

TRANSCRIPT_OFH1_DRAXPOWER_180120

23

00:11

Good evening. Before we begin, can I just confirm everyone can hear me clearly?

00:17

Yep, I'm seeing nods.

00:19

Can I also confirm with Mr. Herold that the live streaming and recording of the event has commenced.

00:26

Thank you.

00:29

For those watching on the live stream, can I also advise you that should we adjourn proceedings this morning, we will have to stop the live stream in order to give us clear recording files. As a result at the point which we recommence the meeting and restart the live stream. You will need to refresh your browser page to view the restarted stream. I'll remind you of this again, should we need to adjourn. It's now 6pm. And I'd like to welcome you all to this open floor hearing. For the application made by Drax power limited, who we will refer to as the applicant for order granting development consent for the tracks bioenergy with carbon capture and storage project.

01:10

The applicant is seeking development consent to instal post combustion carbon capture technology on two of its existing 660 megawatt electrical biomass power generating units including the modification upgrades and extension of existing apparatus at the tracks power station. Thank you for attending this meeting. My name is Ben Northover, I am a chartered architect and have been appointed by the Secretary of State for levelling up housing and communities to be a member of the panel to examine this application. I'm now going to ask my fellow panel member to introduce herself.

01:47

Good evening everyone. My name is Caroline Jones, and I'm a chartered town planner and planning inspector and I have been appointed to be the lead member of this panel to examine the application.

01:59

Together we constitute the examining authority for this application. And we will be reporting to the Secretary of State for business energy and industrial strategy with a recommendation as to whether the development consent order should be made.

02:14

The case manager for this project is George Harold and he is feeling supported here today by a tiller boss, Colin Atkins and Lily Robins are providing support remotely, please don't hesitate to contact a member of the team if you need help on today's event or with the technology.

02:31

Can I begin by asking you if there's anyone here today who did not attend either this morning's issue specific hearing or the preliminary meeting on Tuesday, either in person or virtually? Or watch the livestream of the event? If there are no new attendees, then I can shorten the housekeeping matters.

02:54

And online is there. Are there any new attendees

02:58

now

03:01

I'd like to remind you that this hearing is being recorded and that this recording will be retained for five years from the Secretary of State's decision by the planning Inspectorate. An audio recording of today's meeting will be available on the Drax bioenergy with carbon capture and storage section of the national infrastructure pages of the planning Inspectorate website as soon as practicable after after this hearing.

03:24

When you speak please could you speak clearly and give your name every time you do so thank you. Can I also remind you to turn off phones and laptops or switch notifications to Silent we're not expecting any fire alarms today. If the alarm does go off, then the exit is via the doors at the back.

03:47

Let me briefly explain the purpose and conduct of this meeting. Hopefully the agenda papers for these hearings provides a clear explanation of our and your reasons for being here today. Open floor hearings are your opportunity to raise anything directly to the examining authority that is important and relevant, and that you think we should know about and consider. They are not about a particular location or topic. The topic of your representations about the proposals is therefore up to yourself.

04:20

Once you have spoken, the panel may wish to ask you questions.

04:25

And finally the applicant will be given an opportunity to respond to any matters raised once all speakers have been heard either orally or in writing. In writing by deadline one, which is Thursday, the second of February.

04:42

I have a list of people who are registered who have registered interest to speak this evening. Can I ask that you introduce yourself as and when you come up to speak and if you're representing someone who matters you represent, so those registered to speak are

05:00

Mr. Challenger who's joining us virtually, and I, I understand you need to leave before the end of the meeting. So, we'll hear hear from you first.

05:12

I have Mr. Here. It's

05:15

Mr Boothman for just transition Wakefield.

05:20

Katie Brown from biofuel watch. Is there anyone else here who would like to speak?

05:29

Mr. Pickens? And

05:35

can I also check who will be speaking for the applicant today?

05:47

Thank you

05:58

we don't intend on setting a strict time limit today. But we would ask that your submissions are concise and to the point and be concluded within about 10 minutes. Thank you. Could we first hear from Mr. chelina Online?

06:15

Right on here.

06:17

I am Michael Jelena. And I only represent myself today.

06:26

I have four questions that I would like answers to

06:32

from the applicant.

06:35

My first question

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is that

06:40

they seem to expect the plant to work for 25 years.

06:47

I wonder if over 25 years

06:52

gases, the carbon dioxide in particular would find it more and more difficult to be absorbed in the rocks that they're pumping the gas into and the whole plant could become less efficient.

07:12

So that's my first question. Do they really expect it to last 25 years or

07:21

second question

07:23

is is it

07:27

to be paid for by the general public?

07:32

Presumably rather large grant

07:36

which is a suspicion I have.

07:41

Third question

07:45

is at the moment I found that you cannot get data on the atmospheric conditions above the Drax plant and around it.

08:00

I would hope that

08:03

data will be collected and will be available to the general public to skate see the state of the atmosphere there.

08:16

My last question is because the plant is going to include

08:24

some highly toxic Amiens

08:28

it's even more important

08:31

on safety grounds that the plant is very carefully operated and I would like to know what extra safety measures they plan to take.

08:46

Those are my four questions.

08:51

Thank you for your questions. Mr. Charles will be as I said we'll be giving the applicants an opportunity to respond to any points raised at the end of the hearing. If you need to leave before then you'll be able to either watch the recording or see their to see their response or read their written response if that's how they choose to respond.

09:14

Thank you

09:22

Okay, um, could we hear from Mr. Hewitt? Here we do have this table up here for you to use Yeah.

09:41

Give me a very short the age of the units. They may be already 60 years old or

09:52

started in 1973 or 1986.

09:56

If they're going to have another 25 years added to their life

10:00

then they could be their performance might deteriorate and need replacing possibly.

10:07

The other one, the important one, I think is what happens if the facility underperforms? I appreciate it's more for government than this planning issue. But it is really very important thing.

10:22

One leg maintain that the

10:26

the excellent

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aspiration of this with 95%. And everything

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is,

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is for presentation.

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And it's not like they don't really expect to achieve that.

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And presentational purposes partly to

10:46

increase the likelihood that everything else downstream will proceed. This is the key thing is carbon negative.

10:56

has quite a cynical view. But it's I think it doesn't need to be borne in mind.

11:01

And

11:03

also, what happens if the storage doesn't really come into action until 2040?

11:09

Which I've here is a possibility.

11:14

I appreciate that everything downstream

11:18

is not part of the application. But if the

11:24

emissions do leak,

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who's going to pay for? Is there going to be any redress? Either from the company if it's still around? Or is it just going to be government?

11:38

And the last one, I think is can be easily dealt with.

11:43

I forgot to mention the chimney and the height of it.

11:48

The height, we've talked about the velocity and the temperature, if the height is

11:54

as it is, presumably it already meets the standards required for the existing biomass units. And therefore I imagined therefore the chimney is high enough for the

12:07

debated one. Thank you.

12:11

Mr. Hewitt, if I could just ask you a couple of questions. Just just so I'm clear on what your when you say, what happens if the if it underperforms? Are you talking about if it drops under the 95%? And therefore isn't in accordance with the permits? Is that point you're making? What happens if it then doesn't accord with its environmental permit? Yes. Okay. And ultimately, perhaps the permit could be delayed until everything downstream is ready for another aspect of it. Okay, because once they get the approval, GCo gets approved, then they can start raising money on the back of it. Okay, thank you just want to confirm that. And also, when you're talking about emissions leaking, are you Where where are you talking about them leaking from on the drug side of the pipeline or merrily downstream, particularly from the store?

13:05

Because it's going to be very difficult to check how much is leaking? You're talking about the storage in the aquifers

13:20

Okay, that's all Thank you. Thank you very much.

13:28

Good, so we hear from Mr. Boothman next for just transition Wakefield's.

13:45

Good evening Stuart Bozeman from just transition Wakefield. I did want to raise three things this evening.

13:52

The role of Drax power and Beck's technology in combating climate change, but I raised that earlier in the session this morning, so won't revisit that and I'm going to submit in writing on that issue. Anyway.

14:05

The other two things I wanted to raise this evening were flood risk assessments and the impact on biodiversity if that's okay.

14:14

In relation to flood risk.

14:19

There has been there always has been historic flooding in the fields and farmland around Drax. But irrespective of that the 2022 climate change risk assessment CCRA tweet 2,022.3 advises that climate change adaptation needs to be integrated effectively into all new infrastructure and to prepare for warming up to four degrees C.

14:44

The draft development consent order predates this advice. And so I would contend that the flood risk assessments need to be remodelled in accordance with the climate change risk assessment from 2022

15:00

Let's give a bit of justification for that contention, the open source coastal flooding projection tools, which are available to me as a member of the public. I've used from an organisation called pirate central.org. And it's clear using their modelling that the track site is genuine risk of future flooding. Just by I'm not very technical, but I've had a little play with the parameters in their models, and assumed a mid range temperature rise of 3.2 degrees C by 2100. And under that it's anticipated in the model is that the power station site may well be below the 10 year flood level by 2050. And also below the tideline by 2050, which I must admit I was surprised that as well.

15:47

But that's, that's what came out of the model. And when I submit, you wanted the text in writing, so when I put this in into you, then I will include some screenshots of those projections, which you may or may not find helpful.

16:03

The but also, late 2022 has seen a series of reports about ice sheets and glaciers are melting all indicating that this is happening faster than previously predicted, and that sea level rises will accelerate

further as a result. So I think the climate change Risk Assessment Advice to plan for four degrees C temperature rise is timely. It's not drugs fault that these things happened after the date the CEO was submitted, but I think it is within the power of the examiner authority to ask for new up to date flood risk analyses. Thank you.

16:42

The second thing I wanted to raise was biodiversity.

16:47

Not not strictly biodiversity on the site. There has been increasing scrutiny of the biomass industry through throughout 2022, including documentaries in both the UK and Canada, about biodiversity losses from logging and wood pellet operations

17:08

seem to have lost a page and oh, here we go.

17:11

There's also intense scrutiny on the biomass industry in the southern US where Drax power sources much of its wood pellet. But also in Estonia. The think tank Ember has reported that it believes that some of the imported pellets from Estonia are in breach of the UK sustainability criteria for a number of reasons, logging in protected areas, damage to watersheds around rivers and streams, damage to carbon rich peat soils, and logging in ways that harm biodiversity which include clear cutting,

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and also logging culturally significant trees. But it's also clear from North America that a significant amount of the

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pellet that is imported into the UK comes from clear felling, whether that's for you know, to use the waste or for

18:02

whole trees to go into into wood pellet manufacturers. And so, this those concerns that Emma have raised about logging in in Estonia actually apply to, I would say to British Columbia and to southern United States.

18:19

There are maps that show that some of the logging areas that tracks have licences for overlap protected caribou areas. And southern you east southeast and coastal forests in the US have in excess of 1500 endemic species that are under increasing pressure because not so much drugs, but in Viva who are a major supplier of drugs are clearing, the natural swamp forest is being of no commercial value in inverted commas.

18:47

And I and there is a risk that these could all fall afoul of UK sustainability regulation.

18:53

But, of course, at this same time, we've had COP 15. Recently, we have global moves on deforestation, and we have a biodiversity collapse. And so

19:04

these you know, these things become increasingly important.

19:10

So I know that that is perhaps on the edge of what the planning system would consider. But if we don't raise it, then it can't be considered. So I'll put it forward to you. And it's up to yourselves as the examining authority, whether or not you are able to accept that evidence, but I will submit it in writing with everything else.

19:31

Thank you, Mr. Boozman. And just to come to one of the points you made on the floods risk and the FEMA to submit the was it the

19:42

the projection of the 2050 projection of coastal flooding?

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Yes, I I took three screenshots, one to illustrate each point. The third one was

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a

20:00

Long Term well into the next century view, which is perhaps less relevant because I think the timescale of the plant will be. It'll be decommissioned and dismantled by that point.

20:10

But yeah, the two that are most relevant are suggesting that by 2050, which is within the lifetime of the plant, there are likely to be significantly short flood issues.

20:22

Okay, thank you. Yeah, if you if you'd like us to consider those, then please submit those by deadline one. That'd be great. Thank you. No further questions.

20:48

Could you be next year from biofuel watch? Would you like to both come up? Are you both representing biofuel? What if you could both come up to the table together then?

21:08

Thanks, Katie Brown speaking for biofuel watch.

21:12

I want to talk a bit more about

21:16

the aiming solvents but particularly about the health impacts public health impacts.

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So

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the

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we've talked a bit about the products that are going to be used the amens that bind with the co2, the aiming scrubbers

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and about the energy penalty associated. But there's other concerns to do with the process, which is that the A means

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in that process can degrade into various degradation products. Nitro means I just say means aldehydes.

22:04

And

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drugs acknowledged that night just saying these are known carcinogens. So that's helpful that we have agreement on that. And

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the isn't, there's a lack of

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sort of available data for how harmful

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these may be from the carbon capture systems. The we can't

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extrapolate data from fossil fuel CCS, because as we mentioned earlier, the flue gases are different. And so the presence of increased sulphur and other particles mean we can't make a direct comparison.

22:54

And there's no commercially available modelling software that can be that can be validated. This business has no real world examples to test.

23:09

In the base biomass policy statements, which was published in 2021,

23:16

said that research and updated regulation will also be required to understand and address any air quality impacts from backs, including emissions associated with carbon capture solvents. And that was published after the new levels were set for

23:31

mea and NDMA, which are

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one of the solvents and one of the degradation products,

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which they were setting in September 2021. And the paper was published in November. And

23:48

when those levels were set by the Environment Agency, they said in the next steps, we also considered the need to develop British Standards for monitoring of emissions from carbon capture systems and in ambient air, because to date, there's no certified standards for continuous emission monitoring. And this, this isn't in place yet.

24:10

Then there's a lack of transparency from drugs to the particular solvents that it needs. plans to use site in commercial confidentiality is the reason. And there's a real paucity of research given the limited use and monitoring. So there's a total lack of epidemiological data in terms of the impacts of these,

24:35

these chemicals on on public health.

24:38

And we have a widely accepted principle of using the reasonable worst case scenario and models. But it's difficult to have confidence that Drax his figures represent that scenario

24:52

for those reasons,

24:56

and

24:57

it's worth noting

25:00

Well, we think it's important to note there's no reference in tracks is application to occupational exposure to AMI and degradation products.

25:09

And drugs is currently being taken to court by the Health and Safety Executive regarding exposing its workers to wood dust

25:19

would not suggest that drugs in terms of Chile are willfully or knowingly exposed its workers to those health risks, but rather, that happened because of a failure to adequately adequately address the health impacts associated with the use of a new product at the plant. So when they switched from coal to wood pellets

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you know, proper risk assessment didn't didn't unfortunately didn't take place, and people have come to harm as a result.

25:53

So, yeah, we think

25:57

that the onus should be on drugs to demonstrate more, that it's assess these risks and not these risks and not to expect the public and the examine authority to to trust that they have it, have it covered when they, you know, aren't releasing the data, and the lack of, you know, it's an emerging regulatory framework. And

26:29

yeah, we feel greater caution needs to be applied.

26:36

Thank you, Miss Dickinson.

26:39

Thank you, Mary Dickinson biofuel watch. So I'm going to briefly speak about biodiversity. I'm speaking on behalf of one of my colleagues who couldn't be here today. So if you do have questions, I'll try my best to answer them. But we'll also can answer them in written form if that's easier.

26:55

So it's our view that the proposed development will lead to disturbance and degradation of vital habitats, and there is a risk posed harming a wide range of protected species in the area. We believe this is not compatible with sustainable development as defined by the national planning policy framework as it fails to protect the natural environment or enhance biodiversity by minimising to quote minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures. And of course, that ties in with things like the flood risks and the upcoming catastrophic climate events that we are potentially seeing in our future.

27:35

We also believe this is incompatible with commitments made in the 2021 environment act to support the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in England, and the aims of the Defra nature recovery green paper from March 2020 to

27:49

Jack's is non technical summary states that likely effects from construction and decommissioning include disturbance and clearance of habitats, disturbance of protected species and the risk of water release the risk of release of waterborne pollutants from plant and other machinery.

28:06

We believe that this proposed development has the potential to adversely impact nationally and internationally designated areas that cannot be adequately mitigated or compensated for. In terms of the areas close to the site that are likely to be impacted. It includes 10 International and 12 National statue designated sites within 15 kilometres of Drax power station and nine nonstatutory designated sites of county importance within the Chico kilometres are the proposed scheme that includes the river goose, which forms part of the Humber estuary Remstar site, the special conservation area, special protection area and special site with special scientific evidence and the river Darwin which has a special conservation area close to the power station.

28:48

To follow on from that we believe that there is a risk of harming protected and notable species. Jackson's environmental statement or submits a large number of protected and notable species have been identified within two kilometres or depose the object site including bats, badgers, otters water, voles breeding and wintering birds, reptiles, fish and plants including orchids I believe.

29:11

Moreover, Drax is ecology report notes that habitats within and close to the project site are suitable to support protected notable species and these areas will be impacted.

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So in the

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we believe the Application for Consent is deficient in that it relies on some some outdated species surveys from surveys from 2018 and therefore doesn't properly assess the impact via biodiversity of the proposed development. As many of these species are mobile, there are concerns that development could impact in some cases on populations of local or current county value and that the mitigation proposed may not be sufficient for all species. It does not pay and we also further go on to say that it does not pay sufficient attention to the potential for damage to watercourses by sediment and accidental release of chemicals.

30:00

And I think part of this is tying into the the fact is it was mentioned earlier in the issue specific hearing that if Drax is to proceed with construction of the site, and in the environment permanent permit is not approved, or the subsidy, the funding models don't come through for power backs, there is a potential to harm all of these protected species and sites for very little reason if those don't come into fruition.

30:27

And then just one final brief point,

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unrelated to biodiversity, but about important reliance on imported fuel, we're aware that Drax has no intentions to expand to expand what we're sourcing from within the UK. There simply isn't enough word here. We go through our word in the UK very quickly, which then does make them reliant upon importing wood pellets to burn, which continues reliance upon imported fuel in countries government policy, which aims to increase the domestic supply of fuel due to issues of fuel security.

30:58

Thank you.

31:02

Thank you for taking some that. That's helpful. Mr. Nava, do you have any questions to ask them?

31:09

Just Just to clarify,

31:13

you mentioned outdated species surveys, I wondered if you could just identify which which surveys you feel need to be updated.

31:24

So I believe it was the ones from 2018 There was on species surveys of the area, but I will check that and can submit it in written form as well after this. Thank you, thank you, that'd be helpful.

31:50

Okay, thank you no further questions for us?

32:00

Would the applicant like to briefly respond to any of the points made this evening? Do you could come up to the front Yeah.

32:33

Thank you.

32:38

I will just run through some of the key points that we've just listened to from the interested parties. And I think most of them you'll find that we've already responded to in writing. But I'll point you in the various directions of our responses. First of all, interspersed with the first interested party, there are four questions are asked

33:00

and which

33:03

we haven't responded to yet in the relevant representation in our relevant representation documents. But we will respond to his the the interested parties submission in writing, but in terms of the 25 years, the applicant does not envisage any concerns regarding the feasible the feasibility of the aquifer, taking the 25 years worth of co2 from Drax power station, of course, the you heard more about that

33:32

this morning, from National Grid and

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in respect to and projects zone witness in respect of the size of the aquifer, and then any potential extensions to that. So that does not

33:47

opposition is which is not, we don't face any problems regarding public money. Again, you've heard from us in respect of the Beck's financial model, so there will be government subsidies. On the third point about the atmosphere around Drax, I'd have to take that away and speak to

34:08

our air quality witnesses on that you obviously aren't here today, this evening. And then on respect of a means.

34:19

The other consents and licences document highlights all the other consents and legislation that the applicant would have to comply with, in operating the carbon capture plants and various health and safety. For example, consents and authorizations will be part of that so the plant will be fully

34:39

currently operate with the necessary legislative permits and controls in place.

34:45

In respect of the life of the plant, I think it's important to highlight that the plant as operational currently has a strategy in place to maintain its operational ability to 2052 that's regardless of

35:00

Have Beck's at Drax? It's a strategy to maintain the units of biomass units to 2050 to happen regardless, in respect to the 95%. Capture, we refer to that today. Sorry, repeat that. But that's an environmental permit to control.

35:18

And discussions are ongoing between government and between bays and the EAA over the precise control mechanism in the environmental permits. And that's something that we need to respect that ratio, that process and therefore the environmental protein permitting regime to work through

35:37

in respect of timing, and the 2040 days, I think for when it was claimed the storage facility wouldn't be

35:47

opened until you heard the timelines day from National Grid, carbon limited in respect of the timing set of a consent order.

35:56

And

35:58

which is for the onshore part, and also you heard from Drax this afternoon in respect of the offshore elements and their timings, which also points to operational by the relevant dates at the end of this decade.

36:14

Turning to flood risk and biodiversity comments, flood risk, we've worked hard with the Environment Agency on our flood risk flood compensation area, and that forms part of proposed changes application and the varmint agencies in agreement with our solution. But in respect of the other points raised on flood risk, we've already responded to those at item 22.03 of the relevant rap document, which is PDA 002.

36:46

On biodiversity, that those comments were partly talking about sustainability of biomass, which again at the issue specific carrying Today we covered that is controlled under various other quite, the government has sustainability criteria within the CFDs and renewables obligation which Drax has to comply with a report on that will continue through into the next business model. And indeed, as I

mentioned this afternoon, the biomass policy statement refers to the sustainability criteria being strengthened.

37:20

In terms of other aspects of what was mentioned, and biodiversity, we responded to that at at

37:27

items 12.2 and 12.4. And in appendix E of our response to relevant representations PDA hyphen, 002.

37:39

And then finally, in respect of a means from the representation from bar from the watch, we responded to those points at section 16 of PDA hyphen 00, to our response to relevant representations of the Amiens in the solvents will all be controlled by the Environmental permit. So we have to respect that regime.

37:59

But we respond to that, as I say in that section 16.

38:03

And in terms of health risks to workers, that's been responded to at item 13.3 of PDA hyphen 002.

38:12

And finally, on biodiversity points raised by bath your watch, the application will give rise to in excess of 10% net gain in accordance with relevant legislation. And we have responded to their biodiversity points at section 17 of PDA hyphen 002.

38:34

In terms of the reference to surveys, the environmental statement

38:40

uses the 2018 surveys that were part of the previous DCR application on the site known as repower, but it also does update that with more recent phase one habitat surveys.

38:55

Say we responded to those points at section 17 of PDA seriously, I

39:00

hope that's helpful summary of our position.

39:06

Thank you.

39:08

No further questions from us.

39:21

Thank you all for contributing so fully and usefully to this meeting. We have found it extremely helpful and will consider your submissions. Consider all submissions made carefully. Can I just remind you to submit any post hearing submissions by deadline one, which is Thursday, the second of February.

39:42

The next hearing in this examination is issue specific hearing to into the draft development consent order which will begin at 10am Tomorrow, also in this room. The time is now 6:40pm and open floor

40:00

All hearing for the Drax bioenergy with carbon capture and storage project is now closed. Thank you