



Department for
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& Net Zero

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30th August 2024

Dear Mr O'Reilly

**SCREENING DECISION BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE UNDER THE
ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT)
(ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2017 ("THE 2017
REGULATIONS")**

NAME OF SCHEME:

Decision:

The Secretary of State concludes that the proposed works are not EIA development under the 2017 Regulations and do not require a statutory EIA as they are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment due to their nature, location and size. A copy of this letter has been sent to the LPA for information.

Screening decision for a proposed development ("the proposed development") to:

- Replacement of 3 low voltage (240/415v) electricity poles.

Secretary of State considerations:



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The Secretary of State has considered the factors set out in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations, together with the information within the supplied documentation (“the Application”) by Southern Electric Power Distribution PLC (“the Applicant”) in relation to the impacts on the environment of the proposed development and the views of New Forest National Park Authority (“the LPA”). In particular, in reaching his decision the Secretary of State notes the following factors:

1. The proposed development does not fall within Schedule 1 (mandatory EIA);
2. The proposed development falls under Schedule 2 of the 2017 Regulations as the electricity line is to be installed above ground in a sensitive area.
3. The proposed development falls within the New Forest National Park, Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
4. The Applicant consulted with the LPA on 11th December 2023. The LPA raised no objections and concluded that “the proposed development is not likely to have a significant adverse effect on the environment” (document reference: 23/01625OHL).
5. The Applicant provided a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) which was carried out 14th June 2023, the document provided details on work methods, risks to the protected sites, and proposed mitigation measures.
6. The applicant consulted with Natural England (NE) on the 14th June 2023. NE granted conditional assent for the proposed development covering the period of 1st September 2024 – 28th February 2025, subject to adherence to the conditions laid out on the document dated 29th June 2023 (Reference: 1406231328JT).
7. The Applicant consulted with the LPAs archaeologist who confirmed on the 4 August 2023 via email that the proposed development will not raise any archaeological concerns.
8. An ecology survey was carried out and the subsequent “Ecological Constraints Report” was issued on 18th July 2024 by RSK ADAS Ltd (reference: BRT69105-1385(00)). The survey determined that the site comprises an area of Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland



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(a habitat of principal importance), ground flora including tightly grazed modified grassland with areas of Bramble scrub, Bracken and fallen deadwood. Access routes were located through a small patch of woodlands, which may require the felling of one young Rowan tree and one young Silver Birch tree. A pond was located directly adjacent to one of the poles provided suitable habitat for Great Crested Newts. The survey identified that the heathland habitat and along access routes provided suitable habitat for roosting, commuting and foraging bats, birds including Dartford Warbler and Woodlark, Hazel Dormouse, badger, widespread of reptiles and nesting birds were present in the area of the proposed development along with suitable mitigation measures to minimise the potential impact on these species.

9. Considering the Habitats Regulation Assessment and Ecological survey provided, the Secretary of State considers there may be likely significant effects on National Site Network under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017. This is due to potential disturbance to wet and dry heathland habitats. The Secretary of State has considered whether there could be an Adverse Effect on Integrity of the protected site.
10. The proposed development is relatively short in duration (approximately 1 day), the works will be scheduled for a period of dry weather and vehicles will only use the proposed access routes. The proposed development will be carried out using buffer zones around trees in accordance with Streetworks National Joint Utilities Guidelines Volume 4. The proposed development will be carried out outside of bird breeding season, an environmental eDNA survey of the pond for Great Crested Newt carried out and a Non-Licensed Method Statement for bats, Great Crested Newts, widespread reptiles and Hazel Dormouse shall be prepared by a licenced ecologist and adhered to throughout the development. All excavations are to either be infilled at the end of the day or provided a ramp.
11. In light of the proposed mitigation, the Secretary of State is satisfied that there will be no Adverse Effect on Integrity of the protected site, and this is beyond all reasonable scientific doubt.

Yours sincerely,

John McKenna
Head of Network Planning team
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