# **HyNet North West**

# DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND WITH NATURAL ENGLAND

## **HyNet Carbon Dioxide Pipeline DCO**

**Planning Act 2008** 

The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 - Rule 8(1)(c)

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#### STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

This Statement of Common Ground has been prepared and agreed by (1) Liverpool Bay CCS Limited and (2) Natural England

Signed
[NAME]
[POSITION]
on behalf of Liverpool Bay CCS Limited
Date: [DATE]
Signed
[NAME]
[POSITION]
on behalf of Natural England
Date: [DATF]

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

- 1.1.1. This draft Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Liverpool Bay CCS Limited (the Applicant) and Natural England (NE).
- 1.1.2. For the purpose of this draft SoCG, the Applicant and NE will jointly be referred to as the 'Parties'.
- 1.1.3. The purpose of this draft SoCG is to set out the agreement that has been reached between the Parties in respect of a number of matters related to the Development Consent Order (DCO) Proposed Development. It also lists any points on which discussions are ongoing. SoCGs are an established means in the Development Consent Order (DCO) planning process of allowing all Parties to identify and so focus on specific issues that may need to be addressed during the examination.
- 1.1.4. **Chapter 2** of this draft SoCG records the consultation undertaken with NE by the Applicant. **Chapter 3** of this draft SoCG sets out the areas of agreement in relation to the above matters, and any areas of ongoing discussion between the Parties.

#### 1.2. THE DCO PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.2.1. HyNet (the Project) is an innovative low carbon hydrogen and carbon capture, transport and storage project that will unlock a low carbon economy for the North West of England and North Wales and put the region at the forefront of the UK's drive to Net-Zero. The detail of the project and the DCO Proposed Development can be found in the main DCO documentation. The DCO Proposed Development and this SOCG relate to the onshore CO<sub>2</sub> pipeline element of HyNet only. Other elements of HyNet are subject to separate consenting processes and are not addressed here.
- 1.2.2. The DCO Proposed Development (DCO) impacts NE primarily as a statutory environmental body.
- 1.2.3. A full description of the DCO Proposed Development is detailed in Chapter 3 of the Environmental Statement (ES) [APP-055].

#### 1.3. TERMINOLOGY

1.3.1. In the Issues tables in **Chapter 3** of this draft SoCG, 'Agreed' and 'Not Agreed' indicates a final position, and 'Under Discussion' indicates where these points will be the subject of on-going discussion wherever possible to resolve or refine, the extent of disagreement between the Parties.

#### 2. RECORD OF ENGAGEMENT

2.1.1. This Chapter provides a summary of the engagement to date between NE and the Applicant in relation to the Proposed Development.



Table 2.1 – Record of Engagement in relation to the DCO Proposed Development

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
03/02/21	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		Biodiversity survey approach
		Subsequent meetings
		Discussions and Outcomes
		The proposed survey approaches and methodologies for surveying aquatic and terrestrial receptors (for example, fish, birds, bats, etc.) was presented for discussion.
		As a result, subsequent meetings were tabled to specifically discuss survey approaches for Great Crested Newts (GCN) and bats, primarily the assessment of commuting/foraging routes associated with hedgerows. Additionally, separate meetings were agreed to discuss Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) considerations.
		The approach to bird surveys, both wintering and breeding was discussed with follow-up discussions to be held pending survey results. Ongoing discussions around this matter.
23/02/21	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		Detailed biodiversity survey approach
		A draft survey approach and methodology (bats and hedgerows)
		Discussions and Outcomes
		A meeting was held to discuss detailed survey approach and methodology for GCN and bats.
		Topics discussed related to Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) scoring, the survey extents, survey techniques (for example, use of environmental DNA) and the use of the rapid risk assessment tool. Utilisation of District Level Licensing (DLL) for GCN was tabled for use in England, along with potential mitigation options for GCN in areas where DLL is not possible.
		A draft survey approach and methodology for bats and hedgerows was presented, discussed and provided to NE for comment following the meeting.
26/05/21	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		The proposed survey approach for bats and hedgerows.
		Further details on the static detector sampling strategy.
		Discussions and Outcomes
		A meeting was held to discuss the proposed survey approach and methodology for bats and hedgerows.
		Mitigation options, including use of artificial hedgerows; sensitive timings for works; Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) for critical hedgerows; standard shrub sizes and providing additional roosting opportunities was discussed.
		Further details on the static detector sampling strategy were provided and concerns raised regarding the comparison element and characterisation method for activity levels was further discussed. The use of aerial tree climbing

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
		inspections as an alternative supplementary approach to dusk emergence/dawn re-entry surveys was also agreed for trees.
18/06/21	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		The amended survey methodology
		Discussions and Outcomes
		The amended survey methodology and approach for bats, particularly in respect of hedgerow severance, was tabled and discussed. This included the use of static detectors to enable a comparison between good and excellent hedgerows, and not to determine the foraging / commuting use of hedgerows by bats.
		The Applicant agreed to update and re-issue the survey methodology to NE for comment. The amended survey methodology was still under discussion.
25/10/2021	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE, Welsh	Key Topics
	Government and Applicant	Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Survey.
		Discussions and Outcomes
		The methodology for the ALC was discussed and agreed.
19/11/21	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		Assessment of the aquatic receptors associated with the River Dee.
		Discussions and Outcomes
		The meeting was to discuss the approach to survey methodology and assessment of aquatic receptors associated with the River Dee. Two potential options were presented; 'Do Nothing Approach', using desk-study information alone, and a 'Survey Approach' utilising appropriate surveys and methods. Potential mitigation measures were also discussed.
21/12/2021	Email conversation between NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		Information on the proposed viewpoints for the landscape and visual assessment (LVIA).
		Discussions and Outcomes
		No comments from NE on the proposed viewpoint plans or photos.
26/01/2022	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE, CWCC and	Key Topics
	Applicant	Discuss the GCN District Licensing for England
		Discussions and Outcomes
		The methodology for the GCN District Licensing for England was discussed and agreed.
24/02/2022	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE and Applicant	Key Topics

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Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
		Survey results to date
		Survey plan
		Design stage avoidance measures
		Construction and survey mitigation principles and approaches
		Discussions and Outcomes
		The Newbuild Infrastructure Boundary was presented and discussed. Survey results to date were presented, as were the survey requirements for 2022. Design Stage avoidance measures were described, including micro-siting around sensitive receptors and appropriate root protection zones to be developed for trees and hedgerows.
		It was agreed that an Ecological Clerk of Works is to be present during the construction phase. It was also agreed that extant data will be utilised as part of the assessment presented in the ES.
		It was agreed that a precautionary working method statement will be prepared for each species, which will be adhered to during the Construction Stage and will detail triggers for when and where licencing is required.
07/07/2022	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE, NRW and	Key Topics
	Applicant	Provide an update on survey results and mitigation plans
		The approach for submission of survey data post DCO submission
		Discussions and Outcomes
		Updates on ecological surveys and the proposal for further surveys post DCO submission, alongside mitigation principles and approach were discussed and agreed. The Applicant will provide monthly updates to NE regarding the DCO Proposed Development and mitigation and will re-engage with NE to discuss BNG.
12/07/2022	Email conversation between NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		<ul> <li>Provide an update on the LVIA due to changes to the design outlined in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)</li> </ul>
		Discussions and Outcomes
		NE provided no further comments on the proposed update to the LVIA assessment and therefore their stance on agreement to approach is retained.
14/07/2022	Email conversation between NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		Provide the completed ALC Survey report to NE and the Welsh Government
		Discussions and Outcomes
		No further comments were provided or given regarding the completed ALC Survey report.
26/07/2022	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE, NRW and	Key Topics
	Applicant	Approach for achieving BNG

Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
		Discussions and Outcomes
		The BNG approach and methodology was discussed, along with offsetting requirements. This included the sources of habitat data, and a tailored approach to the post-development assessment.
		NE noted no requirement for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) to deliver mandatory net gain to 10% until 2025 and NE are pleased to see a net gain proposal for this project.
		NE noted that offsetting proposals align with good practice and pleased to see proposals sought within local authority boundaries.
17/11/2022	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE, NRW and	Key Topics
	Applicant	Update on ecology surveys and mitigation
		Provide an update on project design parameters due to changes to the design
		Review survey requirements for 2023
		Discussions and Outcomes
		Hedgerow width removal was discussed and has increased to a maximum of 15m, which is a change from 10m previously identified.
		Trenchless crossing at the River Dee was discussed and will now be at a depth of a minimum of 15m.
		Mitigation was discussed and required to offset woodland, irreplaceable habitats and individual trees was detailed, along with the total amount of mitigation area that has currently been identified within England.
		Survey requirements for 2023 were discussed, and include bat dusk and dawn activity surveys, static monitoring surveys and crossing point surveys for hedgerows. The results of these surveys will feed into the Detailed Design Stage to validate the survey findings and specific mitigation prescriptions set out in the ES.
06/12/22	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		Discussion on early first draft of the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG).
		Update on key milestones of the HyNet DCO application
		Feedback on any points that can be agreed or still under discussion.
		Discussions and Outcomes
		A review of the baseline, impact assessment methodologies and mitigation. NE advised they require further input before agreeing, particularly regarding endangered species.
		Viewpoint locations have been agreed, NE still to provide comments on LVIA methodology.
		Bat survey methodology was discussed, NE to review version 4 methodology again and confirm details at a future meeting.
		NE confirmed they are happy with the ALC mapping surveys but need to review the CEMP and Peat/Soil management plans.

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Date	Form of Correspondence	Key Topics Discussed and Key Outcomes
30/03/2023	Microsoft Teams meeting with NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		Discussion on Bat and Hedgerow Methodology item.
		Draft EPS Licences
		Species Specific Impacts Updates
		Mitigation
		• BNG
		Discussions and Outcomes
		The Applicant confirmed that bat preliminary bat roost assessment and activity surveys have been undertaken in line with best practice guidelines and that the bats and hedgerows assessment was completed in line with the agreed method developed in consultation with NE. NE advised they willcheck internally and confirm they are satisfied with the approach
		The Applicant confirmed that they are preparing the draft EPS licences for NE review.
		NE to be provided with a draft of the Relevant Representation to address some of the outstanding concerns regarding Species Specific Impacts.
		The Parties agreed to arrange a specific BNG topic call to address any outstanding matters or queries.
11/04/23	Email conversation between NE and Applicant	Key Topics
		Follow up correspondence from the meeting on 30/03/23 regarding BNG approach
		Discussions and Outcomes
		NE provided confirmation of the BNG approach outlined and provided updates regarding management and monitoring timeframes for retained/reinstated and created habitats, and the exploration of further biodiversity net gain enhancement opportunities beyond the current target of 1%.

#### 3. ISSUES

- 3.1.1. This chapter sets out the areas of agreement in relation to specific issues relating to the DCO Proposed Development, and any areas of ongoing discussion between the Parties. The topics discussed between the Applicant and NE are as follows:
  - Engagement, ES & Other Application Documents;
  - Landscape and Visual;
  - Biodiversity; and
  - Land and Soils.



Table 3.1 – Engagement, ES & Other Application Documents

Ref.	Description of Matter	Current Position	Status		
Engagement	ngagement				
NE 3.1.1	Engagement	The Parties agree that engagement was ongoing during the pre-application period (as set out in the record of engagement) and the Applicant has sought to bring forward a design which has had regard to NE's views.	Agreed		
		NE has been formally consulted on the application as required by the Planning Act 2008.			
ES					
NE 3.1.2	ES	The Parties agree that the study area as set out in the ES is appropriate.	Under Discussion		
		The Parties agree that the baselines as set out in the ES are appropriate.			
		The Parties agree that the impact assessment methodologies used in the ES are appropriate.			
		The Parties agree that the mitigation proposed in the ES is appropriate.			
		NE considers that appropriate regard has been had to its proposals in the cumulative assessment having regard to the level of information available.			
		NE concurs with the conclusions of the ES.			
Other applica	tion documents				
NE 3.1.3	Other application documents	NE agrees that its interests are correctly reflected in the Book of Reference [AS-023].	Agreed		

Table 3.2 – Issues related to the DCO Proposed Development - Landscape and Visual

Ref.	Description of Matter	Current Position	Status
NE 3.2.1	LVIA Viewpoints	NE agreed with proposed viewpoint locations to be used within the DCO ES as presented in LVIA Chapter 12 [APP-064].	Agreed
NE 3.2.2	LVIA - Methodology	The LVIA Methodology as set out in DCO ES LVIA Chapter 12 [APP-064] was formulated utilising best practice from NE and the approach was shared with NE providing no further comments.	Agreed



Table 3.3 – Issues related to the DCO Proposed Development - Biodiversity

Ref.	Description of Matter	Current Position	Status
NE 3.3.1	Bat and Hedgerow Methodology	NE's response on the bats and hedgerows survey methodology (Version 2) were noted. The Parties agreed to the revised bats and hedgerow survey methodology approach.	Under Discussion
		The Applicant provided the updated bats and hedgerow survey methodology to NE. NE provided further comments on the bats and hedgerow survey methodology (Version 4).	
		NE sought further clarification on the bat and hedgerow assessment including discount parameters, static detector survey methodology and results, and field survey methodology. The Applicant is engaging further with NE on this matter.	
NE 3.3.2	Bat Activity Survey	NE acknowledge that bat surveys have been carried out during the 2021 and 2022 survey period, and that more are planned. Best practice guidelines are broadly followed, however, NE seeks further clarity to aid future European Protected Species License applications. The Applicant is engaging further with the NE to determine the principle and requirement for any additional permits.	Under Discussion
		NE seeks clarification on roost designation, survey methodology and results and further survey information. The Applicant is engaging further with NE to discuss bat activity surveys.	
NE 3.3.3	Species Specific Impacts – Barn Owl	NE will provide comments on the use of barn owl exclusion measures.	Under Discussion
NE 3.3.4	Species Specific Impacts – Wintering Birds	NE advise further information is required within the HRA to explain the reduced bird survey effort and if sufficient additional data is available to enable a robust assessment of impacts to wintering birds. The Applicant confirms that two surveys per month were completed between March 2021 and March 2022. Single site visits were undertaken between December 2020 and February 2021, providing some additional survey data.	Under Discussion
		The approach to the surveys is considered proportionate in the context of the DCO Proposed Development and the short term, temporary and localised works arising from construction. Transect 2 (along the River Dee) was subject to the most survey coverage given the potential for SPA qualifying species and its connectivity to the Dee Estuary SPA, with surveys completed at differing tidal states to ensure representative results. Given the volume of field survey results accrued across the survey period (2020 to 2022), the Applicant considers this sufficient to inform the HRA and its conclusions.	
		NE have concerns over the conclusions for the Mersey Estuary SPA/Ramsar and Dee Estuary SPA/Ramsar regarding noise disturbance to wintering birds and seek additional detail regarding expected noise levels during works in close proximity to SPA birds. The Applicant is engaging further with NE regarding noise disturbance on wintering birds.	
		The crossing of the River Dee is expected to take up to four weeks (paragraph 3.6.101 of Chapter 3 – Description of the DCO Proposed Development [APP-055] and is therefore short in duration and any disturbance would be temporary. The Applicant confirms that there is also availability of sufficient alternative habitat resource along the River Dee to accommodate temporarily displaced birds, should this occur. Due to the short-term, temporary nature of disturbance and availability of alternative habitat resource, Likely Significant Effects (LSE) were not concluded.	

Ref.	Description of Matter	Current Position	Status
		Proposed mitigation for the control of noise emissions would include temporary noise screening methods, acoustic barriers and management, such as hoarding. As detailed within the OCEMP [AS-016], noise screening methods should achieve a minimum attenuation of 10dB. Following the implementation of mitigation and recognising the short-duration and availability of alternative habitat resource, it is considered that no adverse impact on the integrity of the SPA/Ramsar sites would occur.	
		The Applicant acknowledges NE's advice to consider high disturbance works including piling and hydraulic breaking causing noise disturbance beyond 300m and any such requirement for high disturbance works would be determined at the Detailed Design Stage and a sensitivity test of the HRA would be undertaken, as described within the OCEMP [AS-055] which is secured by the Draft DCO [AS-016]. At the time of writing, the need for piling and hydraulic breaking is not anticipated.	
NE 3.3.5	Species Specific Impacts - Otter	NE advise that all suitable otter habitat within 200m of the proposed works is surveyed. proposed works should be surveyed by an experienced otter surveyor, and should include a systematic search for spraints, paw prints, otter paths, slides, food remains, holts and places used for shelter.	Under Discussion
		The Applicant confirms that surveys for otter have taken place along watercourses and associated habitat suitable to support otters [AS-039 to AS-042]. Surveys have been conducted by appropriately experienced surveyors along watercourses within the Newbuild Infrastructure Boundary and to 150m beyond the boundary, where access allowed. Through this approach a sufficient extent of watercourse and bankside habitat has been surveyed to inform the impact assessment. The Applicant considers the extent of survey appropriate to inform the impact assessment and the appropriate mitigation measures and intends to conduct further surveys of watercourses during pre-construction surveys.	
		Mitigation measures, as presented within the OCEMP [AS-055] have been included to ensure that upon confirmation of a detailed design stage for the DCO Proposed Development, an appropriate survey effort is applied prior to commencement of construction to update baseline results and, where required, inform the need for further mitigation and/or licensing.	
NE 3.3.6	Species Specific Impacts – Water Vole	NE agree with the Applicant's proposal for pre-commencement surveys in search of evidence/activity of riparian mammals (namely otter and water vole) in watercourses crossed by the proposed development, and those within an appropriate buffer of proposed works. NE advise that a licence will be required to cover vegetation clearance as part of displacement method mitigation techniques, as per best practice guidance, where water voles are present.	Under Discussion
		The Applicant confirms that where access has not been possible or surveys have not been able to be completed, a precautionary approach has been applied and presence of water vole assumed. The Applicant is currently preparing draft/ghost licensing which will detail draft proposals for use of the displacement method, taking into account relevant vegetation clearance windows to be adhered to.	
NE 3.3.7	Mitigation	The Applicant intends to engage further with NE regarding this matter.	Under Discussion
NE 3.3.8	Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment	The use of BM3.0 for the BNG assessment was discussed and agreed.  No issues were raised in terms of the tailored approach to assessment and the methodology that is used.	Under Discussion

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Ref.	Description of Matter	Current Position	Status
		NE confirmed that consideration of the BNG Good Practice Principles was welcomed. NE advised that BM3.2 is due to be consulted on and released, and for future iterations of the BNG assessment, NE suggested the possibility of BM3.2 being used if available.	
		The Applicant notes that BM4.0 has now been released. The Applicant intends to maintain consistency in the metric used for updates prepared during the Examination so the effect of any changes can be clearly seen. However, future iterations of the BNG calculation following granting of the DCO would be carried out using the metric available at that time.	
		NE advise that the identification of suitable local off-set sites is undertaken in liaison with LPAs and Cheshire Wildlife Trust. NE note any retained/reinstated and created habitats are subject to long term management and monitoring for at least 30 years.	
		The Applicant can confirm that discussions are on-going with local interested parties and landowners, including Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Planning Authority, to achieve suitable and local off-set site locations, with a view to detailing the outcomes of such discussions in future iterations of the Biodiversity Net Gain report.	
		NE sought further clarity on the BNG report which will be addressed in future iterations.	
		NE welcomes a target of 1% biodiversity net gain but would strongly encourage the exploration of further biodiversity enhancement opportunities.	
NE 3.3.9	Licencing and Permits	Draft European Protected Species Licences will be prepared for each relevant species and submitted for agreement with NE in 2023. These would be a single project wide mitigation licence for England for each species.	Under Discussion
NE 3.3.10	District Level Licencing (DLL)	NE has confirmed that DLL is applicable for the DCO Proposed Development. Any amendments to the Order Limits will require the calculation to be re-run a. Construction works will be overseen by an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) or team of ECoWs.	Agreed
NE 3.3.11	In-combination Effects	NE advises that the in-combination assessment continues to be updated as more information becomes available. The Applicant confirms that as further information becomes available from relevant projects this will be reviewed. If this is considered likely to change the conclusions of the HRA, relevant documents will be updated accordingly.	Agreed

Table 3.4 – Issues related to the DCO Proposed Development - Land and Soils

Ref.	Description of Matter	Current Position	Status
NE 3.4.1	Agricultural Land Survey Methodology and Approach	NE agreed to methodology and approach.	Agreed
NE 3.4.2	Agricultural Land Survey Results	NE reviewed the report and agreed with the general conclusions presented.	Agreed
NE 3.4.3	Loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land	NE advise that the land take figure provided in Table 11.12 - Construction Stage assessment of significant effect does not correspond with Table 11.7 – Hectarage of permanently sealed agricultural land [APP-063], although NE acknowledge that the area presented in Table 11.7 would not alter the magnitude of impact and overall significance presented in Chapter 11 [APP-063]. The Applicant will take account of this in a future revision.	Under Discussion
		However, NE advises that Paragraph 11.2.10 should include reference to BMV agricultural land. National planning policy relevant to agricultural land and soils us set out in Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Applicant is discussing this matter further with NE.	
		The Applicant confirms that following the completion of the ALC survey [APP-133, APP-134] potential changes to the route were assessed against ALC grades and where reasonably practicable, the route alignment was amended to avoid BMV land. NE acknowledges that soils supporting BMV agricultural land will be avoided as far as practicable but state that it is not clear how the route option or site design has been devised to help minimise this loss of BMV agricultural land nor minimise the disturbance of peat soils.	
		The Applicant has commissioned a Soil Management Plan [APP-227] (as detailed in the OCEMP) which will mitigate potential disturbances to BMV land (with the exception of the permanent loss area) by providing appropriate direction with regards to procedures required for soil stripping, storage and replacement. Chapter 4 Consideration of Alternatives [APP-056] of the 2022 ES provides an overview of how key environmental designations and environmental features were fed into the iterative design process.	
NE 3.4.4	Material Management Plan	NE advise that a Soil Resource Plan should feed into this to describe how the applicant intends to manage excavated materials. The Applicant will provide both a Soil Management Plan and Materials Management Plan as part of the detailed CEMP in accordance with the outline [AS-055]. In line with good practice Soil Management Plan will form part of and provide input into the preparation of the Materials Management Plan.	Under Discussion
NE 3.4.5	Soil Management Plan	NE notes that an Outline Soil Management Plan has been prepared and submitted; however, a number of deficiencies have been identified including extending the scope and clarifying points. The Applicant is updating the Outline Soil Management Plan [APP-227] to address these comments.	Under Discussion
NE 3.4.6	Peat Management Plan	NE notes that an Outline Peat Management Plan has been prepared and submitted; however, a number of concerns have been identified including utilising data derived from the ALC. The Applicant is updating the Outline Peat Management Plan [APP-228] to address these comments.	Under Discussion