



Department for  
Energy Security  
& Net Zero

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Our ref: 2424u  
Your ref: JO/WART E3L5 Holton Heath

22 April 2026

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/WART E3L5 HOLTON HEATH**

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 forming part of a 1,008 metre 11kV 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 the Holton and Sandford Heaths Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Dorset Heathlands Special Protected Area (SPA), Dorset Heathlands Ramsar, Holton Heath National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Dorset National Landscape.
4. The Applicant produced a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in June 2025 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 17 June 2025 granted unconditional assent to the development from the period between 1 October 2026 and 28 February 2027 (reference: 1306250934JT).
6. The Applicant consulted with the LPA who had no objection to the development and concluded that an EIA was not required on 24 September 2025 (planning reference: P/STA/03687).
7. An ecology survey was conducted at the site of the proposed development on 12 December 2025 and the subsequent “Ecological Constraints Report” was issued on 26 January 2026 by ADAS Ltd (reference: BRT69105-1676 (00)). The survey identified at the Sandford 3 location, poles 5 and 8 contain potential roost features suitable for multiple bats (PRF-M), with the surrounding wet woodland, hedgerows, and waterbodies likely to be used for foraging and commuting bats. Multiple ponds and wet ditches provide suitable aquatic habitat for Great Crested Newts, while nearby heathland offers suitable foraging and sheltering habitat for this species as well as



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widespread reptiles. Areas of gorse and bracken also provide suitable habitat for hazel dormouse and nesting birds. To mitigate potential ecological impacts, poles 5 and 8 will require three dusk emergence surveys, spaced at least three weeks apart, with a mitigation licence from Natural England required should a bat roost be confirmed prior to works commencing. All works should be undertaken during daylight hours to avoid disturbance to bat activity. A Non-Licensed Method Statement covering Great Crested Newt, hazel dormouse and rare and widespread reptiles should be produced with an Ecological Clerk of Works present on-site during works at all four pole locations. Vegetation clearance should be undertaken between September to February to avoid the main bird nesting season, with access achieved using a vehicle fitted with low ground pressure tyres to minimise impacts on sensitive habitats.

8. The Applicant consulted the County Archaeologist in relation to the proposed works, who confirmed on 3 February 2026 that, due to the very limited groundworks, they had no concerns regarding potential archaeological impacts.
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 the potential disturbance to wet and dry heath habitats and non-breeding birds, 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 anticipated to take up to five days to complete and will be scheduled to coincide with the least disturbing times of year for the designated habitats and species. Works will be undertaken during a period of dry weather, with bog matting installed where necessary to limit impacts on the habitat. All open excavations will be closed within the same day. Vehicle movements will be kept to a minimum, with works vehicles accessing the site via the routes detailed on the assent plan. Following completion of the works, soils and turf will be reinstated in the reversal of the removal process. These measures are secured by condition three of the consent issued under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.
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.



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Yours sincerely,

John McKenna  
Head of Network Planning team  
Energy Infrastructure Planning Delivery Team