

Date: 10th February 2026
Our ref: 533358
Your ref: EN020026



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BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Sea Link Energy Cable

The following constitutes Natural England's formal statutory response for Examination Deadline 4.

1. Natural England's Deadline 4 Submissions

An update of Natural England's position and advice in relation to documents relevant to our remit is provided in the Appendices listed below.

Natural England highlights that a large volume of complex material has been submitted in both the pre-Examination period and at subsequent deadlines. Further, a considerable proportion of this material has been amended and/or superseded by subsequent submissions. This is making document review and advice formulation exceptionally challenging. Unfortunately, as a result Natural England has not been able to conclude our review of all the documentation submitted in time for our Deadline 4 response. Consequently, our aim is to respond to any remaining submissions relevant to our remit at Deadline 5.

A full list of documents reviewed for each thematic area is included below in Annex 1-5 and also listed within each Appendix for detailed comments.

The Appendices submitted at Deadline 3A are as follows:

- EN020026_538243_Sea Link Energy Cable Appendix C4 - Natural England's Advice on the DCO – Deadline 4.
- EN020026_533358_Sea Link Energy Cable Appendix D4 - Natural England's Advice on Marine Physical Environment - Deadline 4.
- EN020026_533358_Sea Link Energy Cable Appendix F4 - Natural England's Advice on Marine Mammals_Deadline 4.
- EN020026_533358_Sea Link Energy Cable Appendix G4 - Natural England's Advice on Offshore Ornithology_Deadline 4.
- EN020026_538358__Sea Link Energy Cable Appendix J4 - Natural England's Comments on Kent Landfall – Deadline 4.
- EN020026_533358_Sea Link Energy Cable Appendix K4 - Natural England's Response to ExQ1 - Deadline 4.
- EN020026_538243Sea Link Energy Cable_Natural England Risk Issues Log_Deadline 4.

Natural England expects that a number of documents will be submitted at Deadline 4. We will make best endeavours to respond to any relevant additional documentation by Deadline 6 if not sooner.

2. Kent Landfall

Natural England wishes to raise a new issue in terms of the contamination risk at Kent Landfall. Further to our comments provided at Deadline 3A on the change requests within Natural England's Appendix J3A [REP3A – 028] regarding the use of the disused hover pad for access to the intertidal, we have since become aware of evidence relating to the potential release of contaminants and debris from further degradation of the hover pad. Hence, this evidence has raised a new risk and issue with the use of the hover pad, which will need addressing by the Applicant as part of the examination. We have provided further detail in Appendix J4 of this submission and added a new risk and issue in both the new 'Kent landfall' tab J and Marine Process tab D in the Risks and Issues log submitted for Deadline 4.

3. Suffolk Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

The impacts to the Suffolk and Essex Coast National Landscape remain a key ongoing issue for Natural England in this examination. Therefore, we have provided a detailed summary of key outstanding LVIA issues in Appendix H4 of our submission to deadline 4. The key outstanding issues remain around the 6 hectare restoration area and the main assessment of the LVIA. Further clarification, evidence and audit trail of decision making in order

to substantiate assessment conclusions is required.

4. Offshore Ornithology

Natural England wish to raise a new issue and note that the seasonal restriction at the moment only applies within the SPA itself. Natural England's guidance on recent projects involving cable installation works is to include a 2km buffer from the seaward boundary of the Outer Thames Estuary (OTE) SPA, as vessels may disturb red-throated diver (RTD) up to 2 km away. We would propose that this be included within an updated restriction and see this as an important component of any strategy to avoid AEol.

We also note that the Applicant has sought to mitigate the risk of an AEol by proposing a seasonal restriction on works to undertake most of the cable laying activity when most of the divers are absent. However, the proposed seasonal restriction (1st November to 31st March) has not been applied fully to all activities. Notably the pre-laying grapnel run (PLGR) will be undertaken over a period with a shorter seasonal restriction (1st January-31st March) and so could occur when birds are present in the first half of winter – thereby causing displacement.

5. Issue Specific Hearing 2 Action Points

Natural England has received the action points from the second round of Issue Specific Hearings (ISH) on 28th and 29th January and will be responding to these within our Deadline 5 submission.

Natural England and the Environment Agency have had a meeting since the ISHs on the 6th February 2026 to discuss action point 73 regarding the potentially contrasting positions for morphological change in Pegwell Bay and the HDD reception pits. Natural England wishes to highlight that the remits for both organisations differ, with Natural England's main concern related to the impacts on designated sites rather than the water quality, morphology, and flood risk elements of the Environment Agency's remit. Therefore, we do not believe we hold contrasting opinions regarding the potential for morphological change in Pegwell Bay due to the presence of HDD reception facilities.

For any queries relating to the content of this letter please contact us using the details provided below.

Yours faithfully

Sustainable Development, East Midlands Area Team

Annex 1: Natural England's Response to the Applicant's Documents Submitted prior to Deadline 1 Relevant to our Remit

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England's Response/Position Summary
Procedural Decisions and Notifications to the Examining Authority		
Additional Submissions – Response to the ExA's s89(3) Letters 8 July and 5 August 2025		
AS-098	Additional Submission accepted at the discretion of the Examining Authority – Applicant's response to the ExA's s89(3) letter 8 July 2025 & 5 August 2025 – 6.3.3.2.B (B) ES Appendix 3.2.B Wintering Bird Survey Report 2022-2023 (Tracked Changes).	Natural England provided comments on this within our Deadline 2 response Appendix A2.
AS-116	Additional Submission accepted at the discretion of the Examining Authority - Applicant's response to the ExA's s89(3) letter of 5 September 2025 - 6.2.4.5 (B) Part 4 Marine Chapter 5 Marine Ornithology (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Appendix G4 of Natural England's Deadline 4 response.
Applicant Submissions – Procedural Deadline A – 8 October 2025		
PDA-026	6.3.2.2.B (B) Appendix 2.2.B Suffolk Wintering Bird Report (Tracked)	Please refer to Appendix A3 of Natural England's Deadline 3 submission for our comments.
PDA-028	6.3.2.2.C (B) Appendix 2.2.C Suffolk Breeding Bird Report (Tracked)	Please refer to Appendix A3 of Natural England's Deadline 3 submission for our comments.

Annex 2: Natural England's Response to the Applicant's Documents Submitted at Deadline 1 Relevant to our Remit

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England's Response/Position Summary
Procedural Decisions and Notifications to the Examining Authority		
REP1-048	6.2.2.2 (C) Part 2 Suffolk Chapter 2 Ecology and Biodiversity (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Appendix A3 of Natural England's Deadline 3 submission for our comments.
REP1-054	Late Deadline 1 Submission – 6.2.4.2 (C) Part 4 Marine Chapter 2 Benthic Ecology (Tracked) (Accepted at the Discretion of the Examining Authority)	Natural England previously provided a response to this document within Appendix E3A.
REP1-056	6.2.4.4 (E) Part 4 Marine Chapter 4 Marine Mammals (Tracked)	Please refer to Appendix F4 of Natural England's Deadline 4 submission for our comments.
REP1-062	6.2.4.9 (B) Part 4 Marine Chapter 9 Other Sea Users (Tracked)	Natural England has no comments to make on this document.
REP1-065	6.4.3.2.A (C) Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report (clean)	Please refer to Appendix B3 of Natural England's Deadline 3 submission for our comments.
REP1-068	Late Deadline 1 Submission - 6.4.4.2 (B) Environmental Statement Figures Marine Benthic Ecology (Tracked) - Accepted at the discretion of the Examining Authority	Natural England previously provided a response to this document within Appendix E3A. However, please also refer to our Deadline 4 response in Appendix D4.
REP1-124	9.72.1 Applicant's Response to Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) Action Points - Deadline 1	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.

Annex 3: Natural England's Response to the Applicant's Documents Submitted at Deadline 1A Relevant to our Remit

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England's Response/Position Summary
REP1A-001	9.38.2 Deadline 1A Cover Letter	Natural England has no comments on this document.
REP1A-004	6.2.1.4 (D) Part 1 Introduction Chapter 4 Description of the Proposed Project (Tracked)	Natural England previously provided a response to this document within Appendix E3A. However, please also refer to our Deadline 4 response in Appendix D4.
REP1A-012	6.2.4.11 (B) Part 4 Marine Chapter 11 Inter-Project Cumulative Effects (Tracked Changes)	Natural England's response to this document is provided in Appendix D4 of our Deadline 4 response.
REP1A-016	6.3.3.2.B (C) ES Appendix 3.2.B Wintering Bird Survey Report 2022-2023 (Tracked changes)	Please refer to Appendix A2 of Natural England's Deadline 2 submission for comments.
REP1A-018	6.3.3.2.C (B) ES Appendix 3.2.C Wintering Bird Survey Report 2023-2024 (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Appendix A2 of Natural England's Deadline 2 submission for comments.
REP1A-020	6.3.3.2.D (B) ES Appendix 3.2.D Breeding Bird Survey Report 2023 (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Appendix A2 of Natural England's Deadline 2 submission for comments.
REP1A-022	6.3.3.2.E (B) ES Appendix 3.2.E Breeding Bird Survey Report 2024 (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Appendix A2 of Natural England's Deadline 2 submission for comments.
REP1A-024	6.3.3.2.F (B) ES Appendix 3.2.F Vantage Point Survey Report (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Appendix A2 of Natural England's Deadline 2 submission for comments.
REP1A-026	6.12 (C) Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Report (Tracked changes)	Please refer to Appendix A2 of Natural England's Deadline 2 submission for comments.
REP1A-030	7.11.1 (B) Design Approach Document - Suffolk (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Appendix A2 of Natural England's Deadline 2 submission for comments.
REP1A-032	7.11.2 (B) Design Approach Document - Kent (Tracked Changes)	Please see our Deadline 2 Appendix B2 for comments on this document.
REP1A-033	9.37 Applicant's Responses to Supplementary Agenda Additional Questions for Issue Specific Hearing 1	Natural England has no comments.
REP1A-036	9.70 Applicant's Written Summary of Oral Submissions to Issue Specific Hearing 1	Natural England has no comments.

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England's Response/Position Summary
REP1A-037	9.72.2 Applicant's Response to Issue Specific Hearing 1 Action Points	Natural England has no comment.
Change Request Submissions		
CR1-001	9.76.1 Change Request Cover Letter	Please refer to Appendix A3 of Natural England's Deadline 3 submission for our comments.
CR1-002	2.2 Location Plans (Version 2, change request)	Please refer to Appendix A3 of Natural England Deadline 3 submission for our comments.
CR1-003	2.3 (C) Land Plans Part 1 of 2 (Version 2, change request)	Please refer to Appendix A3 of Natural England's Deadline 3 submission for our comments.
CR1-004	2.3 (C) Land Plans Part 1 of 2 Summary of Changes (Version 2, change request)	Please refer to Appendix A3 of Natural England's Deadline 3 submission for our comments.
CR1-005	2.3 (C) Land Plans Part 2 of 2 (Version 2, change request)	Please refer to Appendix A3 of Natural England's Deadline 3 submission for our comments.
CR1-006	2.3 (C) Land Plans Summary of Changes Part 2 of 2 (Version 2, change request)	Please refer to Appendix A3 of Natural England's Deadline 3 submission for our comments.
CR1-007	2.5.1 (B) Works Plans - Suffolk (Version 2, change request)	Please refer to Appendix A3 of Natural England's Deadline 3 submission for our comments.
CR1-008	2.5.2 (B) Works Plans - Kent (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-010	2.6 Traffic Regulation Order Plans (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-011	2.7 (B) Access, Rights of Way and Public Rights of Navigation Plans (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-012	2.8.1 Statutory and Non Statutory Sites of Nature Conservation Geological and Landscape Importance - Suffolk (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-013	2.8.2 Statutory and Non Statutory Sites of Nature Conservation Geological and Landscape Importance - Kent (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
CR1-015	2.9.1 Habitats of Protected Species and Important Habitats - Suffolk (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment on this document.

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England's Response/Position Summary
CR1-016	2.9.2 Habitats of Protected Species and Important Habitats - Kent (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comments on this document.
CR1-017	2.9.3 CONFIDENTIAL Habitats of Protected Species - Location of Badger Setts Plans - Suffolk (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment on this document..
CR1-018	2.9.4 CONFIDENTIAL Habitats of Protected Species - Location of Badger Setts Plans - Kent (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
CR1-019	2.10.1 Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites and Features of the Historic Environment - Suffolk (version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-020	2.10.2 Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites and Features of the Historic Environment - Kent (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
CR1-021	2.10.3 Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites and Features of the Historic Environment - Offshore (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
CR1-022	2.11 Water Bodies in the River Basin Management Plans (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-023	2.12 Trees and Important Hedgerows to be Removed or Managed Plans (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-024	2.14.1 Indicative General Arrangements Plans - Suffolk (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-025	2.14.2 Indicative General Arrangements Plans - Kent (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
CR1-026	2.14.3 Indicative General Arrangements Plans - Offshore (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
CR1-030	3.2 (D) (Version 2, Change Request) Explanatory Memorandum (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Natural England's submission at Deadline 2 for our comments.
CR1-039	4.2.3 (B) SoR Appendix C Special Category Land Report (Version 2, change request) (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Natural England submission at deadline 2 for our comments.
CR1-041	7.5.1.1 (B) Construction Traffic Management and Travel Plan Suffolk (Version 2 - change request) (clean)	Natural England has no comments to make on this document.
CR1-042	7.5.1.1 (B) Outline Construction Traffic Management and Travel Plan Suffolk (Version 2 - change request) (tracked change)	Natural England has no comment to make on this document

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England's Response/Position Summary
CR1-044	7.5.3.2 (B) CEMP Appendix B Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) (Version 2, change request) (Tracked)	Please refer to Natural England's submission at deadline 2 for comments.
CR1-046	7.5.7.1 (B) Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan - Suffolk (Version 2, change request) (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Natural England's submission at deadline 2 for comments.
CR1-048	7.5.9.1 Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan - Suffolk (version 2 - change request) (Tracked Changes)	Please refer to Natural England's submission at deadline 2 for comments.
CR1-052	9.76.2 (A) Change Request Report	Natural England's response to this document is provided in Appendix D4.
CR1-053	9.76.3 (A) Change Request Consultation Report	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
CR1-054	9.76.4 Change Request Schedule of Change	Natural England has no comments to make on this document.
CR1-055	9.76.5 Change Request: Addendum to Volume 6 Environmental Statement	Natural England's response to this document is provided in Appendix D4.
CR1-056	9.76.5.1 Change Request: Appendix A Saltmarsh Technical Note	Natural England's response to this document is provided in Appendix D4. Natural England may provide a further response on this document in relation to Benthic and Kent Onshore at Deadline 5
CR1-057	9.76.5.2 Change Request Appendix B Geophysical Survey Report	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-058	9.76.5.3 Change Request Appendix C Tree Constraints Plans Kent Onshore Scheme	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
CR1-059	9.76.5.4 Change Request Appendix D Tree Protection Plans Kent Onshore Scheme	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
CR1-060	9.76.5.5 Change Request Appendix E Updated Visualisations for Change 2	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-061	9.76.5.6 Change Request Appendix F Change 3 Phase 1 Habitat Survey Results (Redacted)	Natural England has no comment on this document.

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England's Response/Position Summary
CR1-062	9.76.5.7 Change Request Appendix G Tree Survey Report Schedule Extract Suffolk Onshore Scheme	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-063	9.76.5.8 Change Request Appendix H Tree Constraints Plans Suffolk Onshore Scheme	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-064	9.76.5.9 Change Request Appendix I Tree Protection Plans Suffolk Onshore Scheme	Natural England has no comment on this document.
CR1-065	9.76.5.10 Change Request Appendix J Change 4 Phase 1 Habitat Survey Results	Natural England has no comment on this document.
Procedural Documents		
PD-017	Examining Authority's Written Questions 1 (ExQ1)	Natural England has provided our response within our Deadline 4 Appendix K4.

Annex 4: Natural England's Response to the Applicant's Documents Submitted at Deadline 2 Relevant to our Remit

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England's Response/Position Summary
REP2-002	2.4 (B) Special Category and Crown Land Plans Part 2 of 2 Summary of Changes (Version 2, change request)	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
REP2-004	6.2.4.5 (C) Part 4 Marine Chapter 5 Marine Ornithology (Tracked)	Natural England has provided our response within our Deadline 4 Appendix G4.
REP2-008	6.4.4.5 (B) ES Figures Marine Ornithology (Tracked)	Natural England has provided our response within our Deadline 4 Appendix G4
REP2-010	6.6 (D) Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (Tracked)	Natural England's comments are provided within Appendix E3A of our Deadline 3 submission and within our Deadline 4 Appendix G4
REP2-012	9.13 (B) Pegwell Bay Construction Method Technical Note (Tracked)	Natural England's response to this document is in Deadline 3 Appendix J3A and Deadline 4 Appendix D4.
REP2-013	9.28 Winter Bird Use of Golden Plover Enhancement Area	Natural England has no comments to make on this document.

Annex 5: Natural England's Response to the Applicant's Documents Submitted at Deadline 3 Relevant to our Remit

PINS Document Reference	Document Name	Natural England's Response/Position Summary
REP3-001	9.38.4 Cover Letter	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
REP3-002	2.3 (D) Land Plans Part 1 of 2	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
REP3-003	2.3 (D) Land Plans Part 2 of 2	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
REP3-004	2.4 (C) Special category and Crown Land Plans Part 1 of 2	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.

REP3-005	2.4 (C) Special category and Crown Land Plans Part 2 of 2	Natural England has no comment to make on this document.
REP3-007	3.1 (F) Draft Development Consent Order (Tracked)	Natural England will provide a response to this document at Deadline 5
REP3-009	3.2 (E) Explanatory Memorandum (Tracked)	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-019	4.3 (D) Book of Reference (Tracked Changes)	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-021	6.2.4.1 (D) Part 4 Marine Chapter 1 Physical Environment (Tracked)	Natural England's response to this document is provided in Appendix D4.
REP3-022	6.2.4.4 (F) Marine Chapter 4 Marine Mammals (Tracked)	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-025	6.4.4.1 (C) ES Figures Marine Physical Environment (Tracked)	Natural England has responded within our Deadline 4 response Appendix D4.
REP3-027	6.4.4.5 (C) ES Figures Marine Ornithology (Tracked)	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-029	6.6 (E) Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (Tracked)	Natural England's response to this document is provided in Appendix D4 and within Appendix E3 of our Deadline 3 response. Natural England may provide further responses on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-053	7.5.6.1 (C) Outline Air Quality Management Plan - Suffolk (Tracked Changes)	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-055	7.5.6.2 (B) Air Quality Management Plan - Kent (Tracked changes)	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-057	9.7 (D) (Deadline 3) Applicant's Schedule of Changes to the Draft Development Consent Order (Tracked Changes)	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-060	9.17.1 Suffolk Drainage Strategy	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-061	9.17.2 Kent Drainage Strategy	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.

REP3-064	9.36 Applicants Comments on Other Submissions Received at Deadline 2	Natural England will review but will only provide comment on this if requested as per previous advice.
REP3-069	9.73 Applicant's Responses to First Written Questions	Natural England's response to this document is provided in Appendix H4.
REP3-070	9.73.1 Applicant's Responses to First Written Questions - Appendices	Natural England's response to this document is provided in Appendix H4.
REP3-073	9.77 (D) Application and Examination Document Tracker	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-075	9.82 Operational Noise Contour Plan for Saxmunham Converter Station	Natural England will provide a response on this document at Deadline 5.
REP3-077	9.83 Outline Code of Construction Practice (Tracked)	Natural England has provided comment within our Deadline 4 response in Appendix J4.
REP3-079	9.84 Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) (Tracked)	Natural England's response to this document is provided in Appendix D4.