

On December 12th 2024, I called the applicants' helpline to ask about the timescales for HGV traffic and disruption to the playing fields, I followed this with an email the next day. Despite several reminders, it took them until almost 4pm on January 27th 2025 to respond regarding HGV traffic, the last day for registering an interest in the inspection process and making written submissions.

I think the applicants had a responsibility to help members of the public navigate the thousands of pages of documents to make sense of them and find what they needed to understand the potential impact on their lives. Otherwise, the helpline was little more than window dressing. I attended one of the events during the consultation, at the farmers market in St Annes. Those present were unable to answer my questions, simply leafing through the brochure which had already been sent out to residents.

In their response in January, the applicants referred me to a 439-page document of tables and diagrams regarding traffic movements (document F3.7.5 Volume 3, Annex 7.5: Construction trip generation assumptions). From what I can make out, they are proposing to use Blackpool Road North as access for HGVs over a period of three and a half years with around one hundred a day for four of those months. That's around one every five minutes, six days a week. Their information indicates that this is a 1740% increase. I think it's greater than that. I've lived on this road for more than 20 years and rarely see any HGVs. It's a quiet road that doesn't lead anywhere but people's homes and the playing fields.

- Where did they get their data from? Perhaps they included the bin lorry on Friday and the number 11 bus which uses part of the road a few times each day.
- Why are they proposing to use this quiet residential road for all these HGV movements in the first place? The cable corridor runs through airport land as far as Queensway. Could some of the traffic access the corridor directly from Queensway instead? There is also the industrial estate between Kilnhouse Lane and the airport. One of the roads on the estate runs to within a few metres of the playing fields. Could these access points be used for at least some of the time?
- If there really is no viable alternative to sending thousands of HGVs down a quiet residential road over a period of several years, they must find an alternative route on that basis alone.
- Why is the proposed working day for construction from 8am to 6pm? That's unacceptable in a quiet residential area.
- The applicants are still negotiating with Blackpool Airport regarding how the cables will be installed there. If they don't know whether they are digging trenches or not, how were they able to estimate the HGV traffic flows? How realistic are these?
- Around half the playing fields will be fenced off for health and safety reasons while drilling takes place. What is the nature of the risk to people walking above this and is it something that could also affect the animals inhabiting the nature reserve and dunes?
- They said that they are not going to fence off any of the Old Links golf course while the cables are installed. At the open hearing, they mentioned the relative size of the playing fields and the numbers of people using them. Looking at the map, the golf course looks to be about four times the size of the playing fields. Exactly how do they propose to keep golfers off the cable route for months at a time if they are unable to do this on the much smaller fields?
- As I understand it from one of the football volunteers, this could mean the loss of the full sized 11-a-side pitches and the 5-a-side pitches. Leaving them with one community pitch and a few others. The only alternative I've heard being suggested is at Poolfoot Farm in Fleetwood. This is ten miles from the playing fields, with Blackpool in between. I know from making the journey many times when I worked in Fleetwood, that this can take between 30 minutes and an hour to drive, depending on the time of day. Aside from it being highly unlikely they have so many fields sitting around spare, this will mean many players and volunteers being unable to take part. At the moment, they can walk or cycle to the fields or be dropped off and picked up a few minutes from home. Instead, they would face a 20-mile round trip. That doesn't sound very green to me. As a family, we know how difficult that can be as one of us plays football in Fleetwood once a week. It's not possible for someone to drive them there without waiting at the ground until they've finished.