



**Questions in the Report on the Implications for European Sites
Issued on 18 March 2026**

**Response 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]**

RIESQ16 – To the RSPB: Noting that the draft SoCG records agreement on use of the 60dB disturbance threshold, clarify your outstanding concerns about chronic noise.

RSPB response:

We have welcomed the proposals to include acoustic fencing of a minimum of 3m high around the construction compound adjacent to RSPB North Warren (within the Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI) 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 by noise (including chronic noise). 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.

RIESQ17 – To the RSPB: Noting the applicant's confirmation regarding the noise disturbance threshold and commitment to avoid illumination of boundary features, confirm if you agree that AEol can be excluded. If not, what further mitigation do you consider is required?

RSPB response:

Please refer to our answer to the above question regarding noise impacts. With regard to lighting and visual disturbance, we acknowledge that the commitment to fencing of a minimum of 3m and the existing screening of the site through trees and the railway embankment, that some reduction of impacts is likely. However, we understand that some equipment will be visible above the height of the fence, including the top of the HDD rig, the recycling system, an excavator boom, and on occasion, cranes. We therefore request clarity around any lighting of these that may be visible above the fence line from RSPB North Warren (within the Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI) or the Sandlings SPA and whether any mitigation of such effects is proposed.

RIESQ24 – To the RSPB: Noting the applicant's commitments and NE's position, confirm if you are satisfied that this matter is resolved. If not, advise what further information you consider is needed to address your concerns.

RSPB response:

We have recently discussed concerns around stuck drilling equipment with the Applicant and were reassured that this issue appears to be of low risk within designated sites in both Suffolk and Kent. However, we request that the rationale described to us and the areas where the drill is too deep for excavation to be possible are clarified in writing by the Applicant. For Kent, we also request that REAC measure B43 is updated to state that:

Measures will be adopted to avoid the trenchless drilling equipment getting stuck. There will ~~generally~~ be no excavation to retrieve a stuck drill head within Pegwell Bay SPA/SAC/Ramsar site/SSSI.

Whilst we understand that the RIES does not formally cover SSSIs and that the landfall in Suffolk is within land that is designated as SSSI only (although in close proximity to the Sandlings SPA), for completeness we also note here our request that the REAC commitment for the Suffolk landfall (B22) is updated to state that:

Measures will be adopted to avoid the trenchless drilling equipment getting stuck. ~~In general,~~ No excavation will be undertaken to remove stuck drilling equipment within the Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI.

Additional comment on 3.3.16: Potential for open-cut trenching at landfall

We wish to clarify that, whilst we have welcomed the Applicant's commitments to using trenchless techniques within the dDCO (as recorded in line 3.3.2 of our SoCG), as yet there is no mechanism to give confidence that any DCO would not subsequently be amended to enable open trenching via a Change application. This is covered in lines 3.3.1 and 3.10.1 of our SoCG with the Applicant for Suffolk and Kent respectively and at present remains 'under discussion'. Additional text to explain that there is no intention to revert to open trenching through a Change application would give significant further reassurance regarding this matter and discussions regarding this are ongoing.