



Department for
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& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2173u
Your ref: JO/HINC E4L5 New Forest SSSI

18th July 2025

Dear Mr John 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/HINC E4L5 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:

- Replacement of one 11kV transformer pole.

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 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 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 New Forest National Park, New Forest Ramsar, New Forest SPA, New Forest SAC, New Forest SSSI and an Impact Risk Zone.
4. The Applicant consulted the LPA. The LPA concluded their checks and advised that there would be no significant impact upon the integrity of the SSSI, or any exacerbated visual impact over that existing and therefore raises no objections on the proposed development on 15 November 2024.
5. The Applicant consulted County Archaeologist who responded via email on 26 March 2025 advising that there are no known or possible heritage in proposed work site or along the access route.
6. The Applicant consulted Natural England. Natural England granted assent on 19 September 2024 subject to strict adherence with the following conditions:
 - Vehicle access routes and protective measures to avoid damage to SSSI features on these routes are to be agreed with Forestry England and Natural England in advance of the works commencing.
 - The new pole to be used as replacement should be such that contamination of ground in SSSI habitat from the pole is avoided.
7. Natural England advised that provided that the above conditions are met the proposed works should not cause significant damage to the special interest of the SSSI. The assent covers the period 1 September 2025 to 28 February 2026.
8. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out by Wessex Ecology 20 March 2025. The report determined the habitat across the proposed

work area is a mixture of mainly lowland fen, marsh & swamp. The pole was on the edge of the grassland and just west of a small watercourse with shrubs and trees around it (but not around the pole). The pole had two quite large woodpecker holes in it close to the top.

9. The proposed development is likely to adversely impact the Ecology of the site, in particular vehicle movements and excavations in the absence of mitigations. It is therefore recommended that the Applicant follows the recommendations outlined in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to minimise the risk of impacts on Wildlife and protected species.
10. The Applicant provided a Habitats Regulation Assessment ("the HRA") which was carried out 5 August 2024, the document provided details on work methods, risks to the protected sites and proposed mitigation measures.
11. Having considered the HRA and the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, the Secretary of State considers there may be likely significant effects on a National Site Network site under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This is due to excavation and vehicle movement causing disturbance to the Heathland habitats located in/around the proposed site. The Secretary of State has considered whether there could be an Adverse Effect on Integrity of the protected site.
12. The Applicant has provided appropriate mitigations on the HRA advising turf/soil will be excavated in the correct order of layers and stored separately on ground matting/ Teram sheet adjacent to the excavation. Following completion of the proposed works the soil and turf will be reinstated in the correct order of layers (reversal of the removal process). Works will be carried outside of bird breeding season. Only vehicles required in the completion of the pole replacement will be permitted on the designated habitats. Vehicles will access the site along the proposed access route avoiding significant stands of vegetation. Where vegetation is present on the access route which cannot be avoided, or any small patches around the poles, visual assessments will be undertaken by the construction team / contractor in advance to ensure that breeding birds and reptiles are not present. Should reptiles be encountered the advice and recommendations of an ecologist will be sought. Excavations will be opened and closed in the same day to avoid reptiles and mammals getting stuck in the holes.
13. Considering 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.

14. The proposed development is a minor modification to an existing piece of infrastructure and not likely to have a significant effect on the Natural Landscape.

Yours sincerely,

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