



Department for  
Energy Security  
& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2150u  
Your ref: JO/FOIN E4L5 Dorridge Hill

25<sup>th</sup> June 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/FOIN E4L5 Dorridge 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 five wooden electricity poles on an 11kV overhead line approximately 584m

## 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 Special Protection Area (SPA), The New Forest Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), The New Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), New Forest Ramsar, New Forest National Park, and an Impact Risk Zone.
4. The Applicant consulted the LPA. The LPA concluded their checks and raised no objections on the proposed development on 4 February 2025.
5. The Applicant consulted the county Archaeologist on 5 December 2024. The Archaeologist responded via email on 15 January 2025, advising P48 is within a concentrated area of several WW2 Bomb Craters and the scheduled area for P50 (Scheduled monument) extends over existing tracks, recommending all vehicles to keep to the established trackway. If accessing in wet conditions be mindful to not cause additional ground disturbance/ rutting.
6. The Applicant consulted Natural England (NE). Natural England responded on 11 December 2024 granting assent covering the period from 1 September 2025 to 28 February 2026 subject to adherence with the conditions listed on the assent (reference: 1811240751JT. Natural England advised provided that the conditions and advice are met, the proposed development should not cause significant damaged to the Special Interests of the SSSI.
7. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal issued out by Wessex Ecology on 5 March 2025. The report determined much of the habitat around the poles and access routes was heathland (lowland dwarf shrub heath & lowland Fen). Some of the habitat on/ or close to access routes represented optimal habitat for a number of ground nesting bird species including woodlark and Dartford Warbler and with the potential to support reptiles. The proposed works involve vehicle movements

and excavations; activities that could potentially have an impact on sensitive heathland habitats in absence of mitigation. It is therefore recommended that the Applicant follows the recommendations outlined in the Preliminary Ecological Assessment to minimise the risk of impacts on Wildlife and protected species.

8. Having considered the HRA and the Ecological Constraints Report, 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 excavations 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. The Applicant has provided appropriate mitigations on the HRA advising that the proposed development will be carried outside of bird nesting season, only vehicles required in the completion of the pole replacement will be permitted on the designated routes (as per assent plans) and will not drive on habitats beyond these points. Where vegetation is present on access routes which cannot be avoided - visual assessment will be undertaken by the construction team in advance to ensure no reptiles or breeding birds are present, harmed or disturbed during the works. Should reptiles be encountered the advice and recommendations for an ecologist will be sought. Excavated soil will be separated in layers and placed on a ground sheet in readiness for reinstatement in the correct order, excavations will be opened and closed on the same day to avoid reptiles and mammals getting stuck in the holes.
9. 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.
10. 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