



Hearing Transcript

Project:	North Falls Offshore Wind Farm
Hearing:	Open Floor Hearing
Date:	29 January 2025

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:05:10 - 00:00:34:20

Good morning everyone. It's 10:00 and time for this hearing to open. I would like to welcome you all to this open floor hearing for the North Falls Offshore Wind farm project. Before I go further, please can I confirm that everyone can hear me clearly? That. Thank you for that indication. Can I also confirm with the case manager, Miss Allen, that the live streaming and recording of this event has begun?

00:00:36:06 - 00:00:51:14

Thank you. My name is Wendy McKay. I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be the lead member of this panel to examine the application. I'm now going to ask the other panel members to introduce themselves to you.

00:00:54:06 - 00:01:05:02

Good morning. My name is Matthew Shrigley. I am an inspector and a chartered town planner appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of the panel. To examine this application.

00:01:07:28 - 00:01:15:22

My name is Jonathan Medlin, and I'm a chartered town planner appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of the panel to examine this application.

00:01:17:21 - 00:01:29:12

Good morning. My name is Helen Van Willingham. I am a solicitor and also a chartered town planner, and have been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of the panel to examine this application.

00:01:32:15 - 00:01:43:12

Good morning. My name is Anthony Johnson. I'm a chartered civil engineer and have been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of the panel to examine this application.

00:01:45:20 - 00:02:16:25

Thank you. Together, we constitute the examining authority for this application. I'm just going to explain a few housekeeping matters for those attending the hearing in person. Please, could you ensure that you either turn off or set your devices and phones to silent during the hearing, so as to not interrupt anyone who may be speaking? The toilets are situated in the public area of the hotel, just outside this room and are accessible.

00:02:17:18 - 00:02:51:08

There is no fire alarm testing scheduled for today. Therefore, if the fire alarm does sound, please leave the building by the nearest clear exit and do not re-enter the building until instructed to do so by staff. The muster point is on the sunken lawn, or there is an alternative muster point in the main car park, which is opposite the front entrance. Is there anyone present who would need assistance in the event of a fire or other emergency?

00:02:53:01 - 00:03:17:27

No thank you. A short mid-morning break will be taken around 11:30 a.m., and a lunchtime break will be taking around 1:00. If the hearing is not concluded by that time for those attending virtually, please can I ask you not to use the team's chat function? If you need to draw our attention, then please use the hands up function.

00:03:23:06 - 00:04:05:00

Now, a high level agenda for this hearing was published alongside the notification of it given in our rule six letter dated the 10th of December 2020 for a detailed agenda has not been prepared for this hearing because its purpose is to hear the representations of interested parties who have registered to make oral representations, elaborating on their written representations to date. The order in which you will be invited to speak will follow the list provided to us by the case team, and is based upon the order in which requests to speak were received.

00:04:07:05 - 00:04:31:13

Now, today's hearing is being undertaken in a hybrid way, meaning some of you are present with us at the hearing venue and some of you are joining us virtually using Microsoft Teams. However, we will make sure that whichever way you have decided to attend today, you will be given a fair opportunity to take part.

00:04:33:07 - 00:05:06:04

A recording of today's hearing will be made available on the North Falls Offshore Wind Farm section of the National Infrastructure Planning website, as soon as practicable after the hearing is finished. Please, therefore, ensure that you speak clearly into a microphone, stating your name and who you are representing. Each time before you speak. That will make it easier for people to follow the recording.

00:05:06:18 - 00:05:20:00

After the events for those present, you will see that the tabled microphones have an on off feature. Please ensure that your microphone is only switched on whilst you are speaking.

00:05:21:27 - 00:05:30:05

If you are not at a table with a microphone, there is a roving microphone, so please wait for that to be brought to you before you do speak.

00:05:31:22 - 00:06:02:22

Now I link to the planning Inspectorate's privacy notice was provided in the notification for this hearing. We assume that everybody 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 the data protection laws. Please speak to the case manager, Miss Allen if you have any questions about this. Now, now, ask my colleague Mr.

00:06:02:24 - 00:06:07:08

Medlin to explain the purpose of the open floor hearing.

00:06:11:02 - 00:06:14:12

Let me briefly explain the purpose of this open floor hearing.

00:06:15:27 - 00:06:57:06

The purpose of the hearing is to provide an opportunity for interested parties to make their oral submissions to the panel. It also gives the panel an opportunity to ask speakers questions about the evidence they have presented. Oral submissions should be based on representations previously made in writing by participants. However, we have already read those written submissions and they will be afforded the same weight as those made orally. Therefore, what we are looking for is not those written submissions to be repeated, but instead there should be an opportunity to provide further detail and explanation to help us understand and fully appreciate the case you are seeking to make.

00:06:59:01 - 00:07:32:21

The procedure that we have followed today is to hear first from interested parties who have notified us in advance of the meeting that they wish to speak. We do not intend to set a strict time limit today, but as indicated in the agenda, to make efficient use of the hearing, we would ask that your submissions are concise and to the point, and to be concluded within about ten minutes for individuals and with those speaking on behalf of an organization, a group, or a number of individual IPS being allowed around 15 minutes.

00:07:34:06 - 00:07:49:23

Once you've spoken, panel may wish to ask you questions. Finally, the applicant will be given an opportunity to respond to any matters raised by each speaker. Once all speakers have been heard, either orally in writing by deadline. One

00:07:51:12 - 00:08:38:26

who have been heard that may be. This may be submitted in writing by deadline one on the 18th of February 2025. I would ask for those present not to interrupt whilst another person is giving evidence. Even though you may disagree strongly with what is being said. It's important that everyone has a fair opportunity to put their case without interruption or other distraction. The government guidance on the Examination of applications for development consent explains that the ex may refuse to hear evidence, which is, in its view, irrelevant, vexatious or frivolous, relates to the merits of a national policy statement, repeats other representations already made, or relates to compensation for compulsory acquisition of land, or an interest in or over land.

00:08:39:22 - 00:08:50:22

Additionally, the Ex may request any person behaving in a disruptive manner to leave the hearing, or to remain only if that person complies with specified conditions.

00:08:52:29 - 00:09:01:17

So if there are no questions relating to the purpose of the open floor hearing, my colleague miss McKay will now take the introductions.

00:09:08:06 - 00:09:17:01

Thank you, Mr. Medlin. Before we hear from any speakers today, can I ask who will be representing the applicant?

00:09:33:16 - 00:09:43:15

Good morning. My name is Clare Broderick. I'm a legal director at Pinsent Masons LLP. Solicitors for the applicant, and I will provide the response at the end of the open floor hearing.

00:09:43:22 - 00:09:58:16

Thank you. Right. That's that's helpful clarification. Thank you. And, um, obviously, I assume that you will also be submitting, um, a written summary at the next deadline.

00:09:59:08 - 00:10:08:14

Uh, Clare Broderick, the applicant. Yes. The applicant team will be making a detailed note of any contributions made today and will be responding in full in writing for deadline one.

00:10:08:27 - 00:10:09:16

Thank you.

00:10:14:09 - 00:10:49:03

I will now invite representations from those interested parties who gave the requested notice to us of their intention to speak. I have a list of those who indicated that they will be attending the hearing today, either in person or virtually. I recognize that not all of those persons listed indicated that they would be speaking. However, in case they now wish to speak, they will be given an opportunity Tunity to give oral evidence, and parties will be heard in the order that they wish.

00:10:49:21 - 00:11:27:16

That the requests to speak were received. Um, so if I just run through the people I have, I have. Louie Fel that's acting as agent for Strutt and Parker Farms Limited and Liana Enterprises Limited. Simon Amstell, national landscape manager, Suffolk and Essex Coast and Heaths National Landscape Partnership Thomas Fairlie Tea Fairlie and Sons Limited, Robert fairly Limited, T and Fairly Farming Partnership and Tamsin fairly representing the same uh organisations and individuals.

00:11:29:11 - 00:11:56:04

I do have some non attendees, uh Glynis Robertson and Councillor Marianne Fellows. Um there is also my list councillors Zoe Fairlie, Oddly and Little Bromley Parish Council, Nicholas Gold and Rachel Fletcher. Is there anyone else in attendance who wishes to make submissions that have not already been made?

00:12:08:00 - 00:12:14:28

So I just wanted to check if we could ask if there was anyone else here today who wishes to speak that we have not heard from.

00:12:18:15 - 00:12:24:26

Right. And no one attending virtually that I've overlooked on that list. I've just read out.

00:12:26:26 - 00:12:29:01

I don't see any hands up.

00:12:39:27 - 00:12:42:27

Right. If I could invite, um.

00:12:45:25 - 00:13:06:27

The speaker in attendance at the event, that is Mr. Mr. Fairlie and Tamsin Fairlie. Perhaps you might both. Do you both wish to come forwards? Just hams and Wright. Thank you for confirming that, Mr. Fairlie.

00:13:21:17 - 00:13:22:13

Um, Tamsin.

00:13:22:15 - 00:13:56:22

Fairlie, representing T Fairlie and Sons limited. Robert fairly limited. Um TNR Fairlie farming partnership, who are affected by both the cable corridor, Hall Road and the substation site. Um, we've divided our concerns into those areas. And I'll start with the cable corridor and the associated haul road. We are particularly concerned about the impact on farming, both during the construction and, um, after reinstatement. During construction, we have concerns about safety of field entrances and tracks where shared use is proposed.

00:13:57:13 - 00:14:30:01

Um, we have concerns about the potential easement width. At the moment, both projects are indicating that they are. There is a 90 metre option corridor. If the projects were to happen separately, that would mean that they could end up with two easements at opposite extremities of that corridor, which would obviously be significantly more restrictive to the landowners than what it would be if they ultimately work together. So we're really requesting that they do work together and that the projects happen at the same time.

00:14:36:27 - 00:15:08:21

Ongoing damage to soil structure. Um, the. We will expect to see reduced yields for a number of years. Speaking to people who have experienced this on other projects, some are suggesting they're still experiencing losses ten plus years after these cables have been buried. And we've got examples where water pipes have been put across fields, and some of these have been in for 20 to 30 years, and you can still see them. Um, if you use a use a drone, you can see them very clearly in the summer. They're also very visible on things like Google Earth.

00:15:08:23 - 00:15:30:16

If you if you have a look. Um, one suggestion we have made would be that a a restriction to summer working if this was implemented, would assist with, um, mitigating some of that damage to the soil structure. We know that this has been implemented on other schemes, and we understand it's worked relatively well where it has been done previously.

00:15:32:13 - 00:16:07:12

The cable depth is a common concern from a number of people along the route. We are requesting that this be at a minimum of 1.2m, which voluntarily the applicant has suggested they will agree to. But we understand from their DCO that that's not what they, um, what they're applying for. Um, this if it's if it's any less than 1.2m, this could cause real issues for things like drainage and irrigation. Um, we would be required to notify them if we thought we were going to come.

00:16:07:22 - 00:16:42:03

Less. I think it's a 30cm above that 1.2m. There'd be a restrictive covenant. Um, there'd be potential that this could be breached by landowners inadvertently in situations where vehicles might sink into the ground and need to be need to be pulled out. This is particularly relevant for root crop growers when, um, root crops are obviously harvested during Autumn and early winter, when the ground can be particularly wet. There's concerns from landowners as to what the implications might be for them if they were to breach that covenant.

00:16:42:16 - 00:17:07:19

Similarly, the covenant will restrict some, um, drainage and irrigation repairs. Whilst obviously we understand that the requirement would be to notify them and get their permission. We're concerned about the time that that might take, um, some of these things need to be dealt with in a time sensitive matter, and the ongoing, the ongoing implication of them can be much greater if they're not able to be dealt with in a in a quick time.

00:17:10:00 - 00:17:34:28

During construction, we're concerned about the ability to farm several areas efficiently, um, particularly with existing machinery. Farms are obviously set up to to farm the fields that they're used to having machinery is all designed around that. And some of these, the way in which some of these fields will be severed during construction, it will be difficult to access certain areas and also to farm those fields efficiently, which will affect the profitability of these businesses.

00:17:40:18 - 00:17:52:00

Moving on to, oh, on the, um, on the whole road, we're concerned about the the compaction as a result of the whole road crossing, the crossing farmland. This.

00:17:55:03 - 00:18:31:05

We understand that they will attempt to reinstate the land, but from experience, what we understand from other people, this this won't be able to be returned as it is now that again, we'll expect to see reduced yields across that length. Um, and we've there's a lot of concern about the impact of large vehicles on public highways and the damage they could do to public highways, but there doesn't seem to be as much concern applied to the the weight of some of these vehicles that will be crossing these using these haul roads and the long term impact that that's going to have on the on the structure of the soils and farming.

00:18:34:12 - 00:19:10:05

Moving on to our concerns about the substation site. We are concerned about the extent of freehold acquisition at Norman's Farm. This has increased significantly from the initial discussions we had

with the applicant. And when we first approached it, you know, we sort of indicated that the area required was 25 acres. The total area of freehold acquisition that we're now expecting is in the region of 75 acres, which is quite a substantial, um, substantial part of part of the business, which will have long term effects for profitability and sustainability of that business.

00:19:11:19 - 00:19:44:22

Our primary concern at the moment with the substation site is the differences between North North Falls and five estuaries, and I appreciate that this is a North Wales hearing and not a five estuaries, but the two projects are interlinked and affected the same area. So for us it's quite important that there that they are considered together. Um, North Falls design is is very different to five estuaries. They're both proposing entirely different landscaping schemes at the moment. We prefer North Falls um scheme.

00:19:44:24 - 00:20:20:00

And we have we have expressed that both to both sides. But we're being told by five estuaries that North Falls scheme won't be acceptable as a landscape plan. And therefore they have to stick with what, what they're doing. Um, five estuaries are proposing to acquire additional land around the perimeter of the field at Norman's Farm and enclosing the yard at Norman's Farm, with trees immediately behind it. As North Falls moves these trees slightly further away into the field. An ideal scenario for us would be a combination of the two, but it's really confusing from a business point of view.

00:20:20:02 - 00:20:48:00

When we've been presented with two different proposals and we're being asked to asked to come to a voluntary agreement, which would be our preference. But we don't as yet understand what ultimately is going to be built there. And neither side seems to be progressing that conversation enough to get to a point where they can say, this is what we're going to build. We don't understand why 5G seems so confident that North Foils proposals aren't aren't acceptable if they are happy to submit them as part of this process.

00:20:59:20 - 00:21:00:21

That's all. Thank you.

00:21:03:18 - 00:21:08:08

Oh, if you would just wait there. Um, there may be some questions for you.

00:21:10:16 - 00:21:31:06

So I just wondered if you could explain a little more about you said during construction you had concerns about, you know, the shared the field entrances and tracks, and could you just tell me a little bit more about what you are. You know what you're fearful of that might occur there and what controls you might seek there.

00:21:32:14 - 00:21:55:14

Um, at field entrances, um, and areas where there's shared use from the applicant's construction vehicles, obviously at certain times of year, you know, farmers harvest, there's vehicles that need to get where they need to get to. Um, and it's how they're going to operate that interrelationship of the

construction vehicles and farm vehicles that enables farmers to still be able to, to farm, um, as much as possible.

00:22:06:01 - 00:22:33:20

Um, we're expecting that at certain times. There could be a lorry every 30s on some sections of the road. If there is a lorry every 30s, that will make it really difficult to carry out normal farming operations. Um, you've got large, large vehicles potentially trying to use the same same roads along with pedestrians, etc.. And it's how those things are going to be managed to enable businesses to continue to operate and to do so safely.

00:22:34:22 - 00:22:48:13

Thank you. Thank you. And I think you were questioning the potential, you know, potentially the need for the easement of the width and the extent of the land take for the substation site. Is that right?

00:22:48:25 - 00:23:22:18

Yeah. Yeah. So we understand at the moment that the option area for the two projects is 90m wide, but the ultimate easement will be 20m wide for each project. Um, but we don't know at this stage whether that could be 20m on one side of that, 90m and 20m on the other, in which case you're going to be left with a section in the middle that's effectively sterilised because you've got these two cables either side. So we want the two projects to have to put their easements and their cables as close together as they practically can.

00:23:22:21 - 00:23:25:05

In order to minimize that area that's affected.

00:23:26:21 - 00:23:49:25

Thank you. I understand the point. Um, and then you were also saying about, um, you know, your suggestion for restriction for summer working. You did mention other schemes that had, um, incorporated that. Have you? Can you tell me what those schemes are that you're relying on in support of that?

00:23:50:00 - 00:23:55:06

Happy to provide some further detail in writing and add some notes. Yeah, that seems.

00:23:55:12 - 00:24:05:21

The sensible course. So because obviously you'll be able to provide a written summary of what you've said at deadline one. So if those details could be provided that would be helpful.

00:24:11:23 - 00:24:29:01

And then we we've we've got the point about the the landscaping. So thank you for explaining that to us. The distinction between the two schemes on that on that point. Thank you. I've no more questions. I'll just check with my colleagues in case they have.

00:24:34:24 - 00:24:54:25

Thank you. Could I could I just clarify on the landscaping? You said the preference at Norman's farm is the North Farms proposal, but you mentioned also maybe your optimal would be some kind of compromise between the two proposals. Is that right? Or is it one or the other?

00:24:55:03 - 00:25:14:03

Um, obviously there are some things we can see that could be altered on North Falls plan still that would would, that would make it better for us. But I think we're, you know, if we if somebody put one or the other in front of us when looking at what they're showing us, we are preferring North Falls one. Thank you.

00:25:19:18 - 00:25:42:14

All right. Thank you. Thanks very much for speaking to us today. Can I just check that there is no one else in the room that does wish to speak? And the rest of the speakers are going to be attending virtually. Right. I don't see anyone with their hands up. So if I go on now to the virtual attendees.

00:25:44:22 - 00:25:58:21

The first that I had on my list, I don't know if he's, uh, at the meeting yet. That was Louis Fell. Um, if I could just

00:26:00:11 - 00:26:02:02

check and see if he's here.

00:26:11:02 - 00:26:19:16

Right. I've not going. Any indication that he is present. So if we move on to Simon Amsterdam.

00:26:24:02 - 00:26:25:16

Thank you and good morning.

00:26:26:12 - 00:26:42:23

Thank you ma'am. It's Simon Amsterdam. I'm the national landscape manager at the Suffolk and Essex coast. News, national landscape and also the Dedham Vale national landscape, and I'm here representing those partnerships.

00:26:45:12 - 00:26:48:17

Right. If if you'd like to go ahead. Thank you.

00:26:50:02 - 00:27:25:09

Yeah. Thanks very much. So, um, I'd like just to, um, uh, trying to suggest some items for any future issues, specific hearings. Uh, I've got three items that I think may be worthy of consideration for that one. The recent strengthened Duty on relevant authorities in relation to their decision making on land. Affecting an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is the legal name for a.

00:27:25:11 - 00:28:00:13

National landscape, which came into force in December 2023. And I'm sure the. Examining authority will be aware of the guidance on that matter that came from Defra in December 2024. So, um, I would

I would propose or would like for consideration to be given for a, um, an agenda item at a future issue specific hearing on that topic about how the scheme proposer is meeting their obligations there.

00:28:02:03 - 00:28:06:16

Would you like me to go on to my other two points, or do you want to ask questions as we go?

00:28:07:16 - 00:28:23:11

We'll ask questions at the end, unless you want to elaborate on that point and tell us why you think it's important, uh, given your role. Why we do give that, you know, some detailed consideration at a hearing?

00:28:24:15 - 00:28:51:02

Yeah. I think, um, I'd like to see detailed consideration because it is a new duty and. Yeah. And, you know, yeah, we are still sort of learning how that duty is, is being interpreted, but that duty is in place. And I would like to see, um, the um, scheme proposer demonstrate how they're meeting that duty.

00:28:54:05 - 00:29:09:05

Um, secondly, I'd like to, uh, have consideration at a future issue specific hearing about the impacts upon the, uh, nationally designated OMB, the national landscape.

00:29:09:07 - 00:29:09:22

Skype.

00:29:10:05 - 00:29:44:11

About impacts from the proposed scheme and that and, um, development within the setting of an OMB, I think is recognised as can have potential impacts upon the OMB. And I'd like those, um, those considerations to include considerations of impacts that aren't reaching the environmental impact assessment threshold, but any um, and any impacts upon the, uh, national landscape or the OMB.

00:29:45:23 - 00:30:06:01

And finally, I'd like, uh, if consideration to be given for a future agenda item at a specific hearing on the cumulative impacts on the, uh, OMB, both from the offshore element and the onshore elements of the proposals.

00:30:10:17 - 00:30:17:11

I thank you for those points. I will just check with my colleagues in case they have any questions.

00:30:22:10 - 00:30:24:27

Right. Thank you very much for joining us this morning.

00:30:25:09 - 00:30:26:01

Thank you very much.

00:30:38:01 - 00:30:46:07

I just wanted to check if we had Councillor Zoe Fairley here, either here today present or attending virtually.

00:30:48:10 - 00:30:50:15

Oh, thank you for that indication.

00:30:53:11 - 00:30:58:29

So if I could hear from Nicholas Gold if he has joined the meeting.

00:31:14:22 - 00:31:30:16

It would seem he's not present this morning. So if I could move on, uh, just to check with Rachel Fletcher to see if Rachel Fletcher is present. All right. Thank you.

00:31:37:12 - 00:32:08:19

Hi, there. I'm Rachel Fletcher. I'm the parish clerk for Ardley Parish Council. Um, we're quite impacted by a number of different projects, including this one. Um, I was here yesterday. It's the first time I've sort of been present at such a meeting, and I was struck by some of the comments made by the two Suffolk Town and Parish Council. Actually, one was not even a parish representative around how confusing and challenging.

00:32:08:21 - 00:32:40:04

I know you're trying very hard to make it accessible. Um, I'm hoping that we might have further opportunities to express our views, um, with perhaps a little bit more time to prepare and get ourselves a bit more, you know, um, briefed, I suppose. Um, we have less than one full time member of staff. Most of our councillors are working. Um, we're feeling a little sort of overwhelmed and out of our depth, I think. So I apologize if this is not at the right level that that you're expecting. Um, obviously, we've made a submission.

00:32:40:06 - 00:32:44:06

I'm sure what we want to hear is, you know, what are the local concerns?

00:32:45:02 - 00:32:46:10

Okay. So you better know.

00:32:46:22 - 00:32:48:27

Which which you're the best person to tell us.

00:32:48:29 - 00:33:29:25

Thank you. Um, so, oddly, is is that the kind of, um, epicentre, I think, of, of some of the projects that that, um, that are facing us around the, um, And Norwich and the National Grid. Norwich to Tilbury project brings the East Anglia connection mode across and on one side of Ardley, and the pylons and the undergrounding through the national landscape are sort of on the on the other side. So we're kind of surrounded by potential infrastructure and obviously all the associated concerns around, um, traffic and construction and disruption.

00:33:30:08 - 00:33:56:12

Um, it's really hard to get a proper sort of handle on, on what that will feel like. And again, it was interesting and a bit alarming to, to to hear people from Suffolk talking about the, the real implications. We'd very much like um, the, the um, you, you panel. Are you not panel, are you the authority members to, um, to to to come to Ardley and and get a feel for it if, if you, if you can um, in addition to to I think.

00:33:56:14 - 00:33:58:29

I think we went through Ardley yesterday. Okay.

00:34:00:02 - 00:34:41:17

It's quite Spread out. It has. We noticed it comes almost to. To the A133. Here you can see that the work very close to to where we are now. And preparing. Preparing the link road that's going to assist in in the infrastructure associated with the North, the the Tendring Colchester borders garden community which also is within the elderly parish. So I know that's completely outside the scope of this discussion. But when we talk about cumulative effects in Ardley, we're not just looking at the cumulative effects of the of the interconnectors and the wind farms and the and the national grid infrastructure, but also other sort of quite major planning issues, such as the garden community.

00:34:42:03 - 00:35:29:03

Um, there's a there's six sites proposed for, for additional minerals extraction also within, within Ardleigh at the moment, and quite a lot of other sort of industrial as well as housing developments. So um, what's what's been sort of a nucleated village with, with, you know, lots of rural aspects and something that our residents It's really, really value and appreciate. Suddenly there's a there's a sense that we don't really know what the future holds. And, and it's it's quite hard to express that. But I think there's, there's real kind of anxiety and, and fear and also sort of powerlessness because faced with, with the um, a sort of feeling that, that there's, it's hard to engage without spending a lot of money or employing professionals, you know, surrounded by lawyers and others.

00:35:29:05 - 00:36:08:18

It's, it's quite it's quite challenging. I mean, we've been supporting the Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk Highlands campaign, which is calling for a offshore integrated, um, grid. And I think that's part of the problem that we that we feel like we're it's a very piecemeal approach. We're expected to engage individually with lots of different consultations. Often they're back to back. There's public meetings that happen, you know, um, it's hard to get. It's not that people aren't interested or don't care, But it's very difficult to find the capacity to put our energy into the right place to really to really make a difference, which is why I'm just waffling rather than having a kind of prepared statement.

00:36:08:20 - 00:36:36:16

So I think, you know, it's just we're specifically concerned about the impact on, on our, on our parish of a lot of different things happening at once and making sure that wherever possible, there's a joined up approach and that people are thoughtful of the implications. It's things like traffic noise, you know, and I won't repeat things that are included in our statement, but that's that's the sort of the nub of it really.

00:36:39:00 - 00:37:14:08

All right. Thank you. And just to remind you that you can and you will, I'm sure, provide a written summary of of what you've said about, um, the concerns at deadline one, which is the 18th of February. And if you look at the examination timetable and it is formalized in the rural age, you will see other opportunities to take part in the examination. Thank you. Right. I'll just check with my colleagues if they have any questions to ask you this morning.

00:37:17:21 - 00:37:20:19

All right. Thank you very much for coming along today.

00:37:38:02 - 00:37:51:24

Right. Could I just, uh, again check, um, that there is no one else attending virtually that wishes to speak this morning.

00:38:02:24 - 00:38:06:15

No, I don't I don't have any hands up. Um.

00:38:11:08 - 00:38:17:01

So just finally, if I just check that I haven't missed anyone in the room that wishes to speak.

00:38:23:24 - 00:38:39:20

Right. Then if there are no other matters that anyone wishes to raise. And I don't see any hands up for that, I'll now close the hearing. Thank you all very much for your attendance. All right.

00:38:46:20 - 00:38:49:21

Sorry. Thank you very much. I missed your hand up.

00:38:53:09 - 00:39:24:07

Clare project applicant. Thank you. We just wanted to take the opportunity as this time to just respond very briefly orally to some of the points that have been made. As I mentioned when I spoke at the beginning of the hearing, we will, um, respond, um, in writing to all of the detailed comments. Um, before I begin my response, I just wanted to thank everyone who has participated today on behalf of the applicant. We appreciate that it takes a lot of time and effort to come and speak at one of these hearings.

00:39:24:20 - 00:39:57:11

Um, but we're very grateful for the comments, um, that have been made and wanted to highlight that, um, there are very much opportunities to work with the applicant, particularly picking up on some of the points raised by um Ardley Parish Council in terms of input into outline management plans. Um, the applicant is working very closely with five estuaries and, um, the county and district councils counsels in the production of those outline management plans, which remain live documents throughout the examination.

00:39:57:28 - 00:40:45:07

And I would therefore encourage the parish council and others to have a look at those particular documents and if there are suggestions or mitigation measures that they would like to put forward in order to address concerns that they have received from the local community, that that's perhaps an

area to focus on. Um, particularly and there were some general comments made both today and yesterday during the um, preliminary meeting about, um, the potential for an offshore connection, um, and general points being made about, uh, consideration of alternatives and why the connection point, um, has been chosen for this project and other projects.

00:40:45:21 - 00:41:18:21

I'll just briefly give a summary for those listening, but further details will be provided at deadline one. It was just to refer attendees to the applicant's coordination report, which is referenced as 006, which sets out in quite a degree of detail, the engagement that the applicant had in the government's Offshore Transmission Network Review and subsequent Offshore Coordination Support Scheme. Um, and to highlight that in September of 2024.

00:41:18:26 - 00:41:55:06

So after the submission of the North Falls DCO application, um, the Secretary of State for the Department of Energy Security and Net-zero decided not to grant funding to explore the potential for an offshore cable and offshore grid connection coordination project. Um, and the project had by and other key stakeholders were advised of that decision. Um, whilst the Secretary of State had decided not to grant funding for this work stream, um the Project North Falls project still includes um, uh, works packages to enable an offshore cable connection.

00:41:55:17 - 00:42:09:05

Um, should that come forward in the future? Um, however, at the moment it is only the onshore connection option. That is a at the moment a viable connection for this particular project.

00:42:11:03 - 00:42:11:18

Um,

00:42:12:29 - 00:42:53:24

at the moment, as I say, no third party is promoting a coordinated offshore cable option. But we we've retained that capability in case the situation were to change in the future. Um, the site selection process for why the particular, uh, landfall location has been, um, determined. And the point of connection for this onshore substation, um, is also set out in detail in chapter four of the environmental statement, which is document number app 018 And a number of the comments being raised today related to the management of land during the construction process.

00:42:54:12 - 00:43:31:27

And I'd refer to the Outline Code of Construction practice, which is app 248, which sets out all of the measures that will be taken in relation to management of the soil during construction. So to address some of the comments being made about compaction of soil, restoration of soil following construction, there's a requirement for a detailed soil management plan to be produced. It also deals with issues such as drainage and groundwater, and also the retention of access to other areas of land during the construction period, where practicable.

00:43:32:16 - 00:43:56:23

So all of those sort of concerns have been raised. We have tried to address through the mitigation measures. However, more detailed discussions are ongoing with individual landowners to address

concerns that specifically apply to their land. Um, any losses that are suffered as a result of the construction period? Um, there is a mechanism for compensation as a result of that.

00:43:58:13 - 00:44:34:23

We've had, um, some comments being made about, um, cumulative effects of the scheme, and I'm sure we'll have a much detailed issue specific hearing on that point. But it was just to confirm that the cumulative effects have been fully assessed in the environmental statement. Um, we have got a commitment to collaborate with five estuaries where practicable, but there are a number of reasons why, um, the project cannot commit to doing joint working at this stage. Um, albeit that that's an option that we have assessed and provided for um, in the environmental statement and the project parameters.

00:44:34:26 - 00:44:56:11

And that's due to a range of matters, such as potential consenting delay for one of the projects, the routes to market and supply chain issues. So whilst there is very much an intention, um, to collaborate and commit, um, neither project is able to actually make a firm commitment to carry out construction. At the same time at this point in time.

00:44:59:01 - 00:45:29:21

There are also some comments made about the width of the easement. Um, we have set out in our statement of reasons details why we need these width that's being put forward. Um, and there is a need to keep flexibility at this stage in the process until the detailed design for the cable corridor has been finalised. And that's to allow for a certain degree of micro siting for the cabling following further surveys that will be done pre-construction.

00:45:30:15 - 00:45:52:04

Uh, there were some comments made about the sterilisation of land, potentially between the cables. Um, the applicant's position is that agricultural activities can continue on on the land. And so there wouldn't be a sterilization. Between the cables because ongoing farming activity can continue.

00:45:54:10 - 00:46:34:23

There were a number of points raised in relation to national landscapes, and we'll respond in detail to that point because it's been raised by a number of stakeholders. It was just confirmed that there are no works within the national landscapes in respect of this particular project. Um, and concerns are in relation to the visibility of the offshore wind farm array from within the national landscape. Our written response will set out in detail how we've complied with the duty that was mentioned through the design, evolution and site selection and consideration of alternatives.

00:46:35:01 - 00:46:52:22

So it was just a flag that we've noted that point that's been made by a number of stakeholders and we will be responding in full in writing. Those were the main points I just wanted to comment on orally, and then we'll provide a more detailed response in writing.

00:46:53:23 - 00:46:57:10

Thank you. Right. Thank you very much.

00:47:12:21 - 00:47:27:22

Right. If there are no other matters that anyone wishes to raise, I'll now close the hearing. Thank you all very much for your attendance and participation in this event this morning.