

TIDAL ENERGY : MORECAMBE BAY / DUDDON ESTUARY POINTS AGAINST / CONS

Some would question whether the scheme is economically viable, Is there any guarantee that the economic impacts and the multiplier effect would have the results anticipated?

Although the energy produced by a tidal barrage is predictable, it is intermittent, as it is only produced during the ebb and flow of the tide. It is very expensive at £10b, will be expensive to maintain, and it may not be worth the money to provide energy for only 2000 households or less than 5% of the UK total energy needs.

It is estimated that the barrage will take 10 years to build. During this time there are sure to be environmental impacts on the mudflats and salt marshes, and the nature and habitats they contain. The construction work is bound to cause pollution and habitat destruction.

There are major questions regarding the environmental sustainability of the project. While the production of electricity by the barrages produces no emissions, massive amounts of concrete will need to be manufactured and this process produces carbon dioxide. This may have a negative impact on the government plans to reach net zero by 2050.

The tidal mudflats and salt marshes of Morecambe bay and the Duddon estuary are renowned for their ecosystems and habitats. Large areas are set aside as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) and nature reserves and the area is adjacent to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Nature reserves such as the one at Leighton Moss are habitats for migratory birds and other areas have important habitats for flora and fauna that need protecting.

By holding back the water with each ebb and flow of the tide salt marsh and mudflat habitats will be endangered. Tidal and sediment movements may change, affecting wildlife and negatively impacting on the nature tourism to the area.

The reductions in tidal flow may reduce water salinity and fertiliser run off from nearby farmland may cause eutrophication of the water damaging flora and fauna.

Organisations such as the RSPB and Natural England are very concerned about the possible impact on habitats and wildlife.

Although the road on the barrage and subsidiary industry growth may boost the local economies, residents of Barrow and the southern lakes are worried that the area may go into economic decline with its associated negative social impact. Residents may find it easier and better to travel to Morecambe or Lancaster for work, shops and services, leaving the southern lakes as a backwater.

Although some see the barrage and the new road as a benefit to the tourist economy of the southern lakes, the area is at present at full capacity. A further influx of visitors especially in the summer months may lead to the area being overwhelmed without the capacity to cope. The narrow roads may become congested, existing accommodation may not cope, and the quiet, seclusion and nature that draws people to the area may be destroyed.

