

My personal use of this site is a major reason why it should be kept open and not destroyed for the convenience of avoiding the use of alternative, better matched locations that could and should be explored. I use this site regularly as a birdwatching area, not only because of its incredible wildlife interest but because of the highly protected and sensitive habitats it contains. Losing this site would mean losing an important personal connection that directly supports my mental health and wellbeing.

I come here specifically to see these species, and this experience plays a significant role in maintaining my mental health. If this access is removed due to the Sea Link project passing through this site, my wellbeing will be dramatically impacted. Restricting access to the Hoverport will make this far more difficult for me, and I am certain for many others who use this site for a wide range of personal, recreational, and wellbeing-related reasons.

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Leaching and Ground Contamination Risks

The Hoverport is already constructed from and sits upon a range of man-made and potentially toxic materials. Beneath the Hoverport, there are remains of colliery waste that were disposed of into the area. Other materials beneath the site include heavy metals and additional industrial waste.

All of these materials, when combined, make it critical that the site remains intact. The use of heavy machinery places pressure on the ground and could lead to erosion or the crumbling of the protective outer concrete layer. If this protection is compromised, these substances could leach into Pegwell Bay, particularly if the site is subjected to repeated heavy industrial use.

If these contaminants were to enter Pegwell Bay, the consequences for the wildlife and habitats would be devastating. That this could potentially occur within one of the most highly protected sites in the UK is completely unacceptable. Allowing this would set a dangerous precedent, suggesting that any protected site across the country could be similarly damaged or destroyed.

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Environmental and Ecological Importance

Wildlife using this site should not be affected, particularly given the large number of species that have already been recorded here.

Reptiles are known to be a hotspot in this area, and the site likely acts as a stepping stone between other habitats due to its ideal conditions. Orchids and other rare plant species have been recorded here because this is a unique habitat where they are thriving.

Seals, birds, and other breeding wildlife should not be affected by the use of the Hoverport at any time. It is essential that protected periods of the year are respected, and that this site is not in use during those times.

This site is adjacent to a highly sensitive habitat and lies within Pegwell Bay National Nature Reserve. It is a highly sensitive area for wading birds, and the regular movement of loud machinery would significantly disturb these species. Lighting on site should not be permitted for overnight use, as this would cause light pollution and disrupt many species that depend on natural light cycles.

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Seal Disturbance and Legal Protections

There is a seal colony within Pegwell Bay NNR, just adjacent to the Hoverport, which is used as a haul-out resting area and breeding site. The use of machinery in this area should not occur during the breeding season, let alone year-round when these seals rely on this site for rest and recovery.

Grey seals breed between September and December, while harbour seals breed between June and August. Will the proposed drilling period avoid both of these breeding seasons?

Both seal species are protected under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 and are listed as Priority Species under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. The levels of noise generated by heavy machinery, particularly in such close proximity, pose a serious risk to these protected animals.

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Migratory Birds and Habitat Loss

This site supports extremely high numbers of migratory birds that use the mudflats and saltmarsh adjacent to the Hoverport. Potentially hundreds of thousands, and in some cases millions, of birds have used this area over time. The impact of disturbance or habitat degradation here would be catastrophic, particularly as there are no suitable nearby alternatives for many of these species.

The number of birds breeding here, along with other wildlife, would be directly affected by vegetation removal and construction associated with the port. This would permanently alter feeding, roosting, and breeding areas.

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Public Use, Displacement, and Increased Pressure Elsewhere

This is also a main dog-walking and general public access site. It is widely used by people walking, enjoying nature, and connecting with the environment. Removing access to this area will not remove disturbance; it will displace it.

People will inevitably spill over into other sensitive areas, many of which are already struggling with pressure. This could undo years of conservation work that has gone into protecting migratory birds and other species.

The displacement of users may result in increased disturbance in other coastal and wetland areas, leading to the loss of roosting and feeding grounds and a decline in species numbers. This impact alone could significantly reduce the ecological value of the surrounding landscape.

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Inconsistency and Lack of Transparency from Sea Link

Sea Link has been highly inconsistent about how they intend to use this site. There has been no clear or consistent explanation of its purpose, how long it will be used for, or what exactly it will contain.

At various times, it has been described as a staging area, while other statements suggest it will be used as a primary holding site for equipment and materials. These contradictions raise serious concerns.

There must be full transparency about the intended use of this site, the duration of use, and the scale of operations. This has not happened, despite the significant number of people who will be affected by the loss of access and the

environmental consequences.

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Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Accessibility

The impact on the health and wellbeing of both local people and visitors would be devastating.

This site is used daily by local residents, including people walking their dogs, people seeking peace and quiet, and those relying on accessible terrain. Much of the surrounding land is uneven, waterlogged, or physically inaccessible, especially for disabled people.

This is one of the few locations that provides easy, hard-ground access into nature. Removing this would leave many people without a safe, accessible way to connect with the natural environment, which is vital for mental health.

There are no genuine alternatives nearby that provide the same accessibility, openness, and ease of movement. For many people, this would mean losing their only practical connection to nature.

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Lack of Ecological Surveys

No adequate ecological surveys have taken place.

There has been an insignificant amount of surveying throughout this process, and it appears rushed, as though there is concern that a proper assessment would prevent this project from going ahead.

Baseline surveys have not even been completed, despite the fact that these should have been carried out before this site was selected.

All ecological surveys of wildlife and habitats must be undertaken before any decisions are made. The impacts of using the Hoverport, the surrounding land, and the associated displacement of wildlife must be fully assessed.

Offsets cannot be proposed without fully understanding what will be lost, and currently that understanding does not exist.

This is a highly sensitive wildlife site, and it should be treated as such, not exploited for convenience.