



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

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Our ref: 1974u
Your ref: JO/RELY E1L5 Smallbrook Farm

27 November 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: JO/RELY E1L5 SMALLBROOK FARM - NEW FOREST
SSSI**

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:

- Replace 1 pole within a span of approximately 104m of 11kV overhead line



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Secretary of State considerations:

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 (“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 and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
4. The Applicant submitted a method statement and requested for assent from Natural England (NE). On 21 November 2023, NE granted assent to the development from 1 September 2024 to 28 February 2025 (reference: 0510231127EC). The method statement detailed mitigations such as conducting the works during a period of dry weather, any vehicles crossing the SSSI or working in proximity to the SSSI boundary will carry spill kits, vegetation along the access routes and in the work will be checked to ensure breeding birds are not present and all excavations will be opened and closed in a single day.
5. The Applicant consulted with the LPA who has no objection to the development and concluded that an EIA is not required as the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment on 23 January 2024 (planning reference: 23/01563OHL).
6. The Applicant consulted with the County Archaeologist who confirmed in communications on 17 July 2024 that they had no objections to the proposed development.
7. An Ecology Survey was carried out at the site of the proposed development on 11 July 2024 and the subsequent “Ecological Constraints Report” was issued on 15 November 2024 by RSK ADAS Ltd (reference: BRT69105-1397(00)). The survey determined the site fell within an area of rough grassland and scrub located between a stream and a hedgerow. The hedgerow primarily composed of Hawthorn including the presence of mature Ash, is species-poor but



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may qualify as an important hedgerow due to its existence for over 30 years. The stream located 20m north of the pole, offers a suitable habitat for Otters. To minimise potential impacts on these species, vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside of nesting bird season. If the hedgerow removal identified temporary removal is deemed an important hedgerow, a hedgerow removal notice may be required. Additionally, works near trees should be buffered wherever possible and conducted in line with Streetworks (National Joint Utilities Group Volume 4). A non-licenced method statement covering Badger, Otter, Hazel Dormouse, widespread reptiles, Great Crested Newt, and Himalayan Balsam should be produced and adhered to throughout all phases of the proposed works.

Yours sincerely,

John McKenna
Head of Network Planning team
Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery Team