



**The Examining Authority's Third Written Questions (ExQ3)
Issued on 23 March 2026**

**Answers from the
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds**

**Submitted for Deadline 6
13 April 2026**

Planning Act 2008 (as amended)

In the matter of:

**Application by National Grid Electricity Transmission for the
Sea Link Project**

**Planning Inspectorate Ref: EN20026
RSPB Registration Identification Ref: [REDACTED]**

Ecology and biodiversity**3ECOL2**

Applicant

Access routes for vehicles within Sandlings Special Protection Area (SPA) and Leiston-Aldeburgh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Provide evidence of a signed legal agreement with RSPB regarding vehicle and pedestrian access at the SPA and SSSI or make provision for specified routing and access arrangements to be agreed with RSPB within the Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) or dDCO. RSPB may wish to comment on progress towards an agreement or the necessary wording for a REAC or dDCO commitment.

		<p>RSPB response:</p> <p>We are not aware of any access required within the Sandlings SPA – all access required within the RSPB landholding is within part of the Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI which falls outside the Sandlings SPA.</p> <p>With regard access at RSPB North Warren (within the Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI), following productive discussions with the Applicant, it has been agreed in principle that routes will not require any surfacing and that access required during construction will be on foot only, except in the case of an emergency, e.g. a frac out, in which case access by 4x4, quad bike and/or tractor towing a bowser may be required following consultation with RSPB. We have requested these points are formalised and secured via a REAC commitment. We have also requested a commitment that vegetation groups H1099S and G82S which may require management to facilitate access, will only be managed when required to re-establish the width to no more than 1m (the statutory minimum for a footpath) and will only be managed using hand tools unless otherwise agreed with us. We therefore suggest the inclusion of the following two REAC commitments (the first is based on the Applicant’s wording in our SoCG):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Access during construction will be during HDD drilling works and will be on foot only for “spotters”. In an emergency (e.g. in the unlikely event of a frac out) vehicle access may be required for the delivery of equipment (4x4 or quad bike) and/or removal of drilling fluid (4x4 or tractor towing a bowser). RSPB would be consulted to agree appropriate routes should emergency access be required. The vehicle access routes are only for emergency use during the construction of the Proposed Project not during operation. Access routes will not require any surfacing unless agreed in advance that it is required with the RSPB. Monitoring as stated above will be by foot; there will be no requirement to leave any equipment within the North Warren Nature Reserve. The Applicant will only require access during the construction phase of the Proposed Project. The Applicant will never require access to the cable from the surface.2. Vegetation groups H1099S and G82S within RSPB North Warren will only be managed when required to re-establish the width to no more than 1m (the statutory minimum for a footpath) and will only be managed using hand tools unless otherwise agreed with RSPB. No other vegetation management will be required.
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Air quality		
3AQ4	ESC, TDC, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), NE	<p>Outline Air Quality Management Plan (oAQMP) and other air quality control measures (REAC and oCEMP)</p> <p>Comment on whether any further amendments to the oAQMP [REP5-074], [REP5-076] or other air quality controls are required and propose alternative drafting where relevant.</p>
		<p>RSPB response:</p> <p>We have no further comments on this matter.</p>
Noise and vibration		
3NV5	ESC, TDC, RSPB, NE	<p>Outline Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan and other noise control measures (REAC and oCEMP)</p> <p>Comment on whether any further amendments to the oCNVMP or other noise controls are required and propose alternative drafting where relevant.</p>
		<p>RSPB response:</p> <p>We have welcomed the proposals to include acoustic fencing of a minimum of 3m high around the construction compound adjacent to RSPB North Warren and the Sandlings SPA and to carry out noise monitoring to inform any further mitigation required during construction. With regard outstanding concerns about noise, we have noted that it would be helpful for noise contour mapping to be supplemented by larger scale maps of the noise contours where they overlap designated sites, to aid identification of areas and species which may potentially be impacted. This would help us to determine whether any additional noise control measures are needed to protect the Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI or the Sandlings SPA. We understand that more detailed maps will be submitted by the Applicant at Deadline 6. We will therefore review any additional information and update our position accordingly via our SoCG with the Applicant.</p>