

**Applications by:**

- **East Anglia ONE North Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the East Anglia ONE North Offshore Wind Farm**
- **East Anglia TWO Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the East Anglia TWO Offshore Wind Farm**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) in relation to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response**Version 1.0 issued on 21 May 2020**

This FAQ document answers some questions arising from the Coronavirus crisis about the processes for these Examinations, timetables, procedures and arrangements to assist persons who have registered to be involved. It may be updated from time to time at the discretion of the Examining Authorities.

1. Why have you postponed the Preliminary Meetings and what will happen to the timetables for the Examinations?

The public health restrictions during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic prevented us from holding a range of physical events such as Preliminary Meetings, Hearings and site inspections that involved travel and public gatherings. As a result, the Examining Authorities postponed the Preliminary Meetings that were due to be held on Tuesday 24 March 2020.

The Examining Authorities have continued to review the effect of the postponement and the current public health restrictions on the Examinations. The draft timetables issued with our original Rule 6 letters of 21 February 2020¹ cannot now be achieved, and we will issue new Rule 6 letters and updated draft timetables in due course. The Examinations do not start until after the Preliminary Meetings have been completed, so all dates set out before then will continue to be provisional.

2. How can the time during the delay be beneficially used?

The Examining Authorities' letters of 17 March 2020 postponing the Preliminary Meetings² identified tasks that they believed all parties could continue to develop in the interim period, with the aim of subsequently holding focussed and efficient Examinations. These included, for example, a request for completion by all parties of the Statements of Common Ground that were requested in the original Rule 6 letters and a request that the Applicants work to complete their responses to Relevant Representations. On 21 May 2020, the Examining Authorities issued further procedural decisions requesting comments on relevant representations and early drafts of Statements of Common Ground, where available.

¹ Links to the Rule 6 letters of 21 February 2020 are provided for [East Anglia ONE North](#) and for [East Anglia TWO](#).

² Links to the postponement letter of 17 March 2020 are provided for [East Anglia ONE North](#) and for [East Anglia TWO](#).

Meanwhile, the Planning Inspectorate has prioritised work towards finding a new approach to conducting Preliminary Meetings and subsequent Examination events that can either partially or wholly avoid public gatherings. New methods of delivering virtual events using internet connections from digital devices (computers, laptops, tablets or smartphones), or voice connections from telephones have been designed and tested.

These methods can be used to support fully virtual Hearings for all participants, and, in due time and if public health controls allow this, hybrid events where some participants attend a physical hearing room (with appropriate social distancing and hygiene measures in place) whilst others (for example people who may be required to continue to shield) attend virtually using their digital devices or telephones. The Examining Authorities have been closely engaged in the design and development process and are confident that these new methods will shortly be ready for use in these Examinations.

On 21 May 2020, a questionnaire was sent to all parties registered for each Examination to ascertain how they could best participate in virtual events.

3. What might the alternatives to the usual Preliminary Meetings and Hearings be?

In light of the public health situation surrounding COVID-19, it is not currently possible to hold events that require people to attend in person. Therefore, the Examining Authorities are considering events that would be accessible for people at home using internet connections from digital devices (computers, laptops, tablets or smartphones), or voice connections from telephones. These include live participation either by sound (audio) only (teleconferencing) or through sound and video (videoconferencing).

Instead of people being physically together in one place, teleconferencing and videoconferencing allow people to observe or join in a discussion from a safe location such as their home or office.

While the information and communication technologies are generally available to achieve this for most people, there are some limits to realistic participation through this medium for some people. Depending on the public health situation at the time, events may be held in the following ways:

- **physical** - held with all participants physically together in one place;
- **virtual** - accessed entirely by digital devices and telephones; or
- **hybrid** - a combination of the two, with some participants physically in one place and some accessing by digital devices and telephones.

Teleconferencing and videoconferencing are established and increasingly popular methods for business meetings. They are being adapted and new protocols are being developed which make them suitable for Examination events. Similar approaches are being developed by HM Courts and Tribunals Service and the Planning Inspectorate has worked to ensure that its development work aligns closely with similar work in other parts of the justice system.

Teleconferencing allows an audio (sound only) discussion between people at different locations. Participants can use a smart mobile phone, computer or tablet connected to the internet, or a traditional landline telephone or non-smart mobile phone.

Videoconferencing allows a video (sound plus picture) discussion between participants at different locations. It typically involves the use of a smart mobile phone, or a computer or tablet connected to the internet. Some systems permit those with a traditional landline telephone or non-smart mobile phone to listen or participate in the conversations without seeing the live video.

Digital audio and video recordings can be made of events and published on the internet, enabling people who were not at the event at the time it took place to hear what occurred, ask questions or make comments in writing afterwards. It must be remembered that National Infrastructure Examinations are intended to be primarily written processes and that written contributions carry equal weight to oral contributions.

The Examining Authorities will make final judgements on the format and timetable for the Examinations based on the ability to provide secure, accessible and manageable events. They will be guided by the response to the questionnaires that have been issued to Interested Parties requesting information about how they could participate in virtual events.

4. Would virtual events still be held in public and would there be any restrictions on who could take part?

The Examining Authorities will continue to hold the Examinations in public. They will not have any private discussions with any parties. Arrangements would be made for any virtual events to be as accessible to Interested and Statutory Parties as they reasonably can be in the current circumstances. All events would continue to be recorded and made available through the project web page.

As with Examinations conducted before the Coronavirus emergency, these Examinations continue to be primarily a written process, and the Examining Authorities would use Meetings and Hearings only when these are considered necessary to better understand written submissions or where the legislation requires it. If the virtual event format does not allow full interactive participation by all parties, a full opportunity for registered Interested Parties to submit written representations after the event would be provided, and the Examining Authorities will afford these the same level of consideration as oral contributions.

The Examining Authorities continue to encourage participants who are members of the same organisation, or who know each other and have similar views, to work together and to identify one or two people to make written submissions, or oral submissions at any Meeting or Hearing. A person or organisation with access to a digital device may volunteer to assist another person who does not have a device to access documents or events.

Please contact the case teams by telephone at 0303 444 5000 or by email at EastAngliaOneNorth@planninginspectorate.gov.uk or

EastAngliaTwo@planninginspectorate.gov.uk if you are not sure whether you are a registered Interested Party.

The Examining Authorities do want to hear different views but will have to take account of practical considerations as they exercise discretion on the procedures for Hearings going forward.

5. Are the Examining Authorities considering any other measures to help accelerate the start of the Examinations and ensure their efficiency?

The Examining Authorities have been able to progress a number of aspects of their preparation during the period of postponement and are considering bringing certain parts of the Examinations forward. For example, the procedural decisions of 21 May 2020 have established formal processes for some work to be completed in the pre-examination period. This will save time once the Examinations have started. It should be noted that this will not reduce the rights of Interested Parties to participate in the Examinations: all processes and deadlines that the Examination Procedure Rules require to be included in an Examination will still be provided.

The Examining Authorities are already reviewing issues that they had originally intended to address using Hearings, with a view to reducing the number and breadth of topics that required to be addressed orally. Where matters originally identified to be addressed in Hearings in the original timetables are no longer identified for Hearings in the new timetables, these will be taken forward in new written processes.

Where virtual Hearings are used, the Examining Authorities are considering issuing a more detailed brief and agenda for each event in advance of the day, reducing the time needed for the explanation of introductory matters in the live Hearing and providing a greater focus on planned discussion points. This should reduce the time required for each Hearing and help to maintain concentration.

It is likely that the Examining Authorities would also introduce shorter hearings or more breaks during proceedings to aid concentration and reduce screen fatigue, whilst also allowing Interested Parties to leave and join to meet their needs without disturbing the remaining participants. Breaks may be shorter than those used in traditional events.

We recognise that using technological approaches to Examinations is new and is not necessarily something all parties will have experienced before now. As such, and in order to support the ability of parties to engage with the Examining Authorities, it is likely that the draft timetable will include greater flexibility and redundancy than has traditionally been the case. Alternative dates may be reserved for events, and all potential participants and observers would be asked to reserve these in their diary. With increasing familiarity with any new processes, and with planned mitigation measures put in place to address concerns about participation, it is hoped that these reserve dates will not be needed. A further update will be provided in respect of each application once the Examining Authorities have enough information to confirm the provisional timetable dates.

6. I might want to take part in the events but have never done teleconferencing or videoconferencing before and am not sure if I will be able to. How will you cater for my needs?

The Examining Authorities would be very sensitive to catering for different needs and levels of experience. The Planning Inspectorate is working to make any events as accessible as possible and the case teams would provide support and guidance to parties invited to any event before it takes place.

These FAQs will be updated as arrangements are finalised. Additional advice and guidance for participants will be published and we will highlight when that occurs. Case Teams will support participants and answer questions before the events are held. All virtual Hearings will be preceded by an Arrangements Conference, enabling participants to join, register with the Case Teams, test their equipment and ask questions about how the process will work, before the formal start of the Hearing itself.

7. What equipment and software would I need?

As a minimum, a telephone with a keypad including the numbers 0 – 9, a # key and a * key, but a wide range of digital devices (computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones) can also be used, provided they can connect to the internet. For digital device users, the Examining Authorities are prioritising the following:

- systems that do not require any software at all (for example because they use a web browser that is already installed on your device; or
- systems where any new software is available free of charge from reputable suppliers; and
- equipment which most people are likely to have already.

Details of the system requirements and relevant guidance and support will be provided in due course.

8. How would I be able to join an event?

Registered Interested Parties would be required to give advance notice of a request to speak at or observe events in the normal way, in accordance with the Rule 6 letters or Examination Timetables.

The practicalities of the technical arrangements that would be necessary mean that the Examining Authorities will not be able to accommodate requests to speak at events that are not made formally in advance. Similarly, it is likely that any representations that Interested Parties might wish to make in response to an oral representation at the event would need to be made in writing afterwards, rather than orally at the time. These would be given equal consideration by the Examining Authorities. Further details would be provided with the notification of event, as required.

Technical and management considerations could result in the Examining Authorities having to limit the number of speakers and the time available to them at any event. The Examining Authorities would be most likely to prioritise Interested Parties and those speaking on behalf of a group of people. Others

may be requested to use the event recording and respond to matters raised in writing. The Examining Authorities give the same consideration to any matter, whether it is raised orally or in writing, once or several times.

9. Would I be able to observe the Hearings if I decided that I didn't want to speak at them?

The Planning Inspectorate is investigating whether it is possible to invite observers into a virtual meeting or Hearing as it happens. This would allow observation without active participation. This would typically involve the use of a telephone or smart mobile, computer or a tablet connected to the internet.

As with all Hearings held for National Infrastructure casework before the Coronavirus emergency, a recording would be made of any virtual Hearing event and this would be the formal record. The recordings would be made available on the project web page as soon as practicable after each event. Anyone who was unable to attend in person would be provided with an opportunity to make a written submission in response to the recording, by a Deadline for post event submissions set for that purpose in the Examination Timetable, shortly after the event.

10. Would I be able to make a submission on the matters that are covered in events if I decided that I didn't want to speak at them?

Parties who do not speak at events but who access the recordings would be invited to make a written submission on the specific matters included on the Agendas or arising during the event. These submissions would be made at the Deadline for post-event submissions identified in the Examination Timetable, in the normal way.

11. Could I still take part in the Examinations if I was not able to speak at an event or observe it?

Yes. Interested Parties and Statutory Parties can continue to participate in the Examination through the written process. Deadlines for written submissions are identified in the Examination Timetable.

During the Examinations, the Examining Authorities can use discretion to accept submissions from other parties. The Examining Authorities' intention here would be to continue to do so when they consider it likely that this would assist the Examinations.

Please contact the case teams by telephone at 0303 444 5000 or by email at EastAngliaOneNorth@planninginspectorate.gov.uk or EastAngliaTwo@planninginspectorate.gov.uk if you are not sure of your status.

12. What if I am not able to participate in the process now or my circumstances change?

Please contact the case teams by telephone at 0303 444 5000 or by email at EastAngliaOneNorth@planninginspectorate.gov.uk or EastAngliaTwo@planninginspectorate.gov.uk and explain your circumstances.

The Planning Inspectorate will do its best to accommodate your needs and facilitate different means of involvement.

13. What additional information would be provided?

The revised Rule 6 letters and Examination Timetables that will be published as soon as possible will detail activities, deadlines and requirements in relation to secure, accessible and practical events. They will set out when any events will be notified and when any agendas will be issued. They will also explain when information will be provided on procedures for events. Information will be provided on the methods that will be used at events, on any trials and testing in advance of the event to assist with allowing parties to understand any new format, and on the support that would be provided to participants.

14. How should I keep up to date with the latest news about the Examinations?

Please visit the project websites regularly for updates:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/east-anglia-one-north-offshore-windfarm/?ipcsection=overview>

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/east-anglia-two-offshore-windfarm/?ipcsection=overview>

The project websites also have a facility for you to sign up to receive updates on one or both applications by email. The Examining Authorities encourage you to use this facility and to stay up to date, as arrangements may change to meet changing government requirements and public health advice.