



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2442u
Your ref: FEJ684

2 April 2026

Dear Mr Chambers,

**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: FEJ684

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:

- Upgrade approximately 465 metres of 11kV overhead line from single to three phase



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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 Somerset East Planning 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 Vallis Vale Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Mells Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
4. An ecology survey was conducted at the site of the proposed development on 22 October 2025 and the subsequent “Preliminary Environmental Assessment Report” was issued on 12 November 2025 by the principal ecologist at Southern Electric Power Distribution. The survey identified that the woodland and scrub provided suitable habitats for dormice and breeding birds. To mitigate ecological impacts, pole one should be inspected for potential roost features prior to works commencing. A dormouse method statement should be produced and adhered during vegetation removal. Any vegetation clearance should be undertaken between 14th August, and 1st March to avoid the bird breeding season, where this is not possible, pre-construction nesting bird checks should be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist. All works undertaken in the vicinity of trees, should follow Volume 4 of the NJUG Guidelines.
5. The Applicant produced a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in November 2025 which provided details on the working method, risks to protected sites, and proposed mitigation measures.
6. The Applicant consulted with the LPA who had no objection to the development on 16 December 2025 (planning reference: 2025/2189/OHL).
7. Natural England (NE) was consulted regarding the designated sensitive areas and granted unconditional assent to the development from the period between 1 June 2026 and 1 September 2026 (reference: 2611251401VT).



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8. Having considered the HRA, the Secretary of State considers that the proposed development is unlikely to have any significant effects on a National Site Network site under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This is primarily due to the minor scope of the works and the localised zone of impact of the proposed project and the distance to the European site. The Secretary of State has considered whether there could be an Adverse Effect on Integrity of the protected site. The works are anticipated to be completed within two days, with minor scrub removal that would not significantly affect any habitats relied upon by the qualifying species.
9. 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