

Hi

My name is Keith Ross. I'm a local wildlife guide and filmmaker. I'm part of the Active Ramsgate initiative run by Ramsgate Town Council to encourage people to get involved in various outdoor activities.

I've been filming and documenting the wildlife around Pegwell Bay and Minster Marshes for over fifteen years.

When I wanted to have a bit of solitude I would head out and explore behind the Pegwell nature reserve and by chance found the old disused Richborough railway track that is part of the Sandwich and Hacklinge SSSI. At that time I didn't know it had that designation only that I would rarely see anyone there and that it was a great place to see different species of wildlife away from the coast. It was there that I heard my first Nightingale sing. My first Grasshopper Warbler. My first Grass snake. My first Water shrew. My only Green Tiger beetles. It was a regular spot for Turtle Doves and Cuckoo. Kingfishers use the dykes that run through the fields as a highway from the river Stour to the coast in winter. It is also home to Thanet's only Heronry and Egrettry.

One summer evening I went out with [REDACTED] to see if we could find any Badgers in the area. Instead we watched a Barn Owl fly low over the minster fields with a vole in its talons. It flew up and landed on what we thought was an empty nest box. Located right next to where National Grid wants to build its converter station. Inside were three hungry chicks that I watched the following evenings as they fledged from their nest. It was an amazing sight. I had no idea we had breeding Barn Owls so close to Ramsgate. We put out trail cameras and yes we found Badgers and their cubs. At night they would leave the SSSI and feed out in the fields. The fields where National Grid want to build their converter station. Peregrines used to breed on the Richborough power station cooling towers. When they were demolished they installed a Peregrine nest box on one of the microwave masts as mitigation. That was then removed after a few years and a bespoke Peregrine nest box was installed at the far end of the energy park. In an area that had been made into a small nature reserve by Powergen. They called it the Richborough Nature Reserve. They knew that this was a wildlife hotspot. They built a bird hide overlooking a reedbed where Marsh Harriers were breeding. They knew about the rare Orchids that grew there.

One day I was walking up the track when from a distance I saw two large birds fly into the Peregrine nest box. I thought initially they were Cormorants until one stood on top of the box and began calling. It was a pair of Raven. A bird that has only recently returned to Thanet after years of persecution in the UK. Ramsgate Town Council were so happy to see these birds return that when you walk through Ramsgate you will see brightly coloured sculptures of these birds all around the town. Why you might ask is this bird so important to Ramsgate. Well the story goes that the town of Ramsgate was named after the Ravens as it comes from the Anglo Saxons who called the area 'Ravens cliff gap' which over time became known as Ramsgate. The Ravens bred in that Peregrine box and I would visit in the hope of seeing the chicks fledge. I found one large fledged chick sitting on a branch close to the ground at the edge of a field. The field National Grid want to built their converter station on.

For a number of years I've helping wildlife cameraman [REDACTED] film wildlife stories for BBC Springwatch and BBC Countryfile. [REDACTED] was looking to film boxing Brown hares for BBC Countryfile. I told him the best place to see Brown Hares locally was on Minster marshes so we headed out at sunrise. We never managed to film them boxing but we did film them chasing each other. You guessed it. In the field where National Grid want to build there converter station. On the way back to his truck we spotted and filmed a young Leverett in another field. This was where the Grid stability is planned to be built.

National Grid has chosen this location in order to maximise profits for its shareholders. It is building on fields next to a SSSI that acts as a sponge helping to prevent flooding. Fields that provide food for our native and migrating birds. Land that is part of a wildlife corridor that stretches from the coast at Pegwell Bay up the Stour valley to Stodmarsh. If they get away with this the SSSI will be surrounded by industrial developments that will harm wildlife that is already under huge pressure from habitat loss. The idea of dumping tons upon tons of aggregate to try and build on a marsh sounds like madness to me. A better solution must be found. What is the point of developing green energy if you destroy the very thing you are trying to protect.

Please reject this proposal.

Thank you.

Keith Ross - [REDACTED]

# NATIONAL GRID SEALINK - PEGWELL BAY & MINSTER MARSHES

