

I formally object to National Grid's (NG) proposed change to use the former hoverport at Pegwell Bay as a construction compound and primary access point. This proposal is fundamentally flawed for three core reasons: it represents a failure of transparent planning, poses an unacceptable and unassessed risk to a fragile environment, and will cause significant, lasting harm to community health and amenity.

1. A Failure of Due Process and Transparency

NG's approach to this critical piece of infrastructure has been characterised by inconsistency and a lack of forthright planning, undermining public trust and the integrity of the consultation process.

- **Last-Minute Revision of Critical Plans:** The hoverport's use as a major compound was conspicuously absent from the original Environmental Statement, which explicitly stated only "operational monitoring and maintenance access" would occur there. To introduce this as a major change after the main consultation period is procedurally unfair. It denies the public a meaningful chance to scrutinise the full environmental and social impact of the entire project from the outset.
- **Reactive, Not Proactive, Planning:** NG admits this change is to avoid damaging the protected saltmarsh—a habitat they originally planned to drive through. This demonstrates that environmental protection was not a primary, embedded design principle, but a costly afterthought. It begs the question: what other critical issues have been overlooked in their planning?

2. Unacceptable and Unquantified Environmental Risk

The proposal is based on a staggering lack of essential data, making any claim of "minimal impact" speculative and irresponsible.

- **The "Survey After Consent" Fallacy:** NG has applied for development consent without conducting detailed ecological surveys of the hoverport site itself. They cannot possibly mitigate impacts on species or habitat they have not properly identified. Promising future surveys and an ecologist on-site is an admission that the current application is not evidence-based. Permission cannot be granted on a promise to later discover if the project is feasible without harm.
- **Geological Fragility and Contamination Risk:** The hoverport is an artificial structure over colliery spoil, adjacent to a designated saltmarsh. The impact of sustained heavy machinery traffic on this surface is unassessed. Cracking and subsidence could release contaminants directly into the adjacent protected intertidal zone, causing irreversible damage. NG has provided no geotechnical evidence to assure this will not happen.
- **Habitat Loss:** The hoverport has evolved into a unique mosaic habitat. Its wholesale conversion into a fenced, lit, noisy industrial compound for years represents a direct loss of this habitat, fragmenting the local ecological network.

3. Significant Harm to Community Well-being and Amenity

NG's assessment of the impact on public amenity as "insignificant" is dismissive and demonstrates a profound disconnect from the community it seeks to impact.

- **Loss of a Critical Wild Space:** Thanet is nature-depleted. The hoverport is one of the few large, flat, accessible, and truly wild open spaces where people of all mobilities—including wheelchair users—can experience the coast and its wildlife. Its loss for 2-3 years is not insignificant; it is the removal of a vital community asset critical for physical and mental well-being.
- **Mischaracterisation of "Access":** The claim that "much of the hoverport will still be accessible" is misleading. A narrow strip adjacent to a busy, noisy, fenced construction site is not the accessible, tranquil, open experience valued by the community. The essence of the amenity is its openness and peace.
- **Chronic Disruption to Public Rights of Way:** NG admits to needing between 4 and 40 daily vehicle movements across the King Charles III Footpath and Contra Trail cycle path over a multi-year period. This constitutes frequent, intrusive closures of a major recreational route, severely disrupting walkers, cyclists, and tourists, and contradicting policies promoting active travel and access to the coast.

Conclusion and Request

This proposal swaps one environmental harm (direct saltmarsh damage) for another (potential destruction of a fragile coastal site and loss of public amenity), based on incomplete information and a flawed consultation process.

The Examining Authority must hold National Grid to a higher standard. I urge you to reject this Change Request. NG must be instructed to:

1. Conduct and publish full ecological and geotechnical surveys of the hoverport site.
 2. Properly integrate a truly low-impact, permanent solution into a revised, transparent proposal from the outset.
 3. Undertake a genuine and meaningful consultation on the full impacts of their chosen access strategy.
- Granting consent on this basis sets a dangerous precedent, rewarding poor planning and jeopardising protected environments and community assets on the basis of unsupported assertions.

Yours faithfully,
Mr Carter