

James Smethurst

Responses to written questions to Natural England:

The following was sent in error under deadline 1 as the written questions were available at that time.

Agenda Item 4-Effects of the Proposed Substation at Cowfold/Oakendene:

Q4-1:

- The whole area from the Oakendene substation site and down the cable route to Gratwicke is of ecological importance. It is undesignated but does contain priority habitats-see Written Representations from [REDACTED], including photographic and video evidence, and Cowfold v Rampion for deadline 1. Residents strongly believe this area should be designated; it has had no reason to be surveyed until now, meaning that desk top surveys seriously underrepresent the true picture.
- Sussex Biodiversity records office do not currently have a mechanism for designating new Local Wildlife Site in Sussex, due to lack of resources. However, they have said that they are willing to consider the site for assessment in the future on the basis of the evidence we have presented, should funding become available. However, by the time the funding is available, the site may no longer exist as a result of the DCO proposals

Q4-2:

- Rampion have relied too heavily on desk top surveys to inform their wildlife surveys and have not listened to evidence from local people, despite being warned about the fact that desk top surveys may not reflect the reality if there has been no reason to survey a place before. Many of the ecological surveys were not done before the site was chosen, and when they have been done, there has been an overreliance on desk top studies and the use of designated sites to inform where surveys were undertaken. This has meant that not all studies were attempted on this site. Even when they were, there were incomplete surveys due to equipment failure, or the carrying out of surveys outside of correct seasons. Even more incomprehensible is the claim that they were incomplete due to 'lack of access'. Yet despite all this, this so called undesignated 'industrialised' location and the northern end of the cable route contain such a high proportion of all positive findings: great crested newts, important hedges and veteran trees, water voles, dormice, otter, badgers and nightingales. It is far more biodiverse than the alternative locations at Wineham, sadly already depleted by the earlier substations and the more open nature of the field systems.