

Date: 29th April 2026

Examining Authority
National Infrastructure Planning
Temple Quay House
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Bristol
BS1 6PN



By email: southeastanglialink@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

**RE: Sea Link (EN020026) Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) Application,
Deadline 7 – Kent Wildlife Trust [REDACTED]**

**Any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Infrastructure Planning
(Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 (Deadline 7)**

As requested by the Examining Authority (“ExA”), Kent Wildlife Trust (“KWT”) has reviewed the proposed draft requirement relating to access to Pegwell Bay and welcomes the opportunity to comment.

KWT supports the inclusion of a specific requirement to control access to Pegwell Bay, recognising the need for clear and enforceable safeguards within the Development Consent Order (“DCO”) given the sensitivity of the receiving environment. However, we consider that the proposed drafting raises a number of significant concerns and unresolved questions, and in its current form does not provide sufficient certainty that impacts to designated habitats and ecological receptors will be avoided.

1. **Lack of clarity on “temporary bridging structures”** – The requirement refers to the use of “engineered ramps or temporary bridging structures” to facilitate access. However, no detail is provided as to the nature, scale, design, or installation methodology of such structures. We are concerned that, without clear definition, these measures could themselves result in direct and indirect impacts on sensitive habitats, including:
 - Physical disturbance and compaction of intertidal sediments;
 - Damage to priority habitats such as mudflats and saltmarsh; and
 - Disturbance to invertebrate communities and overwintering and migratory bird populations.

The Applicant has not demonstrated that such structures can be installed, used, and removed without adverse effects on these receptors.

2. **Potential for additional impacts not assessed** – The introduction of engineered access solutions (including bridging and ramping) represents an additional activity that has not been assessed within the Environmental Statement.

KWT considers that further evidence is required to demonstrate that these measures will not give rise to materially new or materially different environmental effects, particularly in relation to designated intertidal habitats and protected species.

3. **“Weak zones” and risk of contamination** – The requirement proposes pre-assessment of the Hoverport area and access points to identify “weak zones”. However, it is unclear what measures would be implemented where such zones are identified.

KWT strongly maintains that this requirement must go further and explicitly require:

- The reinforcement or stabilisation of any identified weak zones; and
- Measures to prevent the mobilisation of contaminants into the aquatic environment.

Without such provisions, there remains a risk that vehicle loading and/or structural failure could result in the release of pollutants into Sandwich and Pegwell Bay, with consequent impacts on water quality, ecological receptors and European designated sites.

4. **Adequacy of monitoring and controls** – Whilst the inclusion of a monitoring programme is welcomed in principle, we consider that the current drafting lacks sufficient detail regarding:

- Trigger levels for intervention;
- Mandatory actions in the event of exceedance;
- Mechanisms to halt works where unacceptable impacts are identified; and
- Secured remedial measures to be implemented in the event that contamination is identified.

KWT considers that reliance on monitoring alone, without clearly defined and enforceable response measures, is insufficient.

5. **Biosecurity and pollution prevention measures** – The requirement refers to wheel-wash and decontamination measures but does not provide sufficient assurance regarding:

- The substances to be used and their environmental safety; and
- The effectiveness of such measures in preventing contamination of intertidal habitats.

6. **Failure to apply the Mitigation Hierarchy** – The proposed approach does not demonstrate that the Applicant has properly applied the Mitigation Hierarchy. We maintain the position that impacts can be avoided entirely by not using the Hoverport. Additionally, the lack of ecological surveys of the site demonstrates that access arrangements have not been designed to avoid sensitive habitats and species. KWT considers this to be a fundamental omission, particularly given the presence of Schedule 5 protected species, priority and notable invertebrate species and rare botanical species, where avoidance should be the starting point for design and assessment.

KWT supports the principle of securing a requirement to control access to Pegwell Bay. However, we consider that the proposed drafting is not adequate to ensure the protection of this highly sensitive environment. In particular, the lack of clarity regarding temporary bridging structures, the potential for unassessed impacts on priority habitats and species and the

absence of firm provisions to address weak zones and contamination risks give rise to significant concern.

KWT therefore considers that the requirement must be substantially strengthened and clarified to ensure that all access arrangements are demonstrably feasible, fully assessed, and capable of being implemented without adverse effects on designated habitats and species. This must include a clear requirement for the Applicant to update and amend their Environmental Statement and associated impact assessments to explicitly assess any additional measures proposed (including, but not limited to, temporary bridging structures, engineered ramps, contamination risk and associated access infrastructure). Without such assessment, there can be no certainty that these measures would not give rise to materially new or materially different environmental effects, particularly in relation to the sensitive habitats at Pegwell Bay.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

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Kent
Wildlife Trust