WINDPOWER MONTHLY

Campaigners argue English wind project would do more environmental harm than good

Campaigners in the north of England are arguing that a major new wind farm planned in the region will do more harm than good to climate and environmental outcomes by degrading the peatlands that act as a natural carbon sink.

by Orlando Jenkinson 28 July 2025

Wind turbines at the Todmorden Moor wind farm, near to where the Calderdale Wind Farm could be built (pic credit: Jonathan Nicholson/NurPhoto)

The Calderdale Energy Park project would see a 300MW wind farm built on Walshaw Moor in West Yorkshire, which is famous as a likely inspiration for Emily Brontë's 19th century classic of English literature *Wuthering Heights*. Existing plans for the wind farm feature 41 turbines of around 7MW each in capacity, plus additional battery storage for excess power. The proposals have already been scaled down amid local opposition from an initial plan for a 63-turbine project and solar PV panels.

It is being developed by Calderdale Wind Farm, a special purpose vehicle backed by NextGen Infra, a subsidiary of Saudi Arabian investment firm Algihaz Holding.

Campaigners argue that the location of the wind farm on peat deposits undermines its environmental credentials.

Peat is a natural carbon sink, and campaigners argue that its construction would lead to the draining of the peat deposits, causing a negative impact on the wind farm's potential to reduce carbon emissions.

"Calderdale Energy Park will destroy vast areas of deep peat by direct excavation and subsequent drying… Wind farms drain peat and make it more likely to burn. The cheapest thing the UK can do to avert the next climate change tipping point is to rewet our blanket bogs, not dry them out," a spokesperson for the Stop Calderdale Wind Farm campaign told Windpower Monthly.
The location is recognised as environmentally important under various criteria, including as a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) and as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). SAC areas, designated under the European Environment Agency, include habitats like peatlands that must be protected by landowners and users.

Myriad threats
Wildfires are a growing concern in rural parts of the UK as average temperatures increase and the climate crisis worsens, and pose a direct threat to the peatlands that the Stop Calderdale Wind Farm campaign is vocally defending.

On the other hand, a greater prevalence of renewable energy projects can lessen the use of fossil fuels for energy, which is the primary source of carbon emissions worldwide and the biggest contributor to the rising temperatures associated with global heating.

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Longstanding practices in moor and peatland environments may also pose a threat to the local ecology, including the overgrazing of livestock resources, and deliberate burning of these areas for land management purposes.

The campaign argues that a recent UK government proposal would ban all burning of "deep" heather that grows on peatland areas, and that the primary landowner in the area, Walshaw Moor Estate, have a longstanding agreement with government

advisory body Natural England to promote environmental conditions in the region including for peatlands.

“Burning old heather will soon be forbidden on all deep peat. There is an agreement on Walshaw Moor between the Estate and Natural England... which runs from 2018 to 2042. The Estate maintain the agreement rigorously,” a spokesperson for the campaign group said.

Debate

The developer maintains it is engaging with local concerns about the potential ecological impact of the wind farm.

A spokesperson for the project told Windpower Monthly: “We recognise the ecological importance of Walshaw Moor, including its designation as a site of special scientific interest (SSSI), special area of conservation (SAC), and special protection area (SPA). Our design process is being informed by extensive peat depth surveys, habitat mapping and hydrological assessments.

“We are committed to avoiding deep peat wherever practicable and minimising disturbance through careful siting of infrastructure and the use of low-impact construction techniques. We are also developing a comprehensive peat management plan.”

Christian Egal, project director of Calderdale Energy Park, added: “Calderdale Energy Park presents an unrivalled opportunity to support the UK’s renewable energy transition and contribute to the Government’s Net Zero 2050 target.

“We will continue to engage positively with the local community as we work to deliver this project of national significance, which is essential for the UK’s future energy security and climate change ambitions.”

The campaigners however seem unlikely to be persuaded by such reassurances.

They did not actively rule out re-examining proposals for the wind farm, however, on the condition that more alterations to the existing plans are made.

“We await a lawful public consultation on a properly designed wind farm,” a spokesperson for the group said.