

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Morgan and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farms Transmission Assets
Hearing:	Q&A on the EA's Part 1
Date:	16 April 2025

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:05:08 - 00:00:13:08

Good morning. It's now 930 and time for this hearing to begin. As usual. Can I just confirm that everybody can hear me clearly?

00:00:14:26 - 00:00:51:22

And can I also confirm that the live streaming and recording of this event has commenced? I would like to welcome you all to this issue specific hearing. This is part of the examination of the application for a development consent order for the Morgan and Morgan Onshore Wind Farms Transmission Assets project. This first issue specific hearing is on site selection and alternatives. The scope of the proposed development and applicants assessments. My name is David Cliff, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the lead member of the panel to examine this application.

00:00:52:08 - 00:01:03:25

I'm now going to ask my colleagues and fellow panel members to introduce themselves, each of whom have also been appointed by the Secretary of State and who will lead on different parts of this hearing today and tomorrow.

00:01:05:20 - 00:01:13:20

Good morning. My name is Maria Rocha. I'm a chartered scientist and a chartered environmentalist and also an examining inspector.

00:01:15:24 - 00:01:21:19

Good morning. My name is Richard Morgan. I'm a chartered civil engineer and examining inspector.

00:01:23:23 - 00:01:30:17

Hello there. Good morning. My name is John Gorst. I'm an a lawyer and an examining inspector. Thank you.

00:01:32:17 - 00:02:03:27

Thank you. Together, we constitute the examining authority for this application. Our role is to examine the application and to report to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and net zero, with a recommendation as to whether or not a development consent order should be made. I'd also like to introduce the members of the Planning Inspectorate case team who are supporting us today. We have Sian Evans, who's case manager for this project, over at the desk on my left. Uh, Carolyn Hopewell, Rebecca Luxton here in the venue, along with Ryan Seggerman and Tim Hall, who are dealing with the virtual side of proceedings today.

00:02:04:09 - 00:02:09:24

The case team will be able to answer any questions you may have about today's event and the process in general.

00:02:11:13 - 00:02:36:24

Some housekeeping matters. Can everyone please set all devices and phones to silent, uh, location of the toilets? They are through into the main foyer and down the corridor on the left hand side. I think there's coffee being served as well there today. Not in the toilets, but in the corridor. And, uh, there's no fire alarm planned for today. Uh, the fire escapes are all, I think, clearly indicated around the room.

00:02:42:28 - 00:03:17:03

But the meeting will generally follow the agenda, which was first included in our rule six letter dated the 28th of March, 2025, and also republished on the National Infrastructure Planning website last Friday. This could be displayed on the screen, please, that would be helpful. Again, if you could just move it down to where the actual list of the gender items are. Please. That will be helpful. Uh, in summary, following a sort of a short section on relevant policy. We will then consider site selection and alternatives. We will then move to consider various aspects related to the scope of the proposed development.

00:03:17:06 - 00:03:54:09

And this will be followed by matters relating to the scope of the applicants assessments. Finally, we will also consider general matters related to the applicant's draft development Consent order and the applicant's various outline management plans. The agenda is for guidance only, and we may add some other considerations or issues as we progress. We'll conclude the hearing as soon as all our questions have been asked and responded to, and all relevant contributions have been made. But if the discussions can't be concluded, then it may be necessary for us to prioritise matters and defer other matters to written questions or further hearings.

00:03:55:01 - 00:04:03:19

Likewise, if you cannot answer the question being asked or require time to get the information requested, then you can please indicate that you need to respond in writing.

00:04:05:12 - 00:04:31:15

And today's hearing, as usual, this week has been undertaken in a hybrid way, meaning some of you are present in the room today and others are joining us virtually using Microsoft Teams. However, you're attending the meeting today. We'll seek to give you a fair opportunity to participate, and a recording of today's hearing will be made available on the Morgan and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farm Transmission Assets section of the National Infrastructure Planning website, as soon as practicable after the meeting has finished.

00:04:33:06 - 00:05:03:18

A link to the planning Inspectorate's Privacy Notice was provided in the notification for this hearing. We assume that everyone here today has familiarized themselves with this document, which establishes how the personal data of our customers is handled in accordance with the principles set out in data protection laws. Please speak to a member of the case team here today if you have any

questions about this. And for example, if you wish to talk in any detail about health conditions or personal matters, then please if you can talk to the case team first about the best way to get those matters into the examination.

00:05:04:03 - 00:05:17:18

Uh, because matters such as that in detail, we would need normally to redact from, uh, the published versions of this meeting. And I think indeed the recording as well. But there are still ways of getting those into the examination.

00:05:19:10 - 00:05:56:03

Uh, just a bit more on the purpose of the hearing. It's been held to address matters and questions identified by us through our reading of submissions to date. We consider that matters relating to site selection alternatives would benefit from oral representations and questioning, taking into account the numerous representations received on these matters. We also consider that it would assist our Assist examination for matters relating to the scope of the proposed development and the scope of the applicants assessments, to be examined through a hearing, in order to ensure that the nature and scope of the proposed development and general matters relating to the applicant's assessments are clearly explained and understood.

00:05:58:15 - 00:06:38:00

Towards the end of the hearing, we will also ask general questions regarding the applicant's draft consent order as I outlined before. As the hearing is to discuss these matters only, we will not be at this hearing considering in detail or hearing detailed representations relating to the actual effects of the proposed development. We have already read the many relevant representations that have been submitted about the proposed development, and of course heard all the representations yesterday at open floor hearing one. There are likely to be further issue specific hearings as our examination progresses, along with the opportunity for written representations from any interested party and local impact reports from local from any local authority at deadline.

00:06:38:09 - 00:07:11:29

One. Following which, we'll also ask a series of written questions. And I think the general idea being that outstanding matters that flow as a result of of written representations, and how questions that need discussion will then move those forward to the next round of issues. Specific hearings as we feel appropriate in terms of introductions from other parties to speed up proceedings. We do not intend to go through the traditional introductions at this point. If everyone who wishes to speak at this hearing. Instead, we will allow parties to introduce themselves when they wish to speak on a particular item.

00:07:12:05 - 00:07:42:16

And when you wish to speak, please raise your hand or your virtual hand. If on teams. I hope that's acceptable for everybody, it just avoids having to go through all the parties again, which we did yesterday. When you do speak on each occasion, please give your name and relevant the name of the organization or business that you represent. Also speak clearly into the microphone. If you're not at a table with a microphone, then a roving microphone, there is a roving microphone. So please wait for one of these to be brought to you before you speak. And for those with microphones at tables, please keep these muted.

00:07:42:18 - 00:07:52:23

And when you are not speaking, I think it's best when you speak to be a little bit away from the microphone, because the closer you get to the microphone, the worse the sound is.

00:07:56:02 - 00:08:30:09

And when we come on to the detail matters. Please be patient if you want to speak. Uh, as it may not be possible to come to you straight away and under each agenda item, as we will normally be asking our questions first on each item. So we will give people an opportunity to speak, but we won't necessarily give people an opportunity to speak after after the response to each question that we ask. That's to sort of aid the flow of the of the examination. Um, and it's also important to note there's no need to simply repeat points that have already been made in writing, or to repeat points that have been made by others.

00:08:30:19 - 00:08:35:24

Representations made in writing carry equivalent rate weight rather to those made orally.

00:08:42:14 - 00:08:44:02

Just briefly. some further points.

00:08:46:24 - 00:09:24:06

Will be seeking to have a mid-morning break at approximately 11 a.m. and aim to break for lunch at 1 p.m. we will have an hour for lunch or approximately an hour for lunch, and we do not intend that the hearing continues beyond 5 p.m. today. The hearing continues tomorrow as necessary. For those joining virtually, please use the same link as you use today to access tomorrow's proceedings. It's always difficult to know exactly how long these discussions will take, depending on the matters that are raised. Uh, our general plan is that we will need to continue to approximately around lunchtime tomorrow.

00:09:24:18 - 00:09:58:06

We may need a little bit longer. We may need a little bit less. But I think we'll go beyond today. Yeah, in my estimation. But it's always difficult. We'll have a we'll have a check if you like, at the end of proceedings today to see how far down the agenda we have got to um, in terms of any action points, uh, we propose maybe again, departing a bit for the traditional approach, that the applicants keep a list of action points arising, which can be checked and agreed following the completion of each section of the agenda.

00:09:58:13 - 00:10:06:22

I think that's a bit easier, hopefully, than having to wait till the end to go through all the action points. And is that acceptable to the applicant?

00:10:08:07 - 00:10:39:00

List down on behalf of the applicant? Um, can I request, as it may well not just be me that's taking action points. There may be others who aren't sitting up at this table, who will be taking more accurate action points than I will. Um, that we do that, um, typically at the end of, at the end of the day and just capture them for each agenda item there. I think doing them at the end of each agenda item, uh, you risk just hearing from me and, and it possibly not being as complete as it might be.

00:10:39:27 - 00:11:11:00

Okay. Um, that's probably okay, I think. I think we'd have probably a similar discussion before in the ER, our retiring room if we did. At the end of the day, that is fine. We'll also be keeping a note. Uh, sometimes it's quite difficult for us to keep notes when we're trying to concentrate on the evidence as well. But if you can be responsible for keeping the overall notes, and then at the end we'll go through and hopefully everybody can will will agree. Other parties may have a view on what was said as well. Uh, but hopefully there'll be no, uh, disagreement on the action points as sometimes can happen.

00:11:15:04 - 00:11:24:13

And generally, submissions pursuant to any action point should be submitted by deadline one which is proposed for the 20th of May 2025 unless otherwise agreed.

00:11:26:10 - 00:11:44:17

And please, can anybody who speaks today provide a written summary of the oral representations by deadline one on the 20th of May, before we move on to the substance of the agenda. Excuse me. Does anyone have any questions about the agenda or how this hearing will be conducted?

00:11:48:23 - 00:11:49:15

Mr. Walker?

00:11:50:23 - 00:12:16:17

Good morning sir. Good morning everyone. My name is Angus Walker from Broadfield Law, and I am representing Newton with Clifton Parish Council and also Freckleton Parish Council and Newton Residents Association. I won't say that all again. Each time I'll just say Newton etc.. I just wanted to ask one thing. You published an agenda on the 25th of April that looks very similar to the agenda in the rule six letter. Is it exactly the same?

00:12:17:21 - 00:12:34:16

No, it's not exactly the same. But I think the the changes are very, very slight. Uh, and maybe some amendments to syntax if you like. Um, the did we change the order of anything?

00:12:36:02 - 00:12:37:18

So we should work from that one.

00:12:37:20 - 00:12:59:00

Yes. Sorry. Yes, that. I think the changes are very, very, very small. But I think if you do work from the agenda published last Friday, then I think that's that's to be encouraged. It's on the, it's quite it's quite near the top of the updates on the, on the website. I think there might be a couple of words added and that is that is all.

00:12:59:10 - 00:13:00:03

Okay. Thank you sir.

00:13:00:05 - 00:13:00:20

Okay.

00:13:03:06 - 00:13:28:16

And good morning John Borough Council. And we had just a number of kind of points of clarification following some of the comments that were made yesterday about, for example, certain planning applications or heritage assets so that we could provide some additional detail and references. So, um, if now is the appropriate time, if it be okay to talk about those or.

00:13:30:18 - 00:13:35:00

Excuse me. This is references for planning applications referred to yesterday. So by and large.

00:13:35:02 - 00:13:48:23

Yeah. An update in relation to the solar schemes mentioned. The heritage schemes mentioned. Um, the pipeline, um, that was mentioned. Um, and then also in terms of a point of clarification around agricultural land.

00:13:48:29 - 00:14:20:21

Okay. Could those issues be raised at the relevant points when we discussed them on the agenda at item six or whenever it's convenient? It sounds as though those issues are likely to raise be raised as we go along the agenda, and if not, we can. I don't think now's the time to still dealing with sort of procedural matters, etc. before we start, we can add it. I mean, certainly I'm happy to receive them, but I don't think now's quite the time. Uh, they're not raised in any item under item five or item six.

00:14:21:06 - 00:14:27:02

Then can we pick those at the end of. I pick those up at the end of item six. As in any other matter.

00:14:29:03 - 00:14:29:18

Um.

00:14:33:03 - 00:14:35:15

Which items was it? Which which topics was it that you were?

00:14:35:20 - 00:14:45:15

So the topics were, um, the solar or the, the energy schemes that were mentioned. Okay. Um, the heritage, uh, assets, uh, I mentioned.

00:14:45:18 - 00:14:47:03

The heritage we have in item.

00:14:47:11 - 00:14:48:21

Agricultural land.

00:14:49:05 - 00:14:50:29

Agricultural land. We've got an item.

00:14:51:02 - 00:14:59:00

And the pipeline that was mentioned with, with in relation to comments received from the Health and Safety Executive.

00:14:59:02 - 00:15:06:12

Yeah, that might be at the end. As any of the matters, I think the solar farms could be mentioned under cumulative effects.

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

Okay.

00:15:07:09 - 00:15:15:29

Thank you. I think and please also confirm those perhaps most importantly in writing as well for for deadline one. But it probably would be helpful to have those today. So thank you.

00:15:19:24 - 00:15:56:02

No it's done on behalf of the applicant. Um I hope this is the right time to mention this. I did say yesterday, um, that as you'll see, we have quite a number of people here who are going to be talking on, um, different topics. Um, I was going to just suggest that for item five, um, which is um, uh, where there's likely, um, certainly this morning to be the most movement of people, uh, in and out that, um, we slightly swap the order of, uh, the items that are being considered just because of the people that are covering those.

00:15:56:14 - 00:16:30:17

So, um, I would suggest that, um, item, uh, the little I, which is the to the proposed substations in, uh, sorry, in item five that we move that to after item nine, uh, little IX, which is the connection to the Penn Wortham substation. So all we're doing is moving the proposed substations to after the connection to Penwortham, and then we can deal with the substations and the construction compounds together because that's the same.

00:16:30:19 - 00:16:35:24

They're the same people talking about those. Is that clear? Shall I say it again?

00:16:36:09 - 00:16:54:26

I think that's clear. So you requesting proposed substations is put to the last but one. Exactly four item. Yes. X was, of course, a logic to our orders in terms of going in from offshore to, to onshore. But anybody got any, any issues with with that.

00:16:58:19 - 00:17:02:09

Okay. Okay. I think that's fine.

00:17:06:05 - 00:17:13:05

Excuse me sir, sorry to interrupt. Somebody did raise their hand in response to your question. Just to the right. Oh, yes. Sorry.

00:17:13:21 - 00:17:19:20

If you'd like to introduce yourself again, please. And, uh. Yeah. Wait for a regular microphone. John.

00:17:22:24 - 00:17:49:20

Sorry to interrupt. Pete Sharkey, we spoke yesterday about various things, just the change of the order of the agenda. It seems to me that the connection to Penn with them is very dependent on the previous item on substations and the siting there too. So I would prefer, I don't know, I'm speaking of just myself. I would prefer the order to stay as it was, because there is that logic to it as you described. That's a request. Obviously if you can't do it, then fine. I understand.

00:17:51:27 - 00:18:04:26

Yes. You're right, there was a logic to the order in terms of the order of where things went from the offshore platforms, if you like, all the way up to, uh, Penn within was the, I think the reason for the sequencing for it.

00:18:07:26 - 00:18:35:23

I'm not sure. At the end of the day, it makes too much difference. Uh, but if there's any particular point you wanted to raise at that time, then please jump in and and do so. I take your point, and that's. You're right. That's the way we did it in that order. If it helps to speed up not having I don't know how many more people are going to be coming in and out. I think it's just a practical point, hopefully, rather than anything else. Uh, and we've got various questions anyway, so I think we can cover them, whichever order that is in as far as this one is concerned.

00:18:35:25 - 00:19:08:11

Oh, certainly it's done on behalf of the applicant. The reason we were suggesting it is that, um, by grouping those together and doing the substations after you're dealing with the whole of the cable corridor in 1 in 1 go, in terms of, um, you're looking at from, uh, obviously from landfall and the, the, the very much the land section that goes, um, uh, from Blackpool Road, um, to the substations and then the, the river crossings, so very much focusing on the cable corridor. That was the reason for suggesting that they're grouped together.

00:19:08:19 - 00:19:17:09

We don't mind whatever's easiest. It's just it means we have fewer people, um, interrupting the flow, as it were, when we come to discuss those.

00:19:17:17 - 00:19:31:14

Okay. I'm happy for procedural reasons, to interrupt Delays, and I think we can still ask the questions that we want, and I'm sure you'll be able to make the points you want. Uh, despite the change in the order. But thank you for for, uh, for raising that.

00:19:33:20 - 00:19:34:14

Mr. Walker.

00:19:35:00 - 00:19:54:02

Thank you. Angus Walker, Newton, etc.. Just a suggestion, perhaps. Item. Roman. Seven of substations could be before the Penwortham substation item. Then it would still be adjacent to it. So it wouldn't need people to move and would still be logically, geographically logical.

00:19:54:04 - 00:20:01:01

It may not allow the reason for the proposed change, i.e. the movement of the mass movement of people into the room, I suspect.

00:20:02:20 - 00:20:21:12

I think I'm happy to go with what we've we've got. I think there's probably, as always, there's various different ways of doing these things. Uh, and they all have probably their benefits and disadvantages. But let's go with what's just been agreed. Thank you, Mr. Walker. Any further comments before we move on to the main parts of the agenda.

00:20:24:06 - 00:20:24:23

Okay.

00:20:26:13 - 00:20:35:12

Thank you. We will now move on to agenda item three then, which is on relevant policy matters which will be led by Mr. Galston.

00:20:37:16 - 00:21:09:25

Thank you, Mr. Cliff. Um, so, um, policy context for decision making. Uh, I'm going going to be referring to the application document at two, three, three. There's no need to, to, to, um, bring it up. Um, this is the applicant's planning statement. Um, and paragraphs three, four, one 8 to 3 four 112 uh, sets out two different scenarios for the Secretary of State's determination of this application.

00:21:10:27 - 00:21:43:20

Uh, these being either that, uh, section 104, uh, where a national policy statement has effect in relation to the development or section 105, where section 104 does not apply in relation to the application. Uh, both those sections of the Planning Act 2008. Um, however, the applicants do not appear to offer a definitive view in their planning statement, uh, on which of these sections and which these routes the Secretary of State should take in.

00:21:44:09 - 00:21:55:00

Uh, in when determining the application, perhaps the applicants could confirm and explain which approach they consider is applicable in this case. Thank you.

00:21:56:02 - 00:22:58:27

Uh, Liz Dunn, on behalf of the applicant. Um, it's the applicant's position that, um, the, uh, the scheme should be determined in accordance with section 104 of the Planning Act 2008. Um, where there is a relevant, uh, national policy statement in place, noting that, um, obviously there's been some consultation. On revised drafts of those national policy statements that was issued last week. Um, the reason for that is that, um, it is now the case in the, uh, the national policy statements, and particularly in one that where there was a lack of perhaps a lack of clarity as to the application of the national policy statements for projects that were brought into the Planning Act by virtue of section 35 of the Planning Act 2008, as to whether those projects, um, uh, had the benefit of um, of national policy statements, and there was some case law regarding that.

00:22:59:10 - 00:23:25:13

Um, the position is now clear, I think, from the national policy statements and, um, Ian, one in particular, that, um, it is the national policy statements that apply. They are the primary policy for the purposes of, um, of projects like this that are brought into the Planning Act, um, under section 35 of the Planning Act, and therefore this scheme should be determined in accordance with section 104.

00:23:28:15 - 00:23:35:12

Um, thank you for that. Um, as a result, will you be updating the planning statement?

00:23:36:07 - 00:24:02:26

Uh, listen, on on behalf of the applicant, I think there are likely to be some updates that need to be made, whether it's an update to the planning statement or an addendum to the planning statement, just to confirm those points. Um, I think there is another agenda item on updates on policy and guidance. Um, so there will be there will be an update needed in respect of that. Um, question whether, as I say, it's a it's a complete rewrite of the planning statement or it's just an addendum that sits with it.

00:24:04:21 - 00:24:54:00

Uh, thank you for that. Um, the benefit of those in the room, I think it makes a huge difference for, for for this application, whether it is section 104 or 1 or section 105. Um, but it's good that, um, the applicant and ourselves know which section um, we're looking at. Um, so I'm quite comfortable. I don't know if any interested party wants to comment on this. Um, uh, I'm not surprised that you don't. Um, it's it's a very technical point and, um, uh, one that, um, at least we've got clarity so that we know which policy that, um, uh, that we're looking at, um, leading on from, from from that, um, uh, and, and, uh, I think what you were saying a bit earlier is, um, a prelude to this.

00:24:54:16 - 00:25:05:28

Um, but since the submission of the application, um, is there any policy, including local policy or guidance that has been subsequently updated or introduced that may be of relevance to this application?

00:25:07:05 - 00:26:02:10

Thank you. Sir. On behalf of the applicants, There are a number of, um, things that, uh, to be honest, don't change the the thrust of policy and, and the approach that the applicants would be taking. But there have been and I'll just run through what those are. Um, so, um, in terms of sort of overarching energy policy, um, the labor government issued the Clean Energy Action Plan on the 13th of December, 2024, which was after the application had gone in. Um, that is a, uh, that effectively sets out the labor government's commitment and pathway to clean power and really reinforces the need for offshore wind generation, which is, as we know, is why these projects are here, which is to deliver the, uh, the renewable energy generation from the Morgan Offshore Wind farm and the, uh, Morecambe Offshore wind farm.

00:26:02:12 - 00:26:40:19

So there'll be an update in respect of, uh, the Clean Energy Action Plan that has now also, um, as your as, as I've already mentioned, um, revised draft national policy statements were issued for consultation on the 24th of April. So six days ago, um, they are to, uh, their, their revised drafts of a national policy statement in one, which is the overarching national policy statement in three, which

relates to renewable energy and and five, um, the changes that are proposed don't affect this application, uh, in any material way.

00:26:40:24 - 00:27:11:05

They do reinforce and they, they draw down the, the Clean Power 2030 wording, uh, into the policy. So again, that, that kind of, uh, that very strong support for, uh, for offshore wind power and for the transmission assets that are needed to deliver to deliver that power. Um, so we will be, um, we will be updating and commenting on that. I would just flag though, as probably everybody is aware that there are transitional.

00:27:11:25 - 00:27:48:09

Sorry, let me step back. There is, um, that's gone out for consultation. I think the consultation is about six weeks or so. Um, and then there will be a period when those policies, um, are reissued. As I say, they don't materially change the position. If anything, they strengthen the policy support for this project for these projects. Um, however, paragraph 1.6.3 of the, uh, of drafting one does talk about transitional arrangements, um, for projects that are, as this one is already in examination or effectively the applications have been made.

00:27:48:16 - 00:28:19:21

And that confirms that, um, for those projects that already have already been submitted or accepted for application, it is the current suite of energy national policy statements that they should be determined against, albeit that whatever revisions come in later will be material to be considered. So it will be important for the examining authority to obviously be aware of those changes and to consider them. But the primary policy for determining this application is against the current national policy statements.

00:28:19:23 - 00:28:36:24

We will set all this out in a note in terms of bringing all that forward. Um, so that's the that's the national policy statement position. Um, are you happy for me to carry on? I was going to talk about the National Planning Policy framework and a quick note on local plan.

00:28:38:18 - 00:28:49:08

Yes. Thank you. Thank you very much for for travelling through that so quickly. And, um, it is quite technical, but obviously it's very helpful for us just to have your confirmation. So yes. Please continue.

00:28:49:24 - 00:29:31:24

Um, so the list done on behalf of the applicants, um, the applicants are also aware that there have been changes to the NPF, the National Planning Policy framework, um, since the application was submitted. again. They're not material to the project or to the policies. And, uh, as we know, um, it's the national policy statements that the primary policy, the national planning Policy framework, is a material consideration to be taken account. We will again be submitting a note just confirming where those updates are to the NPF in terms of making sure that that's just that is complete and it refers to, uh, to the later versions.

00:29:33:22 - 00:29:39:12

So that's where we are on the NPF. Um, in terms of local plan policy.

00:29:39:20 - 00:30:02:05

Um, perhaps I could interrupt you there. I'm going to ask the local authorities to, uh, to to, um, have first, first go at this. That's all right. But thank you very much for, for for that summary. It's been be very helpful and look forward to to getting the update. So just just turning to the the local authorities. Just wondering if um, you want to, uh, give us any idea of any changes. Thank you.

00:30:04:21 - 00:30:38:24

Thank you. Uh, John borough council. Um, so with regards to, um, local policy, uh, the council has published its Local Development Scheme 2025 recently, which sets out the programme for the production of the next local plan. Um, the existing local plan will be, uh, five years old from adoption in December 2026. So initial stages of preparation of the new plan have commenced, including an issue of a call for sites, and it's intended to undertake a regulation 18 consultation.

00:30:39:08 - 00:30:53:27

Um August to September of this year, 2025. Um consideration of of sites will run from May to October 2025. Publication for consultation and a regulation 19 stage is scheduled for me.

00:30:53:29 - 00:30:59:21

Can I just hang on a second? Um, can you just say consideration of science will take place. When did you say?

00:30:59:23 - 00:31:04:20

Um, so that will be May to October this year, 2025.

00:31:06:24 - 00:31:42:28

Um, and then publication for consultation under regulation 19 is anticipated or scheduled, in fact, uh, for May to June, uh, next year, 2026 was with submission proposed for August 2026. So the new plan would run to 2042, which is ten years on from the existing local plan. Um, initial intentions are that the new plan will incorporate existing policies where possible. Um, but obviously that will be subject to the outcomes of the regulation 18 stage, um, if appropriate.

00:31:43:00 - 00:32:17:03

I also just had a comment about the national policy. Um, so with reference to the um, revised national policy statements, um, we had intended to provide, um, comment as appropriate in our local impact report. Um, and um, we also had a comment on a recent, um, decision, which we think is relevant and has kind of implications for policy. Um, which I could pass to him to comment on now if that would be okay.

00:32:18:25 - 00:32:45:15

Uh, Paul working for council? Uh, yes. This is this is Matt in relation to, uh, a recent, uh, appeal court decision on section 106 with the Isle of Wight Council, uh, which my reading of it is effectively that there needs to be a period of consultation, uh, in relation to one of six agreements or, um, uh, two sort of heads of terms of section 106 is, uh, and.

00:32:47:28 - 00:32:57:20

Planning authority examiner authority would have to enter into a period of consultation on those 1 to 6 six in relation to the High Court decision. Appeal. Court decision.

00:33:01:14 - 00:33:08:16

Sorry. Thank you very much. And you'll be submitting details of that. Will that be in the local impact report or separate?

00:33:09:13 - 00:33:12:02

Uh, we'll include that in the impact report.

00:33:13:15 - 00:33:21:13

Fine. Um, before we move on to other local authorities, I don't know whether you want to, um, respond to what we've heard from filed.

00:33:23:01 - 00:33:45:10

But list down on behalf of the applicants. Um, it sounds like we'll keep an eye on the final open plan, but there won't be anything, um, material to consider for this application. But we'll certainly keep an eye on on progress of it. And if there is anything we would update and noted regarding the appeal decision. And we look forward to hearing the council's submissions on it so we can respond to those. Thank you.

00:33:47:08 - 00:33:54:19

Thank you for that. Um, do any of the other local authorities want to make any comment. Blackpool.

00:33:55:11 - 00:34:29:19

Sir Catherine Knight, DWF Blackpool Council. So we're in the process of uh hearing the la the local impact report. Our local plan policies are being addressed in the local Impact report. Uh, it's an overriding view to give the panel a guidance. Blackpool Council at this stage don't see any concern. Their local plan was the last one was 2016 that was adopted. Uh, a new plan is going to be coming to fruition, but not during the decision making of this panel at all.

00:34:29:21 - 00:34:32:28

So the adopted plan is the plan to be considered.

00:34:36:15 - 00:34:37:04

Thank you.

00:34:39:07 - 00:34:45:16

Yeah, thank you for that. Um, any other Lancashire want to comment at all?

00:34:47:21 - 00:35:04:12

Neil Stephens, Lancashire County Council my only comments I got relates to more guidance and data rather than local policy. It's one of the updates, the national flood risk assessment and the data that it contains, which will have an impact upon the area of influence of the scheme itself.

00:35:06:19 - 00:35:10:12

Will that be contained in the Local Impact report? That's fine.

00:35:15:03 - 00:35:38:21

Just one very quick points on local impact reports. If a local authority refers to a development plan policy in its Local Impact report. Could they also provide the full text of that policy and any supporting text in relation in relation to that policy? You probably will already, but sometimes it doesn't happen. It's just helpful to have that if you are going to refer to any, any relevant local plan policies or other development plan policies.

00:35:40:10 - 00:35:49:00

Paul Kim for Council. So yes, we will do that and we will also provide a basic assessment for you in relation to the application.

00:35:52:00 - 00:35:55:17

Does anybody else in the room want to come in on this point?

00:36:00:08 - 00:36:13:03

Um, Mr. Anderson, if you want to respond at all to sorry, I do apologize. Yes. You'd like. If you introduce yourself and make your comment. Uh, David Dunlop from the.

00:36:13:05 - 00:36:28:05

Wildlife Trust for Lancashire and Manchester and North Merseyside. Um, you may be aware of this, but since Preston and South application aren't here, their recognition Regulation 19 Local Plan is currently out for consultation.

00:36:30:15 - 00:36:31:11

Thank you for that.

00:36:35:24 - 00:36:41:09

And there's no other hands in the room or, um, uh,

00:36:43:02 - 00:37:22:15

um, so just to remind everyone to to provide updates for the local authorities for um, uh, for, for, for their, um, uh, lawyers. Um, and Miss Dunn's already referred to the. Um, consultation for the draft maps that were published on the 24th of April. Um, they are consultation drafts, um, as she said, um, and transitional arrangements included within them say, uh, they will not have effect on these applications, but they are potentially capable of being important and relevant considerations.

00:37:23:00 - 00:37:29:27

Um, so that's certainly what we'll be bearing in mind when, um, uh, when, when we come to, um, the report.

00:37:32:11 - 00:37:54:22

Uh, moving on. Can I ask about the, um, uh, the policy trackers? Um, and this is really for, um, uh, for, for for those, in the room and listening. Can the applicant set out their approach to the use of policy trackers, including the frequency of updates for all relevant trackers?

00:37:57:15 - 00:38:01:02

Let me speak for the applicants. Pardon me. Sorry. Um, the.

00:38:09:02 - 00:38:45:03

Um. The trackers are designed to help the examining authority. Mark, our homework is that we're in terms of policy and where we stand in relation to the national policy statements, and then the national planning policy framework, and then the relevant local planning policies from the various planning authorities and for the marine management organisations, marine planning policies as well. Um, in terms of updates at the moment, there may be some small updates that are within PPF numbering changes and subject to what comes from the local impact reports, there may be some other additional changes needed, and I think that would be the appropriate time to look at the document again and then submit a new version.

00:38:45:12 - 00:38:52:15

So if it's okay with the examining authority, will await the local impact reports and then confirm when that document will be updated.

00:38:55:02 - 00:39:13:17

Is done on behalf of the applicants. Just to add in, we would make sure that at the end of examination, the policy trackers were as update were updated as far as they needed to be. So so the final version, effectively the examining authority takes away at the end of the examination, has all the updates at that relevant point.

00:39:16:13 - 00:39:20:11

That's great. Thank you very much for for that. Um,

00:39:22:03 - 00:39:43:20

there are a couple of other councils who aren't here today. Um, who, uh, um, you might just want to comment on in respect of, um, their local plans as Preston and South Ribble. Um, and I don't know whether you want to either now or in writing, but it'd be useful to have an update as to what their current position is.

00:39:46:07 - 00:39:52:10

Liz Dunn, on behalf of the applicant, I have a very high level summary of where we think the position is.

00:39:52:25 - 00:39:53:19

High levels.

00:39:53:21 - 00:39:54:06

Good.

00:39:54:08 - 00:40:27:25

High levels. Good. Excellent. Um, uh, I suspect it's probably one for us to confirm with the local authorities anyway. So, um, for Preston Council, and I think this was the point that was just made previously. Um, it, um, the it's the local plan 2012 to 2026. Uh, there haven't been any updates since submission, but I expect that moving into its, uh, revision process and again, want to keep for us to keep an eye on, um, and, uh.

00:40:28:06 - 00:40:30:14

Oh, hang on. Um.

00:40:37:01 - 00:41:09:05

Ah, right. So it looks like there's a new Central Lancashire Local Plan being developed, um, with a regulation 19 consultation having taken place, uh, between February and April 2025. Um, and that will have key policies for the three central Lancashire authorities, which include South Ribble and Preston. So I think there is a confirmation there to make sure that that's how that's the, um, Fylde may have further information that they're able to, um, to share on that one.

00:41:09:16 - 00:41:17:21

Um, but um, we will certainly keep an eye on it, as I say, and make sure that, um, we're aware of any changes that are potentially coming forward.

00:41:19:09 - 00:41:41:03

Uh, that's just to make sure that they're not overlooked. Obviously, they've got the opportunity to, um, to come along to our hearings. They're not here today. So it'd be really helpful if if, as you say, you can keep an eye on and, um, let us know, uh, and if anybody else. This is, um, agenda item three. I'm not sure if anybody else wants to raise anything.

00:41:43:14 - 00:41:51:07

If not, then we'll move on to, um, agenda item for site selection and alternatives. Thank you.

00:41:55:20 - 00:42:01:09

Thank you, Mr. Gorst. Do the applicants require any maneuvering before we commence?

00:42:32:20 - 00:42:38:06

Does there's some new people appearing. If you want to just briefly introduce them before we start, that's probably helpful.

00:43:07:15 - 00:43:41:24

Thank you sir. Listen, on behalf of the applicants. Um, shall I just introduce the new people we have at the table? Um, and then they'll introduce themselves. Um, as they. Sorry, as they go. Uh, so we now have at the table, uh, miss Heather Koski, who is the offshore consent manager for Morgan. Um, she will be speaking now, um, about the joint approach to, uh, to the site selection for, um, for the joint project.

00:43:42:15 - 00:44:16:15

Uh, next to her, we have Miss Laura Martin, who is the onshore content manager for Morgan, and she will be talking, uh, regarding the cable routing from, uh, from the beach, um, to effectively right through to the connection to Penwortham, uh, next to her. So look down the table. We have Mr. Phil Williamson, who is also one of the onshore consents managers for Morgan, and he will be, uh, dealing with matters relating to Blackpool Airport.

00:44:17:23 - 00:44:18:08

Um.

00:44:21:13 - 00:44:43:06

Oh, and the onshore substation. Sorry. And the overview of the onshore substations for both projects and the Morgan only substation. And then next to him we have Mr. Leo as a man who is the onshore consents manager for Morecambe, and he will be dealing with the Morecambe substation.

00:44:49:17 - 00:45:25:09

Okay. Thank you. Just a brief introduction from myself. This section of the agenda is focused on the applicant's consideration of site selection and alternatives. This is so a clear understanding can be gained of the applicant's approach on this. For key parts of the proposed development, including any alternatives considered will also provide opportunity for representations regarding any alternative sites raised by interested parties in their relevant representations. I have a series of questions that I intend to ask of the applicants. My colleagues may also ask questions, and I'll also invite representations by other parties as I go along.

00:45:25:11 - 00:45:33:21

But as I said before, not necessarily after every question and response. But please be patient. You will get your chance. And

00:45:35:18 - 00:46:09:25

I note that Bas systems have requested that this section of the agenda also includes the proposed ecological mitigation and enhancement areas. Uh, we understand the reasons for that. But to avoid repetition, because it may be that that discussion gets closely linked to discussions about applicants assessments, etc. we propose that there'll be an opportunity for discussion on the site selection alternatives for the mitigation and enhancement areas later in the in the agenda on the item relating to the scope of the applicants assessments.

00:46:10:09 - 00:46:51:08

So it's not our intention to consider this part as part of this item, but we do understand the reasons for it and we agree, I think it be useful for it to be heard. But if we just feel unbalanced that it probably can be moved over to the next section. So that can be dealt with comprehensively. Everybody happy with that? Uh, okay. In terms of item A, just in terms of very sort of introductory item. I'd like to just invite the applicants first to set out their overview of, if you like, the policy basis and indeed the legal or common law basis to the consideration of alternatives.

00:46:51:21 - 00:47:12:28

Just so everybody can understand the applicant's view on as to, you know, how alternatives should be considered, uh, in a national significance infrastructure project application. Before on to sort of talk more in detail about the specifics of site selection and alternatives in this in this case.

00:47:14:04 - 00:47:45:23

Thank you sir. Uh, Liz Dunn, on behalf of the applicant, um, in terms of the legislative and policy basis for considering alternatives. Um, I think the key, the key elements to draw out are the requirements of the environmental impact assessment regulations, um, which require an applicant, um, to they don't actually require an applicant to consider alternatives to the environmental impact assessment regulations.

00:47:45:28 - 00:48:19:16

What they require is for, uh, for an applicant or, or for an environmental statement to set out the alternatives that the, that, uh, that have been considered, uh, and why those were considered and the choice that has been made. So so it isn't a requirement in, in, in law in respect of environmental impact assessment to consider alternatives. But it is a requirement to report on the alternatives that have been considered and to provide those as part of the environmental impact assessment.

00:48:20:05 - 00:49:06:14

Um, this isn't the compulsory acquisition hearing. Um, and and we're not talking about compulsory acquisition matters here, but clearly there is a, um, a requirement in respect of compulsory acquisition tests for an applicant to demonstrate, um, that they have considered alternatives and that there is no, that there isn't an alternative to the scheme coming forward. And we will talk about that on Friday in the context of compulsory acquisition. Um, in terms of the national policy statement, um, the uh, the provisions in relation to consideration alternatives, um, effectively, um, uh, reflect the requirements in the um, in the EIA regulations.

00:49:06:16 - 00:49:39:10

Sorry. And I'm just going to jump through, uh, in terms of where that section so I can refer you to the relevant sections of the National Policy Statement. Um, apologies. You'll have to just, um. So here we are. So, um, uh, so paragraph 4.3.9 of National Policy Statement in one states that, um, as in any planning case, um, the relevance or otherwise to the decision making of alternatives is, in the first instance, uh, a matter of law.

00:49:39:17 - 00:50:24:06

This NPS does not contain any general requirement to consider alternatives, or establish whether the proposed project represents the best option from a policy perspective. Um, although there are specific requirements in relation to compulsory acquisition and habitats, the NPS does not change requirements in relation to those compulsory acquisition and habitat sites. So insofar as that need to consider alternatives, is there. I think the summary position is, um, uh, where it's required by law in a particular area, as we've talked about in respect of compulsory acquisition or indeed, um, uh, for a, um, for a derogation case in respect to habitats matters, which is not is not the case that we're considering here.

00:50:24:20 - 00:50:35:02

Um, the consideration of alternatives is effectively for an applicant to consider, to report on in the EIA context, those alternatives that have been considered.

00:50:39:28 - 00:50:43:20

Excuse me. Okay. Thank you. And.

00:50:46:09 - 00:51:16:24

To what extent then does the do the applicants consider that alternatives are. Because there's two. Well I should actually come maybe comment on these and writing there's there's a couple of, uh, cases say Save Stonehenge world Heritage Site Limited versus Secretary of State for transport, which I think my interpretation of it that is that whilst the NPS relates to or has paragraphs on policy concerning Alternatives.

00:51:18:14 - 00:51:51:15

It appears to confirm that the NPS cannot be interpreted as overriding the common law principles, and whether the alternatives are a relevant material consideration to be taken into account. And the other case that I'd ask you to comment on in writing will be, will be will be fine at deadline. One is the Court of Appeal decision, Langley Park School v Bromley 2009, which is a general sort of planning, uh, relates to planning sort of case law on the consideration of alternatives.

00:51:51:17 - 00:52:10:04

I just want to get sort of clear that what the applicant's view is on those. You can do that now or provide that in writing, but just at that point that it's not just about the NPS. There are other sort of, if you like, common law matters that need to be taken into account in terms of the extent of how far alternatives should be considered by the Secretary of state.

00:52:10:20 - 00:52:49:27

Uh, listen, on behalf of the applicants, um, obviously. So this is the first time you've referenced these cases, and I'm not in a position to, uh, respond to them. Um, I suggest if there are specific questions regarding them that might be a matter for first questions. Um, or if you would like us to prepare a note on the consideration of those cases for deadline one, that's something we can do. I think it it would be helpful to be clear on the particular questions or focus the examining authority has in respect of drawing out points around those particular cases.

00:52:49:29 - 00:53:33:08

I think a deadline one submission would be helpful is really because obviously there's been lots of submissions on alternatives in this case, and I do want to get clear on as to how far alternatives should be agreed, should be taken into account as a material consideration in this matter. And I think those two cases potentially are sort of relevant or relevant To that in terms of, for example, our alternatives, more of a material consideration. If it's considered that a scheme might result in significant adverse effects, or obviously, if you have a case where there's no significance of adverse effects, then perhaps alternatives or the existence of alternative might be a lesser might be a lesser matter.

00:53:33:10 - 00:53:58:17

It sort of relates to those those points. But I'm happy for a I realise I just dropped those on you and today. So as I said before a submission at deadline one, in relation to the relevance of those, just so we

can be clear on the approach sort of taken in this case, particularly in the context of the fact we received many representations, obviously, on on alternatives. Does anybody else have anything to say on.

00:53:58:28 - 00:54:38:20

This on behalf of the applicant? Can I just ask if if we'd had some notice that you wanted to focus on the legal aspects of site selection and have that, we could probably have prepared something to to submit now. And I know it's a kind of general point, and I appreciate it's entirely in the examining authority's discretion as to how agendas are drafted. But if there are some very specific points where, um, that, as I say, a particular focus or, uh, there are things in your mind that you'd like us to consider or come prepared a hearing to, to respond to.

00:54:38:29 - 00:54:58:00

It would be very helpful to understand what those are. We've obviously been working to a general, um, uh, agenda on site selection alternatives. As you're here, we've prepared a lot of detail explaining how we've gone through that process, because that was our thought that that was probably what you'd be most interested in hearing.

00:54:58:02 - 00:55:34:07

Absolutely. It is. The purpose of this introductory question, really, is just to get an understanding on how relevant, or if you like, how much a material consideration could the consideration of alternatives B, which is a sort of just a general sort of introductory question. Partly because obviously there's lots of people here today who will be listening online as well, who raised alternatives. And I just wanted to sort of try and get a sort of clear approach on, you know, how how relevant are they to our consideration and indeed the Secretary of State's consideration. So I just wanted to open this up as an introductory matter, because I think it is relevant to sort of the discussions that will will follow.

00:55:34:09 - 00:55:45:25

I understand your point about raising a particular court case, etcetera. We'll we'll try that as we go along. Hopefully the agenda is fairly detailed as far as today is concerned, but at that point is noted. There's.

00:55:55:15 - 00:56:00:13

Anybody else who would like to, uh, speak on this matter? Mr. Walker, your hand is up.

00:56:01:06 - 00:56:38:15

Thank you. Sir. Angus Walker for Newton. ET cetera. Um, it is our case that the Stonehenge case you mentioned is highly relevant to this project. In that case, the DCO was quashed because of the failure to consider an alternative that the judge characterized as obviously material. And we think that there is an obviously material alternative to this project in the same way. And in fact, in that case, the main the project as applied for was a tunnel underneath Stonehenge for the A303.

00:56:39:00 - 00:57:10:02

It. The portal at one end was outside the World Heritage Site, whereas the portal at the other end was still within the World Heritage Site. And summarising very um, summarily, um, the old alternative was to continue the tunnel so that both portals were outside the World Heritage Site. That would have

added £730 million to the cost of the project, according to National Highways. Nevertheless, the DCO was quashed and.

00:57:11:06 - 00:57:43:07

Not considering that alternative properly. So I think that the alternative that I will be advocating at some point during this agenda item is an even stronger case that it is obviously material because it's much cheaper than the applied for version. Um, and it has many other, uh, benefits. I don't I'm not familiar with the Langley Park case, but I'm going to have a look at that as well. Okay. I also disagree about habitats that I agree with.

00:57:43:09 - 00:58:17:24

Everything that's done said about EIA, and not having to consider every alternative and not choose the best alternative. Necessarily the project stands or falls on its own merits, but if there is an obviously material alternative that should be considered. Um, also on habitats, this project the project has applied for does cross a special Protection Area, the Riddle and Alt Estuaries Spa, whereas the alternative I'm going to advocate does not. And so that is something that's the second reason for considering it.

00:58:19:04 - 00:58:22:19

So that's my initial comments on your remarks earlier. Thank you.

00:58:23:06 - 00:58:26:07

Okay. Thank you. Any more so.

00:58:26:18 - 00:58:42:19

On file council um, opposition is that the, um, alternative sites are a material consideration in this regard and specifically in relation to this DCO. Okay. Thank you. I we'd be happy to provide, uh, advice on that matter.

00:58:42:21 - 00:59:14:03

Okay. Thank you. If any party wants to provide any further written comments on this, then please do so at deadline one. And as I say, it is raised as good reason. I think this is an interesting point because I'm not sure it's completely widely understood in terms of the relevance. I think it takes some grappling with in terms of the relevance of alternatives in a, in a, in an application such as this. So hence raising it. So yeah. Any further comments that deadline one would be appreciated on that.

00:59:14:05 - 00:59:16:18

So thank you everybody. Uh.

00:59:19:24 - 00:59:21:05

So moving on.

00:59:22:26 - 00:59:56:20

Would the applicants. I'd like to there's obviously a lot to consider. And we've also read the application documents. We've read the representations about the various alternative sites that have been put forward by residents. And we've obviously read the applicant's documents. Would the

applicants at this stage just like to provide a general overview on their approach to the consideration of site selection and alternatives, without obviously getting into the minutia detail? Otherwise, we'll be going on for some time. I think that might be useful just to set the context for the discussion that will follow.

01:00:00:12 - 01:00:25:15

And so on behalf of both applicants. So as a general rule, today, obviously everyone's been introduced. But as a general rule, we've sought to balance a level of detail based on the agenda item. So what we'll do at different points is sort of check in to make sure that the level of detail is as needed and as wanted by the Exa. Um, does that sound okay? So we'll we'll all start with a bit of a summary, and then we'll kind of start peppering it with a bit more detail.

01:00:26:05 - 01:00:57:23

Yes, I think it can be quite, quite high level because I do have some further questions as I go along that I want to ask before I go to interested parties to make their points. Um, so it can be quite a high level summary because I have got sort of individual questions on various aspects of it. And it may be that as you go along, I can chip in with those questions as you go along. Um, but if you could just do a sort of general sort of introductory overview to the overall approach.

01:00:57:25 - 01:01:01:26

If I go into too much detail, I'll tell you at this stage.

01:01:02:14 - 01:01:36:06

No problem. Thank you. Um, so in terms of, uh, the, the overview, so what I'll do is I'll start talking about the Crown Estate leasing round for, um, followed by a summary of the offshore transmission network review, um, and the resulting holistic network design report. Um, as these sort of represent the start and end points for our, for our project, and a sort of fundamental to that, we'll talk about the key infrastructure that we based the site selection on, and then the overarching principles and constraints, which are sort of then used through the respective different, um, constituent infrastructure.

01:01:36:15 - 01:02:17:03

Um, as we go through the process in a bit more detail. I'd then summarize the consultation and engagement, just to sort of demonstrate how fundamental and integrated it is to that process. So in terms of the the leasing round before it was instigated by the Crown Estate in September 2019, um, in relation to potential lease areas for wind turbine generators. Um. There are four areas as a part of this round. Um, in England, Wales and as part of the competitive tender. Mwb um were offered preferred bidder status for Morgan array um area or area for lease and flotation in Cobra were awarded the Morecambe area for lease both within the Irish Sea.

01:02:18:02 - 01:02:50:21

Um these areas, in whole or in part, basically form the basis of the wind turbine array areas which, um, for which consent are sought by the separate generation assets developments in alignment with around for leasing. Um the process um, the Department for Energy security net zero launch the offshore transmission network review in 2020 and that was to develop a holistic network design. This is a bit of a new approach. Um, as typically otherwise we've seen developers have brought forward completely separate consent applications for radial connections.

01:02:50:23 - 01:03:29:27

So we've seen that a lot in the East Coast in particular, the HND was devised as an avenue to aim for transmission connections to be delivered in the most appropriate way and, where applicable, in a coordinated way. And that's quite key to our development. Um, and it sought to and it kind of had a remit which was to consider the cost, deliverability, operability as well as the environmental impacts, community impacts. And it looked at all of those on an equal footing. Um, subsequently, in July 22nd, the UK government published the report um, which set out the approach to connecting the 50GW of wind, um to electricity network.

01:03:30:04 - 01:04:00:28

And both both Morgan Offshore Wind Project and the Morecambe Offshore Wind Farm were scoped to that process. Um, the report concluded that the preferred connection option resulting in the most optimal design on balance, um, considering all of the criteria that I just sort of spoke about was for both offshore wind farms to make connection to the grid at Penwortham. Stating that the wind farms should work collaboratively, including a shared. Onshore and offshore cable corridor, on the basis that this would.

01:04:01:00 - 01:04:30:03

Minimise the impact of the cables on the environment and the local community. The projects were engaged in the process and agreed with the findings, and therefore agreed to at that point to work collaboratively, collaboratively about the application of two electrically separate and separately owned offshore wind farms. The outcomes are now endorsed by the MPs and aligns with paragraphs two, eight, 34 and two eight. 40 228 43 of MPs three.

01:04:31:27 - 01:04:54:23

My colleague Ian will talk a little bit more on the grid connection as a part of that agenda item. Um, I just wanted to highlight. So in terms of the identification of the arrays and the point of interconnection as a part of the that review, these are the key end point drivers for the route planning, site selection, site selection process and everything that came after this. Um.

01:04:56:10 - 01:05:30:05

Just go into a bit more detail on the overarching process principles of the site selection process. Um, it's fundamentally an iterative, constraints driven process, and it is fed by the non-statutory and statutory consultation engagement throughout each of these stages. Feedback was absolutely inherent in the process and all feedback received was considered. Although, you know, obviously we can't necessarily take it all into account. Um, to refine, develop the proposals wherever possible. Um, and in order to avoid and mitigate potential impacts at the outset, as a part of that mitigation hierarchy,

01:05:31:24 - 01:06:14:24

um, we set up, uh, multidisciplinary, multidisciplinary teams, um, uh, that included engineers, panel planners, land advisers, legal topic consultants. There's a whole raft of experts which feed into the process. um, as well as undertaking those non-statutory and statutory consultations. We also set up what's called an evidence plan process, which is fairly standard for developments of this nature, um, and within which, uh, as part of the evidence plan process, we have what are termed expert working

groups identified for the key topic areas, but also provide a key, um, a forum for stakeholders to provide that impact, um, that feedback to the project throughout the development phase.

01:06:14:26 - 01:06:47:12

So that includes um, essential local planning authorities, um, and different stakeholders for those different groups. The overarching principles which kind of sits above all of the different, uh, infrastructure for the project, um, are as follows. So we have the alignment of the offshore and onshore infrastructure. So that kind of links back into the, the, the MPs for both the, both offshore wind farms, identification of the shortest and most direct route is always preferred as this reduced.

01:06:47:16 - 01:07:03:27

This does reduce impacts by minimizing the overall footprint for the transmission assets, but also the overall impact on cost for the offshore wind farms, which ultimately reduces the cost to energy to the consumer and minimizes the transmission loss. It's associated with the length of the the circuit,

01:07:05:21 - 01:07:37:16

avoiding minimizing interactions with the environmental features. For example, the ecological, social, human receptors, wherever they're sort of identified. Um, and lastly, the provision of the necessary space to accommodate the design envelope and the infrastructure identified at the outside outset of the process. So we split, um, we split all of the site selection into four main stages. So we had stage one, which is which was the identification of the point of interconnection. Stage two was the identification of areas of search.

01:07:38:18 - 01:07:51:07

Stage three was a refinement siting of the design of the transmission assets. So that's um, post the main statutory consultation. And stage four was refinement and siting, um, for the detailed application.

01:07:52:24 - 01:08:16:08

The overarching principles are essentially used, um, as a guide. And then on top of that we develop what's called a black, red, amber green um, constraints approach. Sometimes we use just a red amber green approach. So my colleague Miss Murkowski, for example, with the offshore elements, will only use a Rag approach when she explains that process. Um, and this allows sorry, sorry.

01:08:16:10 - 01:08:46:19

Just at that point, I have got a question on the Bragg methodology. If I could ask that question for 2 or 3 questions now, because as soon as you use, can you just provide some more background explanation on the choice of this methodology in terms of site selection and including are there any sort of limitations that might arise from its use. And the next question which you may be able to answer. Is answering this question can deal with as well.

01:08:46:21 - 01:09:20:22

I can come back to it if need if need be and remind, remind you. But it's just to provide some further explanation of how the different ratings have been evaluated, because we're all read about Rag assessments. But what seems to be a little bit lacking is that the sort of the detail behind how each of

the, uh, ratings has been actually assessed, uh, or how the conclusions on it has been have been come to. So like the thinking behind what goes into black, red, amber green.

01:09:22:28 - 01:09:23:15

Okay.

01:09:28:08 - 01:09:31:22

I'm so sorry. Can you just repeat the first part of that question?

01:09:32:27 - 01:09:46:06

Sorry, I probably should have left it at the first part of the question, then moved on to the next one. After that, it's just to get some background explanation on the choice of this methodology. And are there any limitations that you are aware of that might arise from its use in site selection?

01:09:49:09 - 01:10:28:06

Um, yeah. So in terms of the prior criteria, it has been it is widely used on a range of projects. Um, we can certainly provide examples of that. Um, uh, as part of a written submission. Um, it is widely used as it allows. So essentially what you do is you look at the it might be third party constraints, it might be site specific constraints, and it allows you to provide buffers based on the black red amber green rating. Um, and then you can essentially use that to physically map and, and route your infrastructure through those areas, navigating those constraints.

01:10:28:28 - 01:10:58:00

Um, so for example, you might have a woodland and you might apply a, for argument's sake, 30 meter metre buffer around that. So again, for argument's sake, I don't know if this is, um, technically right, but that might be like the root protection zone. And that allows you to effectively navigate around that, uh, constraint, um, without avoiding that direct impact, but also mitigating those secondary impacts that you might, might encounter.

01:10:59:22 - 01:11:33:06

Um, there are always going to be limitations. Um, they'll be limitations in terms of the amount of data that you can put into that process. So it will only be as good as the amount of data that goes into that. But again, the data that was used, um, has been used on other schemes, the types of data, it's been used widely on other schemes. So that this is this is not sort of new and um, and novel in that sense. Um, and also you can't always say, for example, if you were to um, there were some nuance in there.

01:11:33:08 - 01:11:52:25

So if you were to identify a black constraint, which might be a triple C, which is a watercourse, but you have to cross it somewhere. You would just look to use a sort of different approach, which is they intentionally cross that to mitigate that, because you do need to cross it at some point. So when you look at the mapping, there is some slight nuance in that process.

01:11:55:10 - 01:12:27:10

Um, yeah. Um, the last question was just on the different ratings. So the ratings again are used. Um, and the buffers that are used are tried and tested and they're, they're inputted by a technical specialist. So they, they are either based on best practice or, you know, in the example that I use in terms of like

root protection zone, that's generally, say a buffer that you would use as a route protection zone. And then when you sort of get into the assessment level, um, after doing this process, you can then sort of, um, start to fine tune that essentially.

01:13:17:20 - 01:13:18:05

And so,

01:13:19:22 - 01:13:20:10

um.

01:13:22:21 - 01:13:57:18

So I just get my bearings. So, as I said, the black, red and green, um, are used to physically map the constraints, so you can make sure that you can start routing around those constraints. Um, at each stage, at each stage, the process involves data gathering. So as I said, that might be a third party. Um, third party data sets, environmental data sets. Um, but also is informed as you go through the stages by site specific surveys. So, um, if you were to go on site and find a veteran tree, you would then look at that and say, actually, this is something that we need to do something more.

01:13:57:20 - 01:14:29:23

We do. We need to route around it. Do we need to do an under it, that sort of thing? It's also fed by any feedback that we get from the local community, the local um via the EWG councils and such. So that's why the evidence plan process is sort of set up, is that we're looking to get that feedback on board and integrate that into the route planning and site selection process. Um, in terms of the key infrastructure. So I'll just glaze over this because obviously we're hopefully we're all familiar. So we have the offshore export cables including the temporary working area.

01:14:29:25 - 01:14:40:11

We have the landfill areas. This is where the offshore cables are joined to the onshore cables via the transition joint base, and that includes any temporary working areas and permanent access that we need to facilitate services.

01:14:40:13 - 01:14:47:15

So I just told you that just going back to the Bragg analysis, we are still talking about Bragg moved on because there's one more question on the Bragg assessment.

01:14:47:17 - 01:14:48:17

I was going to move on.

01:14:48:20 - 01:15:20:27

It's just just one question before you. You do, and it's maybe one you wish to follow up in, in writing. So I don't want to make a huge point about it, but having read the site selection, you know, I understand what you've said and that everything's been sort of allocated but black, red, amber and green. But it seems to be a little bit light in detail on like the sort of qualitative assessments that you get to in order to come to wise one black or red or amber and green, because obviously these do have quite important implications as to where things are actually located. And I don't need to start at the moment.

01:15:20:29 - 01:16:09:29

But for example, green belt, for example, I think that goes into is it red? I think it's red or amber. I can't remember, but as to you know why red, black and green are chosen? Because in impact assessment, for example, in the methodology, there's lots of detail on how you get to a particular conclusion on, for example, significance, magnitude, etc. there doesn't seem to be that same sort of analysis provided for the assessment. It'll just be interesting again, to make a huge point about it, and I appreciate it is fairly sort of widely used, but it is quite important, as I say, in terms of where the where obviously the choice of the applicant site selection, and it was useful to get some more information on that assessment of how each particular uh, criteria is, is reached for the for the relevant matters.

01:16:12:06 - 01:16:19:18

I think my doctor Morgan, want to ask you a question now. Yes, yes. I'll let that question too.

01:16:20:18 - 01:16:22:27

So it's really a follow on from.

01:16:22:29 - 01:16:26:00

What my colleague was just asking. um, how do you.

01:16:26:02 - 01:16:26:19

Actually.

01:16:26:21 - 01:16:28:01

Take account of the consultation.

01:16:28:03 - 01:16:29:00

Responses.

01:16:29:23 - 01:16:30:08

In that.

01:16:30:10 - 01:16:34:27

Qualitative assessment? Um, it'd be really useful to see an example of how that.

01:16:34:29 - 01:16:35:14

Actually works.

01:16:35:16 - 01:16:36:07

In practice.

01:16:43:20 - 01:17:15:27

Um, answers on behalf of the applicant. So in terms of the black, red, amber green, you're right. In terms of the chapter, it just sort of shows a table that says, uh, high potential to be a showstopper

development. Um, me intermediate and then low. So it's quite difficult to explain it across the piece. And what we'll do is we'll take it away. But essentially for each, when you have the broad table, you have all of the constraints mapped. Um, depending on whether it's a environmental, it might be social, it might be technical.

01:17:16:14 - 01:17:46:01

The judgement on whether one is a potential showstopper is slightly different. So for example, where you might have, um, 30km of, you know, really shallow depths offshore in the intertidal or in the entire area that would be considered, you know, quite a high risk to the, the development, but that would be potentially measured differently in terms of your environmental or social impacts, if that makes sense. We'll take that away and we'll provide a note on that. That's okay.

01:17:46:06 - 01:17:57:06

Okay. And in response to Doctor Morgan's point regarding the, uh, how how consultation has been taken into account. We'd like to add that into the to the your response as well for deadline one.

01:17:57:08 - 01:18:12:01

I think on that that particular point and perhaps on the others, um, it'd be really useful for a practical example, you could actually see how that actually operates in practice. And so actually, you know, actually refine the route, actually define the route.

01:18:13:00 - 01:18:34:18

That's out above the applicants. Yes, we can we will take it away and provide examples. But what I would say is so for example when um, my colleagues, Mr.. Williamson um, um Mr.. As well I want to talk about, say, the substation site selection. There are some aspects there which we can sort of, um, start talking about today. Okay.

01:18:37:10 - 01:18:51:03

Okay. Thank you. If you'd like to continue and don't be looked at by various people in terms of they probably want to chip in, but we can move things along and I will open up an opportunity for people to, to, uh, respond later on. Uh.

01:18:54:10 - 01:19:28:24

Um, so just finishing on the infrastructure. So with the onshore export cable corridor. So that's the permanent, um, temporary area, temporary compounds, temporary and permanent accesses. We have two onshore substations, um, where within which the electrical infrastructure will be located. And then we also have the temporary and permanent areas that go alongside that. So be that mitigation or permanent access. Um, we did have, um, offshore substation platforms and a Morgan booster station in at the statutory consultation stage.

01:19:29:04 - 01:19:40:15

Um, those were subsequently removed, um, for various reasons, which my colleague, um, Miss Kier Koski will go into a bit more detail later, potentially. Um, but I just wanted to note that that those have now been removed.

01:19:42:08 - 01:20:10:13

How long is that explanation? Because that's going to be one of my questions. So again, in terms of moving things along the flow. Do you want to give that explanation now regarding the booster stations? My question on it was actually has the I think there is some explanation already provided in writing on on why. But my question was more around the booster stations or the the fact that were taken out. Has that had any. What consequences has that had on the infrastructure that has now been proposed onshore, if any?

01:20:14:18 - 01:20:24:19

Um, and so the applicant so the removal of the optional substation platforms in the Morgan station hasn't had any impact on the onshore cable routing at all.

01:20:25:21 - 01:20:47:07

And the substations does not have any impact whatsoever on the substations in terms of their size, the the, the what's required to go in them, for example. No. Okay. And just briefly so everyone is aware what what is the what was the reason for taking out the the booster stations.

01:20:51:00 - 01:20:51:25

Um, Heather.

01:20:52:04 - 01:20:53:09

Koski on behalf.

01:20:53:11 - 01:20:53:26

Of the.

01:20:53:28 - 01:21:09:05

Applicant. So a booster station is a midpoint compensation reactor. And it does. It relates to the overall length of the cable corridors, and it doesn't.

01:21:09:07 - 01:21:09:22

Really.

01:21:09:24 - 01:21:19:11

Do anything except maintain the electricity and minimize the losses of the electricity. And so the decision was made.

01:21:20:09 - 01:21:50:20

Kind of following the statutory consultation. There were comments from stakeholders around the two such areas we had presented. One was in the Liverpool Bay Special Protection Area, and the other one was kind of outside of that, but quite close to the oil and gas platforms. So the comments received were, you know, they didn't want it in the Special Protection Area. They didn't want it near the oil and gas platforms.

01:21:50:22 - 01:22:09:11

So we took that away and kind of dealt a bit more into the survey data to look at that and determined that we could accommodate kind of the length of the offshore and the onshore cables without needing to boost that energy supply to get it to landfill.

01:22:10:14 - 01:22:18:12

Okay. I understand. Thank you. It is more of my question about what's the implications of that that I was interested in, and you responded to that. So thank you.

01:22:23:10 - 01:23:03:09

And so some of the applicants. Um, so just moving on to just broadly the consultation engagement that we undertook, um, on the route planning and site selection. So as I said, they are completely vital, um, to shaping and refining the development. Um, as I said, engagement has been undertaken with a range of stakeholders on siting design, and this has been done in parallel and with consideration of the wider spatial extent, constraints and environmental factors. So all of the stuff that we've just sort of been talking about, um, in October 22nd, um, we submitted a scoping report to the Planning Inspectorate on a wider scoping boundary.

01:23:03:23 - 01:23:41:26

Um, the scoping report set out, um, the scope and proposed methodology, um, and the, uh, intent for Intense sort of undertaking the environmental assessments following that scoping report. The project had two non-statutory consultations, so the first ran from the 2nd of November to the 30th of December 2022, and the second round between the 18th of April and the 4th of June 2023. So the project hosted a range of events, so that ranged from full events to pop up events, um, in more busy sort of shopping centre type areas all around the region, um, including the Isle of Man.

01:23:42:13 - 01:24:16:28

So that was to give local residents, um, an introduction to the project, um, and give the ability for members of the public, uh, residents to come and ask questions directly to the project team and to learn more about the project at those different stages. The non-statutory consultations were aligned with the consultations for the generation assets um, and that was in recognition of the potential complexity and understanding the separate the separation of the CEOs, um, and for the stakeholders, um, in order to allow for the coordination between.

01:24:17:00 - 01:24:52:09

Morgan and Morgan in developing the single application. Connection to for them. So we also had two statutory consultations. Um, the first of the main section two consultation on the preliminary environmental Information Report. Um, and that was held between Thursday, uh, second 12th of October, 2023 and the 23rd of November 2023. Um, as a result of the feedback that we received at this stage and through discussions with landowners and other stakeholders, a number of changes were then made to the onshore route, in particular, um, and that resulted in the targeted consultation.

01:24:52:11 - 01:24:55:23

We then had to subsequently take place in February 2024.

01:24:57:11 - 01:25:28:09

Um, as I mentioned earlier, it was a process set up as a part of the development phase, and it's quite common for these projects. So that included local planning authorities, have authorities statutory and nature conservation bodies, and they were sort of consulting engaged on the process throughout site selection throughout the development phase. Um, and these expert working groups were users forums to discuss update updates and get that feedback. Um, I'll now hand over to that's what I was going to cover.

01:25:29:09 - 01:25:31:29

Um, can we take a break now?

01:25:32:03 - 01:26:04:18

Well, yes, I was going to break at 11:00. Uh, because that's when our coffee arrives in our room, which is quite critical for us. Um, so is that what have you got? And we'll have we will have a 20 minute break. What else have you got to explain in terms of the overview, just so I can get sort of a feel for sort of timings and when I want to get to my questions as well. And obviously residents and interested parties want to have a say as well. So it's very good background. It's probably a little bit too much more detail at the moment, I would say in terms of what we need.

01:26:06:24 - 01:26:16:26

There's probably a little bit more detail than I expected, because I don't really want repetition of what's already been put, and we've already read about the consultation stages, etc., so it could be a little bit briefer in terms of the overview.

01:26:18:13 - 01:26:50:26

But lays down on behalf of the applicant. Um, so that's the overview finished in terms of that. But we were then going to move into the um, the grid connection point, talking about um, in more detail about the northern decision, uh, and matters related to that. Um, I appreciate we've gone into a lot of detail. Um, and we've got more detail about it. Um, and, and it is important, um, I think that, um, to, to understand the process that has been followed.

01:26:51:10 - 01:27:46:23

Um, there has been a lot of criticism about the process that's been followed. There have been lots of representations made about that process. And I think we appreciate that the volume of documentation that's provided with these applications, it can actually be quite difficult to find all the the relevant elements. Um, and I think given given the focus that there is on and there will be on site selection, um, I do think it's important that the applicants can explain what they've done. Who has been involved in that process? Uh, over consultation, engagement with the various statutory bodies, with the local authorities, the opportunities that there have been to influence that process so far, how those things have been taken into account, uh, and how the decisions have been made to, to, to arrive at the project there is we've tried to structure this in such a way that there is an overview.

01:27:47:06 - 01:28:20:00

There is a lot of detail and, and, and I do think it's important that, that that detail is aired and shared so that, so that the examination and people participating are not, Not engaging with Misapprehensions as to what has or hasn't been done so far. People might not like where it's got to, but it's about, uh, drawing out about this process. And site selection is about site selection. It's about the process that has

been gone through. It's about understanding that process and understanding the decisions that have been made.

01:28:20:02 - 01:28:35:01

So we're very aware of timing. Um, and we've sought to structure this in a way that will give that higher level and then be there to answer detailed questions as they come. Um, but I would ask you, just because there is a narrative and there is a story that goes with this.

01:28:35:03 - 01:28:35:18

Which.

01:28:35:20 - 01:29:03:05

Is that I don't disagree, I think it is very useful for everyone to hear, because I'm aware, too, that it's very difficult for everyone to read all the documents. So that was the purpose of several of these items today. So we can get a clear understanding. So if we break for, uh, morning coffee, tea, etc. and come back at 11:20 when we come back, we'll continue with the overview on the grid connection. How long approximately do you think you will need for that?

01:29:06:04 - 01:29:06:19

Uh, in the.

01:29:06:21 - 01:29:07:06

Case.

01:29:07:08 - 01:29:08:06

Of both applicants.

01:29:08:12 - 01:29:09:15

Um, I'm looking to keep.

01:29:09:17 - 01:29:14:00

It high level. Just to the key points, I would imagine. No more than ten minutes.

01:29:14:08 - 01:29:29:26

Okay, I will then ask some questions on that. And then we can go on to any other parts of the zoom, what the substations, etc., and the cable route too. I'm assuming is that covered in your ten minutes or is that another? Is that to follow?

01:29:30:08 - 01:29:32:08

No, that would be my my colleagues to my right.

01:29:32:10 - 01:29:50:08

There would be some crossover to I think, and we'll think inevitably of Elizabeth, a crossover between cable routes and, uh, connection points inevitably. And I think some of my question is about some crossover. So there needs to be some flexibility. But we'll break now for, uh, mid-morning break and return at 1120. Thank you.