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Open Floor Hearing 1

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:06:20 - 00:00:10:18

The time is now, 10 to 5. So this hearing is now resumed.

00:00:13:16 - 00:00:16:09

Can Michael Dover please come forward to speak?

00:00:31:20 - 00:00:34:02

Good afternoon. Michael Dover, Local resident.

00:00:38:00 - 00:01:09:13

I don't have anything prepared. Just feel should represent the good people that live around here and have to be impacted by the four major projects that are planned. And I know you're only looking after one, but the impact is just exponential when it's added to the other three. I just believe the timing of this thing has been engineered. It seems to be engineered. It's like an attrition. We have to go through all the documents, both governmental and development. We get lost in that.

00:01:09:15 - 00:01:10:13

We haven't got the

00:01:12:07 - 00:01:51:21

equipment that the developer has. We haven't got the legal team that developer has. We are by ourselves. And yes, it's not fair. It's not fair that we we cheer and support our people here. But it's certainly not fair that these highly paid people can come along and desecrate our landscape, take away the farming. The profit made by farming for the UK devalue the property. It's just on fair and think even if one goes through, it will be too much for this this area to bear and will prepare better for the hearing too, and hope more to say to you.

00:01:51:23 - 00:01:53:14

But thank you for giving me the opportunity.

00:01:55:01 - 00:01:55:20

Thank you.

00:01:57:18 - 00:01:58:14

Perry Hepburn.

00:02:17:09 - 00:02:59:29

Afternoon. I'm Perry Hepburn. I'm a resident of Billingham Village and I'm here on a to look at the human side of this. The whole thing was to hell for very many years, and it's just the size of it. That's too big for us to manage. Also, people's mental health is very important. A lot of people who live around here have very stressful jobs and often it's the only thing that helps them manage these stressful jobs by being able to be out of the countryside and enjoy the beautiful local environment that we have.

00:03:01:00 - 00:03:45:21

I have two areas of concern. So I've written down the size of the four projects in the small area and myself have observed wildlife as I go for walks every day because I'm in my 80s now and have been around a long time and the conservation of diverse wildlife has been observed by myself into this and monitored include rare species birds, including Marsh Harrier, Nephilim, Lake night jars, native deer observation by myself covering half a mile of local hedgerow that I walk every day, thousands of bees vital to human existence.

00:03:45:23 - 00:03:50:27

You will agree. Hundreds of butterflies and other insects. Nesting birds.

00:03:52:14 - 00:04:12:10

Those also several years and habitat to name a few. All this will be lost. It will not be found again. About 57km of these types of hedgerows will be lost. There will be no way that can be replaced. This diversity.

00:04:14:01 - 00:04:48:28

The secondary of concern is I know this has been said before, but she's just from my point of view as an ordinary person, not going into all the details of things, but just from where I am, I'm just a one small person living in this area. The solar farms hasn't. The efficiency of that has been done. This is the cotton one. I know that we're talking about that having removed myself for many years, it's obvious that they produce limited electricity in low light winter months.

00:04:49:02 - 00:05:28:25

And should there be a few days of falling snow, for example, they're unable to produce any energy at all. Of course, during sunny days as now they have to be switched off, probably because they are producing and generating far too much. The latest greatest in winter when solar output is the lowest. And this is not efficient. This is just from my ordinary points of view. I propose a smaller array be piloted for their efficiency before this valuable crop producing land is covered by solar panels, which may prove in years to come to be not a viable source of green energy generation.

00:05:28:29 - 00:05:34:11

This for the generations of humans in the future. Thank you.

00:05:36:21 - 00:05:38:23

Thank you. Craig Pace.

00:05:58:14 - 00:06:00:03

Hi, I'm Craig Pace and.

00:06:00:29 - 00:06:28:14

Excuse me. Sorry. I live at [REDACTED] and there is some water there if you do need it. Thank you. Thank you. Live at [REDACTED] and impacted party in Normandy. Normandy by stone. Um, I'd like to share a few views and points today. One being health concerns, property value impact and suggest an alternative logical new route using our land.

00:06:30:24 - 00:07:03:21

And early on in the process, Savills did come and see us and we had a face to face with them. And they discussed about the surrounding land that had the potential impact for the cotton, solar farms and the cable routes. And we mentioned that, you know, if the cables were unlisted go through, we would be interested parties and we'd consider the cables going through our farm. Now we don't farm our land. It's only used as equestrian grazing.

00:07:03:23 - 00:07:40:15

So it made more sense than using actual farmland to run the cables through. However, at the time, they turned around and told us that there would be a survey and we have never heard back from them, nor had we ever had the survey. I'd like to find out why that is. And since then, we've identified that the cable route now runs along our barns and various other properties up the dirt track, and it goes completely sort of to the right, far away from where the end destination is to come back along the front of our house.

00:07:40:20 - 00:07:57:27

And we'd understand why would you not go a more direct route? Um, so that made no sense to us. And we only found this out through Googling and finding the actual new new routes which have been suggested. No communication has been provided to us.

00:07:59:21 - 00:08:00:07

And.

00:08:02:09 - 00:08:33:22

So I would like to obviously state that an alternative route, which I've submitted in the letter previously, is to use the bottom end of our field, which is a more direct route. Should the solar farm go ahead and the cabling required been laid? And that would be more cost effective to yourself as an organization as well as move the cables away from our homes and the impacted parties. Now.

00:08:36:03 - 00:09:03:00

During this development. We also want to state that this will impact us and our horses because we use the bridle way on Cotton Lane, and this could cause us an impact for up to two years whilst this development takes place. And it is the only means of exiting our property with the horses. So we'd like to, you know, stipulate that as well and the impact on us and our lovely good.

00:09:06:16 - 00:09:07:01

And.

00:09:09:11 - 00:09:44:24

So studies also are inclusive when it comes to health organizations that state there is little or no health implications. Whilst others say that this could cause concerns like headaches, nausea. And in young kids, it may be linked to leukaemia. This is the radiation that comes off solar farms and also the magnetic field that comes from the cabling. So, you know, this is a real concern of ours, a personal concern for the houses around where this new cable route has been suggested.

00:09:44:26 - 00:09:50:18

It comes right past all our properties and it's within 10 to 15m of our homes.

00:09:53:09 - 00:10:20:08

And the World Health Organization, who mentioned the solar farms do give off radiation. Now, no one here today has mentioned much about the radiation, but that does cause various side effects. And, you know, we need to be a bit clear that the information is inconclusive. When you look at the health organizations, some parties say it does, some party it doesn't. So I'm not going to go down that road today.

00:10:24:01 - 00:10:58:18

And so it does. It does have significant information around electronic magnetic hypersensitivity, which some people do suffer from. And this is caused by the magnetic fields or waves from the cabling. And now the Who has published the people who suffer from this. It can be a serious condition and it can actually shorten their lives. Um, there is also suggested suggestions that this may or may not be linked to an increase in cancer.

00:10:59:00 - 00:11:02:22

The problem is studies are still in early days suffering.

00:11:04:28 - 00:11:42:24

Suffering from electrical, electronic magnetic hypersensitivity is something we have not considered before and do not know if this could now impact our lives. Once these cables have been laid close to our property, having this installed and then finding out. That is a condition that we might have is worry for me and my family. I most certainly do not want my young family to be part of such a risk or unknown, a guinea pig to say, Would you want to put your family in a similar situation? Think not.

00:11:43:29 - 00:12:21:27

The neighbors down the road have been trying to sell their property. And we heard three potential buyers have pulled out since the environmental searches have returned. Mention the cotton solar project is being built in the fields behind the property. That's indicating it already has a direct impact to the properties in the area. What compensation would be granted as a few websites and studies in the UK indicate you could lose between 1.5 and to 7% in value of your property living near solar farms or where solar cabling is laid.

00:12:22:04 - 00:12:54:28

This is a large sum of money when you when you come to sell or even if you indeed cancel as a result. Not only is this our home, but our future investment which could potentially be jeopardized with the lack of knowledge and understanding or devastation this could have on the housing market with time to come. We would much prefer to. I'd like to reiterate, and we'd much prefer the option of using the end of our field for the cable choice.

00:12:55:15 - 00:13:29:00

Not only is it beneficial to the organization, but for the people living here, This will move the route and the cabling away from our homes and it will cause less disruption as our neighbors use the the pathway to get to their driveway. And this will impact them considerably. There are four more properties which are being developed, and this has started on this route. And the cabling actually runs completely right next to the buildings.

00:13:29:02 - 00:13:54:03

So if you measure the the 10 to 15 meter radius, these homes will be completely within that magnetic field. And I'll leave you with this question. Would you want a solar cabling farm or solar cabling and put right next to your forever home or where your children sleep at night? Thank you.

00:13:56:06 - 00:13:56:25

Thank you.

00:13:58:09 - 00:14:18:05

Thank you, Mr. Page. I just wanted to come in briefly and say that as an infected person, you also have the right to request a compulsory acquisition hearing. We have taken a note of the points that you've made today, but if you did want to come along to a hearing that we may hold further in the process to specifically discuss the impact on your land, then you would be welcome to do so as well. Thank you.

00:14:19:17 - 00:14:20:22

Catherine Booth, please.

00:14:29:11 - 00:15:03:21

Um, good afternoon. My name is Katherine Booth and I'm a resident at [REDACTED] in Normanby by Stow. And just for a bit of context, my parents have been renting this property for almost 30 happy years. And. And if you're referring to the areas of interest 14 two nine, seven and 14 292 mark, the only point of access for us and our neighbours to our property. Our main question today really is that is this really the optimum location for the main cable route? I find that really hard to believe.

00:15:04:04 - 00:15:34:24

Our everyday lives will be disrupted by the installation of this power cable, whereas minimal disruption to our lives would occur if West Farm, Mr. Pace and Ms.. Mun had been consulted. As Mr. Pace has already pointed out, there are already three properties using this access, with four more on the way. Mr. Marshall has planning approved for four properties using this existing access route and you can find that for planning number 144540 for West Lindsey District Council.

00:15:35:08 - 00:16:12:13

I have this question. Can you really guarantee that once Mr. Marshall's for additional properties as well as well as our own are considered around this access route? Will these cables consistently be ten or more meters away from our properties? I find that hard to believe. We have major concerns for the disruption that construction will cause. The National Grid guidance states that where underground cables are installed, the national grid requires an approximate width of 30m above the cables to be kept free from development or planting in order to allow ready access to maintenance and to ensure that the cables are not disturbed.

00:16:12:15 - 00:16:50:21

You can see from the photos that were submitted on the 29th of August 2023 by Mr. Stephen Booth, as well as the plans for the areas of interest that this would not be possible in proposed cable route. Another thing that the National Grid stated was that the average work with width would be 40 to 65m typically. And again, I question how this would be possible or plausible down our access route. We also have major concerns about how the cables will be set. The National Grid cites that disruption to traffic, excessive noise, vibration, visual intrusion and dust generation can all be caused and the construction phase of cables.

00:16:50:23 - 00:17:28:02

This would have massive implications for the properties and the people living in them In Normanby by stone particularly, seems like an unnecessary risk when an alternative route could be proposed. Another thing to consider is that where the proposed cable route is, it's close to the bend on the on the road. And there have been multiple accidents here in the last 18 months, all of which have been attended to by both Pcs and other emergency services. This increase in machinery and the potential for road closures whilst the cables being laid or for it being repaired as the National Grid alludes to, that could be sometimes two and between 2 and 6 weeks for repairs.

00:17:28:04 - 00:18:02:03

In some cases that would further the risk. Think of accidents occurring on this dangerous bend. And. Whereas, through Wesfarmers field, it's already on the straight of the road, not close to the bends where such accidents have already taken place. So surely there is less of a collision risk. And further want to move on to think about the health implications and some concerns about mitigation, what maintenance and checks will be guaranteed in the long term to ensure there are no adverse health implications or other issues arising from the cables being so close to properties on this proposed route.

00:18:02:08 - 00:18:53:29

On the info page, which the National Grid refers readers to who wish for more information on electromagnetic fields, it states that ground level magnetic fields from underground cables can actually be higher at small distances from the cable compared to overhead routes. How can you ensure that this will not adversely affect our health and our lives? Can you predict what the impact will be in the construction phase and disclose what sort of mitigation you would utilise? Has there been a hazard risk assessment about this? And will these findings be made publicly available? So just my concluding thoughts, I would just like to say that this really is not the optimum route for the cable route being so close to houses and would implore you to reconsider the route and discuss with the owners of West Farm an alternative cable route that will result in less disruption to the properties and the people living in them and would be more compliant with the National Grid guidance.

00:18:54:06 - 00:18:54:25

Thank you.

00:18:58:20 - 00:19:09:28

Thank you, Mr.. As in this case, I think Mr. and Mrs.. Both your parents are also affected parties and they have the option of being shared separately as well as what's been said today at Ultra Exposition here in Switzerland. Thank you.

00:19:11:10 - 00:19:15:24

Thank you. Um, I'm now going to turn to Raymond Stansfield.

00:19:29:25 - 00:19:30:12

Hello.

00:19:33:06 - 00:19:35:13

Thank you for the opportunity to talk. Um.

00:19:37:27 - 00:20:11:17

Really today. Mr. Cridland, in your preamble, you advises against the repetition of previous arguments. However, there are two things that want reiteration. I offer these here because I would not wish you to get the impression that the paucity of in-person attendance at the preliminary meeting this

morning is in any way an indication of indifference. Miss Gabbard of 7000 Acres and Mr. McBride of the Council raised the issues of the cumulative effects and the crowding of timetables of contiguous schemes.

00:20:11:23 - 00:20:48:27

And this is reflected in the concerns of every resident I know. And these issues are expected are expressed in our parish meetings. One of my neighbours is not here today, not here this afternoon because he sat in his tractor gathering hay while the weather allows. Another is preparing a B&B for today's guests because tourism supports are of income. These developments may affect agriculture and tourism and there must be hundreds of other examples across West Lindsey. Maybe we can find time tomorrow to be present for the preliminary meeting for the West Burton day after tomorrow.

00:20:49:20 - 00:21:29:06

If Mr. McBride and the Council are struggling to respond in a realistic way, as professionals, you can be sure that the lay residents are struggling too. You have emphasized the limits of your remit in regards to viewing every one of the solar projects as a separate issue. But I've suggested that this will be given consideration under cumulative effects. I endorse Mr. Garber and Mr. McBride in urging you to give this the greatest accommodation you can and to look favourably upon adjusting, where possible, the timetables and deadlines.

00:21:30:03 - 00:21:47:18

These are the issues that, in my experience as an affected residents, are a concern of everyone I speak to. The rules of the planning process may oblige your view to be compartmentalised. Our view of our neighbourhood landscape cannot be.

00:21:48:18 - 00:21:49:10

Thank you.

00:21:52:16 - 00:21:53:01

Thank you.

00:22:04:02 - 00:22:31:01

I just wanted to make the point that this is a primarily written process. And so Mr. Henley and I are aware of the number of relevant representations that have been received from members of the community and local residents. And we will not be taking attendance at either the preliminary meeting this morning or indeed any of the hearings that that are happening today, tomorrow or indeed in the future as any indication of whether there is or is not support. We have all the written representations and they will all be taken into account.

00:22:32:00 - 00:22:32:17

Thank you.

00:22:34:15 - 00:22:50:22

And that completes the submissions for the parties that have asked to speak today. So thank you for your contributions. I'm not going to move on to item five, which is responses by the applicants. Would the applicant like to respond?

00:23:06:00 - 00:23:18:13

Claire Broderick for the applicant. We just wanted to start by thanking everyone for attending today's open floor hearing. There's been a large number of very clear and very detailed representations.

00:23:18:21 - 00:23:48:26

And the applicants team have taken detailed notes of all of the points that have been raised today, and we will be responding to them all in writing, along with our responses to the relevant representations that were made at Deadline one. And we appreciate that there is a large volume of material that supports this application and that a wide range of questions have been asked this afternoon where the answers to those questions form part of the application documentation.

00:23:48:28 - 00:24:39:24

We will provide some clear cross references in our response so that those participating in easily find where that information is located within the examination library. We will also respond to some of the more detailed sort of land specific questions that have been raised today in detailed submissions. That deadline one. And as I said, there's there's been a wide range of points raised today, and we don't really have time to respond to them all in detail, ranging from sort of conceptual, high level points in relation to the role of solar in in decarbonizing and achieving net zero to more specific points raised in relation to this particular project and also how it interrelate with the other projects that are proposed in this area.

00:24:40:06 - 00:25:28:11

And we will be responding in detail to all of those points. One of the points that I did want to specifically mention is that for those not familiar, the DCO draft is a statutory instrument. It contains a wide range of powers, but those powers do have limitations and those limitations can be found in the requirements and the outline plans that are referred to in those requirements and where points have been raised in relation to potential impacts and potentially the scope of the project and will set out in our written responses where there are already limitations within the and how that actually operates in practice.

00:25:28:16 - 00:26:06:28

For example, there's been a wide range of concerns raised about removal of hedgerows. And so in our written response we will try and set out clearly for everyone how the wide ranging powers in the DCO are controlled by the requirements such that there isn't the proposal to remove all of the hedgerows that are shown on the plans. There's very much hedgerow removal to facilitate access and to facilitate construction the cable route. However, there is a need to microsite at the detailed design stage and therefore the wide ranging power needs to apply to a larger area.

00:26:07:14 - 00:26:21:23

So we'll give a bit more detail as to how that actually works in practice. No, we've got some questions on the powers at the issue specific hearing tomorrow where perhaps that point might come up again. But what I wanted to reiterate was that.

00:26:23:11 - 00:26:36:12

It's important not to look at necessarily anything in an individual on its own. It needs to be read in conjunction with the other documents, and we'll try and make that clear when we respond to everyone. But that was what wanted to say. And this afternoon. Thank you.

00:26:37:23 - 00:26:44:08

Thank you. Is there anything else anyone in the room wishes to raise within the scope of this open floor hearing?

00:26:47:01 - 00:26:55:28

Okay. And is anyone else, anybody else taking part one Microsoft teams who wishes to raise matters within the scope of this open floor hearing.

00:26:58:28 - 00:27:02:26

Thank you. I'll now turn you to my colleague, Mr. Cridland.

00:27:05:15 - 00:27:36:03

Thank you. Darren officially can thank everyone who has spoken today, particularly for taking the time to come along and speak with us. As I said at the start, we do very much want to hear from everyone who may wish to express a view and those of you who have particular local knowledge, it does really help us in examining this application. So as said, thank you very much and we have heard everything that has been said. And I also want to finish today by giving you all an assurance that we will take all of the views expressed into account when considering the application and making our recommendation.

00:27:36:20 - 00:27:45:27

Now, if you have spoken today, it would be very helpful if you could please ensure that you cover the points that you've made in writing. They don't have to be detailed. They can be a summary.

00:27:47:24 - 00:28:18:09

The recording of the hearing will be published on the project webpage, as I said at the start, and we'll try to do this as soon as practicable after the hearing closes. If you don't know how to find the project web page, but you do wish to view any of the documents, please have a chat with one of the members of the case team and they'll direct you how you access that. Tomorrow's hearing is the issue specific hearing on the draft development consent order and it starts at 10:00. It's at the same place settings available from 930 and the arrangement conference.

00:28:18:11 - 00:28:22:06

For those of you joining us via Microsoft teams will start at 945.

00:28:24:22 - 00:28:41:01

Developed consent order really will be an issue specific here in the technical nature, but everyone is welcome to come along if you are available. We look forward to seeing some of you there. It's now 5:20. Thank you all again. And this open floor hearing is now closed. Thank you all.