

I'm reading this on behalf of Save Minster Marshes and [REDACTED].

My name is [REDACTED] and I'm a wildlife guide running nature walks from Ramsgate to Pegwell Bay. I'm part of the 'Active Ramsgate' initiative for Ramsgate Town Council. And a steering group member of SMM

I'm objecting to National Grid proposed use the old Pegwell Hoverport as a compound for the Sealink project.

This is a very special area that is located between the chalk cliffs of Ramsgate and next to the Sandwich and Pegwell Bay National Nature Reserve.

The Hoverport is now a sensitive area for wildlife as it has been left to nature to reclaim it since it closed down in 1987.

Kestrels and Sparrowhawks use it to nest and hunt.

It is one of the last remaining strongholds for breeding Greenfinch in the area.

Migrant birds use it to rest and feed before and after crossing the channel including Wryneck and Hoopoe.

Kingfishers also use this site as they pass along the coast in autumn and winter.

The hoverport is famous for its wild orchids that grow there, including Man, Bee and more recently rare Lizard Orchids.

It also has a population of reptiles including Common Lizards, Slow worms and Grass snakes. In fact one of the hoverport Grass snakes was going to star in David Attenborough's wildlife documentary 'Wild Isles' but sadly the other Grass snakes at the nearby Monkton nature reserve didn't perform as hoped so sadly it didn't make it into the episode.

However this area is so special that it has featured in numerous wildlife films made for BBC Springwatch and BBC Countryfile over the past few years.

The hoverport is one of the best places to find nesting Long-tailed Tits.

Wildlife cameraman and presenter Richard Taylor-Jones filmed them nest building for BBC Countryfile and he also filmed the mass arrival of Cormorants that lined the edge of the hoverport on one spectacular occasion a few years ago.

The reedbed at the side of the hoverport attracts Bearded tits most years as they irrupt from their breeding grounds at Stodmarsh in the autumn.

Last year I watched Green woodpeckers raise 2 chicks from their nest in a tree along the hoverport cliff edge.

Every spring and autumn the hoverport attracts Ring Ouzel and Spotted Flycatchers on migration.

During the summer months Cuckoos can sometimes be seen perched at the top of the tallest cypress tree on the hoverport where it calls to the female as they make their way up and down the coast looking for nests to lay their eggs in.

One of my most memorable wildlife experiences was watching a Sparrowhawk catch a wood pigeon and drag it out of the bushes to eat it in front of me on the edge of the hoverport tarmac.

Butterflies love the hoverport too with Painted lady, Green hairstreaks and rare White letter hairstreaks. The most amazing huge buddleia bushes line the back edge of the hoverport.

In summer these are alive with feeding butterflies like the Red Admiral and Peacock.

It's also a great spot to see Hummingbird Hawk moths feeding on the nectar produced by their flowers. Foxes also breed on the hoverport, rabbit and even weasels.

For these reasons part of my nature walk is around the old Pegwell Hoverport as it is a great example of nature recovery.

Any closure or disruption to the area will affect these walks and will be a backwards step for nature, wildlife and tourism in the area.

The idea that the hoverport would be taken over by heavy machinery for years, depriving the local population and visitors of such a tranquil place to walk around and for wildlife to rest, feed and breed would be appalling. National Grid needs to be more sensitive where it develops its projects so that it doesn't cause damage to wildlife and the environment.