



Department for
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& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2186u
Your ref: JO/MILA E6L5 Castle Hill

18 July 2025

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/MILA E6L5 CASTLE HILL

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 four wooden poles within a span of approximately 671 metres of an 11kV overhead line

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 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 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), The New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), New Forest Special Protected Area (SPA), New Forest Ramsar and New Forest National Park.
4. The Applicant produced a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in December 2024 which provided details on the working method, risks to protected sites, and proposed mitigation measures.
5. Natural England (NE) was consulted regarding the designated sensitive areas and on 9 January 2025 granted conditional assent to the development from the period between 1 September 2025 and 28 February 2026 (reference: 2312230854RM).
6. The County Archaeologist responded on 16 January 2025, following a consultation, stating that no mitigations were required for the proposed development.
7. The Applicant consulted with the LPA who responded with no objection to the development on 7 March 2025 (planning reference: 25/00041OHL).
8. An ecology survey was conducted at the site of the proposed development on 31 March and 1 April 2025 and the subsequent “Ecological Constraints Report” was issued on 16 May 2025 by ADAS Ltd (reference: BRT69105-1454(00), 1525(00) and 1534(00)). The survey identified that at location four, the heather heath, bramble, gorse, and bracken around the poles offered suitable habitats for nesting birds and widespread reptiles. A number of recommendations to mitigate the limited impacts on protected species and habitats were

outlined and will be followed by the Applicant throughout the development.

9. Having considered the HRA, 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 potential disturbance to European dry heath, North Atlantic wet heaths, and alluvial forest habitats along with breeding birds, southern damselfly, and stag beetle, as a result of excavations and vehicle movements. The Secretary of State has considered whether there could be an Adverse Effect on Integrity of the protected site. The works are scheduled to begin in September when dry ground conditions are anticipated. Any open excavations will be closed on the same day. Vehicles will stay on the proposed access routes, limiting their movement onto the designated habitat. The development will take place outside of bird breeding season, and a visual assessment of any scrub will be conducted prior to works commencing if scrub clearance is necessary to facilitate access.
10. In light of the proposed mitigations, 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
Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery Team