

File Name: HFSP ISH2 20th September 2023 Part 1.mp3  
File Length: 01:12:43

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:07:23 - 00:00:45:21

Hey, good morning, everybody. Just confirm that everybody can hear me both in the room and online. And can confirm with the case team that the live recording has commenced. Yeah. So now 10:00 and it's time for this hearing to begin. I'd like to welcome you all to this second issue specific hearing to the draft development consent order for the application made by ecosystem fans Solar Limited, who I will refer to as the applicant for an order granting development consent for the Heikkinen Fen Solar Park.

00:00:46:16 - 00:01:14:16

My name is Susan Hanson. I've been appointed by the Secretary of State for levelling up housing and communities as single examining inspector to examine this application. And you will also see and hear me referred to as the examining authority. I'm a chartered town planner and a planning inspector, and I will be reporting to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net-zero with a recommendation as to whether the development consent order should be made.

00:01:16:21 - 00:01:37:07

Case managers for this project are Tom Bennett and Norm Morgan both here today and are supported online by the case Officer corps and contacts a member of the case team. If you have any queries about the examination process or if you need help at today's event or with any technology issues.

00:01:39:23 - 00:02:10:10

Scaping matters. And just to remind everybody, please set your devices and phones to silent. And I'm not aware of any fire alarms, tests or any other drills today in the event of an alarm. Please exit via the stairs that you came up and congregate in the main car park. The hearing will follow the agenda, which was published on the 5th of September, and this is unchanged. It will be helpful if you had a copy of this in front of you.

00:02:11:25 - 00:02:29:04

You'll also find up information about the application on the project page of the Planning Inspectorate National Infrastructure Planning website. And I encourage everyone to familiarise yourself with it because I will be using it to communicate with you and provide access to documents throughout the examination.

00:02:31:02 - 00:02:57:04

Today's meeting is being undertaken as a blended event. So some of you are present with us at the hearing venue. I think most of you are and some of you are joining virtually using Microsoft teams and so everybody will be given a fair opportunity to participate. Anybody that is participating virtually or wishes to later you, please use the hands up function on Microsoft teams.

00:02:59:18 - 00:03:07:15

If anyone doesn't manage to raise a point at the relevant point on the agenda, there will be an opportunity to do so towards the end of the hearing.

00:03:10:09 - 00:03:28:11

You'll know that a recording of the hearing will be made available on the national infrastructure planning website as soon as possible, and this will include a transcript. So every time you speak

today, speak clearly into the microphone and please say who you are, your name and who you're representing every time you speak.

00:03:31:17 - 00:04:10:28

Just to make you aware again that the recording will be retained for five years and it forms a public record that can contain your personal information to which the general data protection regulations apply. And there's a link to our privacy notice in the in the Rule six letter. This establishes how personal data of our customer is handled in accordance with the data protection laws. If anyone feels personal information is necessary and making a point at any hearing, you should do so in a written document because we can easily redact those rather than verbally to avoid the need to edit the digital recordings.

00:04:11:03 - 00:04:14:15

And please speak to the case manager if you have any questions.

00:04:16:25 - 00:04:29:03

The hearing stage is expected to continue for much of the day. So there will be an opportunity for a break in around 90 minutes time and then again for lunch around 1 p.m. or earlier.

00:04:32:08 - 00:04:57:25

So I'm now going to ask those of you who are participating today to introduce yourselves. So when state your organization's name, can you give your. Can you give your name who represents? And if you're not representing an organization, summarize your interest in the application. And can you also state how you wish to be addressed? Mr.. Mrs.. Can we start with the applicants and their advisors, please?

00:04:59:08 - 00:05:31:03

Thank you. Good morning, madam. Um, my name is Neil Bromwich. I am a partner and solicitor at Osborne Park Solicitors and am representing the applicant. Um, if it's. If it's all right with you, what I will do is just explain. We've got quite a few people today planning to speak. It's quite a packed agenda. So if I could possibly just explain each person and which item they're dealing with, and then when we get to that item, that person will obviously introduce themselves again at that point, if that's okay.

00:05:31:05 - 00:05:32:15

Just to give you an indication.

00:05:32:17 - 00:05:33:11

That's fine to.

00:05:33:13 - 00:06:04:05

Do that. So just running through. We've got Isabel Hollins. Isabel is a director of the environment at Pegasus Group, and she'll be speaking on items three and item eight. We've got Josh Taylor, who is an associate director at Osborne Clark. Um, and he will be speaking on items for an item ten. Um, Nigel Curzon is a senior planning director at Pegasus Group, and Rebecca Grace is an associate planner at Pegasus Group.

00:06:04:07 - 00:06:34:23

And they will be speaking on items five and seven. So I'm Pickering is an ecological and environmental advisor for Ecosystem, and he'll be speaking on items nine and 11. Phil Jenner is an electrical engineer and electrical project manager at Tricity and he will be speaking on item six. Laura White is a senior development manager at Ecosystem and she will be speaking on item ten and 14.

00:06:37:27 - 00:07:04:09

Tony Kernan is a chartered surveyor of Kernan Countryside Consultants and will be speaking on Item 12 and Elizabeth Pratt, associate heritage consultant. And she will be speaking for of Pegasus Group and she will be speaking on item 13 Archaeology. Sorry about that, madam, but that's a list of those who will be speaking on behalf of the applicant today.

00:07:08:05 - 00:07:22:10

Yeah, that's fine. Thank you. So when they when they come to their bit, if they introduce themselves again, of course, would be great. Thank you. Can I move on to the local planning authorities now, please? I'm starting with Lincolnshire County Council.

00:07:24:25 - 00:07:38:25

Thank you, madam. My name's Mark Willis. I'm the applications manager at Lancashire County Council. Um, if I can just introduce Martha Reeves as well. She's the senior lawyer for Legal Services, but emotionally, myself speaking in respect to Lincolnshire County Council.

00:07:40:15 - 00:07:43:19

Okay. Thank you. Welcome. North Kesteven District Council.

00:07:44:27 - 00:08:07:16

Good morning, madam. Nick Feltham, Assistant Development Manager at North Kesteven District Council. And to my left, Mark Williams, who is the development manager at North Kesteven District Council. We anticipate probably feeding back in relation to items um, four, five, eight and 14 in particular. Thank you.

00:08:10:01 - 00:08:13:16

Okay. Thank you. And Boston Borough Council, please.

00:08:15:22 - 00:08:24:26

Good morning. Yeah. My name is Abby Marwood. I'm the deputy manager for Boston Borough Council. And also joining us today is Peter Udi from Boston Borough Council as well.

00:08:28:02 - 00:08:29:06

Okay. Welcome.

00:08:33:13 - 00:08:36:01

Plexus Internal drainage board.

00:08:38:19 - 00:08:42:26

Everybody. Hi, I'm Andrew Scott. I'm the planning and development officer at the Black Solution Internal Drainage Board.

00:08:46:19 - 00:09:00:09

Okay. Welcome. Is there anybody else either in the room or online that doesn't belong to one of those organizations wishes to speak? Nope. Okay. Thank you.

00:09:10:08 - 00:09:43:09

I'll now briefly explain the purpose of today's issue specific hearing. It's being held because. Wish to explore a number of matters orally in respect of the scope of the development and a range of environmental issues. And as you'll see from the draft examination timetable, in my Rule six letter, which was issued on the 21st of July, I intend to issue written questions. And these are scheduled for the 17th of October. And there are additional hearings planned for the week commencing 20th of November.

00:09:44:05 - 00:10:07:11

And that round of hearings is also likely to include further consideration of environmental matters. And what I hear today, what I receive at deadline one and further deadlines and the responses to my first written questions that will determine the agenda of the next set of hearings, which I will issue in advance.

00:10:09:29 - 00:10:50:08

Today's hearing is quite a high level hearing will cover some initial questions I have relating to environmental matters, some of which are in response to comments received in relevant representations. And I'm mindful that the applicant will be responding to those at Deadline one in writing. So there may be some overlap, but we'll just summarize the matters and set the scene today. I won't be covering every aspect of the environmental statements, and this doesn't mean I'm giving those matters any less weight, but I will expect to be asking relevant questions in writing, and I may include those matters in further hearings.

00:10:53:05 - 00:11:26:11

I will be examining information submitted by the applicant. I'd also like to hear from the interested parties present today. So anybody today you don't need to repeat in length something you've already submitted in writing. But if you do wish to refer to a documents that you've already submitted, it's helpful to give me the examination library reference. And also for the benefit of parties here today or watching the live stream that might not be as familiar with the documents or the examination process as you are.

00:11:26:15 - 00:11:30:06

And please avoid using acronyms or abbreviations.

00:11:35:09 - 00:11:50:24

So in summary, the purpose of the hearing is to enable the applicant to present the project and for you to ask answer any questions that I may have to ensure I have all the information I need to make my recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy security and net zero.

00:11:53:06 - 00:12:24:10

The examination procedure rules require that at the start of the hearing, the examining authority shall identify the matters to be considered at the hearing, and these remain as set out in the published agenda. So there's no change. Items 3 to 8 are high level matters relating to the scope of the proposed developments, and it's really the applicant's opportunity to present the application at this early stage. Highlight matters which set the scene for my consideration of the application.

00:12:25:16 - 00:12:59:05

Item four I'd like the applicant to summarize their recent change application and will seek comments on it. Item five relates to planning policy. There are any recent updates to both local national policy guidance and publications, particularly those which relate to renewable and low carbon energy. Item six I would like the applicant to explain matters relating to electricity, export and grid connection and item seven to present their case on need and benefits.

00:13:00:18 - 00:13:08:08

And then item eight, we'll deal with cumulative assessment matters, particularly in relation to the other large solar parks in the region.

00:13:10:26 - 00:13:46:21

And then items 9 to 13 go on to a limited range of environmental matters. She will seek updates and clarification on. And these include ecology, the water environments, habitats, assessment, land use,

including Best, most versatile land and archaeology. And then at item 14, I will seek an update to the statements of Common Ground which relate to environmental matters. And item 15 will briefly discuss the arrangements for a future accompanied site inspection.

00:13:49:22 - 00:14:04:26

Some items on the agenda will be very brief and others will take a bit longer and I'll ensure we stick to time. So if you do need to give a lengthy response, please let me know if you'd prefer to respond in writing at deadline one.

00:14:07:28 - 00:14:28:24

There are a number of documents that may be referred to today. You may find it useful to have the examination library open on your laptop so you can open up the relevant documents as needed. I believe the applicant wishes to share their screen for some of the documents and that's fine as well if it enables understanding of those documents.

00:14:31:14 - 00:14:46:12

The change application will also be referred to. But again, just to remind parties that I've not formally accepted these documents into the examination as yet, and this will shortly follow the hearings as a procedural decision in my Rule eight letter.

00:14:49:04 - 00:14:55:13

So are there any questions relating to the purpose of today's hearing? Before I move on to item three?

00:14:58:17 - 00:15:00:22

Right. Okay.

00:15:02:15 - 00:15:34:06

Turn to item three on the agenda. So it's the applicant's introduction to the proposed development and the trust its sake around ten minutes or less. And again won't be counting you down, but try to keep concise. A broad and general overview, both for my benefit and the understanding of interested parties here today. And watching the live stream who may not be as familiar with the documents. Okay. If you'd like to start, please. Good morning, madam.

00:15:34:11 - 00:15:58:28

My name is Isabel Hollins. I'm here representing the applicant work for Pegasus Planning Group, and I've been working on the environmental impact assessment over the development of the application. So just from a reference perspective, the items reference documents, I often have reference within my notes the change application documents if you wish that to be updated in the oral written. So I can do that to make sure that both are covered, the submitted and the change.

00:16:00:02 - 00:16:02:11

Yeah, for completeness, just refer to both.

00:16:02:13 - 00:16:45:19

Yeah. Understood. Thank you. Um, so the first item, the bullet point list that you provided in the agenda for item three is site selection and alternatives. And I'd like to take you through the relevant national policy requirements for that. So this energy park site gained planning consent for a 66 megawatt onshore wind farm in 2013. That's not been built out due to a Grampian planning condition for technical mitigation for an RAF radar solution. The site is a well contained site with a single landowner and no environmental designations placed upon it due to the existing grid connection offer secured, which has got connection for 2027 and the long term relationship with the landowner.

00:16:45:21 - 00:17:17:17

The applicant wished to consider the site for other forms of renewable energy generation. The relevant national planning policy when considering possible alternative sites, sits within one and in paragraph 4.4.1, it does state from a policy perspective the NPS does not contain any general requirement to consider alternatives or to establish whether the proposed project represents the best option. Ian One then goes on to offer a more detailed policy on how alternatives should be considered if they are present.

00:17:17:19 - 00:17:48:14

And that's within 4.42 and 4.43. So within section 4.3, that lists a series of principles. And I'd like to which you used when you're deciding what weight should be applied to the alternatives if they are presented. And I'd like to draw your attention to the second and the third bullet point. The second bullet point offers the following guidance. The decision maker should be guided in considering alternative proposals by whether they are a realistic prospect of delivering the same infrastructure capacity in the same timescales as the proposed development.

00:17:48:16 - 00:18:35:15

And the third bullet point then goes on to state that the decision maker should not reject an application for development on one site simply because fewer adverse impacts would result from developing a similar infrastructure on another suitable site. And it should have regard to the possibility that all suitable sites for energy infrastructure may be needed for future proposals. The drafting with Ian one is the emerging is the same as within the current one. On the topic of alternatives, the proposed development site has already confirmed to be a suitable site for energy infrastructure by virtue of the existing permission for the onshore wind farm, which shows compliance with Ian one and Ian one does not allow the proposed development to be rejected simply because there might be other sites with fewer adverse impacts.

00:18:35:27 - 00:19:11:02

The point of connection is secured for 2027 and therefore for a development at the Hecking site and through the CIP process, that connection date can be achieved. An alternative site would take at least 12 months to find and complete the necessary legal negotiations for heads of terms and the additional time needed to secure land for an alternative site would have been unachievable with a 2027 connection date. Therefore, any alternative site would fail to comply with the alternatives requirements of one that is being deliverable with the same timescale as the proposed development.

00:19:11:15 - 00:19:43:00

Our review against National Planning Policy concluded that the site is suitable for the proposed development and there is no need to consider alternative sites as they would not be able to be operational within a similar timescale. And therefore it's not necessary. You wouldn't fail a policy test. Notwithstanding this, in order to respond to the consultation responses from the county in the North Kesteven and Boston, a back check and review exercise was undertaken to ensure the site is a suitable site for energy infrastructure, the search area and the methodology for that back check.

00:19:43:02 - 00:20:14:03

And the review process was agreed with the local planning authorities during consultation. The back check review identified 13 possible alternative sites and these are outlined in more detail within appendix 3.1 of the submitted and that's at 176. And that assessment is also supported by figures 3.4 through to 3.4, 8 to 3.4, which is plans showing the locations of those sites and the environmental constraints upon them.

00:20:14:12 - 00:20:58:07

So therefore, to summarise the back check and review process did not conclude that the proposed development site concluded that the proposed development satisfied the requirements of one. Madam, I'd now like to turn on to bullet point two of item three, which is energy generation and storage. The energy part comprises of two main areas. These are fixed ground mounted solar panels for renewable

energy generation and an energy storage system which is also called an as within the documentation and the that is used for the storage of electricity generated from the on site solar panels, but also for any excess electricity that other generation sources might be generating within the national grid system.

00:20:58:20 - 00:21:29:09

This is stored electricity would then be released into the national grid system at times when it's required. The energy generated from the proposed development is a 400 megawatt export and a 250 megawatt import. And further details of that can be found within chapter four of the is a madam. Just so you're aware, further details of the energy storage will be dealt with under item six today, so I'll move on from that one. Then we move on to item three. Sorry, bullet point three for item three, which is the grid connection.

00:21:30:05 - 00:22:03:01

So within chapter three of the submitted is from paragraph 3.25 onwards, we talk about the location of the on off site cable route corridor and the steps that have been undertaken to refine that corridor and the one that's been assessed within the and then and therefore submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. This information is further supported within the documentation submitted by the grid route selection report, which is an appendix to the statement of reasons, which is document reference at zero 18.

00:22:03:22 - 00:22:38:15

Madam. The off site grid route proposed within the application is as follows. The off site cable route leaves the energy park on the south eastern boundary. It crosses agricultural land and it travels to a fence substation. To reach the substation it crosses Viking Link Triton all connections before heading south towards Bekka fen again within the off site cable route, there are 32 crossings that we will be required, one of which include the A17 south 40 foot drain, the railway line, a high pressure gas pipeline and a number of water crossings.

00:22:38:17 - 00:23:12:19

The off site grid route will then be connected into a new generation bay within often the locations of these 32 grids crossing over locations where the crossings needed for the off site grid is presented within a figure 4.2 of the submitted documentation. And the locations are also defined in table 4.2 or 4.2 within the change application, the change application reference for chapter four and that's 055. The total length of the off site cable route will be approximately 8.5km in length.

00:23:14:10 - 00:23:47:05

I'll now move on to bullet point four, which is the Rochdale envelope and the topic of design, scale and layout. So due to the rapidly moving technology within the energy industry and storage, there's no specific technology that's been listed within the documentation. Instead, we've worked to look at maximum extents of land required and the maximum dimensions of equipment to be assessed. That's to be ensured Robustness against the Rochdale principle and the implementation of the Rochdale envelope that we've used within the documentation is in line with advice.

00:23:47:07 - 00:24:24:12

Note nine The draft development consent order and the work's plans have both been drafted for flexibility to use for use of space within the proposed development in both type of activity and in their location. The flexibility that's being sought within the application and against which the EIA was drafted can be seen in table 4.1 of Chapter four of the submitted documentation. The key points to note are maximum extents are the solar panels will be between 3 and 3.5 meters in maximum height depending on the location within the energy park.

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The energy inverters will have a maximum height of four meters and there would be up to 127 of these distributed throughout the site. The energy storage system has a maximum height of six meters,

and that's assessed six meters across the whole of that area. Within the is the on site and off site cable routes have all been assessed as being underground. And the Becher fen substation extension, all the new equipment has been assessed to a maximum height of 15m and that includes the maximum parameters is the same within the change application.

00:24:59:13 - 00:25:39:18

The choice of the location of the substation was determined by National Grid. National Grid have also requested that there be optionality within the design of the extension at Beca Fen, which is also outlined within the change application. The extent of the two design options can be seen within figure 4.27 of the change application document that's referenced. PS 038. The two options are the air insulated switchgear system or a gas insulated switchgear system that they and both of them require different land areas, both of which have been assessed to the Rochdale envelope in the change application documents.

00:25:39:24 - 00:26:13:01

And the final part of the extension at Beca Fen is the creation of a new cable ceiling end. Both switchgear options require this equipment and it will be in a new area of land which is 0.9 hectares and again has been assessed to 15m in height. This element of the development is outlined in Works number six. Sorry, networks number six C and in the draft development consent order and again is shown on the works plans and it's been assessed as part of the Rochdale envelope within the change application.

00:26:14:03 - 00:26:55:25

I'll now move on to point bullet point five, which is the construction management. So the construction phase of the proposed development is currently anticipated to be 30 months, but it will depend upon the final design. The management of the construction is set out within the outline construction management plan and link, which then links to schedule two of the draft development consent order. This document looks to control the environmental effects of the construction process, which has been assessed within the ES items such as traffic flows, construction, working hours, dust management, noise levels, protection of existing on site vegetation and ecological habitats are all outlined within the construction management plan.

00:26:57:00 - 00:27:32:27

No phase of the development can commence until the final construction management plan has been submitted and approved by the relevant planning authority and and the consult in consultation with the Highway Authority and the Environment Agency. So now I'd like to move on to the final bullet point, which is that of decommissioning the operational life of the proposed development is to be 40 years and decommissioning is therefore estimated to take place no earlier than 2067. Decommissioning is expected to take in the region of 6 to 18 months and will be undertaken in a phased approach.

00:27:33:00 - 00:27:50:11

This is outlined in section 4.3 of Chapter four of the year and it's also further outlined in an outline decommissioning and restoration plan, which was updated as part of the change application. And the reference for that updated document is PS 150. Thank you.

00:27:54:29 - 00:28:03:15

Okay. Thank you very much. That was a good whistle stop tour of the application. Thank you. Um.

00:28:05:12 - 00:28:22:12

I won't ask any questions at this point. I'll let you go on to the the change application next and then probably ask some questions after the first few agenda items once we've been through everything. But are there any comments from interested parties at this stage in the Council's?



00:28:25:14 - 00:28:38:06

You go on to item four, then please to provide a summary the content of the change application and any details and results of any consultation carried out and its implications for the examination.

00:28:40:29 - 00:29:19:03

Josh Taylor For the applicant. Yes. Thank you, madam. Some of this you may have heard yesterday, but I'll repeat some of it, just to introduce it and for the benefit of those here today. Um, so, yes, as you're aware, the applicant submitted a change application on the 25th of August, and this was required as a result of further engagement with National Grid, where it became apparent that additional works were required to connect the applicant's project. These works are essentially twofold, and they include an increased footprint to the fence substation to the south of the existing fence substation and a new cable ceiling end and a compound to the west of the existing fence substation.

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This is all on land owned by National Grid. As a result, this required the splitting out of work number six in the DCO to cover work number six A, which was the applicant's works for the Generation Bay and then work number six B and six C, which were two new works for the benefit of National Grid.

00:29:42:15 - 00:30:03:23

In terms of the justification for this, it is supported by policy. So the notion of a holistic planning regime and including all related infrastructure in a single application is given support in policy, particularly at Section 2.7 of N5, and that's reference to the 2023 version of N5.

00:30:05:26 - 00:30:42:19

In relation to the consultation carried out. The applicant has carried out comprehensive consultation, so the applicant publicise the new environmental information and details of the change for at least two successive weeks in local newspapers. Once in a national newspaper and once in the London Gazette. Consultees were then given a minimum of 30 days from that last newspaper notice to respond. And this is in keeping with the themes of the regulations. Now, given the localised nature of the changes, the applicant did undertake targeted consultation and this is encouraged by advice.

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Note 16 and that refined list of targeted consultees was included at appendix two of the change notification letter.

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But despite this targeted consultation, the applicant did still inform a wider group of Consultees and the local community as a matter of courtesy and as a result of continuing engagement with that wider community.

00:31:07:12 - 00:31:37:08

In terms of the outcomes, the consultation report submitted with the change application, which is document reference PS 004. It demonstrates the activities undertaken and the regard then had by the applicant to that consultation. In terms of the responses, there were 19 consultees that responded and the majority of the themes were around traffic movements associated with the networks and the ingot substation and then plantation loss at the end get substation.

00:31:39:15 - 00:32:16:24

In terms of the implications for the examination advice. Note 16, which covers details around changes, refers to the need for procedural fairness and reasonableness in considering a change of this nature. Now, our submission would be that there has been both procedural fairness and reasonableness in approaching this. As I've mentioned, the applicant has carried out extensive

consultation. All appropriate people have been consulted and given ample opportunity to respond. And in a way, our submission would be that the principle of the development is not materially different from what was proposed before.

00:32:16:26 - 00:32:42:21

It's an extension to the areas essentially that were included in the original application at land owned by National Grid. So to summarize, we consider that the consultation activities undertaken to date, as well as the opportunity to comment today and at deadline, one will have provided a sufficient opportunity to examine the change and to comment on the change. Thank you.

00:32:54:06 - 00:33:05:04

Okay. Thank you. Do the interested parties here today. If you've got any comments on the change application before, ask some questions. Yeah. Self Stephen.

00:33:08:16 - 00:33:51:05

Nick Feltham for North Kesteven District Council. Yes, Thank you, Adam. We have provided a response to the applicant in relation to the change notification consultation, obviously noting that the works take place entirely within Boston Borough rather than North Kesteven district. Our main point of response has been in relation to the plantation impacts 0.4 hectares of proposed removal. We have sought advice from our ecologist in relation to those points and made some recommendations back to the applicant and it was an issue that we touched on briefly yesterday in terms of biodiversity net gain and the locations for possible

00:33:52:24 - 00:34:25:05

provision and whether or not that could be around Byker Fen or within the main body of the energy park site. Um, the council's ecological consultee has recommended that woodland compensation, if possible, takes place in proximity of Becher fen substation. Given the relative scarcity of woodland, as noted within within the borough, that part of the borough. So we have provided some feedback to the applicant primarily in relation to, to woodland and being impacts.

00:34:25:22 - 00:34:26:13

Thank you.

00:34:30:00 - 00:34:34:21

Okay. Thank you very much. Do Boston Borough Council have any comments to make?

00:34:38:12 - 00:34:41:23

And thank you. I'd just reiterate what. Nick.

00:34:42:00 - 00:34:42:15

You're

00:34:44:00 - 00:34:47:06

right. Go on. Go ahead. Sorry.

00:34:47:08 - 00:34:48:00

Can you hear me now?

00:34:48:08 - 00:34:49:12

Yeah, I can hear you now.

00:34:49:25 - 00:35:12:23

Um, just reiterate what Nick has said from NK, which is that we made similar comments to the applicant around the loss of Woodland. Um, their proposal was to compensate that at the energy park itself. Um, and our comments related to whether there was an opportunity to improve the tree cover at Beca Fen itself rather than at the energy park, which is some distance away.

00:35:15:27 - 00:35:17:00

Okay. Thank you.

00:35:22:29 - 00:35:29:12

Could they? Could the applicant just explain exactly where the additional tree planting is proposed?

00:35:31:08 - 00:35:32:23

So to offset the loss.

00:35:33:02 - 00:36:15:08

Isabel Hollins on behalf of the applicant. So it's currently proposed that the replacement tree planting would be within the energy park site and within field, which is defined as G8 within the documentation. So that's in the northern corner of the site and the field plan within the which is figure 1.4 of the year shows the the field numbering that I'm referring to and the area of Woodland plantation woodland that would need to be removed from the fence substation is an area of 0.4 hectares and we're proposing to replace that with 0.42 hectares within the energy park site.

00:36:15:25 - 00:36:31:23

And and that's shown the location of that is shown on the landscape strategy plan, which is in the change application documentation, which is figure 6.2, that's A091 within the change application documentation.

00:36:34:22 - 00:36:37:26

Oh. Can you just repeat that examination? Library reference.

00:36:38:07 - 00:36:40:24

PSA 091.

00:36:41:27 - 00:36:42:26

Okay. Thank you.

00:36:48:06 - 00:36:56:08

Okay. Can you outline the reasons why the replacement planting isn't proposed around often instead?

00:36:58:22 - 00:37:32:03

Isabel Hollins for the applicant. So in the discussions that we've had with National Grid, that discussion point has been raised with them to seek whether or not we could use their existing land within and around that area to see if there was an opportunity to put plantation back in. The issue that they have is that under their requirements, they can't have new woodland or forest planted on top of cable roots. And as we'll know that the connection at Fen is a very congested connection with a lot of underground cabling coming in from every direction.

00:37:32:05 - 00:38:09:12

So there isn't currently space around the site where cable roots are not entering that could have new plantation placed on top. And then they also know that there are a lot of other grid connections that are in the pipeline for them over the next ten years coming in to theoretically or five, ten years coming in. And therefore, they don't want to limit that land and those options for those grid connections by

planting on those small sections where they do have, uh, no connection wires coming in at this point in time.

00:38:12:04 - 00:38:25:23

Has any land outside of the immediate area of the substation being considered. For example, towards the village of Becher and elsewhere in Boston Borough Council's area.

00:38:27:17 - 00:38:56:28

No, it hasn't been considered within details. So we've considered obviously land within the order limits as we've moved through. We haven't considered offsite mitigation, planting, working with a third party etcetera, for woodland planting within Boston. The wish was to try and ensure that from a perspective we're offering as much as we can within the order limits itself. And so therefore have chosen to try and utilise the land that's already within the order limits.

00:38:59:29 - 00:39:01:00

Okay. Thank you.

00:39:05:26 - 00:39:20:09

The the documents refer to an alternative sites that was considered to the northeast of the Becker fen substation for the works and that that was ruled out by National Grid. Can you explain why.

00:39:22:11 - 00:40:02:00

Isabel Hollands for the applicant. So again, the National Grid, when they have a series of design stages and design processes that they run through and the initial connection is where do they have capacity? And they had two bays, one to the north and one to the south. That was theoretically possible for the Eckington fen connection to create a new Bay four As they've refined their design process, they have preferred to offer a connection bay to the southwest, to the north location and they obviously determine where the connection goes in to, which fits best with their infrastructure that they have currently on the substation.

00:40:02:02 - 00:40:14:11

So hence the as the following on from the scoping and as we've moved through to the stage that's been refined down to the southwest or the southern boundary really of the making substation.

00:40:18:12 - 00:40:19:12

Okay. Thank you.

00:40:33:16 - 00:40:53:26

And can you just provide further comments on the, um, the biodiversity net gain issue that the, the Council mentioned and how the, the loss of trees and the off the proposed replacement woodland area, how that affects the calculations.

00:40:55:22 - 00:41:31:01

Isabelle Hollands For the applicant, I think we'll probably be able to hopefully touch on that in more detail later on when we talk about the ecology specific. But from a sort of a headline, we're still in large. So obviously a policy requirement of 10% and the calculations are showing, um, even with the change application and the removal of that section of planting and then obviously replacing a larger area, we're still able to offer on the indicative design that we have at the moment in the region of 100, 100% for that hasn't altered through the change application.

00:41:33:18 - 00:41:34:15

I thank you.

00:41:39:04 - 00:41:59:04

And on the area of tree planting, it's proposed to be removed. Whatever the area that may comprise when final design is decided. Um, are there any more surveys that would need carrying out on that area of woodland and how would that be secured?

00:42:01:26 - 00:42:36:15

Isabel Hollins for the applicant. So to date, a full ecology survey has been undertaken of that woodland. So we know the tree species mix and the ecology baseline at this current point in time. That would as required be further surveyed prior to any trees being felled and obviously working around the appropriate season. That needs to be for that work and that would probably be the main, I'd say from an ecological perspective, the survey works that would probably be best just to be undertaken at that point.

00:42:36:17 - 00:42:45:21

Again, to assure that there's no direct impact on breeding birds. For example, at the point that the plantation area needed to be removed.

00:42:48:09 - 00:42:51:03

So with that form part of the environmental management plan.

00:42:53:13 - 00:42:55:22

Yes, that would perform part of the environmental management plan.

00:43:09:29 - 00:43:19:03

Okay. The local authorities have anything else they wish to raise? After what you've just heard before, I move on to agenda item five.

00:43:22:07 - 00:43:22:22

Now

00:43:24:04 - 00:43:25:00

for the bay.

00:43:27:04 - 00:44:11:24

I'm Andrew Scott. That's the idea. This is possibly is more informative than anything else. We are currently working with the Forestry Commission and a local landowner on an area of tree planting, funnily enough, not a million miles away, probably just to the northeast of fence substation. They are planning to make it an educational feature as well. Getting local primary schools, etcetera involved. And they they're obviously looking at planting some trees. There may be an opportunity for the applicant to perhaps make a contribution towards that as part of the the offset for the for the tree planting as an alternative to the planting to the north of the site itself.

00:44:15:15 - 00:44:29:00

Okay. Thank you. If you're able to submit any details of that, that would be useful if you could submit them for deadline one just to report summary of what the proposals are. Thank you.

00:44:44:18 - 00:44:47:02

Okay, Let's move on to item five.

00:44:51:06 - 00:45:42:03

So under this agenda item said, I'd expect the relevant planning authorities to provide a planning policy update. And before you do so, in the latest version of the planning statement that was submitted with the change application, there are some updates within that. So just wanted to check that you'd

seen that. Um, so for example, that update, the latest version of the, the Lincolnshire Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. Um, so if you could just summarise that and also any national policy or guidance that you're aware of that might have emerged since the production of the original application, which has been in for some months? Um.

00:45:43:27 - 00:45:49:24

So that's both local planning policy and any recently published government documents. Thank you.

00:45:54:08 - 00:46:28:18

Thank you, Madam North. Nick Feltham from North Kesteven District Council. Yes. As you've just clarified, obviously the February submission referred the applicant's February submission, referred to the 2017 version of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, which has been replaced by the April 2023 version and will set out in a lot more detail through our local impact reports. The, um, the policies specific to this particular project and an analysis of how we think they have positive, negative or neutral connotations.

00:46:28:20 - 00:47:09:02

I suppose there are four in particular to draw out at this stage, those being um, policies. S14, um, s 1661 and 67, um, which, which I'll sort of briefly go through the, the local plan, the 2023 local plan is, is framed very deliberately around, um, achieving net zero carbon and it has a suite of policies including in relation to energy which are framed around recognising those national but also um, local um, imperatives and, and policy.

00:47:09:04 - 00:47:55:17

S14, which is our renewable energy policy, contains a specific section dealing with ground based solar energy in a way which goes into a little bit more detail than the previous version of 19 in the 2017 plan. Um, there is a presumption in favour of ground based solar photovoltaics. Um, there are a couple of caveats to that. One, one of particular relevance being unless there is significant harm arising or where the proposals take place on on land and then don't meet the requirements of policy 67, which is the freestanding BMV agricultural land policy.

00:47:55:19 - 00:48:28:10

And there are a series of four tests within F 67 which obviously then then overlap with S14, one of which is about evidencing, um, need and whether or not land of lower grade has been has been favoured. Um F16 in the local plan relates to wider energy infrastructure. These are of course picked up in the in the appellants updates and they again are positive offer support in principle for facilities such as battery storage and thermal storage transition systems.

00:48:28:12 - 00:48:58:14

So again, there's a new policy basis that is not addressed in the 2017, um, local plan. Policy 61 dealing with biodiversity net gain. We touched upon briefly yesterday and we had some discussions around whether or not we. We look at a 10% figure or something more more challenging. And Policy 61 fixes that minimum requirements in relation to to BMG.

00:48:59:04 - 00:49:36:10

And in the case of policy, 60 ones tie in with S14, which is a renewable energy policy, and S14 actually seeks to maximize Benji. So those need to be read along one alongside each other. But but S14 talks about the maximization of Benji on schemes, albeit that the minimum is is 10%. And then as I've just briefly touched upon earlier on 67, which is the the BMV policy has some similarities with the with an equivalent policy in the previous plan.

00:49:36:24 - 00:50:18:11

But Part A really focuses on that point about demonstrating a need and there being insufficient lower grade land available as an alternative through a series of for particular tests. And so obviously if you were minded to accept the change notification, then the applicant has summarized those policies in their documents. And I think the council's view is that if you're not minded to accept the change notification, there would still need to be an update to that planning statement and the associated documents, given that the February 13th version has now become outdated, um by our recently adopted local plan.

00:50:21:01 - 00:50:21:16

Thank you.

00:50:24:13 - 00:50:28:14

Okay. Thank you. And is there any national policy you're aware of?

00:50:32:24 - 00:50:34:25

Thank you, Madam Nick Felson for North Kesteven

00:50:36:15 - 00:51:03:18

and the applicant is picked up on the changes to national policy. Obviously the the consultation on the updated national policy statements ended at the end of June. We addressed those drafts in our Lear and then obviously the very recent proposed changes to the which um relate to to wind energy. Um, obviously don't have any implications in relation to this particular project. Thank you.

00:51:06:13 - 00:51:14:16

Thank you very much. Do Boston Borough Council have anything to add? Almost what Mr. Felton's just said.

00:51:16:14 - 00:51:31:05

Thank you. Abby Marwood for Boston Borough Council. Um, nothing to add in terms of our policy, our policy as a Southeast Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019 that hasn't altered or changed since February. Um, so no changes from our side of things.

00:51:32:25 - 00:51:34:06

Okay. Thank you very much.

00:51:53:17 - 00:51:57:16

If the applicant got anything else to add on what's just been said?

00:52:08:17 - 00:52:52:16

Warning. Nigel Pearson, speaking on behalf of the upcoming. Yes, thank you very much. We broadly agree with what has just been said by the authority in terms of the updates. We the submission that was made in August in terms of the change application, did give an update on relevant policy at that stage up to August. And the key points being in relation to as the local authorities have just highlighted, the revised national policy in the ones three and five of particular relevance that were published in 2023.

00:52:52:28 - 00:53:34:12

Um, and we agree with the officers in terms of the publication of the local plan for North Kesteven, the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, again, the relevant policies that have just been cited by the authority in terms of policies S14 1661 and 67 are picked up in the change submission of the planning statement. And I think as an overview in specific regard, as welcomed that the 14 is a supportive policy subject to the criteria that the authority mentioned.

00:53:34:22 - 00:54:06:27

Um, and acknowledging that there is the overriding need for the significant enhancement to renewable energy. Um, and think in terms of the criteria and caveats of that policy, those are addressed in the statement think we are the applicants view is that those criteria are met within and that the policy is addressed. I know that there will be further discussions on the BMV and think that can be picked up in those further discussions.

00:54:06:29 - 00:54:42:29

But as we say, our position on that and is met. Similarly, 16 infrastructure for the infrastructure elements of the scheme. 61 I know there will be further discussion on also, but just noting, as my colleague has previously mentioned, the scheme is providing or will provide once the ultimate design comes forward in excess of the 10% minimum policy requirement and so would seek to maximise in the way that policy states in terms of the being.

00:54:43:20 - 00:55:17:04

Um and similarly policy. 67 in regard to BMV, the other criteria set out in that policy, we have sought to address all those points. The the overall BMT BMV within the site has been minimised. The applicant has sought to reduce down through redesign the quantum of BMV and the policies criteria have been addressed.

00:55:17:06 - 00:55:47:21

I think from the point of view of the appellant, the applicant, um, the further wider policy um would agree also in respect of the local plan for South East Lincolnshire, as the Boston Authority have just notified, there's been no change since the submission of the the initial application in March or February.

00:55:47:23 - 00:56:37:13

Sorry. Um, so turning to the wider policy in terms of the National Policy Guidance Council mentioned NPF in August 2020 sorry, September 23rd, the the revised NPF was published. Um. Primarily focusing on wind. Not a great deal of change in there in respect of solar proposals. And it's probably worth highlighting that the relevant policies or relevant paragraphs in relation to solar as advising determination of applications not requiring to show demonstrate need and the presumption that their proposals are acceptable in principle, subject to being no impacts or impacts being made acceptable.

00:56:38:06 - 00:56:56:02

So that's still stands within the revised NPF and other points which we've raised. We would highlight the revised planning practice guidance notes on renewable and low carbon energy, which was issued in August 2023.

00:56:57:21 - 00:57:17:09

That document. Primarily focused on battery storage in terms of the relevance to this proposal and deals with consultation with fire authorities. And again, think the wider consultation strategy undertaken on this application ensures that those matters are covered off.

00:57:21:07 - 00:57:46:14

So think. That covers our update on the policy. As the Council notes, if it's deemed that we need to update the. A February 2023 statement of planning, need and policy. Given that if you are not minded to accept the change application, then we'd be happy to do so.

00:57:48:15 - 00:57:52:18

Obviously that's caveated, that we ideally wouldn't not accept that.



00:57:58:16 - 00:58:38:19

Okay. Thank you. And the the latest planning statement that's come in with the change application. Um, any new, um. UK government government guidance but policy documents and I know there's there's there's been an additional one added there. Um just to expect throughout the examination for it to be updated accordingly. And if the is are published during the examination, I obviously would expect that to be addressed by all the parties and if anything else comes out and just keep an eye on that.

00:58:38:21 - 00:58:53:02

And in every deadline, if there is any updates and to, to produce those. Um, yeah. Nothing else to mention on policy and guidance and.

00:58:54:18 - 00:58:56:08

For the councils.

00:58:56:25 - 00:58:57:10

Yeah.

00:58:57:12 - 00:59:09:03

Thank you. Mark Wallace, Lincolnshire County Council. Just to say. Guess I spoke on behalf of probably all the authorities will obviously confirm the position in our relevant local impact report. So that will set out clearly.

00:59:09:13 - 00:59:09:28

Which.

00:59:10:00 - 00:59:10:23

Policies we feel.

00:59:10:25 - 00:59:15:00

Are relevant. And to add to that, we would look to seek to agree that through the statement of.

00:59:15:02 - 00:59:16:01

Common ground as well.

00:59:16:03 - 00:59:23:06

So there's clarity for yourself in terms of which policies we consider relevant, important for the purposes of the examination.

00:59:25:10 - 00:59:34:04

Yeah, of course. Yeah. Well, all the, the relevant planning authorities would expect to see that within the local impact report and statement of common Ground.

00:59:35:27 - 00:59:40:15

Okay. Moving on to. Sorry, the applicant. I'm sorry.

00:59:40:18 - 01:00:18:24

Could I just add to the question about updating state statements? Planning a need statement was quite a large document. Um, I just wondered whether it might help if we had an addendum to that document, um, which we could update on a regular basis with any changes. Um, it may be less worldly to do that and have an addendum and update that rather than update the full statement. But obviously I'll be guided by you as to whether you would prefer the full document to be updated as planning policy changes or whether an addendum would be acceptable.

01:00:21:13 - 01:00:30:16

Yeah, an addendum. If it's just a discrete part of that document that can be updated and everything else is staying the same and addendums, fine. Thank you.

01:00:39:01 - 01:01:13:15

So agenda item six, which relates to the generating storage capacity, electricity exports and substation type issues and partly covered this already under agenda item three and was just like the applicant to explain the generating capacity of the proposed development and the range. Explain the relationship between the the capacity of the solar park and that that's exported to the grid and.

01:01:17:17 - 01:01:22:18

Yeah. Come on. The other two questions next. But really just about the solar park capacity. First place.

01:01:22:28 - 01:01:40:21

Thank you, madam. Neil Bromwich for the applicant. I'd like to introduce Phil Jenner, who's an electrical engineer and project manager. Electricity, perhaps to come in at this stage. And Phil is on online. So he will be You'll be patching in now, hopefully.

01:01:43:07 - 01:01:45:18

Okay. Thank you. If you'd like to. Go ahead, Mr. Jenner.

01:01:47:01 - 01:02:24:09

Good morning. Thank you. Phil Jenner for the applicant. In regard to the capacities, the allowable export capacity from the development to the grid is 400MW and the secured import capacity is 250MW. And this has been secured via the connection agreement with National Grid entered into on the 19th of July 2022. The solar park is expected to have a solar panel installed capacity in the region of 5 to 550MW, depending on the capabilities of the panels taking into selected at the time, taking into account the latest technology.

01:02:25:05 - 01:03:06:22

This is a direct current or capacity, but the capacity that will be exported to grid will be limited by the alternating current or AC capacity. The power must be converted to AC for export and this conversion done by the inverters will be in the region of 400MW. It is a common design approach of solar parks to install a lower AC capacity in order to be more economic and efficient with infrastructure. The peak power from the sun only occurs for a small proportion of the day, and so the AC capacities tend to be lower than the DC capacity and this is known as the AC to DC ratio.

01:03:08:07 - 01:03:51:06

The energy storage capacity will be between 2 and 400MW and this will be sized and optimized to make best use of the allowable export and import capacity from the grid. The energy park may also be charged from the adjacent solar park. So the solar park and the energy storage will share the grid capacity. The extent of sharing will be done in accordance to market conditions. The solar farm will normally have priority for exports, but in some scenarios such as the need for the energy storage to support the grid frequency, this priority may change and the design allows for the solar power to be diverted to the energy storage.

01:04:10:11 - 01:04:19:21

So what sort of situations would the the priority change from the solar park to the SS?

01:04:22:06 - 01:04:50:06

So the energy storage will enter into grid service agreements with National Grid for frequency support or voltage support. And in these instances, it may be more economic for additional headroom for the export to be prioritized to the energy storage as opposed to the solar park. And these will be these decisions will be based on trading decisions given the market situations on the day.

01:04:59:07 - 01:05:00:12

Okay. Thank you.

01:05:08:07 - 01:05:47:15

Okay. I don't know if this is free for you, Mr. General. The applicants, um, just need to explain the requirements of national grade and the relationship of the proposed substation works. And with existing customers of National Grid that feed into often and future customers. You know, we talked earlier when we were talking about the, um, the trees that there are likely to be future cable runs coming in to Becker Fen and just wondered if you could provide a bit more information on that place.

01:05:53:06 - 01:06:28:28

Oh, yes. Phil Jenner. For the applicant. So in regard to the substation works because then the applicant scope of works will be to equip the bay that has been assigned to the development. And this would involve installing cable sealing ends, switchgear and a short section of busbar to connect to the National Grid bus pass and a control building to house protection Control monitoring and metering equipment will also be constructed. National Grid scope is to extend the bigger fence substation and to provide the bay for the project to connect.

01:06:29:02 - 01:06:40:05

And this includes adding a bus section and extending the bus bars and adding a bus coupler. And existing circuits will also be moved to the newly extended part of the substation.

01:06:45:26 - 01:06:50:26

Thank you. The applicants here today like to add anything to that?

01:06:53:03 - 01:07:23:19

Q Madam Josh Taylor for the applicant. I suppose just around the mechanics of your question on interaction with other customers. I think our submission would be it's kind of a well-trodden path for electricity transmission and distribution network operators to to kind of manage this process on what are usually quite constrained sites from a technical perspective. And in terms of the relationship with any current or future connections.

01:07:24:00 - 01:07:57:00

Largely, this is dealt with by protected provisions that we have with National Grid now, as well as the commercial agreements behind the scenes and including the Connection agreement and their use of land process, which provides those necessary protections. And then in the future, if any other connections were coming along and we had infrastructure there, we would expect then the same protection for any of the applicants equipment. So I think largely it will be dealt with through protected provisions and commercial arrangements if that helps to answer at that point.

01:08:01:21 - 01:08:11:01

Absent any future proposals coming in to Becca, Finn would need to consider your project and protect you. Is that right?

01:08:11:03 - 01:08:11:28

Correct. Yes.

01:08:33:02 - 01:08:40:18

Just another question on the range and Mr. Jenner explained about.

01:08:42:06 - 01:08:47:03

The solar park, 500 to 550MW.

01:08:49:21 - 01:09:24:09

And. And then when it's converted to a, say, 400 megawatt the the range of documents in the submission. Um it does vary. Um for example the, the planning statements, paragraph 3.9 says that potential maximum range is between 500 and 600 megawatt peak, um, which is consistent with what I've just heard and the design and access statement.

01:09:24:25 - 01:09:31:24

Paragraph 4.7 states between 400 and 600MW. Um.

01:09:33:16 - 01:09:38:29

And then again each environmental statement. Chapter 13.

01:09:41:13 - 01:09:42:14

It's my screen

01:09:44:16 - 01:10:05:19

at table 13.13 refers to a 400 megawatt. So it's just just a play to make the documents consistent. And it was he realized that there will be a range, but it's just making those documents consistent with what what that range is expected to be.

01:10:09:00 - 01:10:09:16

Laura Weiss on.

01:10:09:18 - 01:10:44:19

Behalf of the applicant. So the differences in numbers there are to assess the worst case for each and each part of the project. So, for example, traffic and management and traffic and access has assessed up to 600MW because that would involve a larger number of vehicle movements and 400 is used. So we're assessing a almost worst case for the sort of socioeconomic benefits for, you know, talking about business rates, for example. So hopefully it's just to cover those worst case assessments for each of those individual topics.

01:10:48:29 - 01:10:58:20

Yeah, understood. So the lower range is assessed as a worst case scenario for the socio economic, but the higher for other.

01:11:00:15 - 01:11:01:29

Yes, that's correct. Yeah.

01:11:03:25 - 01:11:11:12

Madam Neil Bromwich is the applicant. We can have a look at your references and we can go back and review that and make that clear if that would help.

01:11:12:15 - 01:11:17:08

Yeah, that would be helpful. Just to. Just a brief explanation. Yeah. Thank you.

01:11:39:08 - 01:11:48:02

Okay, that's about it for agenda item six. But do any interested parties here today wish to raise anything on this matter before I move on?

01:11:51:25 - 01:11:54:11  
No. Nobody online? No.

01:11:59:01 - 01:11:59:26  
Okay.

01:12:01:17 - 01:12:03:11  
I propose to take a break now.

01:12:03:13 - 01:12:07:18  
It's a little bit early, but think the next item. Um.

01:12:09:07 - 01:12:24:25  
Might take a little bit longer. So if we break now, um, it's 11:12 and we come back hurts and come back at 11:30 and I'll. I'll see you then. 11:30. Thank you.