



THE PLANNING ACT 2008

THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE) RULES
2010

Sea Link Energy Cable

Appendix B5 to the Natural England Deadline 5 Submission

Natural England's Additional Comments on the Kent Onshore

For:

The construction and operation of the Sea Link Energy Cable.

Planning Inspectorate Reference EN020026

11th March 2026

Appendix B5 – Natural England’s advice on documentation related to Kent Onshore Ecology.

In formulating these comments, the following documents have been considered in relation to the impacts of the Sea Link Energy cable on Kent Onshore Ecology:

- REP3-029: 6.6 (E) Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (Tracked)
- REP4-068: 7.5.7.2 (C) Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan - Kent (Tracked Changes)
- REP4-222: 6.2.3.2 (E) Part 3 Kent Chapter 2 Ecology and Biodiversity (Tracked)
- REP4-234: 9.84 (B) Register of Environmental Commitments (REAC) (Tracked)
- REP4-242: 9.86 (B) Applicant's Comments on Other Submissions Received at Deadlines 3 and 3A (Tracked Changes)

Natural England have reviewed, but have no comments to make on the following documents in relation to onshore matters:

- REP3-001: 9.38.4 Cover Letter
- REP3-061: 9.17.2 Kent Drainage Strategy
- REP3-069: 9.73 Applicant's Responses to First Written Questions
- REP3-070: 9.73.1 Applicant's Responses to First Written Questions - Appendices
- REP3-077: 9.83 Outline Code of Construction Practice (Tracked)
- REP3-079: 9.84 Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) (Tracked)
- REP4-003: 2.3 (E) Land Plans Part 2 of 2
- REP4-007: 2.5.2 (C) Works Plans – Kent
- REP4-044: 6.3.3.9.B (B) ES Appendix 3.9.B Kent Construction Noise and Vibration Data (Tracked Changes)
- REP4-079: 9.28 (B) Winter Bird Use of Golden Plover Enhancement Area (Tracked Changes)
- REP4-226: 7.12.2 (B) Design Principles - Kent (Tracked)
- REP4-233: 9.83 (B) Outline Code of Construction Practice (Tracked)

For Standard Advice for Air Quality Impacts in Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects please refer to Annex 1 of Appendix B3 to the Natural England Deadline 3 Submission [REP3-117].

Detailed Comments

Table 1: Natural England’s advice on Kent Onshore Ecology – Habitats Regulations Assessment

Document reviewed: [REP3-029] 6.6 (E) Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (Tracked)			
NE Ref	Section	Key Concern and/or Update	Natural England’s Advice to Resolve Issue
B5.1	4.4.21	References to loss of functionally linked land have not been updated to show as a construction phase impact rather than an operational phase impact. Natural England notes that the Applicant has questioned whether this change is essential in their response to our Relevant Representations comment B19.	Natural England advises that while the change is not essential to the outcome of the assessment, as the impact has still been considered and satisfactorily mitigated, it should be made for completeness.
B5.2		Natural England notes that regarding matters relating to air quality impacts although an updated HRA has been provided, there are no apparent changes that would change our position.	<p>In a letter dated 16 October 2025 Natural England informed local authorities and the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) that we are changing how it responds to consultations that might affect air quality.</p> <p>This advice will be based on our best scientific understanding of how to assess development impacts on air quality.</p> <p>Natural England has previously provided bespoke air quality advice on this project in our Relevant Representations dated 23 June 2025 (EN020026). We have reviewed this case and after careful consideration, concluded that the air quality related aspects arising from this DCO can be addressed using our new standard advice, please see previous advice in response [REP3-117] Appendix B3. Therefore, we will not be providing any further bespoke advice on this case. Though it would be helpful for the</p>

			Applicant to demonstrate how they have taken our advice into account.
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Table 2: Natural England’s advice on Kent Onshore Ecology: Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

Document reviewed: [REP4-068] 7.5.7.2 (C) Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan - Kent (Tracked Changes)			
NE Ref	Section	Key Concern and/or Update	Natural England’s Advice to Resolve Issue
B5.3	3.3.5	<p>Natural England notes that “<i>Noise monitoring would be included adjacent to the SSSI to confirm the mitigation measures met the required noise thresholds</i>”, and that “<i>Any works causing noise levels above 60dB L_{Amax}, will take place outside the bird breeding season (March to September included)</i>”, which we welcome.</p> <p>However, we also note that “<i>Seasonal restriction on any activities relating to construction of the Minster Converter Station and Substation that are calculated, following detailed design, to be above 60dB L_{Amax} at the boundary of the SSSI, are to be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March to June).</i>”</p>	<p>It remains Natural England’s advice that the bird breeding season should be considered to be March to September inclusive, and that any works which are likely to disturb breeding birds should preferably be timed to avoid these months wherever practicable.</p> <p>However, where this is not practicable, Natural England advises that an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) is appointed to undertake a thorough check of all vegetation for any signs of breeding activity before works proceed, and that works stop if necessary to avoid disturbance to breeding birds.</p> <p>We note that section 1.6.1 of this document has been updated to include reference to an ECoW being appointed, which we welcome. As such, we ask that the Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) is updated to include reference to this measure under B45, B50 and B65 (similarly to how B02 has been worded under REP4-234 9.84 (B) REAC February 2026, for example).</p>

			Provided that works are timed to avoid the breeding bird season wherever practicable, and an ECoW is appointed to oversee all relevant works, and these commitments are secured within a named plan/document, Natural England will be satisfied no significant impact upon Sandwich Bay to Hacklinge Marshes SSSI due to construction disturbance.
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Table 3: Natural England’s advice on Kent Onshore Ecology - Chapter 2 Ecology and Biodiversity

Document reviewed: [REP4-222] 6.2.3.2 (E) Part 3 Kent Chapter 2 Ecology and Biodiversity (Tracked)			
NE Ref	Section	Key Concern and/or Update	Natural England’s Advice to Resolve Issue
B5.4	2.9.216	Natural England notes that additional information has been provided to rule out impacts from back-up generator emissions on Sandwich Bay to Hacklinge Marshes SSSI.	Based on the information provided, Natural England can concur with the conclusion of no effects to the SSSI.

Table 4: Natural England’s advice on Kent Onshore Ecology - Register of Environmental Commitments

Document reviewed: [REP4-234] 9.84 (B) Register of Environmental Commitments (REAC) (Tracked)			
NE Ref	Section	Key Concern and/or Update	Natural England’s Advice to Resolve Issue
B5.6	B45	Natural England notes that this measure, proposed to address impacts on breeding birds from the installation of overhead line pylons, now states that these works “ <i>will either take place outside the bird breeding season or will only occupy approximately two months of the breeding season unless otherwise agreed with Natural England.</i> ” We advise that it is not clear what this means.	Natural England refer the Applicant to our advice provided above under REP4-068: 7.5.7.2 (C), regarding avoiding construction during the breeding bird season where practicable, securing an ECoW to oversee all relevant works and updating your REAC measures to reflect this.
B5.7	B50	Natural England notes that this measure, proposed to address disturbance to breeding birds relating to construction of the Minster Converter Station and Substation, continues to reference the breeding bird season as March to June.	Natural England refers you to our advice provided above under REP4-068: 7.5.7.2 (C), regarding avoiding construction during the breeding bird season where practicable, securing an ECoW to oversee all relevant works and updating your REAC measures to reflect this.
B5.8	B65	Natural England notes that this measure, proposed to address Impact on breeding birds due to tree height reduction works, continues to reference the breeding bird season as March to June.	Natural England refers you to our advice provided above under REP4-068: 7.5.7.2 (C), regarding avoiding construction during the breeding bird season where practicable, securing an ECoW to oversee all relevant works and updating your REAC measures to reflect this.
B5.9	GG31	Natural England notes that this measure, proposed to address environmental impacts associated with decommissioning works, has been updated to reflect our previous advice.	Natural England welcomes this change and considers this issue resolved.

Table 5: Natural England’s advice on Kent Onshore Ecology - Applicant's Comments on Other Submissions

Document reviewed: [REP4-242] 9.86 (B) Applicant's Comments on Other Submissions Received at Deadlines 3 and 3A (Tracked Changes)			
NE Ref	Section	Key Concern and/or Update	Natural England’s Advice to Resolve Issue
B5.10	Table 3.2, Section 2.9.199	Natural England notes the applicant’s comment in response to our advice regarding works being restricted for the entirety of the breeding bird season (March-September inclusive).	<p>Natural England notes that this appears to be an ongoing issue and wish to proceed in a pragmatic and proportionate way. As such, we refer again to our advice above provided above under REP4-068: 7.5.7.2 (C), regarding avoiding construction during the breeding bird season where practicable, securing an ECoW to oversee all relevant works and updating your REAC measures to reflect this.</p> <p>Provided this approach is appropriately secured in a named plan/document, Natural England is satisfied that any necessary tree works, which we understand are likely to be minimal and infrequent, should be able to avoid impacts on breeding birds.</p>