

Representation made at CAH2 1st August 2025

Sheila Hall, a local farmer representing the family farm.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this hearing.

Sadly, despite the comments made at the first Compulsory Acquisition hearing on 2 May the applicants' agents have not engaged meaningfully with my agent on the heads of terms documents over the intervening months. My agent and I are committed to progressing these discussions with the aim of reaching a voluntary agreement but our ability to do so depends on the project team engaging constructively with us.

I would also like to highlight that my agent and I are still struggling to get answers to our questions on the proposed approach on the different areas of my land. Our questions relate to issues that fundamentally impact what the land can and cannot be used for during both the construction phases and in the future, which impacts the plans for the farm and what can and cannot be done long term and short term.

My impacted fields are prime grassland that currently produce good quality silage to feed dairy cows. I do not understand how the applicants can state in their documents that we will be able to resume current agricultural practice while they also say that they do not yet know the location of key items such as joint bays and link boxes which are likely to significantly and permanently impact the future activity on the land.

The lack of meaningful discussions over recent months is deeply disappointing. However, the project team issued a letter last week on 24 July stating their willingness to work with me and my agent on the agreements. I ask that this time the project team live up to that statement over the coming weeks so that we can make progress.

And finally, I just want to note it is really good that the project team are holding a further land agent engagement meeting at Myerscough College as unfortunately not all of us landowners had the opportunity to go to the July one due to issues with the mailing for the invitations. So hopefully the project team will be able to engage more meaningfully with a number of us landowners in the coming week

Thank you

Further points arising from the hearing:

Decommissioning

The decommissioning plan including requirements need to be in the DCO so it is binding and not left to individual documents with land owners.

The decommissioning requirements need to include that any infrastructure that is above or at ground level and to a depth of 0.9m is removed at decommissioning and that the land is then reinstated so that normal agricultural operations can be resumed.

Impact on farm businesses

Is it reasonable that the applicants dismiss considering the request to position link boxes at the edge of fields just because it would increase their construction costs while positioning the link boxes mid field will significantly and permanently damages the ongoing income of the farm businesses?

The proposed projects will significantly and permanently impact the future use of the land impacted by the cable corridor. The protracted construction periods over both projects will mean the impacted land is out of use for many years from when the work starts, through to when the reinstatement work is completed and the land recovers. For farms the impact on the land drainage, the position of items such as of the many link boxes and joint bays will determine whether it is possible to plough, grow crops including good quality grass or mow in the fields in the future. In addition, there is the devastating impact of the substantial area of farm land permanently lost to the location of the substation. Consequently, the viability of many businesses is fundamentally threatened by the proposed projects and given the current approach proposed by the applicants many farm businesses in the Fylde will probably cease.

There is clearly a significant and permanent threat to the viability of a number of businesses as a result of proposals for the transmission assets. So given the compulsory acquisition guidance why is it acceptable for the applicants to not have considered meaningful alternative options? At the CAH2 hearing the applicants argued they had considered alternative sites for the substations but that was only within a very narrow area predicated on the proposed cable routes which have not yet been approved. The requirement to consider alternatives surely applies to the proposed location of the transmission assets as a whole. As has been raised a number of times at the hearings there is a credible alternative route, referred to as the northern route, that the applicants have refused to even consider.