



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2365u
Your ref: APJ/MILA E5/St Leonards & St Ives Heaths

13th February 2026

Dear Mr Andy Jackson,

**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: APJ/MILA E5/St Leonards & St Ives Heaths

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:



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- The replacement of three electricity wooden poles supporting an existing 240/425v overhead line approximately 80 meters.

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 Dorset Council (“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 is located within the St. Leonards and St. Ives Heaths SSSI, Dorset Heaths SAC, Dorset Heathlands SPA and Dorset Heathlands Ramsar.
4. The Applicant consulted the LPA, which reviewed the proposed development and confirmed that the mitigation measures set out in the HRA were satisfactory. The LPA raise no objections, noting the short duration of the works and the like- for- like replacement of poles means that the proposal is unlikely to have significant environmental effects. The LPA’s response was issued on 30 July 2025.
5. The Applicant consulted the County Archaeologist who reviewed the plans and advised that, according to the Dorset Historic Environment Records, some military remains from the Second World War have been recorded in and around both locations. However, the County Archaeologist considered it is unlikely that the pole replacements, as described in the plans, would have any significant impact on the remains. They concluded that archaeology is not a matter that needs to be considered.
6. The Applicant consulted Natural England, which concluded that the proposed development would not give rise to significant effects, given the short duration of the works and the fact that vehicles would remain on existing access routes. Natural England subsequently granted unconditional assent on 7 May 2025. The assent is valid from 1 September 2025 to 28 February 2026.



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7. An Ecological Constraints Report was issued on 18 November 2025 by RSK ADAS Limited. The survey identified that the heathland, scrub and log piles provided suitable habitat for reptiles, dormice, nesting birds and foraging bats. However, the report concluded that the works are limited and temporary in nature and can therefore be undertaken under a Non-licensed Method statement prepared by a suitable qualified Ecologist. Further mitigation measures should include:
 - Adhering to appropriate bat-sensitive lighting guidelines for any night-time works, as the area provides suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats.
 - Undertaking works between September and February, outside of the bird-nesting season; and
 - Ensuring ecological supervision of the works in relation to the species identified.
8. The proposed development is likely to adversely impact the Ecology of the site in the absence of mitigations. It is therefore recommended that the Applicant follows the recommendations outlined in the Ecological Constraints Report to minimise the risk of impacts on Wildlife and protected species.
9. The Applicant provided a Habitats Regulation Assessment (“the HRA”) which provided details on work methods, risks to the protected sites and proposed mitigation measures.
10. Having considered the HRA the Secretary of State concludes that the proposed works may have 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. The Secretary of State has considered whether there could be an Adverse Effect on Integrity of the protected site.
11. The Applicant has outlined appropriate mitigation measures in the HRA. These include scheduling the works outside of the bird nesting season, which also coincides with the period when reptiles are likely to be hibernating, thereby reducing the risk of disturbance.
12. The worksite is located on the periphery of the heathland beneath a low-voltage overhead line adjacent to mature pine trees, where predation risk from species such as crows and magpies already limit breeding potential. Undertaking the works outside nesting season further minimises impact on birds.
13. A competent person/ecologist will inspect the worksite prior to commencement to ensure that no reptiles are present. No excavations will be left open overnight, thereby preventing potential harm to reptiles or other fauna. Non-breeding species such as hen harrier may be



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present during the works; however, given that the works are geographically constrained and short-term in duration, no significant effects are anticipated.

14. To minimise habitat damage, works will only be undertaken during periods of dry weather. Turf and soil will be excavated in the correct stratigraphic order and stored separately on ground matting adjacent to the excavation. Following completion of the works, soils and turf will be reinstated in reverse order to restore the habitat. Each location will be completed within a single day, ensuring immediate reinstatement.
15. The site will be accessed on foot to minimise damage and any vehicle movements will be kept to a minimum, with all vehicles restricted to designated access routes. No refuelling will take place on site, and all vehicles will carry spill kits to address any accidental fuel or oil leakage. The works are anticipated to be completed in a single night, over an approximate duration of 10 hours.
16. 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.
17. The proposed development is a minor modification to an existing infrastructure and is not likely to have a significant effect on the National Landscape in which it is located.

Yours sincerely,

John Mckenna
Head of Electricity Network Planning team
Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery Team