



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2274u
Your ref: JO/MILA E1L5 AHCP

21 October 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 E1L5 AHCP - ST LEONARDS & ST IVES 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 two wooden poles within a span of approximately 417 metres of an 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 Dorset Council (“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 St. Leonards and St. Ives Heaths Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Dorset Heathlands Special Protected Area (SPA).
4. The Applicant produced a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in October 2023 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 granted assent to the development between 1 October 2024 and 28 February 2025. As the works could not be completed during that period, the Applicant requested an updated assent for the same scope of works between 1 October 2025 and 28 February 2026. On 6 August 2025, NE confirmed that, as assent had previously been granted and no new likely significant effects would result, an updated assent would not be required (reference: 0712231543EA).
6. The County Archaeologist responded on 24 June 2024, following a consultation, stating that there are no archaeological reasons for concern.
7. The Applicant consulted with the LPA, who raised no objections to the development and concluded that an EIA was not required, stating on 8 August 2024 that ‘the proposed development is not likely to have significant environmental impacts’ (planning reference: P/STA/2024/03601).



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8. An ecology survey was conducted at the site of the proposed development on 5 June 2024 and the subsequent “Ecological Constraints Report” was issued on 16 July 2024 by ADAS Ltd (reference: BRT69105-1385(00)). The survey identified that pole 13 is located approximately 15 metres south-west of a pond, while pole 14 lies 40 metres east of a pond. Although the poles are close to ponds, the proposed works are minor and do not involve vegetation clearance, making it unlikely that Great Crested Newt will be affected. The surrounding heathland and scrub along the access routes and around the poles provide suitable habitat for protected species such as nesting birds, sand lizard, smooth snake, and hazel dormouse. 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, along with aggregations of breeding birds including Dartford warbler and Nightjar, 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 October and are expected to be completed in one day during a period of dry weather. Any open excavations will be closed on the same day. Vehicles will remain on designated access routes to minimise disturbance to the designated habitat, with spill kits readily available. The development will take place outside of bird breeding season, and a competent person will check access routes and work areas for reptiles prior to excavation.
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