



THE PLANNING ACT 2008

THE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (EXAMINATION PROCEDURE) RULES
2010

Sea Link Energy Cable

Appendix H7 to the Natural England Deadline 7 Submission

Natural England's Additional Comments on the Suffolk LVIA

For:

The construction and operation of the Sea Link Energy Cable.

Planning Inspectorate Reference EN020026

29th April 2026

Appendix H7- Natural England's advice on documentation relating to Suffolk LVIA.

In formulating these comments, the following documents have been considered in relation to Suffolk's Landscape and Visual impact of the Sea Link Energy Cable on Suffolk:

- **[REP6-051]** 6.6 (H) Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (Tracked Changes)
- **[REP6-075]** 7.5.3 (D) Outline Onshore Construction Environmental Management Plan (Tracked Changes)
- **[REP6-098]** 9.110 Inter-Project Cumulative Effects Assessment Update - Technical Note
- **[REP6-135]** 9.84 (D) Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments (REAC) (Tracked Changes)

1. Natural England's Summary Position Statement

Please also refer to Natural England's advice in REP6-248 submitted at Deadline 6 on the 13 April 2026.

1.1 Suffolk and Essex Coasts and Heath National Landscape

The common statutory purpose of protected landscapes is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. To *conserve* natural beauty, the mitigation hierarchy applies to demonstrate how impacts can be avoided, reduced and as a last resort, compensated. The term *enhance* is over and above, to provide more, which is to do with improving the quality of protected landscapes and going beyond the compensation of harm. We have consistently advised that impacts need to be clearly quantified and audited to demonstrate proposed compensation and enhancement for example.

1.2 Restoration Area

The 6ha restoration area is provided as compensation for a ten-year period for the temporary loss of acid grassland within the National Landscape and significant inter-project cumulative impacts which have been identified by the assessment.

We have advised that the presence of intensive cultivation and pig farm rotation immediately adjacent to this land parcel may influence the soil conditions locally. We have identified this as a risk/limiting factor to the successful restoration of acid grassland. In response we have advised that the pH of the soil should be tested in order to provide evidence and a level of confidence in the potential success of the restoration.

As this matter remains outstanding, it is unclear if the ground conditions on site would be suitable for acid grassland. We have advised that clear management prescriptions in

reflection of the potential risks and limitations should be detailed in the LEMP. We also continue to advise that ten years limits the potential of this area.

1.3 Assessment Material

We maintain that the LVIA and underpinning evidence has not been clearly presented and acknowledge that additional information has been presented during the examination. Having reviewed all information provided we have advised that this has not remedied our initial advice that the evidence supporting conclusions on the sub factors of the Special qualities is not clearly referenced, we have provided examples of this.

The assessment relies on the small scale of the project and in doing so has not clearly acknowledged the impact on the special qualities within the receiving landscape in which they are experienced, which should not be judged as a percentage of the National Landscape as a whole.

The assessment concludes that the project will have a temporary significant impact to the National Landscape. We have advised that the time for the landscape and visual impacts for example linear scaring may extend into the operational phase as vegetation takes time to mature.

Natural England's position regarding the potential to avoid impacts via employing trenchless crossings remains (please see Natural England's Deadline 6 response - Appendix H6) and should be considered in line with the LURA duty. We recommend that additional information regarding the duration of trenchless techniques and benefits should be further considered.

We welcome that the applicant is meeting with the National Landscape and Suffolk County Council to discuss potential options to satisfy LURA Duty.

1.4 Summary

In summary Natural England has detailed the areas where evidence and/or clarity is lacking in the assessment, and where further evidence is required to support the conclusion that the proposed compensation area will be successful. As such it is Natural England's current position that we agree to disagree with Applicants conclusions regarding LVIA matters until such time as this additional evidence is provided to support assessment conclusions. We welcome that the applicant is in discussion with the National Landscape and Suffolk County Council regarding additional compensation measures required to discharge the Section 85 duty