



Hearing Transcript

Project:	Sea Link
Hearing:	Recording of Open floor hearing 3 (OFH3) - Session 1 Part 3
Date:	24 March 2026

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:05:10 - 00:00:36:29

Good afternoon. The time is now 2 p.m. and we will recommence the hearing and restart the live stream. Our next group of speakers are Councillor Andrew MacDonald for Snape Parish Council, um councillor Becky Wing for Thanet Green Party, councillor Katie Graham for Aldeburgh and Leiston ward, and councillor Jamie Henderson for Kent County Council.

00:00:41:24 - 00:01:00:08

I've just been told Timothy John Harrison is also here. Um, so he will be in the order that we had previously on the agenda. So if we could first have Councillor Andrew MacDonald, please, for Snape Parish Council. You've got six minutes.

00:01:02:16 - 00:01:16:06

Uh, good afternoon, and thank you. Um, can I just note, I think I've also got three minutes personally down on the agenda, and I was going to start with my personal three minutes before the Snape Parish Council, if that's okay with you.

00:01:16:10 - 00:01:17:25

That's fine. Thank you.

00:01:17:27 - 00:01:54:22

Thank you. So. So I'll start as Andrew McDonald, uh, a resident of Snake Village. Um, I've previously made written and oral submissions on cumulative traffic management and impact pressures, especially in respect of the limited choice of study area that National Grid have chosen, and also about their expressed lack of concern for traffic pressures consequent on the addition of sealing traffic to SPR, SLC, line link and so forth outside the study area. Road users, as they're demonstrating right now, are quick to respond to danger and delay on their pleasant routes by finding alternatives.

00:01:54:24 - 00:02:25:25

And this should have been part of, uh, ceiling's forecast and assessment processes. We're now in a sort of unregulated test phase for these cumulative impacts. Last weekend's a 12 a 109 for closure for size or C works led straightaway to a 3 or 400% increase in traffic through Snake Village towards Tunstall and the A11 52, as I believe I forecast in previous written responses and similar pressure on Sternfeld Road, especially at the B11 21 junction.

00:02:26:18 - 00:03:00:28

HGV pressure on the A1 094 consequent on ceilings. Consenting would have the same effect, but would actually embed these escape routes into normal behaviour. So the impacts on rural roads, quiet lanes, verges and hedgerows are already emerging purely on the basis of one okay very large project and its traffic impacts. We have severance, pedestrian delay, fear and intimidation and non-motorized amenity effects already. So let me give you an example of an attempted cumulative impact mitigation.

00:03:01:23 - 00:03:32:10

Spills traffic management works at Snake Church Junction, which as an intervention against severance, are apotropaic rather than effective. Unless you consider that an unmarked, unsigned and invisible kerb marking at a notoriously difficult junction close to a stretch of national speed limit, a road to be in any way traffic management but at least SVR have recognized the danger, although their intervention is ineffective and limited to an ineffective study and impact area. Um, apotropaic.

00:03:32:12 - 00:04:07:18

Since you might be wondering, means designed to ward off evil, usually through magical means. In projects of this scale, its more usual to use junction modeling than magical means to ensure that infrastructure can handle future demand while minimizing congestion. It's a critical component of transport assessments. And so my one real point I'd like to just ask why ceilings Proposals are being examined without a full traffic assessment and with junction modelling squeezed out like blood from a stone from this immensely well resourced and very large company at the last possible deadline.

00:04:08:09 - 00:04:09:04

Thank you.

00:04:10:06 - 00:04:14:04

Thank you. You've now got three minutes on your own behalf.

00:04:14:21 - 00:04:46:05

Ah. That was my three minutes on my own behalf. I was going to go on to the snake. If that's okay, that's fine. I wasn't timing that one. I'll try and keep the six minutes for for snake PC. So on behalf of Snake Parish Council would like to make, uh, four points in amplification of our earlier submissions. And to introduce one additional topic. Our concerns as a PC are very much wider than traffic impacts alone, but we restrict our comments today mainly to this area. So one baseline data, um, an old favourite.

00:04:46:07 - 00:05:22:09

The construction of the baseline of traffic movements has been an issue since the original application documents reveal that the baseline months that national grids had chosen were far from neutral and indeed completely ignored the seasonality of tourism and agricultural traffic movements across the local network. This matter remains unresolved and disqualifies any calculation based upon it. Second point junction modeling. Again, the information received up to deadline five on traffic impacts excluded any junction modelling and we are still, after five months of examination, waiting for any modelling of Suffolk junctions.

00:05:22:24 - 00:06:02:02

The eventual commitment made by National Grid excludes a number of key junctions, including, from our point of view as a parish council, the A1 094 B1 069 Snape Church Junction, providing this information at deadline six, reveals a startling lack of interest on the applicant's behalf in their stakeholders feedback. Three access to the proposed Saxmundham site. The options for access to site for abnormal loads have all been heavily criticised in today as well, and we're concerned that these options are only now being finalised despite National Grid's public claims of strategic forethought.

00:06:02:18 - 00:06:37:08

Each option in their change request has severe impacts on the road and rail networks, and we therefore identify the parish council at this point, with the proposals made by Suffolk County Council to explore the use of the size. We'll see Northern Relief Road for access. We agree with ACC in their rep for 149 that National Grid have not paid enough attention to the provision of alternative access solutions, especially as regards maintenance and operational access, with the impact of consequent road closures on the A1 094 and our own local roads left out of consideration.

00:06:37:10 - 00:07:13:23

We also consider C links arguments in their rep five 179 once again unsatisfactory, repetitious, bringing the original case back to the debate unchanged in no way respects the feedback that National Grid claim to value from their stakeholders. And to make a small point, the environmental impact set out in app zero 44 and paragraph 3.8 sub paras 11 to 16. That National Grid take to disqualify the relief road proposal contain nothing at all that is not simply brushed aside in other contexts when it suits the applicant.

00:07:16:03 - 00:07:59:17

Number four rat running. We've previously asked as a parish council, for more detailed attention to be paid to the second order diversionary impacts of heavy traffic on my on major roads, and we make this request once more. Still, hopefully those responsible for the cumulative impact of traffic diversion into unsafe and fragile rural roads and quiet lanes should be the ones to pay for Tros to reduce speed limits and for effective signage to protect smaller roads from the pandemic, pandemonium and the verge destruction that we've already seen with only one project in place, and which will be repeated over the next decade unless action is preemptively taken through DCO obligations.

00:08:00:24 - 00:08:49:18

Our last point, and our new point for the parish council is on the needs case. Um, we'd also like to note that the points made by other organisations about the actual need for this project seem at last to have received a considered, if not satisfactory, response from National Grid in the rep five 142. And in that context, we also very much welcome the examining authority's questions in SSC three on the requirements of National policy N-1, where claims of critical national priority are especially in protected landscapes and protected environments required to be supported by a rigorous, rigorous application of the mitigation hierarchy, which of course, in our view starts with the of the option of avoiding altogether.

00:08:49:20 - 00:09:25:00

Do not do. The applicant, of course, has been ignoring the needs argument throughout, relying on appeals to the Clean Power 2030 mission for the assumption of support for a so-called critical and urgent, but clearly now very general need for reinforcement of the grid. They should, of course, have first considered more efficient and cost effective methods of meeting both locational and general need for renewables, especially in a national landscape with an extraordinarily high incidence of protected and preserved landscape ecology and heritage.

00:09:25:10 - 00:09:31:07

We very much look forward to seeing the applicants response to these questions. Thank you.

00:09:32:07 - 00:10:10:29

Thank you very much. And next we have Councillor Becky Wing representing the Planet Green Party. You've got six minutes when you're ready. Thank you. And thank you for allowing me to speak again. Getting quite regular at this, aren't we? I am Councillor Becky Wing. I'm representing Planet Green Party and obviously myself as a resident and a councillor. This representation seeks to detail concerns and objective objections. Read the National Grid's proposal as part of their Kent ceiling, plans to expand the use of and CPO the old hover pool at Cliff's end.

00:10:11:06 - 00:10:45:05

As a councillor and a resident of Ramsgate who enjoys the benefits from a wide variety of open spaces in Thanet, one of which, as a dog owner, is the use of the hover port alongside many others. I would like to submit the following concerns. Environmental concerns. There appears to be little, if any, attempt by the National Grid to understand the unique flora and fauna at the Hover Port Ecological Survey seem to be lacking and would have identified what is there, in what numbers and how it links to the wider ecology of the area.

00:10:45:28 - 00:11:19:15

There is little effort to acknowledge the importance of the site, given it has now been rewilding for the last 30 plus years and its significance now as a biodiverse habitat located within a designated Ramsar site, National Nature reserve and nearer the risk of pollution, the make up of the hover pool is a mixture of concrete making up the old landing site for hovercraft, scrubland and saltmarsh. There has been no assessment of how what is planned will impact on these distinct areas.

00:11:19:17 - 00:11:58:24

I'm especially concerned about the extensive concrete area, which was built on the sands of Pego Bay near Cliffs End, using reclaimed land from 300,000 tonnes of spoil from the now closed colliery. This was used to build up the chalk bedrock to create a terminal and apron. Coal mine spoil is well evidenced as a significant potential pollutant and environmental hazard consisting of waste rock shale coal rejects generated during mining, which can cause long term pollution to air, soil, and water through leaching, spontaneous combustion, and erosion.

00:11:58:28 - 00:12:37:26

My concern is that the extensive use of this site by the National Grid will disturb the already fragile cement surface, and in so doing, will pollute the environment. The National Grid have not addressed this very real concern at all, and it is hard to see how what they propose will not speed up the damage to an already fragile cement surface. Indeed, there are wider concerns that if this the CPO and the DCO are approved, freshwater would be at risk of contamination due to the extensive earthworks, drilling and need for massive amounts of gravel to be introduced that are not native to the unique nature of minster marshes.

00:12:38:03 - 00:13:18:13

Southern Water Data states 80% of its water comes from ground source, from the chalk aquifer and the River Stour. And so the risk is very real with with public confidence at an all time low regarding water companies and the Environment Agency's capacity to monitor and enforce restricted, we are extremely worried. We are also horrified that it appears the National Grid are planning to deposit

plastics and synthetics at sea, providing little no detail and assessment of impact in relation to this loss of local amenity and impact on neighbours.

00:13:18:24 - 00:13:56:07

National grid documentation indicates that the impact to loss of this amenity for the many people that use the hover port has been assessed as insignificant. They state that much of the hover pool will still be accessible, but it is hard to see how a narrow strip by the cliffs next to the construction site would offer the peace, tranquillity and right to explore the whole site and the flora and fauna that presently exists. Offer birdsong will be replaced by noise and pollution of heavy machinery, machinery and much of the site will be destroyed and inaccessible.

00:13:56:18 - 00:14:32:25

The loss of local amenity and impact on neighbors is hardly insignificant, and the National Grid have made no attempt to engage with users or locals to assess the present use and value of the site as an extremely important and highly valued amenity, or the impact on the health and well-being of those that use it, including myself. Should this part of the DCO application be approved, assessed need and transparency. This site has been a late addition to the main DCO and involves an extremely wide area of Penguin Bay, as well as the proposed CPO of the airport site.

00:14:32:27 - 00:15:03:00

It is not clear why they need to CPO the old hover port site, which would mean a total loss of amenity, an ongoing negative impact on the biodiversity of the site and Pedro Bay forever. Given the lack of detail. Here, it would seem that the National Grid have simply decided to try and take the site with little evidence to justify their decision making, or indeed why they need it. The only justification seems to be to avoid negative impact at another location.

00:15:03:03 - 00:15:37:21

Indeed, they make no. They make little or no attempt to investigate these negative impacts at the alternative site and present a comparison which would justify their decision making and the need in summing up on this site. National grid appears to have done little to assess the real value and importance of the hover port site in relation to biodiversity, amenity and its significance within the wider environmental network of this area, of which significant parts are of are of high biodiversity value.

00:15:37:24 - 00:15:47:10

I just, uh, I've got a bit about, uh, drainage and flooding, but I can put that in in the submission I make in April. But thank you. That would.

00:15:47:12 - 00:15:48:01

Be great. Thank you.

00:15:48:03 - 00:15:50:02

It's really appreciated. Bye.

00:15:50:04 - 00:15:55:20

Thank you. Thank you very much. So now we have Timothy Harrison, I believe.

00:15:58:08 - 00:16:01:19

Hello. Hello. Um, you've got three minutes.

00:16:02:02 - 00:16:34:18

Thank you. I wish to oppose the compulsory purchase and therefore the permanent change of use of the old hover pool at Cliff's end. Just as the building of a converter station on a swamp is ill conceived, so is the idea of the old hover port as a storage area for the aggregates in order to build it. The proposed site is an unused suitable location. The old hover port was formally opened in May 1969 and has since been closed for many years.

00:16:35:01 - 00:17:11:24

It consists of an area of deteriorating concrete that has been in place for over 50 years, and has been exposed to the erosion of weather and sea. During that time, it also peppered with holes and fractures through which vegetation, trees and bushes have been permitted to drive to grow in order to rewild the area. The roots of these truths are further accelerating the deterioration of the concrete. The area was never intended or designed to support the weight of wheeled vehicles or loads of aggregates.

00:17:11:26 - 00:17:47:10

It was designed to support a hovercraft. The proposed location is also directly underneath the Viking longboat, a feature and tourist attraction that the local residents are justifiably very proud of. There are many visitors who come to admire both the ship itself and the surrounding area, and the adjacent nature reserve, or for making a day of it with a picnic and their families. There is a tradition of Kent schools making field trips to the longboat as part of a project, or maybe a history lesson.

00:17:47:23 - 00:18:24:00

Minibuses from local hospices and charities bring people of all ages and disabilities to enjoy the great Kent seaside within a safe, flat and well paved area. The old hover port, along with a connecting park area and the adjacent multi-use of footpaths, are frequented throughout the year with dog walkers, bird spotters, ramblers, cyclists, horse riders and families with pushchairs. These groups are joined in the warmer months by many more visitors, including car clubs, motorcycle clubs and caravan owners.

00:18:24:24 - 00:19:06:24

I feel that the close proximity to the working site with large noisy lorries. Dusty TVs would be dangerous and the most unsuitable place for visitors and their children, who have become accustomed to a safe, flat and easily accessed area in which they can relax. This proposal would also have a knock on and detrimental effect to local businesses and the economy. It would be a travesty for so many diverse people to be so adversely affected by the desires of a few faceless investors in a desire to further their profitability.

00:19:07:06 - 00:19:08:17

And I thank you.

00:19:09:29 - 00:19:20:29

Thank you very much. We now have Councillor Katie Graham, representing Aldeburgh and Leiston ward. You have six minutes when you're ready.

00:19:22:05 - 00:19:53:09

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm a district councillor representing Aldeburgh and Leiston ward, which also includes the parishes of Bendall and Stanfield and Friston. I endorse this government's acceleration of decarbonisation of our electrical grid. It is an urgent and essential priority, only further underscored by instability in the Middle East and beyond. But following decades of inaction to prepare our country for essential energy transition, our government has inherited a system of commercially led project promoters setting the agenda of how this takes place.

00:19:53:11 - 00:20:32:05

And I worry that it is turning communities against the change we need. Here in this part of Suffolk, despite being an area of high ecological value, we are particular beneficiaries of a lack of strategic oversight. We narrowly missed the last government's holistic design network scheme already too little, too late, and the current government's regional energy Spatial plan is welcome progress for the nation, but also apostates, the tangle of development planned in, planned or in construction. Here, the current application for a grid reinforcement project with questionable origins and questionable need is particularly symptomatic of the chaotic and careless approach of this developer led transition.

00:20:32:24 - 00:21:19:15

At this point, I would like to pay tribute to our communities, the town and parish councillors, the tireless campaign organisers and the hundreds of residents who have given over hundreds of unpaid hours to scrutinising a succession of complex and unconnected project proposals over several years. It has been unrelenting and frequently demoralising. In the course of this, however, a notable thing has happened. These residents, the future inheritors of poorly planned energy transition, have stepped up to fill the vacuum of strategic oversight that has been lacking to assemble their considerable expertise, commissioned research and legal counsel to assess the truth of the picture as it has been presented to us by the developer to attempt to view things in the round, and even to explore alternative solutions.

00:21:19:17 - 00:21:55:19

For this, I think they deserve to be heard. There remain many areas of disagreement between East Suffolk Council and the developer, and it has been frustrating to witness the disregard and get has shown on the future impact of its project locally. As you are aware of from our previous written responses as a council and as we have recently heard from the cabinet member for Energy and Climate Change, Tom Daley. Cumulative impact seems to be ignored, with valuable opportunities for coordination with other projects wilfully missed and a refusal to align with a refusal to align with other developers on basic issues such as acceptable working hours.

00:21:55:23 - 00:22:30:29

Cost has been presented as a barrier to more environmentally sensitive construction approaches that other developers seem able to afford, and as we have heard, their project plans even risk unbelievably railroading existing and essential mitigation for a previous consented project. However, there is a very fundamental area of disagreement which our communities and the Council would welcome a more detailed discussion on. And that is on the needs case for Sealink. And while I am aware that both the council and other respondents have already laid out concerns in a written format, and that this is the advised vehicle of the examining authority.

00:22:31:03 - 00:23:03:14

I would like to make the request, on behalf of our exhausted communities, that this discussion be allowed to take place in the more open form of an issue specific hearing. There is a history of lack of transparency with National Grid plc, which takes great care to distance itself from the multiple strands of its parent company. Let's go back to the beginning, when they offered a connection agreement to Scottish Power at Friston, which we were told was for two wind farms only. These projects were given consent, with the caveat that the impacts were severe and could only just be mitigated.

00:23:03:22 - 00:23:34:13

Despite this, there shortly followed applications for other projects under the umbrella of National Grid plc that were seemingly always lurking in the queue, and which now had the connection point in place that made it expedient for them to advance. Nautilus. Sealink line link. And then, of course, just down the road, development consent was given for Sizewell C, one of the largest construction projects in Europe. Against the recommendations of the Planning Inspectorate. The impacts of this, as others before me have already testified, are enormous and will be very long lasting.

00:23:35:00 - 00:24:06:25

It's only right that Suffolk, as with other parts of the country, should play its part in hosting a more resilient, greener and future proofed energy system. But is it right that it should inherit so much without proper master planning, and where the parameters are set by commercially led developers? The current use case presented by Njit, as we have previously heard, has changed since originally finding their DCO and investigations by campaign groups informed by research and legal counsel suggests there are viable alternatives that render it unnecessary, or at least not necessary at this particular juncture.

00:24:07:02 - 00:24:28:03

So there is, again, as before, a very important question about what this grid reinforcement project really is. If it's not for its initial justification, what will it open the door to? And what is the end point for energy development in this part of the country. Our communities deserve this transparency, and I respectfully ask for an issue specific hearing on this item.

00:24:30:17 - 00:24:38:13

Thank you. Our next speaker is Councillor Jamie Henderson for Kent County Council.

00:24:39:25 - 00:25:11:29

Thank you. I speak today as Kent County Council's councillor for Margate and also as deputy cabinet member for Economic Development and the environment at KCC. This project was signed off by the conservatives and although the current KCC administration has grave misgivings, we are not in a position to undo what has been done. We have listened to residents concerns and are fighting for them, our community and its wildlife.

00:25:13:01 - 00:25:49:04

The need for this facility is without doubt for the benefit of the residents and businesses to feed our growing energy needs as our local population and house building numbers grow. But why is such a facility required and why so big? Well, firstly, it is to feed the power hungry rush to net zero caused

by our green electric cars and our green air source heat pumps all pushed upon us over the last decade to save our natural world.

00:25:49:11 - 00:26:17:15

Secondly, it is required to stabilise the fluctuating power generation coming from wind turbines and solar farms as our weather is of course, unpredictable. Thirdly, it is to feed the government's rush to build on our farmland with thousands more homes being built or due in the coming years in Thanet. Again due to the rush to build labourers 1.5 million homes.

00:26:19:09 - 00:26:51:02

So this project is net zero uncovered. Saving the environment at the high cost of the environment. This shows the true effect of net zero. This is the green agenda's collateral damage that they didn't warn you about. There are of course positives and I respect that. Firstly, jobs being in the short term and the long term and for local suppliers and contractors.

00:26:51:04 - 00:27:23:26

Secondly, grid stability, balancing the peaks and troughs of our weather dependent solar and wind farms. And thirdly, hopefully the reduction in the time the turbines are often switched off for helping to reduce wasted energy in our system. So to sum up, and in my personal opinion, this is the right facility in the wrong location, and I blame the rush to net zero for this now necessary monstrosity.

00:27:24:04 - 00:27:25:01

Thank you.

00:27:27:03 - 00:27:52:01

Thank you. So our next group of speakers is Councillor Trevor Schenk, representing Ramsgate Town Council. Lady Torres, coffee rep. Councillor TJ Heyworth Cole, representing all borough and Leyton Council and Belgrano. Luigi. So if I could have Councillor Trevor Schunk first please.

00:27:55:26 - 00:27:56:16

Can you hear?

00:27:57:10 - 00:27:59:00

Yes I can. So you've.

00:27:59:02 - 00:27:59:17

Got.

00:28:00:01 - 00:28:00:21

Six minutes.

00:28:02:13 - 00:28:03:03

Ready to go?

00:28:03:19 - 00:28:04:09

Yes.

00:28:05:01 - 00:28:39:03

Now on our website, the town council, uh, which is a privilege. Anyway, Ramsgate Town Council accepts the principle of the Sea Link Project. But we remain deeply concerned about the Kent onshore component, particularly the converter station associated Atlantic Minster marshes. Pebble Bay falls on some of the most environmental sensitive landscapes in our region. This is an area of value not simply for scenery, but for the ecology, the floodplain function, birds migration.

00:28:39:05 - 00:28:58:03

I know you've heard it all before. That's because that's such a concern to us in Thanet and connection to the Keppel Bay protected Site complex for many locals. We are not persuaded by this project and currently configured, demonstrates the location is the only viable option

00:29:00:00 - 00:29:36:07

nor the lower impact alternatives, particularly brownfield opportunities, near which were concerns and pressures. Planet is carrying the burden of multiple major developments. Offshore grid connections, transport upgrades, housebuilding, regeneration and coastal district with limited landings and deprivation. Our communities are already experiencing the loss of green spaces. Marshland, biodiversity, amenity seedling footprint in Kent would impose a long term industrialisation of the whole area.

00:29:36:11 - 00:30:12:16

Environmental value is high whose landform is fragile, low flying, increasingly vulnerable to climate driven flood risk. We believe these factors have not yet been meaningfully reconciled with community and impact fairness for local residents, particularly in Ramsgate, Minster, Cliffe Sand and surrounding parishes, which they all enjoy this area. There's a sense of nationally significant infrastructure is repeatedly rooted in these areas, least able to resist the loss of value natural spaces.

00:30:12:18 - 00:31:05:26

We hear regularly from residents who do not support renewable energy, and we and don't and the grid strengthen that. They are simple questions why? When there's an alternative, we believe there's a fair question and the examination should test robustly. What are we asking the examination authorities to look at previously? Test whether Minster Marshes is generally unavoidable, require transport demonstration those alternative sites, especially Brandon Fields areas which were which had been fully modeled compared to discounted for sound reasons, require the applicant to minimise and land take the permanent impacts with temporary positions of right only arrangements or rerouting can significantly damage the marshes.

00:31:06:05 - 00:31:36:24

Scrutinise flood with Implications. Rising platforms. Piling holes. Roads capable of infrastructure to worsen flood behavior in this area. Protect. Access. Recreation. Cultural landscape. The way of Saint Augustine's and the marsh routes are integral to our local identity. Their loss would temporarily be deeply felt, especially from the South as well. Require stronger engagement mitigation.

00:31:36:26 - 00:32:07:07

Comments. Communities must not be left worse off. I think they should be more involved than what they are at the moment environmentally, socially and visibly because the national infrastructure scheme closing. But I've got other I've got a few minutes. Chair members of our message is constructive and clear. We support the national need but not the necessary local harm. Ramsgate Town Council asks examination ensures a full range of alternatives honestly weighed and the final income out.

00:32:07:09 - 00:32:28:21

Come. Whatever form it takes. It's not simply the easiest route for the developer, but the one for the nation, for our locals. Anyway, let's go back to some of my own thoughts. I'm sick. You know, I've lived in this area. I've walked here since I was seven. This project is costing the earth more ways than one.

00:32:30:13 - 00:33:03:07

The birds winter here, the wetlands, insect life. Some of the marshes have never been touched. From day one when we were born. And wish we were sometimes. What I worry about is the mitigation to restore these wonderful oases. It's a crime. It really is. You're never going to restore this. It's going to be a complete loss. I care about it. I care about Ramsgate cliffs and all the villages, the old hover ports on which I've been going to when it had hopper glass. It lays there in its own wilderness with its own undisturbed life.

00:33:03:20 - 00:33:34:29

Heavy lorries at sandwich, the Viking ship. When we built the Titanic Parkway station. Those slow worms didn't know where to go because their land that we took off them were going across the new ladies car parks, and they were getting just flattened. This is what we're doing. 60, 67% of our insect life we've lost. You know, I love walking out. We've got so many elderly people here, and that's the only way. Footpaths. The trees at blossom this time of year.

00:33:35:06 - 00:34:05:10

Um, there's so much going on. Which is it? Shouldn't be, because it's net zero is killing us, actually. People want to go out, enjoy this space. They want to enjoy their retirement. They want to enjoy the cliffs, and they want to enjoy Monkton Minster. I think I've had enough on that. But, uh, we are really worried about this scheme. It really is. I've listened to most people today and all their concerns is we've taken on board as well because it shouldn't happen here. I don't want to say not in my backyard, but thank you very much for your time.

00:34:05:21 - 00:34:13:15

All. All I try to do is represent the people that actually vote in. And I think that's a that's the best thing I can ever hear. Thanks.

00:34:15:12 - 00:34:21:07

Thank you for your contribution. Um, our next speaker is Lady Torres. Coffee?

00:34:22:15 - 00:34:24:21

Good afternoon. Thank you very much for having.

00:34:25:00 - 00:34:27:00

Three, three minutes. When you're ready.

00:34:28:19 - 00:35:02:09

Um, thank you very much. And thank you for allowing me to join, uh, this today. I used to be the member of parliament for this area. I'm no longer, um, but still live in the Saxmundham area. And I've been working on energy projects for the. It feels like 15 years. Um, first of all, I just wanted to endorse what others have said. The concerns about whether this project is needed at all. I appreciate that it's not entirely in the hands of the examiners, but I do appreciate the questions that you've tabled through G. Three Gen one and three Gen two. In essence, this project will cost over £1 billion and in effect, insurance.

00:35:02:11 - 00:35:35:01

It's a backup, uh, in case, uh, electricity fails in basically. Kent, Sussex. Surrey and parts of London. Um, I would consider that perhaps the great Tilbury project which has been given permission could be, um, upgraded, given they have already permission for a new tunnel to provide that resilience that's needed here today. In terms of, um, also grateful to the examiners for having visited the area a couple of weeks ago, uh, seeing what a special part of the country where we live and work. And I'm sure we'll have noticed the narrowness of certain of the roads.

00:35:35:03 - 00:36:09:01

The only HGVs crossing into Saxmundham are those of Tesco and Waitrose. They don't go over that bridge. The same could be said also of, um, the issues involving the Ben Bridge. And I commend Suffolk County Council for their proposal, which I think is sensible for alternative transit and using existing infrastructure corridors. In terms of where I think, uh, there's a number of issues and the questions that you've asked. I think in particular, it could be worth pressing the Environment Agency on the three W6, and this is regarding the Water Framework Directive.

00:36:09:10 - 00:36:40:24

The Anglian River Basin Management Plan was produced a couple of years ago, but since then there's been the Court of Appeal ruling going against Defra and the Environment Agency on how specific these river basin management plans are. That's the Pickering Fishery Association ruling. Um, it was always the intention of plan for water that there'd be a lot more detail going into this. And I think you've picked on a particular issue which needs a lot more interrogation in that regard, and grateful to you for the detail of questions.

00:36:40:26 - 00:37:14:28

I can also think of LV, A1 Advanced planting. There's been a watering down of that. Um, but I also want to draw attention to the new land use framework. It seems ironic that this part of the country in Suffolk is going to be the place where it's expected to have many, much more habitat, much more agroforestry. particularly ironic when a Christmas tree farm is basically being plowed through by some of these cables. Um, but I think more broadly, one of the things that slightly concerns me is that in not failing to deliver habitat targets will actually lead to legal challenges elsewhere.

00:37:15:00 - 00:37:31:22

Ultimately, this comes down to trust. Um, the CEO of GM is now the permanent secretary at Disney's. A lot of these changes, particularly with the change to The Substation and Friston, all resonate to a lack of trust and concern. But I will write further to the examiners and I thank them for this time.

00:37:32:28 - 00:37:48:02

Thank you very much. Um, so our next speaker is councillor TJ Heyworth, representing Aldeburgh and Leiston Council. You've got six minutes. Thank you and good afternoon. Uh, thank.

00:37:48:04 - 00:38:26:09

You again for allowing me time to talk today. I am the county councillor for the Albright and Layton division. Um, and I'm talking today and representing or town council, Leighton Town Council. And as the mayor of Aldeburgh, I'm not a policy expert or an energy planner. I am a local resident and a local councillor who sees each day the fine detail of life in Aldeburgh and the nearby towns and villages. I would like it on record that I concur with everyone that has taken part today, particularly Michael Mani, Richard Wright, Charlotte Fox and Fiona Gilmore.

00:38:27:00 - 00:39:00:14

But today I want to talk to you about something that's really important that we haven't talked about yet. Not about cables and roofs or grid work, but about people, young people, children whose lives are more vulnerable in our area. Many young children have additional learning needs. They are not numbers. They are little people. Their routine matters. Their confidence and trust takes time. Their development depends on calm, familiar surroundings, a feeling of being safe.

00:39:00:23 - 00:39:31:13

Being able to get to school or nursery safely. For many, getting to nursery or school already takes careful planning, and any change to roads, noise, access or timing can have a really big impact. If their journey becomes longer, more confusing or more stressful, they might not get there at all. And if that happens, they don't just miss a day at school. They miss an early opportunity, a key moment to learn, to connect and to feel secure.

00:39:32:02 - 00:40:09:04

These early stages really matter. Little people are delicate. They're not weak, but they are very sensitive to change. There is something that you might not know in Aldeburgh. We have some flowers. Nursery. They are working to become a beach, an area linked to school in a learning setting. Children learn from the coast and the surrounding area about nature. About tides, history and through outdoor play. This builds confidence, grit and resilience. But this kind of learning does rely on calm, safe and reliable access to our coast and our amazing footpaths.

00:40:09:11 - 00:40:42:27

It needs to be in a stable environment, not one that feels busy, loud or uncertain. You cannot grow a child's curiosity about nature. If a large construction project that changes routes, views and creates concern. It's just not fair to them. This is not theory and it's happening now and it cannot be paused. Early development of our children will not wait. Aldeburgh also works in a very careful balance. It has seasonal rhythms, visitor flow and, as we've heard, very, very narrow roads.

00:40:43:01 - 00:41:13:02

But we do have a beautiful balance between between tourism and daily life. One disruption doesn't just cause delay, it spreads like a virus. It affects careers. It affects carers. Reaching people. Staff getting to school or nursery. Parents on the school run or getting to work. And local businesses and tourism attractions opening on time. It affects employment and it really is impacting our high streets. We are not empty land.

00:41:13:04 - 00:41:28:09

We are a living community with limited capacity for disruption. And one more point Oprah gives not just young people calm, open space and connection to nature. It and the surrounding land have environmental protections placed upon it.

00:41:32:16 - 00:41:36:15

Sorry, counselor, I think you've muted yourself.

00:41:37:10 - 00:41:40:10

I have. Where did I get to? One more point.

00:41:40:21 - 00:41:41:10

Yes.

00:41:41:12 - 00:42:21:25

Yeah. Oprah gives not just young people calm, open space and connection to nature. It and the surrounding land have environmental protections placed upon it for continued protection and heritage. This matters the wellbeing. Long periods of noise, traffic and uncertainty will change that for children with additional needs that change can be really overwhelming. So I ask, what is the true cost of disrupting a child's early pathway? What is the cost of interrupting the learning? And what is the cost of changing a town and surrounding area like this? I would like to know if the Children's Act, Families Act 2014 and Send policy has been viewed.

00:42:21:27 - 00:42:53:15

It's very clear about equality, wellbeing and community resilience. We all understand the need for national energy planning, but it must not come at the cost of our most vulnerable, our children and our also our elderly residents who rely on the calm and stability Leighton Town Council and its residents tell me, and I'm sure others will concur, that the effect from size will see on Leighton and the surrounding area has been far greater than anyone anticipated, including seismicity themselves.

00:42:53:23 - 00:43:27:26

Residents are suffering mental health issues due to the loss of landscape. The unprecedented increase in traffic, both HGV and contracted traffic. The loss of dark skies, the constant background noise which is day and night and to add further disruption with another nip, is far too much for this rural community to comprehend. If this project is allowed, we are not just affecting the land, we are affecting opportunity, comforting confidence, reputation and well-being and for wildlife and people that cannot be repaired.

00:43:28:00 - 00:43:29:27

Thank you for your time today.

00:43:31:03 - 00:44:02:17

Thank you very much. Um, I understand Luigi Beltrami is not here, so we will move to the next group of speakers. So we have Henry Young representing Britain. Pears, peers, Arts. Emma Waller, representing Kent Wildlife Trust. Hannah McCowen and I understand Humphrey Hawksley may not be here or Councillor Julia Hewitt, but we will see if they've arrived by the time we get to them.

00:44:02:19 - 00:44:10:16

So our next speaker is Henry Young for Britain, Pears Arts. You've got six minutes.

00:44:22:16 - 00:44:24:13

Do we have Henry Young?

00:44:37:13 - 00:44:42:21

Hopefully I'll give him a phone call and let him know he's missing if he's not careful.

00:44:42:25 - 00:44:56:17

Okay. We can come back to him. So should we move on to Emma Waller? While we're waiting, if Emma Waller is ready for Kent Wildlife Trust. You've got six minutes, please.

00:44:57:24 - 00:44:59:06

Good afternoon. My name is.

00:44:59:08 - 00:45:00:03

Emma, speaking on.

00:45:00:05 - 00:45:02:03

Behalf of Kent Wildlife Trust.

00:45:02:05 - 00:45:02:22

I would like to.

00:45:02:24 - 00:45:37:20

Focus on the proposed access arrangements at the airport, a place that, on paper may appear to be a disused hard standing, but in reality has become something far more valuable. Because this is not a vacant site, it is a rewilding habitat, one that has quietly, over decades developed into a mosaic of coastal habitats supporting rare plants, protected species and nationally scarce invertebrates. Life has returned to the hover court, yet its proposed use for construction access has been advanced without a proper understanding of the ecological impacts.

00:45:38:02 - 00:46:15:00

The applicant is seeking flexibility to route construction traffic across the hover port, claiming this can be done without significant ecological harm, largely on the basis that it is existing, hard standing and that no vegetation clearance is required. But this assumption is flawed because nature does not recognise the distinction between hard standing and natural habitat in the way planning documents do.

We know through years of biological recording that the site supports a remarkable assemblage of species a confirmed breeding population of the thyroid clearing moth, fully protected by law.

00:46:15:10 - 00:46:47:20

The Sussex emerald moth, one of the UK's rarest species, also fully protected, nationally scarce and priority species such as bright wave restoration, oblique striped moths, common lizards and rare orchids, including the formerly extinct lizard orchid, which is not only rare in the UK, but across the whole of Europe, and a wide range of micro moths and other notable invertebrates that depend on exactly the kind of undisturbed transitional habitats that the site provides. These species are not incidental.

00:46:47:24 - 00:47:20:19

They rely on the very features that are most vulnerable to disturbance. Root systems, substrate stability and the continuity of undisturbed ground compaction, vibration and repeated vehicle movements can destroy the ecological functionality of the site, even when no formal vegetation clearance takes place. Larvae within rootstock can be crushed. Overwintering species can be killed and fragile plant communities can be lost. This is habitat damage in every meaningful ecological and legal sense.

00:47:20:21 - 00:48:20:04

And it's not just protected species. We need to be concerned about. The movement of heavy plant and construction. Vehicles across the port also carries a real risk of mobilizing contamination within the site. Evidence already indicates the presence of historic deposits, including coal residues, and disturbance of these materials could alter water chemistry. Increase in acidity and critically. Could release toxic heavy metals into the coastal aquatic environment. The hover port is directly connected to internationally designated sites, and the release of contaminants into these habitats has the potential to cause significant adverse effect on the integrity of these ecosystems, including the serious risk of mortality from heavy metal toxicity across multiple species, from invertebrates and fish to birds, seals and dolphins that depend on them as prey, as well as a serious health risk to people and their dogs who enjoy Pequot Bay.

00:48:21:00 - 00:48:59:23

Yet these risks have not been investigated. We are faced with the same pattern and certainty now, with the expectation that it can be managed later. Environmental assessment is not a box ticking exercise. It is the foundation upon which lawful decisions are made Without a clear and complete baseline, it simply is not possible to assess likely significant effects, apply the mitigation hierarchy, or demonstrate compliance with environmental law. And critically, it is not possible for the examining authority to be confident that this project can proceed without committing offences under wildlife legislation.

00:48:59:29 - 00:49:30:18

This is not a technical concern. It is a matter of legal compliance. Case law is clear that harm to habitat, including disturbance and degradation, can be sufficient to trigger offences where protected species are affected. And it is. It is equally clear that these matters cannot be deferred to post consent stages. Yet that is exactly what is happening here. Flexibility is being sought. First, evidence being considered later. You cannot design around constraints that have not yet been identified.

00:49:30:27 - 00:50:06:12

We recognise the stated intention behind this change to avoid impacts on saltmarsh. The intention is not evidence and aspiration is not mitigation. What is being presented here is not a robust, evidence based solution. It is a proposal built on assumptions, gaps and deferrals and that carries significant risk real risk to protect species, to priority habitats and to the integrity of this wider coastal system. Because, as we all know from the impacts of the applicant sister company, once damage occurs to these habitats, it is not easily reversed.

00:50:06:15 - 00:50:58:14

We have seen this before. Commitments are made. Mitigation is promised, but once consent is granted and construction begins, the reality on the ground can diverge from what was anticipated. Unexpected constraints arise. Methods change and ecological harm follows. This is precisely why these matters cannot be left to assumptions or post consent promises. So today our position is clear. The change request is not supported by adequate baseline data. It does not demonstrate application of the mitigation hierarchy, and it does not provide certainty, either in ecological or legal terms, that harm to protected species and habitats can be avoided without the surveys, without the evidence, without the understanding, and without without the mitigation, the applicant cannot definitively conclude that there will be no long lasting ecological harm to this important site.

00:50:58:17 - 00:51:09:27

In closing, the report may look like a forgotten place, but ecologically it is anything but. It is the place where nature has returned quietly but persistently, and it deserves to be protected. Thank you.

00:51:11:05 - 00:51:14:19

Thank you. Um. Henry young. Are you there now?

00:51:16:21 - 00:51:17:14

I am.

00:51:17:18 - 00:51:21:05

Hello. Lovely. Okay. You've got six, six minutes.

00:51:21:07 - 00:51:51:13

Thank you very much. Um, thank you for allowing me to speak today in in my two roles as chief operating officer of Britten Arts, a charity that owns Snape Maltings and the Red House, two venues in the impact zone of the development, proposed development and the organisation that produces the Aldeburgh Music Festival and also as the director of the Suffolk Coast Limited, a destination management organisation for East Suffolk, which has a membership of 250 businesses and engages with many, many more.

00:51:51:28 - 00:52:23:24

I've written and presented before and therefore do not wish to repeat all the statistics about the value of tourism in the area, accounting for 15% of jobs, and how important peace and tranquility are to its appeal. 84% of visitors cite those reasons for their visit. I continue to be baffled by the applicant's

refusal to acknowledge the impact that Sealink will have on the visitor economy, both as a standalone project locally on Aldeburgh and Snape, and in conjunction with all the other end trips.

00:52:24:24 - 00:53:05:20

Last week I attended an all party parliamentary group for the East of England. The sole agenda item was the region's very many energy projects. We had the Energy Minister, Michael Shanks, talk about how urgently the UK needs greater energy security and about how much he worries about the state of the national grid infrastructure. There was a lot of talk about the clean green energy corridor, known by some as East Anglia. Of the 60 or so people in the room, rather surprisingly, the only person that sounded vaguely aware of the impact of the projects and what impact they're having on the area was Nigel Cann, the CEO of Sizewell, See, who seemed rather browbeaten.

00:53:06:20 - 00:53:49:20

Sadly, it feels inevitable that the Secretary of State will want to consent Sealink. But please, can the applicant be forced to acknowledge that this and other schemes should be strategic? Surely offshore joined up and future proofed, and that people and businesses are resident in this corridor, and that thousands of people work in tourism and their livelihoods will be put into jeopardy by the harm to the visitor experience. Please do not consent the spaghetti infrastructure, but at the very, very least can then get acknowledged that impact through a proper, fulsome issue specific hearing on tourism not in the margins of another session, and offer proper support to help mitigate it.

00:53:49:22 - 00:53:50:20

Thank you.

00:53:52:14 - 00:54:05:25

Thank you. Um, next. Our next speaker is Hannah McCowan. Hi there. Hannah McEwan. McEwan. I'm sorry. You've got three minutes. Thank you. So I'm the owner of the Viking Ship.

00:54:05:27 - 00:54:07:19

Cafe, a thriving business located.

00:54:07:21 - 00:54:09:25

On the green directly above the hoverboard.

00:54:09:27 - 00:54:10:12

I have.

00:54:10:21 - 00:54:11:06

Previously.

00:54:11:08 - 00:54:34:04

Raised concerns, both in person and in writing, regarding the impact that using the hover port as a working site will have on our business. I would like to expand on these concerns. The level of noise and vibration generated by the site will travel directly up to the green. As an outdoor cafe, we have no means of shielding our customers from this disturbance. This will significantly reduced the appeal of our location and is likely to drive customers away.

00:54:35:29 - 00:54:48:18

National grid's comment it's barely used well on weekend days and school holidays. There can be between 400 to 600 people visiting the green. I'm sorry I'm getting emotional, but this is my business.

00:54:51:17 - 00:55:01:03

There are three open top buses that stop at the Viking ship every hour from June to September, which is for most days, approximately 50 people on each bus, getting on and off every day.

00:55:02:19 - 00:55:15:24

The green also holds very historical anniversary events yearly. In addition, the closure of the coastal parkway and walking areas will remove a key attraction for walkers, tourists and families, many of whom form a large part of our customer base.

00:55:17:11 - 00:55:57:09

We are extremely concerned about the effects of dust and debris, particularly with prevailing south westerly winds blowing directly from the sea towards the cafe. This raises serious questions about air quality, cleanliness and the safety and comfort of our customers and staff. Increased traffic and accessibility. The anticipated volume of HGVs and large vehicles using Samudera will for further deter visitors from coming to the area, impacting not only accessibility but also the overall visitor experience. Business impact and compensation given the significant disruption this project is expected to cause, what provisions our national grid making for compensating local businesses that would be adversely affected because we've heard nothing from National Grid in this whole planning process.

00:55:57:17 - 00:56:25:27

Onsite catering provision if the project does proceed, can National Grid confirm whether there will be any any onsite food and drink services provided for workers? This could further impact local businesses by diverting potential customers away from existing establishments. I would appreciate some kind of comments and some kind of communication from National Grid, with a clear response to these concerns, and an outline of the measures that will be taken to mitigate the impact on our business, because this is our livelihood. Thank you for your time.

00:56:26:26 - 00:56:37:22

Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Councillor Julia Ewart, representing Kelsall and Oxford ward. You have. You have six minutes.

00:56:45:03 - 00:56:47:13

Directly affected by Sealink.

00:56:47:18 - 00:56:48:16

I carry.

00:56:48:18 - 00:56:49:03

A.

00:56:49:05 - 00:56:49:20

Serious.

00:56:49:22 - 00:56:50:09

Responsibility in.

00:56:50:11 - 00:56:55:28

Addressing you today, at a time when a densely populated part of East.

00:56:56:00 - 00:56:56:15

Suffolk.

00:56:56:17 - 00:57:27:26

Is being subjected to unprecedented infrastructure pressure. I speak on behalf of hundreds of residents whose lives are already being reshaped. Their voices must not be diminished by process or treated as an administrative inconvenience. Our once glorious landscape has so swiftly become dystopian in appearance and distressing. Inexperience. Inexperience.

00:57:28:11 - 00:58:09:07

Multiple major schemes have been permitted and concentrated in a single small area by organisations that do not live here, do not endure the daily disruption. As right now I am late because I couldn't get here quickly enough and will not face the long term consequences of the choices being made. Now the Inspectorate will know from my previous submissions that I have consistently sought for potential benefit for my community. Yet, despite raising these points in goodwill and good faith, there is little sign in the application that I have been listened to or taken seriously, or any of my considerations have been taken on board.

00:58:09:18 - 00:58:17:13

There remain no meaningful benefits to counterbalance the intrusion, and for me, now the game is up.

00:58:19:05 - 00:59:00:21

The development consent order process was created under the planning rules, as you know, the Planning Act of 2008. To provide a clear and transparent system for nationally significant infrastructure, not as a mechanism to bypass democratic accountability, community input or rigorous scrutiny. Where there is transparency, there should be no weaknesses and otherwise it will collapse. And we have seen this through size will see which is shown what happens when detail is not properly worked through assumptions multiply risks are missed, cumulative impacts are misunderstood, and communities as we are now are losing confidence.

00:59:01:00 - 00:59:33:24

And when applicants avoid detail, as is the case here, harm follows and transparency is a choice. And right now we need the right choice. No more obscurity in this application. Critical questions for me remain unanswered. I'm almost doing this at a light level because there's so many technical queries. Environmental effects not discussed, operational risks as access arrangements are not brought forward, and the combined burden of multiple simultaneous projects not addressed.

00:59:34:03 - 01:00:06:15

It's remarkable that the examination process progresses at all for a scheme of this scale. This is really concerning. And once the course is set and it seems both Kent and Suffolk, Suffolk are expected to return endlessly their responses, I hope that a rejection will be inevitable. Let me be clear lightweight concepts are not acceptable foundations for decisions and not for a nationally significant project such as this.

01:00:06:17 - 01:00:40:16

Not for the community of this, of this importance, and not when the impacts were last for generations. As Doctor Fox has highlighted, mental health pressures are already emerging, not hypothetical future risks, but daily and worsening realities. Tomorrow is the first meeting of the ICB of Norfolk and Suffolk. It is a point that I will be bringing up because we have such issues that require resource. I'm dealing with these induced challenges constantly.

01:00:40:24 - 01:01:15:04

No property search in the past 20 years warned residents that from 2026, except expect for the next 15 years to have disruption. Yet that is now the reality that my community faces. This is Harding of Snape. This morning was right to challenge the National Grid's failures and the lack of detail presented. None of us would dream of submitting proposals of such poor quality in a domestic environment with such internal inconsistencies, and they simply, simply wouldn't get to the committee table.

01:01:15:06 - 01:01:52:17

Certainly in our planning department, and given National Grid's refusal to engage meaningfully. And I'm really serious about this. It is small wonder that my colleague, the portfolio holder and lead for energy projects, Councillor Daley, had to stress publicly today that the National Grid must now take seriously and then get its responsibility to act responsibly. It has to stop. We need more interaction. The key point for you is under National Policy Statement N1 applicants must demonstrate that reasonable alternatives had been rigorously assessed.

01:01:52:21 - 01:02:26:17

We do seem to be going back on this point, but it hasn't been addressed yet. There's still no convincing evidence that potential brownfield or alternative sites have been examined transparently or seriously. As Mrs. Gilmore said this morning, of course, and she's rightly stating that alternatives must be tested or this must be turned down if it is not acceptable. By contrast, Suffolk County Council has proposed using public funds a practical and deliverable integrated solution for Sealink.

01:02:27:03 - 01:03:10:15

It reduces community impact, removes reliance on the unsafe banal railway bridge, and avoids unnecessary environmental and heritage damage. It is coherent, it is workable and evidence based. I put to you how can the applicant presented with such a robust solution? Simply declare it is too costly and too long a route, especially when neither issue affects them directly and with repeated calls in Parliament for the applicants to coordinate on an integrated access solution, this proposal must be examined more fully and more fairly.

01:03:11:01 - 01:03:21:08

It answers problems the applicant has failed or declined to resolve, and ignoring it would undermine the very purpose of the CIP regime.

01:03:21:26 - 01:03:24:10

Chancellor of the year.

01:03:25:12 - 01:03:27:02

Have I really had six minutes?

01:03:27:04 - 01:03:31:04

Yes, yes. You've just gone over. Just finish your sentence.

01:03:31:10 - 01:03:40:17

Oh. Well, then I just want to say please read every word that Michael Marley said as speaker 21 today, because he put it all into one, one speech. Thank you very much.

01:03:40:23 - 01:04:09:16

Thank you. If you've got anything else that you want to say but couldn't, then please do submit it at deadline. Six. Thank you. So the time is now just after 3 p.m., and we've been going for nearly, um, for just over an hour. So I therefore propose that we take a short adjournment to allow a comfort break. For those watching on the live stream, you will need to refresh your browser page to view the hearing. When we recommence, we will recommence at 315. Thank you.