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Welcome back. It's 11:30 and this issue specific hearing two is now resumed. We're on item number seven, which relates to need and benefits. So I'd just like the applicant to take some time to briefly summarize their need case with reference to the latest government publications which relate to renewable and low carbon energy. Thank you.

00:00:36:04 - 00:00:40:13

Thank you, Madam Neil Bromwich for the applicant. Um.

00:00:41:28 - 00:00:42:23

Dealing with.

00:00:43:14 - 00:01:21:29

Need. The applicant's case is that there is an urgent and overwhelming need to deliver the project to contribute to the generation and supply of renewable energy. In the absence of an adopted national policy statement that describes solar generation, the Secretary of State, in considering the need for the project, must have regard per Section 105 of the Planning Act 2008 of matters in relation to development of description of the application, which is a solar development and other matters which the Secretary of State considers important and relevant.

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The Government's position in paragraph 3.31 paragraph 3.315. And paragraph 3.4.5, Part three of adopted Energy National Policy Statement one is that the need for a new renewable energy electricity generation is urgent and that new energy insists national significant infrastructure projects should be brought forward as soon as possible.

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Further paragraph 4.1. Point two of Energy National Policy Statement one provides that the decision maker should start with a presumption in favour of granting consent for applications for national significant infrastructure projects. That is a matter that is both important and relevant to this project. Ian One explains that this urgent need is required to meet the increasing demand for electrical power and to replace the decreasing nature of fossil fuels to decarbonize it.

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Energy generation.

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The British Energy Security Strategy, which was updated in April 2022, noted at the time, at that time that there were there was 14GW of solar capacity in the UK and that the expectation is to ramp up deployment of solar to 70GW by 2035. That's about 4.6GW of new generation being delivered each year between now and 2035.

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Draft Energy National Policy Statement 3rd March 2023, notes that government has committed to sustained growth in solar capacity and paragraph three point 10.1, and that solar is a key part of the government's strategy for low cost, low cost decarbonisation of the energy sector. And at paragraph

three, 10.2, that 70GW of solar development is expected by 2035. The 70 gigawatt target is confirmed in Powering Up Britain March 2023, which is the UK Energy security plan and the Net zero growth plan, which are two different documents, but one set of documents, one set of proposals.

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So these are all factors which are both important and relevant to demonstrating the need for the project. Whilst N3 is not yet adopted policy, the Secretary of State does consider this is an important and relevant consideration and this is noted in the Government's consultation response planning for new energy infrastructure, which was the response in March 2023 for the on the draft national policy statements.

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I'm.

00:04:37:06 - 00:04:37:21

Sorry.

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Find my place again. So whilst draft entry is not adopted policy as, say the Secretary State does consider it an important and relevant consideration. As noted in the government's response

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adopted in Policy and National Policy Statement 3rd July 2011 recognises at paragraph 1.8.1.82 that as renewable technology becomes economically and technically viable, national policy will need to be updated. And that sorry, this is the adopted national policy and three of 2011. Um, so that is the clearly the current status we are in now for solar generation and hence it's the applicant's submission.

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That draft three carries significant weight in demonstrating urgent need for solar generation.

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The government has a legally binding target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. It's now recognised that reaching 70GW by 2035 is a seriously stretching target.

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Mission Zero, which is the independent review of net zero. Also known as the Skidmore Review, January 20th, 23 notes that delay to reaching net zero is a significant risk. And further, the Climate Change Committee 2023 progress report to Parliament in June 2023 states that the confidence in the UK of meeting its medium targets for renewable generation has decreased. So there is an urgent need for new solar.

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And this is exacerbated by several other factors. The first of which is that in 2023 auction for contracts is different. No offshore wind bids were made, um, further delaying the deployment of offshore wind. And this is a key part of the government's drive for renewable energy at scale. And this is further reflected in a recent announcement not to progress a Norfolk um Boreas scheme.

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Um, offshore wind nationally significant infrastructure project as it's not currently commercially viable.

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And further the government's ambition to deliver 24GW of new nuclear by 2050 has recently been subject to scrutiny. In the July 2023 House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee paper, which is called Delivering Nuclear Power. And in that, doubts are raised in this report that this target can be reached and has identified a power gap in nuclear provision.

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So with that, the delay to offshore wind and the doubt over the delivery of certain capacity of new nuclear, there is now an even more clear and urgent need for new solar generation at scale, and Headington then can deliver 400MW of generation associated storage in a quick delivery time scale, which is economically viable. And that's clearly going to contribute to ambitions to contribute to the net zero decarbonisation target, to deliver energy security and to provide affordable electric electricity generation.

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And that, Madam outlines our needs case.

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It's very much.

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Okay, before go on to the other benefits. Do the interested parties wish to raise anything regarding the need case that has just been outlined?

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So.

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Okay. Would the applicant like to then summarize the range of other benefits which are expected to arise from the proposed developments?

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Thank you.

00:08:59:24 - 00:09:02:18

Madam. I introduce Rebecca Grace, who will pick up this point.

00:09:04:23 - 00:09:45:21

Hello, madam. Rebecca Grace Pegasus Group On behalf of the applicant and I will briefly summarize the benefits which are set out in full in our statement of need and Planning statement, which is referenced 141 and the socio economic benefits chapter of the Yes, which is zero 66. But just before I do that, and I just wanted to pick up one point, we think that there was slight overlap in issue five, item five. Sorry, you talked about the applicant setting out any other relevant recently published government documents that the examining authorities should be aware of and we've chosen to deal with it now as part of our needs and benefits section.

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And I'll just mention six documents and we'll do is put include them by deadline two as part of our updated suite of documents in more detail as to why they're relevant. But if I could just name them now. And there's the British Energy Strategy, March 23rd, Powering Up Britain, which is a suite of documents that includes the net zero growth plan and the energy strategy plan, which is April 23rd. The Climate Change Committee 2023 progress report to Parliament, which is June 23rd.

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And in July there was the Department for Energy Security and Net zero policy paper on national emergency plan for Downstream gas and Electricity. And in July the 19th of July, there was the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee delivering Nuclear Power Report. And I must mention that Neil has just picked up a few of these already in his speeches then and then the updated August 23rd Department for Energy Security and net zero on electricity storage, health and safety gap analysis.

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Um, but what I'll do is move on to the benefits of the proposal now so. As already mentioned, the proposal has a willing landowner and developer the viable grid connection by 2027 with capacity to enable the scheme to be commissioned very shortly in the event of the grant of a DCO. And so this proposal can very quickly make a significant contribution to the energy generation requirement and taking into account the range which my colleague Laura White has just mentioned.

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And obviously we're doing energy generation. We were talking about figures of 400MW export and 250MW import, and this brings with it a wide range of benefits as well as meeting three important national aims such as decarbonisation, security of supply and affordability and and which I'll talk a bit more, and social economic development benefits. So in terms of affordability, the cost of solar generation is an important enabler of its development.

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Solar panels and electrical infrastructure have become larger and more efficient, meaning that more electricity can be generated from the same area of land as was previously possible. So as a consequence, solar is now a leading low cost generation technology and across all scenarios, strategic investment is required now to develop this whole energy system and deliver clean, secure, affordable and fair energy for all consumers. And this is driven by the need to ensure that electricity is carbon free, affordable and sustainable, and that renewables emerge as the dominant source of electricity generation for Britain between now and 2050.

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And security of supply, obviously geographically and technologically diverse suppliers are required. Demand for electricity is growing and security of supply means keeping the lights on and is two main components. Um, ensuring that there's enough electricity generation capacity available and operational to meet demand.

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Um, on decarbonisation, which my colleagues already talked about. The United Kingdom has a legal commitment to decarbonise and commit itself to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. And we also have international obligations to decarbonise. Um, in terms of the socioeconomic benefits, there are a number for, for from this project including uh, biodiversity net gain, which includes enhancements of habitats within the site, creation of species, rich grasslands, significant length of hedgerow planting and approximately 8.5km of new hedgerow will be planted around the energy park, um to offer landscape screening, screening, but also offer new areas of habitat and feeding grounds for local wildlife.

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Um, we've got a new community orchard proposed in the southwest corner of the park. Um, and enhancement of a new 0.4 hectare woodland of native species of local provenance in the Northwest Energy Park, which Isabelle talked about earlier. Um, other figures. Economic benefits rise to the provision of temporary jobs during the construction phase of the site. It's estimated that the total cost of the proposed development distribution of £400 million, which is investment in the scheme to create job opportunities locally and throughout the supply chain, particularly in the construction process.

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And in total, the proposed development would or could support 932 temporary jobs, both direct jobs on site and indirect roles in the wider economy during the 13 month construction period. In terms of contribution to economic output, the overall GVA impact associated with the construction phase is estimated at £175 million over 30 month build time frame. There's accommodation demand because of course, um, it could be a maximum of 400 construction workers forecasted at the peak times during construction period.

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And it is those construction workers and that that may be sourced outside the local area that will be accommodated in local hotels and non-service accommodation. From business rates point of view, it's estimated that the solar project element of the proposed scheme could generate up to £1.3 million per annum in business rates. So over the intended 40 year lifespan of the scheme, business rates generated could total around £29.3 million. And decommissioning will also bring about the provision of temporary jobs, with 200 workers on site during peak times across 18 months and which also again brings with it accommodation demand.

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And the overall impact associated with the decommissioning phase is estimated at £52.5 million over the 18 month decommissioning phase.

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So.

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In summary, the proposed development is a leading large scale solar scheme, providing critical stepping stone towards the future of efficient decarbonisation through the deployment of large scale, technologically and geographically diverse, low carbon generation schemes and its proposed development addresses all important aspects of existing and emerging government policy and brings about a number of socio economic development benefits.

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Okay. Thank you very much.

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I've got a couple of questions. First, I just want to seek comments from interested parties here today. Um, firstly, to the relevant planning authorities. Do you do you agree with the benefits as set out?

00:17:10:25 - 00:17:42:05

Thank you, Madam Nick Feltham, North Kesteven District Council. And don't think this was just was specifically picked up on. Um, obviously the applicants talked about grassland hedge planting, community orchard. Um, there is a section that deals with um, socio economic benefits in relation to um, BMV considerations. So the alternative benefit associated with the change of use of the land and the possibility of grazing.

00:17:42:15 - 00:18:12:18

Um, I think it's possibly just a point to say that we deal with that in our local impact report. Um. In terms of the way in which the the the economic benefit of continuance of farming versus a change with different type of agricultural activity carries a financial value in the degree to which that has been, I suppose, evidenced or is shown to be capable of being secured at this stage and our matters which we deal with in our little.

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Thank you.

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Yeah, that's understood. The local authorities will include these matters within the forthcoming local impact reports. Is there anything any the other authorities Boston or Lincolnshire wish to raise?

00:18:33:12 - 00:18:33:27

At.

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I just got to ask the applicant a couple of clarifications. Um, so environmental statement Chapter 19. She's reference app 072 at table 19.5.

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Just that it turns that.

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Sounds.

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Yeah. So it's an electronic page 31.

00:19:42:16 - 00:19:47:15

Which refers to employments and.

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This refers to in combination effects, but it's also referred to elsewhere and interactions during construction and decommissioning. I just wanted to explain in the final. I'm column under employment. It says that new full time farm businesses could emerge with the proposed development in place. Just wondered what was meant by that.

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Thank you, Madam Laura White on behalf of the applicant. So that's in relation to the new sheep enterprise that would be taking place on site. So as part of the outline landscape and ecological management plan, we've proposed grazing on site and we've had discussions with a shepherd about that. So with his with his sheep, he estimates about 1.5 full time equivalent roles to look after those sheep across the energy park site.

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Okay. Thank you.

00:21:17:03 - 00:21:26:19

And. Chapter 11, the Environmental statement. She's up 064.

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Okay, it's socio economic chapter.

00:21:47:06 - 00:21:51:00

So this electronic page is 37 to 39.

00:22:01:15 - 00:22:08:07

Again, it's talking about employment. And then. Accommodation demand.

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There's this appears a number of times in different documents as well. It's about the demand for accommodation only and set out how that's been calculated, etcetera. But it only seems to mention North Kesteven district and not Boston. And I just wondered why that was and why why Boston accommodation in Boston hasn't been.

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Has it been assessed and. Will there be an effect on the Boston Borough Council area as well?

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Mr. Holland speaking on behalf of the applicant. Is it all right if I take that point away to talk back to the socioeconomic expert that did the analysis behind the chapter and come back to you with a written answer.

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This course is fine. Yeah. Thank you.

00:23:30:03 - 00:24:04:27

Environmental statement, Chapter 11 again at 064 and referring to the operational jobs, which is paragraph. 11 .5. 12 onwards under employment impact. And it refers to five operational jobs on site and seven in the wider economy. Could somebody just explain a bit more about what those operational jobs would involve?

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All right. On behalf of the applicant. And so the operational jobs on site are likely to be involved in looking after the panels. So checking things are operating correctly and repairing any that may need repairing. And then general landscaping, you know, checking fences of not broken anything like that. And then the seven wider jobs, um, need to confirm where we are those. I think that's in relation to things like the security.

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So for example, the cameras would be monitored by an off site control room and then that would be sort of an estimated wider economy job associated with that. We can maybe provide a more fuller response once we've spoken to the author of this chapter, if that's useful.

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Yeah, that would be useful. Thank you. Um, so it all adds up with the benefits and just just try and establish exactly what weights give to those benefits and what sort of employment they would create. Thank you.

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To all the questions I've got on that agenda. Item seven Do any interested parties wish to raise anything else after what they've just heard relating to to benefits?

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So.

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Okay. Trans rights mate. Cumulative effects.

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So if we could have open environment Statement. Appendix 2.3.

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She's at 75, I think. I'll just get that open.

00:26:26:08 - 00:26:34:28

Yes, it's it's the long list and short list of cumulative sites. Tables. 1.2. 1.3.

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So could the applicant explain the methodology of how the shortlist was arrived at and how that was narrowed down from from the longlist? And was the shortlist agreed with the relevant planning authorities? And so the short and later to that, the shortlist includes prior primarily energy projects as well as a South Lincolnshire reservoir. And are there other types of developments, um, which were considered for the shortlist, for example, residential commercial developments? And can you explain why those were excluded and provide a bit of background about the shortlist please.

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That would be useful. Thank you.

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Isabel Hollins On behalf of the applicant. So the criteria that we followed to develop the shortlist and then follow that through to the long list is outlined and we followed the criteria of advice. Note 17, which is the advice note for cumulative effects relevant to an inset project. Um, this criteria allocates a tearing basis on where the proposal within an area is in relation stage within the planning system. So there's a three tier system, um, of which tier one is consented or being built out.

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Tier two is a submitted and proposed application, active planning application and tier three in early stage of um, the development but known within the local community. And there's some flexibility within the interpretation, I would say, for Tier three projects to try and make that that list as robust as possible. And we've worked with the local authorities with the development of that list. So we've got an open line of communication with them all as they're aware of projects and can talk to us about them.

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Obviously they're sometimes held with non-disclosure agreements. We've been able to include those and consider those within the cumulative assessment. And we have the long list in itself has mainly focused on the initial focus. I suppose primary focus has been cumulative from an energy perspective and looking at the sort of the cross cumulative impacts that can occur between various different energy schemes. Um, if there had been a major application for residential or a mixed use development, for example, that would have been included within the long list and then assessed down through into the shortlist process.

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Um. So that's the sort of the process that we've gone through to develop that list. That's the criteria that's been used. And obviously within that, the consideration of other schemes as they have come through the the end, from our perspective, the cumulative shortlist, I've reviewed it again since the initial submission and there are further schemes that I feel should now be included within the cumulative assessment.

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So my intention or wish would be to add to that cumulative assessment. Looking at Beacon Fen and SIP scheme reference number 010152. That's currently at the Pre-application stage, but the DCO, their target or their working target should probably say is looking at a submission in quarter two,

2024. Then also Springwell Solar farm which is N010149 that has a similar timescale but with an expected submission in quarter two again of 24 foss Green energy N010154 and that's an expected submission in quarter four of 24 and Tilbury Solar project 014 two quarter 124, I believe is the information that's out at the moment.

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So although all of them are at different stages within the process, there's now some more information that can be included and that information wasn't available when we submitted the application for February, hence why that they weren't included within the long and short list. Um, with the ongoing conversations that we've been having, particularly with North Kesteven, they've requested that two other town and country planning applications again for solar that are updated. The first of that is called Land at UAB Thorp, which was screened for a solar scheme back in 2014.

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The landholding for that project is part of the landholding within the inset for Baker Fen, not big a fen. Apologies for Beacon Fen and so that's highly likely to fall away as a town and country planning application and as a result that land area would be considered within the Beacon fen cumulative assessment work. And then update yesterday from North Kesteven was the land another solar site 49.9MW of again within the town and country planning system called land at Little Hayle, which has got a planning reference, I believe of 21 41337, and that was validated yesterday by the the North Kesteven.

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So we would look to include that within our long list and then follow the Tir process to determine whether or not that could be on the shortlist.

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Okay. Thank you. So they're currently in table 1.3 as a tier three.

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Land of you be thought is which was then um. So it was considered in the long list. But because that hadn't really progressed, because it was just at a screening, that was the only piece of information that was on that site. But that piece of land is now included, a piece of land which is now included in the Beacon Fen and CIP scheme, which hadn't come to public knowledge when we prepared the cumulative list for the February submission. So hence that that connection between the two hadn't been made. So our intention would be to update the long list in order to be able to include make that correction of dropping out UAB, Thorpe and including it within um the Beacon Fen and SIP land area.

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And the little Haile Fen site wasn't in the public domain at all when we were looking at the long list back for the applications. Hence that would be a new site that would be added to the long list and then assessed through to the shortlist process. Yeah. Sorry.

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Apologies in the short list.

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It was.

00:33:36:19 - 00:33:45:21

Yeah. Yeah. Little health and number 14. Yeah. In the shortlist as it's got a screening opinion on it. 49.9MW.

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Yeah. So I've got that that was the reference like that.

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Just that was the 21 to that it's now submitted.

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Yeah. Yes that's correct. And I believe it was validated yesterday.

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Okay.

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Yes, that's going to be one of my questions is how do you deal with emerging applications and projects that are coming in throughout the course of this examination? And how do you intend to update the documents accordingly?

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Our approach at the moment was to consider these sites and some of these sites overlap with the interrelationship report anyway, so they will be picked up within that. But our proposal to you is that the element of cumulative assessment will be updated and submitted to you at deadline two so that that information is in the bundle. And then obviously, because the Yes has to be an iterative process and cumulative is we'll continue to monitor and work with the local authorities on any updates that they may be aware of of

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applications that may be coming forward. And if we need and we can always make a note each time as we come through to each deadline to confirm that that's been reviewed and whether or not any sites have needed to be considered. Um. And submit that accordingly. If any did come forward that needed to be taken forward onto the shortlist, we would advise and determine a timescale with you when that information, what deadline that needed to be with you for.

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Yeah. Okay. Yeah, that's that sounds fine. And to get the version, the next version at deadlines is with a comprehensive update. That's okay. And understanding that the other infrastructure projects will be in the installation report, which I'll come on to next. Um, and in the long list and shortlist, there will be some developments that are in there that as you said, some will have fallen away.

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Um, others I would, I would also wish to know whether others have actually commenced um, development that would be a useful, um, marker as well. And some, some of them which have been approved such as Vicarage Grove. Um, is if there's any update on commencement as well, I'd like to know about that.

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And we'll add that Currently, just for your information, Vicarage Drive has not started construction as at this point today.

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Yeah. So it's like to seek the local authority's view then, Um, whether they're in agreement with the overall approach to the cumulative impact assessments and the selection of developments that are in

the long and short list, Um, and as has just been outlined, how additional developments will be added to, to that assessment as, as the examination progresses. It's just your comments on that place.

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Thank you.

00:37:24:00 - 00:37:56:24

Mark It's for North Kesteven District Council. Um, I think we're in agreement with what has been outlined by the applicant. They've updated the solar intercepts for Beacon Springwell, for Green and Tilbrook as we understand them in their process. The one area where, um, there is some progress and I think it's still. It's number 15 on the list. It's Lincolnshire Reservoir. It's noted as being unregistered. It is actually now a registered and it is at Pre-application stage.

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Um, being involved in that project can say that it's got an extraordinarily elongated pre-application process. Um, but the, the submission has been indicated in quarter one, quarter two, 2026, so it'd be worthwhile updating the list in that regard, we believe. Thank you.

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Yeah, yeah. That that goes without saying as well.

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Okay. Yeah. Lincolnshire.

00:38:31:06 - 00:38:31:21

Thank you.

00:38:31:23 - 00:39:04:11

Ma'am. Mark Willis Lincolnshire County Council. Just to add to that, um, again, it's early days and welcoming, you know, the updating of that cumulative list. But there is another scheme that's been publicly announced recently for a large scale solar development known as One Earth, um, Solar Farm, which is on the Lincolnshire Nottinghamshire border. Um, it's a non-stop consultation stage, but again, think it's worthy of just being included to see how that scheme develops, particularly in relation to how there could be implications for cumulative assessments.

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So just watching that space really.

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Is that an end step as well?

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It is.

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So I think it was announced on the 20, uh, just recently, the last few weeks. Last week, 27th of August. Think it was recently announced.

00:39:33:07 - 00:39:41:00

Okay. So is there anything from Boston, is there any developments that haven't been mentioned that you wish to raise at this stage?

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I think, you know, I don't think there's anything additional that's not already covered on the list from a Boston point of view.

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Okay. Thank you.

00:39:58:14 - 00:40:40:15

Right. If we go on to the relationship report on the interrelationship with other nationally significant infrastructure projects which is referenced in Annex an annex of the Rule six letter. Um, so we would expect to see the first version of that at deadline one as, as in my procedural decision. But just once, just a summary of your approach on this, your approach to other solar projects, um, in the Lincolnshire and area, in the wider region, And what is your approach to other projects such as the one that was just mentioned which may emerge, um, during the examination.

00:40:40:20 - 00:40:41:09

Thank you.

00:40:42:03 - 00:41:13:04

Thank you, Madame Isabelle Hollands again, for the applicant. So within the list that rules the rule six letter, you identified six in CIP schemes. That was Cottam Gate, Burton, West, Burton, Malpas Till Bridge and the Beacon Fen. So those are all are being included in addition to date. Up to date, we were also requesting to include the addition of two further in CIP schemes that have spring well and also a foss green, so those to be included.

00:41:14:01 - 00:41:49:26

Um, after today, I'm happy to go and look at the one Earth one as well. So think to have a probably a comprehensive baseline where we start for Issue one of that report for deadline one. Think it would be useful to be able to include that one as well but will go away and look at that in more detail. Um, it also had discussions with yourself via your team on the content of the report and how it needs to be focused towards the end set projects rather than looking at the wider cumulative impact linking to any that was town and country planning.

00:41:49:28 - 00:42:24:06

But we were, as we've started the reassessment of the short list of the town and country planning sites for the update for the. There are two town and country planning applications which are very or close proximity to the bike offence substation that of Vicarage drove, which is a consented scheme and also Cowbridge Road, which is a consented scheme a bit further away as and its physical presence, but its grid connection enters into the bike fen substation and but that again is a 49.9MW scheme.

00:42:24:08 - 00:42:41:11

So um, with your consent, we were intending to include just those two town and country planning schemes within that report as well, simply to have a complete baseline on um, kind of impact within the very immediate local area.

00:42:44:05 - 00:42:47:11

Um. Is that something that you'd be supportive of?

00:42:48:10 - 00:43:06:23

Yeah. It's an iterative document as well as, you know, um, particularly where there's 49.9MW, which are literally just off being an inset. I think it is. Um, it would be pertinent to include those within the report. Um.

00:43:08:29 - 00:43:41:00

Yeah, the document itself, as you know, it is it's been asked for for for all of the solar projects that that are happening at the moment in Lincolnshire. Um, others are closer together as you know, than this one is. They, they do have more direct cumulative impacts, so to speak. But to get that overview and how that evolves during the examination is really useful and to include the Town and Country Planning Act.

00:43:41:02 - 00:43:46:04

So the parks where the where they're very close by as well think think would be useful. Yeah.

00:43:47:12 - 00:43:48:24

Ready for that confirmation.

00:43:48:26 - 00:43:51:00

The local authorities want to comment on that.

00:43:56:03 - 00:43:56:18

Okay.

00:43:56:20 - 00:43:57:05

Thank you.

00:44:05:17 - 00:44:17:08

That's it for the scope of development session. And next, we'll move on to environmental matters, starting with the ecology biodiversity.

00:44:26:13 - 00:44:57:06

I think so we can look at because they're all interrelated. Matters. Ecology, water, environment. Think we break for lunch now and then we can deal with all those together. Because otherwise. Because there's not some crossover between what's said, if that's okay with everybody. So if we could adjourn now at 1215 and return at 115 for the session on environmental matters. Thank you.