those particular habitats that are of conservation importance and particular sensitivity to some of the activities that would be happening during construction. Um, they would be highlighted. Um, identified. We would also be including the kind of information that we would need to collect to be able to identify and categorize those habitats, because some of them are quite difficult to, um, categorize.

00:15:23:11 - 00:15:55:09

So, for example, sub area reefs are a, you know, they're a big concern. They're incredibly fragile, but area occurs in all sorts of different forms. It might be a veneer on the surface, on the surface of the seabed. So those kind of thing, the guidance documents that we would need to be referring to. And there have been some more recent guidance documents published since the time of writing. So those will be referred to. But we will also be liaising with working with Natural England and to look at some of those issues.

00:15:55:25 - 00:16:24:16

And well, sort of following on from that last point, who would sign off approval of the benefit mitigation plan and its and its proposed mitigation? I think it's referred to as they would be done in consultation with MMO, for example. Um, but um, it would there be in terms of securing the mitigation and approving the actual plan itself? You just let me know how that would be done as a process.

00:16:25:18 - 00:16:40:04

Jackie Hill for the applicant. I think that's something I might need to take away. I'm not entirely sure of the exact process. I mean, I know there is going to be consultation, but how it's actually the detail is secured. Yeah, I think I need to come back in writing that.

00:16:40:08 - 00:16:59:27

Yes. And if, if something like that happens and the mitigation plan was produced, it's it's basically who is sent to. Does that have to form an agreement. It doesn't have to agree. It and then secure in the implementation of that as well. Yeah. It's those processes. I would be interested in.

00:17:00:05 - 00:17:09:06

I'd like to pass to my colleague Robin Jones, Doctor Robin Jones, on the behalf of the applicant. Um, yeah. It would be likely to be the MMO, uh, for that approval process.

00:17:09:15 - 00:17:19:13

Okay. So if you could just clearly set out how that is secured within what you've submitted. That would be very useful. Thank you very much. Um,

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also in terms of the pre commencement survey, um, would the scope and methods used for the survey um be agreed uh prior with say MMO or and or Natural England prior to the surveys undertaken?

00:17:38:01 - 00:18:15:03

Doctor Robert Jones, on behalf of the applicant. Um, we've identified within the project description the types of surveys they're likely to be required, uh, during pre-commitment activities. Um, these include bathymetric surveys, side scan, sonar surveys, and potentially drop down video surveys as well. Um, this is not just typical from environmental, but also for engineering just to establish, um, burial requirements prior to a sort of beginning. Um, but yes, I can um, yeah, I think we can take that away, but I think we probably would look to consult, um, as required with relevant stakeholders.

00:18:15:05 - 00:18:23:18

Yes. I mean, that'd be useful again, to know the process, how that would actually happen. Who would be consulted, how that would be secured, that sort of thing?

00:18:23:20 - 00:18:25:21

Yeah. No problem. We can take that away and provide a response.

00:18:25:23 - 00:18:26:29

Okay. Thank you very much.

00:18:31:12 - 00:18:47:26

I mean, is it possible in your view that the pre commencement survey could uncover issues related to, say, Saks or MSC Zs, which are not currently addressed within the ES. Is that a possibility, and is it also, therefore a possibility that further mitigation could be required as a result.

00:18:49:01 - 00:18:54:05

For the applicant? Um, do you mean in terms of finding habitats that we've not found already?

00:18:54:07 - 00:19:01:29

Yes. And covering issues which might need to be addressed, but that would be post consent rather than obviously.

00:19:02:06 - 00:19:26:20

I don't think so. We've done a lot of desk based research. We know the kind of habitats that happen in this area of the North Sea. There have been a lot of previous projects that we've collected data from.

Um, we know the habitats that are protected by the designated sites, so I would be very surprised to find something. Yeah. I mean, I can't think as a benthic ecologist, I can't think of another habitat that we might find that would cause us a problem.

00:19:26:29 - 00:20:01:21

Okay. Thank you. Um, next, I want to raise the issue of, um, monitoring. Um, the and the in principle monitoring plan, which has just been discussed in writing the IPM as it's known. Uh, the, uh, Natural England have um, suggested that an outline version be submitted previously, um, which could then be used to explain how monitoring would be done, including methods. For example, finer details of monitoring could then be left to a final IPM p to be agreed often with with the MMO.

00:20:02:01 - 00:20:32:27

Um, it seems to be a quite a common feature, a common document with any proposals. Um. Such monitoring is often then used to validate these conclusions, but also identify issues, uh, following cable installation that wasn't previously anticipated. Um, on this basis, um, uh, from the examiner authorities perspective, I think we would still like to see an outline. IPM p submitted. Um, I know there is information already submitted in terms of monitoring.

00:20:32:29 - 00:20:47:08

But but as a sort of singular document, we would find that useful. Um, and if not really just looking for the applicant to maybe give some reasons why they're not looking to submit it at examination stage.

00:20:50:15 - 00:21:23:24

Robin Jones, on behalf of the applicant. Um, yeah. We completely agree that in principle, monitoring plans are important documentation. Um, and they are usually applied to offshore wind farms where there's very much uncertainty or evidence gaps or significant impacts. As it stands, our assessment, um, offshore, we haven't got those, uh, significant impact impacts. Sorry to benthic habitats and therefore sort of driving a plan based off, um, that at the moment it's quite difficult because we haven't identified any habitats at this stage that might require monitoring.

00:21:24:03 - 00:22:01:04

Um, however, whilst we understand that during pre commencement surveys we might find sensitive habitats like Jackie's outlined. Yes. Um, we've therefore created two commitments within the Reac. Which state that if we do identify any habitats which do require monitoring and suggest that our initial assessments differ because, um, new evidence has come to light, then of course, we would consult with Natural England or relevant stakeholders to then produce and in principle, monitoring plans going forward. But at this stage, because we haven't got those significant effects, um, we've not proposed that we've put forward an outline plan based on that.

00:22:01:06 - 00:22:08:18

Um, but however, like I said, if new data came to light prior to, um, construction, then of course we would consult as needed.

00:22:08:22 - 00:22:26:12

Okay. And, um, I did note the the inclusion of the IPM p as a to go along, I think with the benefit mitigation plan. Um, can you just check as well is a post installation cable route survey, uh, currently planned by the applicant for the full route.

00:22:32:29 - 00:22:39:00

And rehired for the applicant. I just want to clarify. Can you repeat the question of post installation?

00:22:39:02 - 00:23:30:26

Post installation. Uh, basically a survey of where the cable has been installed. Will there be a survey of that? I think it has been mentioned in terms of things like marine archaeology and maybe fisheries as well. Um, and I'm just wondering if that's going to be submitted and also data then produced from that which could feed into um, benthic ecology issues basically to see if, if there's anything that's come that post construction, um, there might be issues for example, and anticipated um by what submitted at examination stage or things which could be of worse impact than anticipated as well that maybe needed some further mitigation.

00:23:31:03 - 00:23:40:28

Um, so yeah, it was the I believe there is mention of this post insulation cable route survey, but not in the terms of benthic. Is that something they looking to do.

00:23:41:12 - 00:24:10:12

And for the applicant. So I can confirm that there is definitely a post installation so-called as build survey to confirm that the cable has been installed and the conditions in which it's been installed. I would defer to my colleague on the topic of whether there is a benthic element to that survey, but from an engineering perspective, it's very focused on bathymetry. Uh, the depth of lowering of the cable, um, and the condition of the cable in situ along the route.

00:24:12:19 - 00:24:41:17

Jackie Hill, for the applicant. In my experience, it wouldn't be normal to do a post construction benthic survey because you would be using your pre-construction information on the habitats that were present. You would then be looking to the engineering to see where the cable had been laid, to see what cable protection had been in place. Um, yeah. So I've not seen that before, but it's something maybe we need to take away and have a just, you know, it's a multidisciplinary discussion, I think.

00:24:41:19 - 00:25:19:28

Yes. I think it links in with the point about monitoring as well. Um, because if you're going to monitor something, obviously you need to provide some form of post construction monitoring to see what has happened since then. So, um, I would have thought that would fit in then with the Ipmi that, um, they would have to be some sort of level of, um, survey after the construction event to see whether, um, what you're planning and what mitigation you might be looking to, um, build into the, the, um, cable route, uh, installation has been successful, basically.

00:25:20:06 - 00:25:37:18

Um, and or if, for example, the that National Natural England has also mentioned monitoring of certain areas such as close to M.C.C., for example. So that would be a post construction monitoring. Um, from from my understanding.

00:25:38:25 - 00:25:56:29

Jackie, here for the applicant. I mean, that would only be necessary if the pre-construction survey identified areas where we would need to either microsite or where they may need to be cable protection in those sensitive areas. And that would be within the in principle monitoring plan.

00:25:57:17 - 00:26:06:18

But in those circumstances you would do then therefore monitoring or via survey work after construction or installation, I should say.

00:26:07:23 - 00:26:12:17

Again, I'm not sure. I think I think we need to take that one away and discuss because it. Yeah, I'm.

00:26:12:19 - 00:26:14:28

Just not sure how you would monitor something without.

00:26:15:00 - 00:26:21:13

Well, if we don't find if we're not if we're not affecting the sensitive habitats, then we don't need to monitor.

00:26:21:15 - 00:26:22:10

But if you did.

00:26:22:12 - 00:26:27:20

If we did, yes, then there would be an in principle. We'd refer to the in-principle monitoring plan.

00:26:27:22 - 00:26:35:14

Which there then could include a post construction using the post construction survey data as part of that.

00:26:35:24 - 00:26:36:14

Potentially.

00:26:36:16 - 00:26:38:23

Potentially. Okay. Thank you very much.

00:26:43:17 - 00:27:19:09

Um, just a couple more questions. Um, there appears to be an increased substantial increase in the proposed quantity of rock backfill in high risk trench areas included in the various documents updated by the applicant. Um, again, this was picked up also by Natural England. This includes a change from 17,100 meter square to 45,600 meter square, um, of rock backfill. Can this be explained? And has this change been taken to account with maximum design and worst case scenarios within the ES?

00:27:20:28 - 00:28:01:19

Jacket for the applicant. Yes, it can be explained. It was a mistake. Okay. We, um. We picked that up that our up at deadline one and submitted the change. We took that figure through the impact assessment. So it's not just something a question of updating the project description. Yeah. Um, we've actually reflected that in the assessment and we still find no significant impact. And the reason for that is yes, the backfill has increased, but the overall direct habitat loss has only gone up from 0.15km² to 0.18km².

00:28:01:24 - 00:28:07:22

Taking into account that error. And so actually from a proportionality point of view, it's not actually changed the assessment.

00:28:09:22 - 00:28:50:21

Thank you for that. Um, lastly, uh, Natural England advised that reef features features within the coast. Um, SAC should have a medium sensitivity to suspended sediment concentrations or SSC, and deposition in line with the precautionary principle. If the assessment is updated to a medium sensitivity. I think at the moment what's been submitted by the applicant is that the sensitive sensitivity would be low. Um, how would this change the s assessment on benthic ecology at coast sac uh, through potential um, suspended sediment and smothering impacts.

00:28:50:23 - 00:28:54:24

Would this then be a potential, uh, significant effect.

00:28:56:11 - 00:29:01:11

For the applicant? Sorry. Can you just repeat the habitat that they're talking about for this planet?

00:29:01:13 - 00:29:31:25

Coast sac? Um, I this is in the benthic chapter that's been submitted. I think it was an update after Natural England brought it up quite early on to do with the reefs and the sea caves and I think are basically the says here that from the applicant, the cave habitats are not sensitive to changes in SSC from cable installations that wasn't considered further, but for intertidal and infra littoral reef.

00:29:31:29 - 00:29:51:01

Sensitivity to SSC ranges from not sensitive to medium sensitivity. Considering the location of the features within the area of high natural variability in SSC due to wave and tidal wave movements, sensitivity is considered to be low, but naturally the suggested sensitivity should be medium.

00:29:52:07 - 00:30:00:12

For the applicant, so the sensitivity rating has been taken from the designated sites pages. For Natural England. That's what we've used.

00:30:00:14 - 00:30:01:11

Right. Okay.

00:30:01:15 - 00:30:09:28

Um, so but sensitivity is a mixture of the actual vulnerability of the habitat, um, and the importance. Um,

00:30:11:24 - 00:30:28:21

so yeah, I think, I think I need to take that away because I. Yeah, I've used the rating from the Natural England designated sites pages. We did miss sea caves. Those have been assessed. Yes. Those are definitely not sensitive to, um, suspended sediment concentration.

00:30:28:23 - 00:30:52:12

Yeah. And I don't think naturally. And then come back on the case with any criticism. It's it's just at one point it is in the deadline three submission for benefit ecology. So if you're responding to that then you will want to respond to that. Okay. Thank you very much. Has anyone got any other comments to make on um, the matters we've covered in benthic ecology here today. Anyone online?

00:30:54:13 - 00:31:29:18

Okay. I'll move on to item six and I'll only be correct. This is Fish and shellfish. My questions were mainly going to be from the Marine Management Organisation, the MMO, um, to do with the seasonal restriction that related to, uh, red throated diver in the outer Thames Estuary Spa. And they, they basically pointed out that that period coincides with the spawning seasons for the Dan herring and November to January, and the spawning hibernation period for sandhill in November to February. So MMO did say that limit's adverse impacts during these sensitive periods, particularly for sandhill.

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Um, what I wanted to clarify from the MMO was where their position actually is, whether they still feel there's a concern there, or whether they're still pushing for some other form of mitigation or something like that. So what I'll do, I'll put that into an action point for MMO. So just to let you know where I am with that. And um, so yeah, I haven't really actually got anything else on fish and shellfish species today. Um, are there any, uh, other points that anyone else wants to make in relation to fish and shellfish species? Um, offshore marine? Um, not to do with fisheries itself, but the the actual species.

00:32:08:13 - 00:32:10:07

Is there anything else anyone wants to make?

00:32:21:27 - 00:32:24:10

Yes. I can see someone there. M m.

00:32:28:12 - 00:33:01:26

Morgan. Hangman. On behalf. Oops. Sorry, my microphone wasn't down. Morgan Harriman, on behalf of the Environment Agency. Just to note that we do have a number of outstanding issues to do with fluvial fisheries as well as offshore as well to do with brook lamprey. Um, these are issues that the applicant is aware of. So perhaps you might not want to discuss them now. But I just thought as you ask that question, if anyone else had any concerns to do with fish, I could raise it.

00:33:03:16 - 00:33:19:22

I think we are aware of, um, the Environment Agency's points with regards that I didn't have any questions myself and with regards to that species today, but we We're aware of your points that you've, um, you've made. Previously on that one. Okay, okay.

00:33:19:24 - 00:33:20:29

Fair enough. Thank you.

00:33:21:07 - 00:33:21:23

Thank you.

00:33:25:00 - 00:33:33:18

Uh, if there's nothing else, then, uh, I can pass over to Miss Thomas, uh, for, uh, item seven, which is marine mammals.

00:33:34:15 - 00:33:35:07

Thank you.

00:33:37:12 - 00:33:38:01

So.

00:33:38:18 - 00:34:01:21

In relation to marine mammals, I have asked several questions on the supplementary agenda, but there are some more specific matters that I want to discuss today. Um, which I hope won't take too long. Could the applicant please share? Um, the examination library references are EAP one, dash 122.

00:34:03:12 - 00:34:38:00

Just lovely. Thank you. Um, that's figure one. So this shows Peggy Bay. This is from the, um, sound, the noise assessment for marine mammals, for seals. Um, so first I raised in written questions the potential for effects on seal behaviour from the visual presence of construction activity, um, including vehicles and lighting at low tide, and well Bay, which is a point that's been raised by Kent Wildlife Trust.

00:34:38:03 - 00:35:19:01

Um, and the applicant did respond to that. Um, but I do still have some questions. So seals haul out, as we can see on this, um, figure that's being displayed, you can see where seals haul out generally on. Thank you. On the River Stour. Um, so my understanding is that seals move in and out through the river. Um, sorry. Move in and out of the river, through Pego Bay and into the Channel beyond to hunt or to forage, which would then take them past the construction activities going on in Pego Bay.

00:35:21:01 - 00:35:25:10

That's just a basic point, but I just want to make sure my understanding is correct.

00:35:25:20 - 00:35:46:22

Jackie. Over the applicant. So when the Seals are coming out of the river and going out to hunt, it's going to be high tide. So most of those lighting and the works are not going to be happening in Bedwell Bay, because the tide will be in. This is primarily a construction activity that's happening at low tide. So the lighting is not going to be an issue or visual presence.

00:35:47:00 - 00:35:58:19

Okay. Okay. Thank you. Um but other. So the barge etc. would still be there though. That's not going to be taken away at low tide. At high tide.

00:35:58:21 - 00:36:03:01

I'm assuming Jackie Hill for the applicant. That's right. But it's not going to be moving.

00:36:03:03 - 00:36:11:03

No. Okay. Um, would other, um, equipment still be there that would be visible at high tide.

00:36:12:10 - 00:36:33:11

Um, yes. So the coffee Jackie Hill for the applicant. Sorry, the cofferdam will still be there, but I think the point is there isn't going to be a lot of activity going on over the high tide when those seals are moving out. And actually, that's not when they are most sensitive to that kind of disturbance anyway. Hmm.

00:36:33:17 - 00:36:41:03

I understand the point. I just need to understand for my own, um, you know, ability to to deal with the issue. Um,

00:36:42:21 - 00:37:07:21

so are there. I know you've said that, um, seals in the water are not so likely to be affected by disturbance because they're under the water. Um, but presumably they do. They're not under the water the whole time when they're swimming. And they would come up and they would be able to be aware of, um, equipment, the barge, etc., the cofferdam.

00:37:07:25 - 00:37:08:10

Jackie?

00:37:08:12 - 00:37:08:27

Yeah.

00:37:09:17 - 00:37:32:05

Yes. Yeah. But if they're foraging, they're spending most of their time underwater. So, yes, they definitely come to the surface. Okay. But the the area where they're going to be foraging is some distance from when the activities are Bedwell Bay. So in terms of visual disturbance, I can't see that that's not an issue. It's not been an issue. A thing that we've considered.

00:37:32:29 - 00:37:47:10

Is there scientific evidence that you've been able to refer to or observed evidence about how likely seals are to be disturbed by that sort of activity? Because just looking at this, they would be passing fairly close.

00:37:48:18 - 00:38:21:01

Yeah. Jackie, over the applicant I think having been to site, it's actually really difficult to understand for a map the distances involved. So the distance from where the seals are to where the activities are happening is quite a it's quite a distance away. Seals are very easily disturbed, particularly when

they're hauled out, particularly by visual disturbance. But that visual disturbance is nowhere near close enough for the seals, particularly the seals at bay, that are really habituated to all sorts of disturbance to be disturbed.

00:38:21:03 - 00:38:30:11

Okay. Um, does anybody else want to make any comment at this point? I, I think Kent Wildlife Trust is still on the call.

00:38:34:03 - 00:38:43:14

Hi, Emma. Oliver. Yeah, I think we all consult with our, uh, area warden for Pequot Bay and get back to you at the deadline for. If we have any further questions.

00:38:43:23 - 00:38:46:25

Okay. Thank you. That's helpful. Um.

00:38:56:17 - 00:39:03:02

Oh, sorry. I seen there's a hand up in Suffolk. Is that in relation to this question about seals?

00:39:04:00 - 00:39:25:08

Uh, yes. Just to note to assist that, um, recently off the Suffolk coast and specifically off the landfill site, uh, there has been seals, uh, witnessed, um, in the area and they've been displaced from Norfolk Island. So I draw that to your attention for further investigation. Thank you. Marian Fellowes, Aldeburgh resident. Thank you.

00:39:26:25 - 00:39:29:21

Would the applicant like to comment on on that?

00:39:29:25 - 00:39:47:14

Yeah. Jackie Hill for the applicant. Um, so the activities happening at Aldeburgh are all subtitle. So we're not looking at activities that could disturb seals, um, from airborne sound or visual disturbance. And there are no important haul out sites anywhere near that particular site.

00:39:49:27 - 00:40:28:18

So if they're going to be present, they'll be present in the water. Present in the water, quite close to the coastline. Um, which is a short distance from the beach and where the um, HDD will be. Thank you Jackie. Helping the applicant. So most Seals will stay relatively close to their haul out locations. So that doesn't preclude sales from being anywhere in the North Sea. Some of them are known to forage quite long distances, but in terms of affecting populations, there's nothing happening at Aldborough in terms of the number of sales that would have a significant impact.

00:40:28:20 - 00:40:30:12

Okay. Thank you. Thank you.

00:40:32:25 - 00:40:55:00

Um, there's further point. Kent Wildlife Trust says that there's evidence that seals use the saltmarsh at high tide and would therefore, um, obviously be higher up and potentially have a view of activities, um, going on in Pago Bay. Do you have any comments on that?

00:40:55:10 - 00:41:23:05

Jackie Hill for the applicant, I do. So I think we'd probably be talking about modeling, but the modeling accounts for, um, the position. The topography of Pequot Bay and the river. So it accounts for the noise disturbance on the salt marsh. But I think this goes back to my previous point that at high tide, there's not that much happening at Pequot Bay. Most of the activities are at low tide.

00:41:25:03 - 00:41:30:08

Kent Wildlife Trust, have you got any comment on that response from the applicant?

00:41:35:12 - 00:41:56:28

Uh, no response, that specific question, but it was just another question that we had in regards to obviously, seals use the area for breeding as well, and we see that most of the assessments are done and just haul out locations. But whether whether or not breeding, um, it's been taken into account and how it will impact breeding and also pups.

00:41:59:20 - 00:42:02:12

Would you like to respond to that point?

00:42:02:15 - 00:42:34:11

Yep. Jackie Hill for the applicant. Um, so there are definitely pups. Um, at the haul out location in the river. The numbers are very small. Uh, the River Stour is not the main breeding population or the main breeding area. But when we talk about the assessment and we're really concerned about disturbance, is we look at the population and we do consider pups, but the pups behavior is determined by the adults behavior. And we're looking at the disturbance for both.

00:42:36:24 - 00:42:44:11

Okay. Thank you. Um does anybody else want to say anything about this specific issue about seals?

00:42:49:05 - 00:43:30:27

No. Okay. Um, so I've got one more question on this, I think. Um, so in terms of potential effect effects on cetacean species close to the Kent landfall. Kent Wildlife Trust have raised concerns about the reliance on desk based assessments to establish the baseline. However, in view of the increasing population size and expanding range of several marine mammal species, including bottlenose dolphin, um, there seems to be concern there is an increasing population size that may not have been really identified by not doing actual surveys.

00:43:31:13 - 00:43:39:14

Um, I just wanted to ask Kent Wildlife Trust if they've got any actual evidence of this. Is it? Or is it more anecdotal evidence?

00:43:41:03 - 00:43:50:08

Kent Wildlife Trust working with the Kent Dolphin Project. So there's been, uh, reports and sightings via the Kent Wildlife. Kent dolphin project.

00:43:55:00 - 00:44:07:10

Okay. And do we know what sort of. I mean, is that indicating a large change, or do we have any? Is that information you were able to provide to the applicant for consideration?

00:44:07:25 - 00:44:14:02

Oh, yeah. I can provide any information in our deadline for, um, representation.

00:44:15:09 - 00:44:22:25

Okay. Perhaps it would be appropriate for the applicant to respond at that point rather than, um, today to that.

00:44:22:27 - 00:44:54:19

Jackie Hill, I'm happy to respond later, but I would like to say that our assessments have taken into account the worst case scenario in terms of density estimates, and it would not be normal to do surveys, cetacean surveys for an interconnector project, because the sound that the main impact pathway is underwater sound and the sound intensity from cable is not particularly high. Yeah. And, you know, anecdotal data to go into an impact assessment can be useful.

00:44:54:21 - 00:45:10:00

But we need to do our assessment. We need density data. And that comes from systematic, regular um, surveys led by the Sea Mammal Research Unit. And that is the most robust and standard data set that's used to do your assessments.

00:45:10:16 - 00:45:17:15

Okay. Thank you. Does anybody want to make any comment on that? I can see a hand up. Is that, um. Matthew? Danny.

00:45:20:06 - 00:45:48:22

Uh, yes. Dots. Matthew. Danny. Representing seas. Um, just you just said, uh, Doctor Hill about the fact that the cables won't cause any noise, but presumably you're not denying that the actual laying of those cables will cause significant noise impacts. Uh, I don't know much about the end of things, but, uh, it would be interesting just to to know that that's being covered.

00:45:49:27 - 00:46:20:21

Jackie Hill, doctor. Jackie Hill for the applicant. Yes. Of course. Underwater sound impact assessments are a fundamental part of the Marine Mammal chapter. It's the main impact pathway that we have to consider for cetaceans. So we consider every activity that might be producing underwater sound, from geophysical surveys to vessels to cable installation. And what you see is the activities are not of a high intensity. They're not impulsive, they're continuous sound sources, they are relatively low level.

00:46:21:00 - 00:46:31:05

And we look at zones of influence, but we also adopt standard JNK mitigation measures to minimise impacts where they are required for particular activities.

00:46:32:10 - 00:46:41:25

Okay. Thank you. Um, just on that point of the, um, marine mammal mitigation protocol, um.

00:46:44:24 - 00:46:54:19

Is it so Kent Wildlife Trust is also raised that it's too narrowly focused, and it doesn't include any mitigation for sales at Bagwell Bay.

00:46:56:15 - 00:46:58:17

Would you like to comment on that?

00:46:58:24 - 00:47:17:02

Yes, doctor. Jackie Hill for the applicant. Um, there are no mitigation measures for seals at Bagwell Bay. Sorry. In the River Stour, not at Penguin Bay. Um, because there is going to be no disturbance. We found non-significant impacts. So no mitigation measures are required.

00:47:18:27 - 00:47:23:06

Would anybody like to make any comment on that trust or anybody else?

00:47:25:07 - 00:47:28:23

I think we'll consult our colleagues and get back to you at deadline for.

00:47:29:03 - 00:47:50:05

Thank you. Thank you. Um, so apart from that, I just would like to ask the applicant to respond to natural. Oh, okay. Just. I'll carry on, and then I can see Mr. Marsh's have got their hand up. Um, I'd like to ask the applicant to respond to Natural England's comments at deadline three and make sure everything's, um.

00:47:50:07 - 00:47:51:02

Okay.

00:47:52:01 - 00:47:54:10

Yes. The comments that they made at deadline three.

00:47:55:04 - 00:47:56:07

Um, uh.

00:47:56:15 - 00:48:05:03

So I think there's a little bit of a lag in terms of, um, Natural England responding to to what you've submitted.

00:48:05:10 - 00:48:11:21

Yes. Jackie, for the applicant. Yes. Um, yes. We are waiting for some responses from Natural England.

00:48:12:00 - 00:48:14:28

Okay. Thank you. Um, segments to marshes.

00:48:18:00 - 00:48:21:06

Would you like to say something on marine mammals?

00:48:22:06 - 00:48:24:25

Thank you. Sorry. There's a delay.

00:48:24:27 - 00:48:25:12

Every.

00:48:25:14 - 00:48:38:20

Time when I ask to speak. I'm really sorry. Um, but, uh, we are under the the, um. We understand that the HDD drilling will be 24 hours a day.

00:48:40:18 - 00:48:56:11

Is the applicant saying that this is not going to be the case? Because if the HDD drilling is 24 hours a day, then there's going to be sound Impact underwater and lifeboat stations and fields.

00:48:58:00 - 00:49:01:11

Thank you. Could the applicant respond to that, please?

00:49:01:13 - 00:49:12:09

Jackie. Hillary, applicant. Uh, the HDD drilling does go on for a long time, but it's only the noise is only created in the marine environment when it exits, um, through the ducks

00:49:13:24 - 00:49:14:27

or through the exit pit.

00:49:14:29 - 00:49:17:04

Sorry. Can you just explain that a bit?

00:49:17:06 - 00:49:32:02

So each HDD is going through the sediment so it doesn't come out into the marine environment until the HDD comes out of the sediment into the water. So the actual underwater sound impacts are really, really short lived.

00:49:34:04 - 00:49:34:19

Okay.

00:49:35:20 - 00:49:42:08

Does anybody have any further questions on on that camp Wildlife Trust.

00:49:43:17 - 00:50:11:05

Hi, Emma. I just I think, um, one of our concerns again, that was around impact. Impact assessment on prey availability seals um and how that is going to then impact seal behavior. Um especially with the vibrations um, or the like the sediment and the vibe, those vibrations that are impacting sediments, how will that impact impact prey availability and then impacts on seals for their hunting.

00:50:13:01 - 00:50:15:15

But the applicant just respond to that point please.

00:50:15:17 - 00:50:51:13

Yes, definitely over the applicant. So we have looked at the impact of underwater sound, a lot of which is, um, vibration particle movement on fish, uh, in relation to a number of other receptors. So birds, um, and seals and harbor porpoises, um, those impacts on fish are really minimal. So we don't see any actual impact on prey availability. You also need to consider that seals had very wide foraging ranges. So um, in terms of the actual extent of the impact is minor or negligible.

00:50:52:20 - 00:50:57:19

Okay. Thank you. Kent Wildlife Trust. Has that answered your question?

00:51:00:20 - 00:51:03:25

Uh, yeah. If we have any more questions, we'll put them out. Deadline for.

00:51:04:11 - 00:51:12:23

Thank you. Okay, so unless anybody else has anything else they want to say on marine mammals, we will move on to, um.

00:51:15:00 - 00:51:17:08

Landscape and visual. Thank you.

00:51:30:05 - 00:51:34:05

Sorry. Landscape and visual is also May. So I'm just going to wait for a moment.

00:52:05:16 - 00:52:12:08

Sorry. Just. Well, people are moving around. I see there's a hand up from Matthew. Danny is. That's about marine mammals.

00:52:14:00 - 00:52:48:29

Uh, yeah. Doctor. Matthew. Danny sees here. Uh, no, it isn't, actually, but it is about ecology. So just before we move on to non ecology matters, uh, I know we're under time pressure earlier, but in the ornithology section, a couple of, uh, agenda points um, were skirted over particularly, um, to do with the, uh, uh, functionally linked land in Suffolk. It focused on Kent. Um, are we able to, uh, give, give you some written representation on this instead.

00:52:49:01 - 00:52:51:20

Before, uh, deadline for.

00:52:52:27 - 00:52:55:15

Yes. That would be appropriate. Thank you.

00:52:55:17 - 00:52:56:29

Great. Okay. Thank you.

00:52:57:14 - 00:52:58:05

Okay.

00:53:05:24 - 00:53:09:22

I'll see. There's another hand up. Is that from the Environment Agency?

00:53:11:09 - 00:53:23:12

Thanks, ma'am. Yes, Morgan. Hangman, on behalf of the Environment Agency. Just a quick query about the agenda. I must apologize, I forgot that we're moving agenda item A, can I ask when we've moved that item to.

00:53:25:12 - 00:53:32:05

Well, hopefully that will be the end of the day today. Um, depending on how we get on with the next items.

00:53:33:11 - 00:53:34:00

Okay. Thank you.

00:53:34:02 - 00:53:36:10

That's marine physical environment. Yes.

00:53:36:12 - 00:53:37:11

Yeah. That's the one.

00:53:37:13 - 00:54:18:10

Yeah. Yeah. Okay. So now turning to, um, landscape and visual matters. I just wanted to say first that I acknowledge that this is a broad issue that a lot of interested parties have concerns about. I have also asked other questions in the supplementary agenda as well as at first written questions. But the purpose of the hearing today is for me to focus on the specific areas that I want to discuss. Um, obviously, when I have received answers to the supplementary agenda and indeed, following today's session, I will consider whether I want to raise further questions.

00:54:18:22 - 00:54:48:25

Um, about that. So I have slightly changed the order in which I'm covering the points that were set out in the agenda initially. I would first of all, like to discuss the visual assessments. I have focused on some of the representative viewpoints, which have been identified as having either moderate or major adverse effects that are significant and, um, are those that are closer to the proposed converter station sites in both Kent and Suffolk.

00:54:49:01 - 00:55:20:00

I would like to look at each of these and hear from the councils as to whether they agree with the applicant's assessment of the magnitude of the effects, and also, um, to consider whether because I know various suggestions have been made for additional landscape mitigation. So I would just like to hear from council's and obviously applicant to, um, respond, um, on whether additional mitigation would be appropriate in those cases.

00:55:20:25 - 00:55:55:01

I'd like to bear in mind that the national um, policy Statement M one paragraph, 5.1.6, states that the aim should be to minimise harm to the landscape, providing reasonable mitigation where possible and appropriate. Paragraph of also um MPs in one paragraph. 5.1.5 acknowledges that infrastructure projects are likely to have adverse effects on the landscape, but states that there may be beneficial landscape character impacts arising from mitigation.

00:55:56:18 - 00:56:10:16

Turning first to Suffolk and we will come to Kent later. Um, can the applicant display viewpoint one, which is sheet five of eight in app 208?

00:56:18:16 - 00:56:56:27

So in in this one um, does and I think East Suffolk councillor probably the lead for landscape in in Suffolk. Is that right or. Well I'm happy to hear from both of you. Um, and I'm also aware that seas are here and would no doubt like to comment as well. Um, so first of all, just do the councils. I will say, agree with the applicant's conclusion that there would be, um, likely significant adverse effects, which would be major at year one, reducing to moderate at year 15.

00:57:01:21 - 00:57:02:06

Um.

00:57:02:10 - 00:57:35:04

Madam, I don't know whether, um, I'm whether I'm jumping ahead of East Suffolk or not. Well, I am jumping out of East Suffolk. Michael Bedford, Suffolk county council. Um, can I introduce to answer that question from the Suffolk County Council perspective? Can I introduce Mrs. is Old Cutting who is a senior landscape officer with the county council. She should be online and therefore should be available to respond to that point.

00:57:41:13 - 00:58:40:12

Good afternoon. Shall I just jump in? It's already cutting for Suffolk County Council. Hello. Um, yeah. So I think, um, as the, as the visualisation shows quite clearly the, you know, it is a significant impact and completely changes the landscape in this area. And, um, the visual effects are long, long term, if not permanent. And we are of the view that the proposed mitigation planting is not sufficient in this area to, to mitigate and especially bearing in mind that, um, the site that's been chosen is the site that has been, you know, um, in the latter half of the 20th century, been quite degraded and is now devoid of most landscape features, which we thought would give the applicant a sort of clean slate to come up with, um, some improvements for the landscape character in this area, and that hasn't really materialized.

00:58:42:07 - 00:58:44:15

Okay. Thank you. Um,

00:58:46:05 - 00:58:48:05
can I hear from East Suffolk

00:58:49:29 - 00:58:51:05
on this letter?

00:58:52:18 - 00:58:55:12
Uh, yes. Mark West and Smith for East Suffolk.

00:58:55:14 - 00:58:56:08
We have.

00:58:56:10 - 00:59:02:01
Uh, with us, Nicholas Newton, who's a principal landscape and agricultural officer.

00:59:02:03 - 00:59:05:26
And I'm going to ask him to, uh, respond, please.

00:59:06:12 - 00:59:10:14
Good afternoon, Nicholas Newton Heath, Suffolk. Um, yes. This is this.

00:59:10:16 - 00:59:42:28
Is a key view. Um, because it's the point where the public right of way leaves the B road that links sex funding to Leiston. The converter station will be plum in the focus of that footpath route in the view. So yes, we certainly agree with the applicant's findings that there will be significantly adverse effects arising, uh, at the end of construction. The question is, is what's going to happen at year 15? And you have well, you have the. The point that my county colleague, Mrs.

00:59:43:00 - 01:00:13:09
Cutting, has just raised the fact that this is a seriously denuded landscape, and there were generous opportunities for the applicant to come up with something more ambitious that sought to redress some of that lost landscape character through their mitigation proposal. The other key problem you have is that it has been exceptionally difficult establishing new planting in this part of the country in recent years because of erratic weather patterns, and in particular.

01:00:13:18 - 01:00:14:03
A lot.

01:00:14:06 - 01:00:14:21
Of very.

01:00:14:23 - 01:00:30:06

Dry will come to us later. But I just want to stick with this actual view for the moment. Are you able to suggest where you would like to see additional planting, and certainly you think that would achieve?

01:00:30:28 - 01:01:14:14

Well, back towards the to be the be road and where the viewpoint is taken from. And the more you bring it nearer to the viewer, which in this case is the footpath user, the more effective it becomes and the sooner it becomes more effective and also more likely to overcome that difficulty of establishing plants. It is still a relevant point that planting is very difficult to establish. So the the question you originally raised was that whether adverse effects will moderate over the 15 year period, and it does very much depend on the success of the planting, but if you can bring them nearer the viewer, then the more effective they also become.

01:01:14:23 - 01:01:39:16

And if I may, Mark Weston Smith for East Council, you asked about proposals for mitigation planting. If you look at our local impact report, which is rep 1-128, page 38, figure two has some suggestions for mitigation, planting and suggestion for this particular viewpoint is area B of that figure?

01:01:40:15 - 01:01:47:19

Yes. What do you think that would be? Can you just briefly explain what how that would help in this situation?

01:01:48:27 - 01:01:53:15

Yes. Well, I'll hand back to the expert for, for that judgment, but.

01:01:53:18 - 01:02:02:12

Well, it's the point that it brings the planting nearer the viewer and makes it more effective sooner in the time period post construction.

01:02:04:22 - 01:02:08:03

Okay. Would the applicant like to respond at this point?

01:02:08:22 - 01:02:19:07

Uh, sorry for the applicant. Um, yes, ma'am. I'm going to ask Miss Ruth Morrison, who's our landscape and visual lead, on behalf of the applicant to help you with this.

01:02:20:09 - 01:02:51:25

Thank you. Ruth Morrison, on behalf of the applicant. Um, perhaps taking obviously a number of things to discuss there, but accepting that we are all in agreement that there will be residual significant effects from this location. Um, a side of debating whether or not the degree of significance between ourselves and other interested parties. Um, looking at the areas of additional planting that East Suffolk Council identified in the local impact report, area B, um, we provided a response to that.

01:02:51:27 - 01:03:24:20

Um, and primarily the woodland um, as the area B would be around the permanent public right of way, which was diverted during the construction period, would be reinstated once operation um, once

the scheme's operational and by planting around that particular corridor. Um, in effect, you would be closing views off to the wider landscape and also channelling views along the public right of way, actually towards the converter station site.

01:03:24:22 - 01:03:58:02

So by enabling a more open outlook from users of the prowl. Um, they'll be able to have what are wide views across the landscape, um, which are fairly expansive in many respects. Um, but taking the point about, um, users within this section and looking at opportunities, other opportunities that who suffer council have identified in their local impact report. Um, one being um, whether we could provide some additional planting along the B11 19.

01:03:58:16 - 01:04:31:15

Um, the applicant's pleased to agree that we would be able to provide some additional planting within our order limits, and that would provide a strengthened belt of planting in addition to the hedgerow and hedgerow trees that are currently proposed. Um, that would strengthen the planting along this corridor, noting that we would extend that up to the point of Mr. Rick's land, which we heard from him yesterday in his concerns around, the existing hedgerow and tree planting that sits there.

01:04:31:20 - 01:04:40:05

And reflecting that we would provide this belt up and to that point where we have space in our currently in our order limits to provide that.

01:04:40:24 - 01:05:03:02

Okay. Thank you. Does anybody want to comment on that suggestion? Um, and I'm aware I haven't heard from you, Mr. Bridges. I will come to you. Um, if I can just stick with the council's for the moment. Um, I can see a few hands up. So let's hear from, um, East Suffolk first, if that's okay. Yeah.

01:05:04:17 - 01:05:41:24

Charles Westerman. Smith. Uh, East Suffolk council. Um, we welcome that indication of further planting. Um, to the north. That is something we have been asking for. And obviously we'll review when we see a further indication of precisely where that is proposed as to the area be Planting, and there's a choice to be made. And what that planting would do is screen. Um, the, uh, converter station for users of the prow wouldn't accept it with channel views.

01:05:41:26 - 01:06:12:24

One can see from the viewpoint, uh, being shared at the moment that, uh, planting to the left of the track would screen rather than channel views of the converter station. And the question is, is that preferable to, um, the converter station being the focus in, uh, wider views where there are plenty of prowls around the locality that are enclosed. So there would be a change in character.

01:06:12:29 - 01:06:37:03

But for those that are out working in the countryside, um, views of uh, albeit close views of um trees may be preferable to longer views of the converter station. And so we prefer the proposal to plant alongside that and proud rather than naughty, but welcome the indication that there'll be further planting to the north. Thank you.

01:06:37:25 - 01:06:59:10

Thank you. Does the applicant want to respond to that particular comment? Obviously I've already heard what you've said. Um, I think it would be helpful to hear from you. And, um, I guess there are different types of landscaping that could be used that could filter rather than channel views.

01:07:01:12 - 01:07:31:14

And on behalf of the applicant, and just a couple of points I'd like to make. One being that the public right of way runs, um, partway along the, um, existing track that you can see in the view there, but then crosses the field, whereupon it is um, and would be channelled towards the converter station. Um, second point being that this would affect the land acquisition and then implications on the landowner. Um, something that's an important consideration.

01:07:33:17 - 01:07:48:01

I think, um, we haven't got the Olympe plan up at the moment, but I think there is a triangle of land that's, um, within the order limits, is there? Or is that outside of the order limits?

01:07:50:02 - 01:07:58:19

Rights? Um, for the applicant? Um, it is, but it's about the acquisition. We don't have, um, permanent rights over that parcel of land.

01:08:00:08 - 01:08:07:19

Thank you. If you could go back to the the viewpoint, that would be good. Um, can I hear from. Thank you. Um.

01:08:10:00 - 01:08:13:21

Is it, um, Geraldine Barker? Is that from.

01:08:13:25 - 01:08:17:09

Did you want to hear from Mrs. Cutting from the county council? Yes. First.

01:08:17:11 - 01:08:18:01

That would be good.

01:08:18:03 - 01:08:21:21

Thank you. Then. I think she's she's I see on that.

01:08:21:23 - 01:08:23:04

Okay. Okay.

01:08:23:15 - 01:08:54:04

Thank you. It's already cutting for Suffolk County Council. Um, yeah, a couple of points. Uh, coming back to the openness of the landscape, I think, you know, we have to remember that it is a denuded landscape. And, you know, that's not necessarily the the characteristic that we most need to aim for the with regards to the channelling of the views. That is correct, that, um, the, the footpath veers off to, you know, diagonally across the field towards the substation. However, by then it is also that much closer to the substation.

01:08:54:06 - 01:09:39:14

So um, that means the the proposed mitigation planting will then have a greater effect than from where, where this viewpoint is located. And I, I would say there's, there might be a middle ground to be found between, you know, great. Making this footpath stretch into basically a woodland walk and, and leaving it completely open because I think it could, um, create filtered views with with strategically placed vegetation blocks and then having some vegetation along the footpath that is, you know, sort of again, doesn't have to be solid, but it gives something to focus on in the foreground and takes the mind off the very, um, you know, dominant feature in the background.

01:09:40:00 - 01:10:10:29

Um, with regards to the planting along the, um, B road, uh, I've noticed there was some in the in the response to the, um, question round number one, the applicant provided some cross sections, um, as, as to how they envisaged that. Um, I think unfortunately that is insufficient in my eyes. I mean, the, the planting width of two meters with a hedgerow that is sufficient to actually plant the hedge, but it's not sufficient if that is the intended corridor.

01:10:11:01 - 01:10:45:05

I mean, I don't know the, the five metre width for the, for the maintenance strips either side of that are quite generous. And maybe there is some room allowance for the hatch to develop into, but, um, certainly not to me. This is certainly not a realistic corridor to have any, um, you know, long sort of longer distance use from the north, um, sort of sufficient filtering of the views. I think what we would be aiming for would be a tree belt of a minimum width of ten metres and then, um, a five metre maintenance trip, maybe to the south.

01:10:45:07 - 01:10:49:06

That would coincide with public access ideally.

01:10:51:19 - 01:11:06:16

Thank you. Thank you for the applicant respond on that point of the whether that width of um, planting that's already in the order limits along the be um 1119 is would be sufficient.

01:11:08:03 - 01:11:47:08

On behalf of the applicant. Um, the cross sections, I think Miss Cutting was referring to um, in our deadline three submission provided more than just, um, the hedgerow and tree planting and provide an additional area within the order limits. And I think what I'd like to suggest is that the deadline for we will update the cross sections to make it clear exactly what this enhanced area of planting could look like along the B11 19. Um, just like to quickly also note that the area in question we're talking about around the public right of way is actually a utility corridor, a permanent utility corridor, um, which would limit the tree planting.

01:11:47:11 - 01:11:50:26

Um, that would be, um, possible within that.

01:11:51:29 - 01:11:56:27

So do you mean the public right of way across the field that we can see here? That's correct.

01:12:00:07 - 01:12:15:21

Could I hear from, um, Geraldine Barker? Before we move on, I see another hand up as well. I will try to deal with you quickly, but obviously we have got a lot to get through, and, um, we've already spent quite a lot of time on this, unfortunately.

01:12:16:14 - 01:12:51:19

Thank you. Yeah. So it's Geraldine Barker from Saxmundham Town Council. Thank you for allowing me to speak on this. Um, yes. It is a blight on the landscape at this point. Uh, I asked why we couldn't have additional planting, and I believe, uh, this is intrinsically linked with the next proposed converter station, which is line link, which I know it's outside the scope of this. However, it is, it is very apparent from line links.

01:12:51:28 - 01:13:24:29

Um, document, which I have just got in front of me at the moment, which is the background to, to potential design approaches. That line link appears to be taking on, uh, the metal of landscaping, both areas, which will include extensive planting from what I can see. Um, adjacent to this, um, metal public right of way, uh, with instigation of the great wood that used to be around.

01:13:25:04 - 01:13:36:11

So sorry to interrupt, I am I am also aware of that plan, and I will be talking later on or asking today about the interaction with line link. So.

01:13:36:20 - 01:13:56:26

Ah. Thank you. Um, but the last thing is that we would like to see planting around the B1 one, one of the 1119. Um, because it's not just people walking, it's the visual implications for people entering Saxmundham and the impression that it gives of an industrialized landscape.

01:13:57:04 - 01:14:11:29

Thank you. I can see another hand up at Suffolk. Is that do you have something to say specifically about the this view and the planting? Well, actually, it's, um, a secondary to Geraldine's.

01:14:12:01 - 01:14:22:05

Point as well. Um, to say don't forget line link. And also don't forget that there's, um, a southern view with public right of ways from Stanfield.

01:14:23:12 - 01:14:24:18

Okay. Thank you.

01:14:27:11 - 01:14:39:27

So if if there's no more. I'm sure people do have things to say, but I feel like we've discussed viewpoint one. Um, could we now turn to, um, viewpoint, Miss Thomas? Oh.

01:14:40:13 - 01:14:40:28

I do.

01:14:41:00 - 01:14:46:16

Oh, sorry. Yeah, I know you've been very patient. I would like to hear from. See? Thank you. That's all right.

01:14:46:24 - 01:14:48:21

I'll turn to Mr. Bridges.

01:14:48:25 - 01:14:49:10

Um.

01:14:49:12 - 01:14:50:22

He's riba. Um. Um.

01:14:51:01 - 01:14:51:22

RSA.

01:14:51:24 - 01:15:00:04

Um, could I just check is your question. Are your questions here purely in terms of visual impact or also landscape impact?

01:15:00:06 - 01:15:07:23

We will I will come to landscape as well. I was just trying to for my own sake really. And everybody else is keep it focused. Yeah.

01:15:09:19 - 01:15:12:01

Thank you. Nicholas Bridges, on behalf of seas.

01:15:12:11 - 01:15:14:26

Um, firstly, this existing.

01:15:14:28 - 01:15:16:05

Landscape character.

01:15:16:07 - 01:15:17:11

Uh, has nothing to.

01:15:17:13 - 01:15:19:08

Detract from the landscape character.

01:15:19:10 - 01:15:20:05

L1.

01:15:20:19 - 01:15:21:13

Um, so.

01:15:22:00 - 01:15:23:01

This proposal is.

01:15:23:03 - 01:15:23:18

Being.

01:15:23:20 - 01:15:24:05

Mitigated.

01:15:24:07 - 01:15:29:05

By the proposed planting. And that raises questions. Um, and also why.

01:15:29:07 - 01:15:29:22

This.

01:15:29:24 - 01:15:42:27

Building is on the tallest part of the site, um, in terms of the mitigation that's proposed. Obviously that's that's good, but it's only affects the visual points. It doesn't affect the the impact on character, which no doubt will come to later.

01:15:45:14 - 01:15:46:11

Thank you.

01:15:48:01 - 01:15:50:11

Does the applicant want to respond to that?

01:15:50:29 - 01:16:25:19

Thank you, Ruth Morrison, on behalf of the applicant. Um, and I will keep it relatively brief just to say that, um, there's a lot of work that's evidenced in various documents in the application explains why this particular part of the site has been selected. It's further east, away from, um, the approach into Saxmundham. It sits within the context of the existing planted framework on the site, with a back cloth of existing woodland that the landscape mitigation is looking to further enhance and work with.

01:16:26:08 - 01:16:43:22

Um, and it is just to be clear, the highest point in the site is actually where this location is taken from here. Um, and that the site does fall and fall slightly towards the back of the site, which is where the, um, proposed converter station is located.

01:16:44:08 - 01:16:52:08

Okay. Thank you. I can see another hand up is do you have a point to make about this particular matter?

01:16:53:07 - 01:17:14:23

Uh, yes. This is, um, Paul Atkinson. I'm a resident of Saxmundham. Um, I, um, understand the line link consultation I went to on Saturday that they're proposing to bury lower the converter station,

which is the same height, 26m to the sea link converter station by at least 3 to 4m. And I wondered if the applicant has considered that.

01:17:15:11 - 01:17:18:16

Thank you. Could the applicant respond on that, please?

01:17:18:18 - 01:17:51:11

Please. Morrison, on behalf of the applicant. Um, yes. That is something that we looked at as part of the early design iterations. We looked at where the cut and fill could work. And to do that now, the part of the site that we're sitting in with Sealink, there's very limited ability to work with cut and fill. There will be a little bit early indications of showing through the design and engineering work that's been carried out. Um, there will be some material available to provide some bonding, which we will be using within our proposed landscape works.

01:17:51:13 - 01:18:08:18

Once the detailed designs carried out, we'd know exactly how much that would be. But where Line link are, positioning themselves is a different part of the site, and the cross fall across their area is quite considerable compared with where the Sealink um converter station is Positioned.

01:18:08:29 - 01:18:19:03

So is funding something that would then be included in the landscape and ecological mitigation plan when you have a more detailed design?

01:18:19:15 - 01:18:38:19

Ruth Moritz, on behalf of the applicant. That's correct. And the detailed length that would be um, uh, provided in um subsequently that would outline because the material would be available to understand how much material there is to work with and where best to position that in terms of minimizing impacts and fees.

01:18:38:21 - 01:18:59:24

Okay. Thank you. Um, I've seen it's just gone 315. I don't know whether that's a an appropriate time for a quick break. Um, so we'll have a 15 minute break until, um, 335. And just a reminder to those watching on the live stream to refresh your browsers when you rejoin. Thank you.