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DATE: 26th September 2025

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Response: Calderdale Energy Park Scoping Report

Whilst Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) supports measures to reduce consumption of non-renewable energy sources, including the use of sustainable technologies, for each renewable source of energy, we acknowledge that there may be environmental impacts as well as benefits, depending on where a development is sited. We understand that this Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report[1] (hereafter referred to as, the Report) was not published for Non-statutory Consultation. Despite this, we have very significant concerns about the appropriateness of any development of this scale in the location proposed, therefore have reviewed this Report and provided the following comments.

While reviewing this Report we are acutely aware climate change is one of the biggest threats to wildlife, and humankind, in the UK. It is leading to shifting wildlife ranges, and changes in the annual timing of flowering and the migration of birds and butterflies. We are mindful of the UK and devolved Governments commitments to ensuring that the UK reaches net zero emissions by 2050, with the UK's Committee on Climate Change (CCC) setting out what this means for the economy and for land usage. It is the appropriateness of the land usage that we dispute rather than the need for renewable energy infrastructure, the proposed location on peatland we view, is unacceptable:

> *"Given that wind farms **could** be sited solely on non-peatland sites, and that other forms of renew able energy are available to meet emission reduction targets, the exclusion of wind farm development on peatland would not be expected to significantly impact future emission factors."*[2]

Please note that due to the size of our planning team, we have focussed our attentions on chapters of the Report most relevant to YWT's concerns, as outlined in our previous response, dated 10.06.25. After reviewing the Report, we sustain our **objection to the principle of this development**. The overarching reasons for this in our previous responses were Impacts on peatland and impacts to Designated Sites.

[1] Calderdale Energy Park EIA Scoping Report, 2025.
[2] *Wind farms on undegraded peatlands are unlikely to reduce future carbon emissions (2013)*, Jo Smith, Dali Rani Nayak, Pete Smith, *Institute of Biological & Environmental Science, University of Aberdeen*, p.590

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The impact of this development on blanket bog, an irreplaceable priority habitat, and on the integrity and structure of peatland soils and carbon stores would be unacceptably high. The designating features of the Internationally significant South Pennines Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) would be impacted through loss and damage of habitat and displacement of birds, potential bird strike and through the possible disturbance of land functionally linked to the protected Sites. In addition, the conservation objectives of these Sites would be compromised, as would the ongoing restoration of the peat habitats. The importance of this wetland Site as a focal point for Nature's Recovery in Yorkshire and would be destroyed if this application were approved. We have referred back to these issues throughout our review of the Report published 01.09.2025. Please see our comments on the chapters reviewed below, sustaining our **objection to the principle of this development**.

Methodology

YWT understand we are not a Schedule 1 consultee under Sections 42, 47 and 48 of the Planning Act 2008[3] and Regulation 13 of the EIA Regulations 2017[4], however our comments to the Non-Statutory Consultation are referenced in this Report[5]. YWT works in partnership with the Yorkshire Peat Partnership (YPP) and have specialist knowledge of peat management and restoration, including the negative impacts that development can have on this irreplaceable habitat. Therefore, although we are non-statutory consultees and the Applicant has no obligation to consult us at this stage, we would recommend that the Applicant review this when the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) is published in January 2026.

Mitigation Hierarchy

In our previous response we stated that we were **objecting to the principle of the development** because we did not believe that any measures for mitigation or compensation would be

[3] His Majesty's Office (HMSO) (2008) Planning Act 2008 (as amended)
[4] His Majesty's Office (HMSO) (2017) Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017
[5] Please see Table 6-2 Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council Scoping Opinion, pg. 115 of Calderdale Energy Park EIA Scoping Report, 2025

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proportionate to the impact of this scheme. Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[6] states:

"if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused"

Paragraph 2.12.149, of Draft EN-3[7] states:

"where developments impact on peatlands, the Secretary of State must be satisfied that avoidance, management, mitigation or compensatory mechanisms are sufficiently robust."

The NPPF and Draft National Policy Statement (NPS) must be considered by the Applicant when undertaking the EIA for this project. In the first instance, as this Site is located on a peatland, we consider that the Applicant has not **avoided** impacts on this irreplaceable habitat, and we do not believe the justifications for siting the development in this location that are presented in this Report are robust enough.

Chapter 5.13 states:

*"The Proposed Development is anticipated to include off-site compensation measures that will compensate for the **loss of bog habitat**; and will include opportunities for mitigating and restoring biodiversity within the Turbine Area."*

As we have previously outlined, the negative impacts on and loss of irreplaceable habitat at Walshaw Moor Estate, will be so severe, that any off-site compensation would be disproportionate.

Given the extent of hardstanding and impacts of the associated infrastructure that will occur, should this NSIP be approved, we are not confident that sufficient off-site mitigation and restoration will be achievable. This Report describes how borrow pits, areas of hardstanding and construction of the

[6]Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2024). National Planning Policy Framework. [Online]. [Accessed: 19 March 2025]. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf

[7] Department of Energy and Climate Change (2025) Draft National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3)

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Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) in whichever location the Applicant proposes, will cover large areas of irreplaceable habitat, such as blanket bog.

Mitigation performs a different role to compensation; the former comprises measures intended to avoid, cancel or reduce adverse effects on European Sites whereas the latter can only be considered under the derogations – where an adverse effect cannot be avoided. The Site and its associated irreplaceable peatland habitats should be avoided in the first instance, to comply with the NPPF, EN 1, 3[8], as referenced in this Report.

Cumulative Impacts

The Report references the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) Advice Note Nine on the 'Rochdale Envelope[9]', which provides guidance for handling applications for development consent under the Planning Act 2008, applicable to the EIA process set out in The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017[10]. The Applicant has requested this approach from PINS, stating that:

> *"By considering reasonable 'worst case' scenarios to determine likely significant effects[11]"*

Throughout this Report, they are seeking flexibility as the design is not yet finalised. In chapter 3.4.7 of this Report, the Applicant states:

> *"The EIA will assess the maximum development parameters (or the parameters **that represent the reasonable worst case for likely significant environmental effects** should that be different)."*

Given the scale of this development and the implications on peatlands, designated landscapes and alarming increased risks of flooding in an already high-risk area, we do agree that the Applicant has presented true worst case scenarios throughout this Report, as we will outline throughout this response. Schedule 4 paragraph 5(e) of the EIA Regulations 2017, requires the Environmental

[8] Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2025) Draft Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (NPS EN-1)
[9] 1 The Planning Inspectorate (2018). Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects - Advice Note Nine: Rochdale Envelope. [Online]. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nationally-significant infrastructure-projects-advice-note-nine-rochdale-envelope/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects advice-note-nine-rochdale-envelope
[10] His Majesty's Office (HMSO) (2017) Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017
[11] Pg 32, of Calderdale Energy Park EIA Scoping Report, 2025

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Statement to include a description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from:

"The cumulation of effects with other existing and, or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources."

We believe that the cumulative effects of the associated infrastructure required for a proposal of this magnitude, should be considered as cumulative effects and addressed in the Preliminary Ecological Impact Report (PEIR).

Ornithology

The International importance of the proposed wind farm location is reflected in its designation as the South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC[12]) and South Pennine Moors Phase 2 Special Protection Area (SPA), designated under the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017, as amended (Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (2019 Regulations)). The SPA is designated on the basis of nationally important breeding populations of merlin (*Falco columbarius*) and golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) and in summer, a diverse assemblage of breeding migratory birds of moorland and moorland fringe habitats.

We consider that the proposed development would impact on the designating features of the SAC and SPA, through loss and damage of habitat and displacement of birds, potential bird strike and potentially through disturbance of land functionally linked to the protected Sites.

In addition, the development is also likely to impact upon the Conservation Objectives[13] for the Sites. As an example, with specific reference to blanket bog, one of the conservation objectives for the SPA is to:

'Maintain the structure, function and availability of blanket bog, dry heath, wet heath and acid grassland for the SPA bird assemblage'[14]

[12] The SAC is designated on the basis of the following habitats: blanket bogs; European dry heaths; Northern Atlantic wet heaths; old sessile oak woods; transition mires; and quaking bogs.
[13] Natural England Access to Evidence - Conservation objectives for European Sites: Yorkshire and Humber
[14] Natural England (2014) European Site Conservation Objectives for South Pennine Moors (Phase II) SPA (UK9007022)]. [Online]. Available at: European Site Conservation Objectives for South Pennine Moors (Phase II) SPA - UK9007022

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And for the SAC to:

'Restore the total extent of the habitat feature at or to feature extent baseline-value of just under 20,000ha[15]'.

As an Appropriate Assessment must be completed under the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, we strongly believe that the required consideration of alternatives exercise, would identify other more suitable Sites which would not have such significant impacts on the breeding and migratory bird populations and irreplaceable habitats.

Biodiversity

We have comments on the scope of the baseline surveys, described throughout this chapter and the area scoped out of the Turbine Area Boundary (TBA). We note an absence of reporting within the proposed cable corridor, 7.4.25*:*

"No site surveys have yet been completed within the Cable Corridor and Site Access Search Areas. Therefore no confirmed receptors have been identified."

These need to be completed. We would expect the PEIR to contain survey information especially in relation to the protected species, Designated Sites and irreplaceable habitats within this cable route.

Areas Scoped out of Assessment

We do not agree that the Walshaw Dean Reservoirs should be scoped out of this Report, 7.4.10*:*

"The Walshaw Dean Reservoirs are in the centre of the Turbine Area whilst they are out with the scoping boundary itself."

As the reservoirs are surrounded on all sides by the Turbine Area and associated infrastructure, we do not agree that they should be scoped out. Potential cumulative effects of the development on the reservoir could include habitat loss, reduced water quality and risks to flooding. Walshaw Dean Reservoirs are hydrologically linked to Hebden Water, the watercourse which runs into Hebdon Bridge and has been linked to severe flooding events. These have had hugely detrimental effects on the community and environment.

[15] Natural England (2014) European Site Conservation Objectives for South Pennine Moors SAC (UK0030280) [Online]. Available at: European Site Conservation Objectives for South Pennine Moors SAC - UK0030280

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We acknowledge that the Applicant has confirmed that Environment Agency (EA) and Yorkshire Water have been consulted but reiterate that we do not consider the reservoirs being outside of the scoping area appropriate.

Bats

The bat survey area is described as being:

"Within Turbine Area Boundary suitable features within 200m of turbines."
(pg. 173. Table 7-9)

We agree that the 200m buffer surrounding the TBA is appropriate, the NatureScot[16] guidelines the Applicant has referenced, describe that areas 50m from the impact of turbine blades should be scoped into the assessment therefore increasing that buffer zone is welcome. Despite this, we feel the impacts of bat populations within the TBA would be unprecedented, given the previously undeveloped nature of the Site.

The NPPF[17] seeks to ensure that new development is appropriate for its location, taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the Site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so, the NPPF states developments should:

a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;

b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and

c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

(Para 198. 2012. NPPF- 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment)

[16] https://www.nature.scot/doc/bats-and-onshore-wind-turbines-survey-assessment-and-mitigation
[17] Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2024). National Planning Policy Framework. [Online]. Available at: National Planning Policy Framework - 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment - Guidance - GOV.UK

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Given the associated risks of on shore windfarms to bats, including collision, light pollution and noise, despite the additional 200m impact zone being implemented, we do not believe that any mitigation proposed by the Applicant would be effective, especially when one considers the clause:

"b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise"

As both the disruption caused by construction, associated infrastructure and operational lifetime of up to 40 years will negatively impact existing populations.

Great crested newts

We note that the scoping area for great crested newts (GCN) surveys has been described as:

"Within Turbine Area Boundary+ 250m (ponds and waterbodies only)"

For many months of the year, outside of breeding season, GCN are mobile and terrestrial dwellers. Due to this, we would expect the 250m buffer to be widened to 500m as per government guidelines:

"Developers may need to increase this to 500m if there are no obvious barriers to GCN dispersing into the wider environment."[18]

Given the Applicant has committed to worst case scenario throughout the report, we would recommend this is reviewed in advance of the publication of the PEIR; as one positive result was returned and the Applicant has acknowledged the presence of suitable refugia within the TBA.

Reptiles

In regard to reptile surveys, the Report states:

"other reptile species may be present, however the widespread availability of suitable refugia may limit the effectiveness of artificial refugia surveys."
(pg.174)

We expect further reptile surveys to be undertaken, sightings of common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and sloughed lizard skin have been reported in the walkover surveys and also during the ornithological surveys.

[18] Great crested newts: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK

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As there are suitable habitats for reptiles within the turbine boundary, as described in Table 7-9 on pg. 174 of this Report. We will expect to see this more robustly assessed in the PEIR.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

The Scoping Document has stated the Applicant has committed to conducting a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), which will be preceded by a Shadow HRA during the pre-application stage, 6.6.2:

"Consultation with the statutory nature conservation body (e.g., Natural England) will be undertaken throughout the process to confirm the approach and scope."

Here we must query whether the shadow HRA screening be published for comment from consultees in conjunction with the publication of the PEIR? We would be interested in commenting on this Appropriate Assessment when available, no timeframes have been provided currently.

Irreplaceable Habitats

Natural England are currently funding restoration of blanket bog at Walshaw Moor through the Walshaw Moor Estate Catchment Restoration 2017-2042 Plan[19] (CRP). This Restoration Plan[20] is a series of integrated measures that work together to restore, protect and enhance the blanket bog habitat, The aims of which include:

"Restoration of 1,000 ha of blanket bog over the term of this agreement. Up to 100 ha per annum will be restored"[21].

Considering this key goal in Natural England's CRP, the construction of a wind farm on this irreplaceable habitat is not compatible and could negate the effects of whatever restoration works have been carried out to date, as well as those ongoing. It is not possible to complete the installation works without disrupting the hydrology of the bog and it is not possible to restore a bog without hydrological integrity. We must question how the reversal of this restoration can be justified and as a result, claims that the mitigation hierarchy being followed be substantiated, especially in relation to

[19] Walshaw Moor Estate Catchment Restoration 2017-2042 Plan - MRP002 (naturalengland.org.uk)
[20] Walshaw Moor Estate Catchment Restoration 2017-2042 Plan - MRP002 (naturalengland.org.uk)
[21] Pg. 164, Calderdale Energy Park EIA Scoping Report, 2025

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the direct losses of irreplaceable habitat. Further, the CRP includes habitat management of wet and dry heaths; in its FCS Heathland Report[22], Natural England asserts that:

> *"[where dry heath communities] occur on deep peat, the habitat should be treated as a degraded form of mire rather than as heathland. Similarly, any M15 or M16 wet heath occurring on deep peat (greater than 30 cm in depth) should also be considered as either degraded fen or bog."*

This implies that the area of irreplaceable habitat (blanket bog) should be considered larger than that recorded and presented in this Report. Observations from the Habitats section of the Biodiversity Chapter (7.4.10) include the following:

> *"At the time of survey, bracken and exposed peat could be seen in some areas."*
>
> (pg.164)

This evidences that the peatland is degraded and emphasises the importance of the goals of the CRP, in restoring the irreplaceable habitat. Exposed peat is a symptom of the drying effects of a deep water table – the work associated with constructing this development will only deepen the water table, further degrading the peatland. The presence of bracken is indicative of nutrient enrichment, a likely result of the manure of grazing animals. The Walshaw Moor Estate currently uses the Site for grazing livestock, the presence of bracken does not detract from the presence of irreplaceable habitat (blanket bog) within the search area, which as the FCS Heathland Report indicates, is likely to be more extensive than reported.

Given the information presented in this chapter regarding the known presence of irreplaceable habitat and Natural England's CRP imposed on the Site, we must draw attention to the following statement from the Applicant in this chapter:

> *"The mitigation hierarchy will be applied to biodiversity (CIEEM 2018) to ensure design first seeks to avoid significant harm, to mitigate where it is unavoidable, and, as a last resort, to compensate for residual effects that remain after avoidance and mitigation measures are implemented."*
>
> *(pg.181)*

[22] RP2977 NE FCS heathland 2025.pdf

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There is no way to compensate for the loss of the 6,000 year old habitat; an irreplaceable habitat. There is no way to mitigate harm to blanket bog; the hydrology in peatland is not a series of discrete pockets, it is a continuous entity. Disruption in one area of the bog will have effects throughout the bog. Blanket bog changes slowly and monitoring in the lifetime of this development may not observe all the effects of the harm. Additionally, over the lifetime of the proposal, leaving areas of hard standing in situ will also damage the habitat as it disrupts the hydrological integrity of the Site.

Another factor to consider, which would impact the additional 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) uplift that is to be mandatory of all DCO applications by May 2026[23], is that the Site is also subject to the CRP, in agreement with Natural England. The Applicant will need to apply the principle of additionality when enhancing non-irreplaceable habitats on the Site, for BNG to demonstrably exceed existing obligations of the CRP. This is in addition to the supposed bespoke compensation for the irreplaceable habitats, that the Applicant has committed to delivering off-site, due to the irreplaceable habitat loss this scheme would result in, if approved.

Due to the magnitude of compensatory enhancements the Applicant must deliver under BNG, we would expect this to be described in detail in the PEIR for proper assessment, before the application is submitted for approval by the Secretary of State. Any bespoke agreements for off-site compensation of irreplaceable habitat **will not** contribute to the mandatory 10% uplift required for non-irreplaceable habitats and must be additional. It is hard to believe that this undertaking will be achievable, especially as all enhancements delivered under BNG must be additional to those delivered by the CRP.

Summary of Biodiversity

Within the Report, paragraph 7.5.1 includes the following statement*:*

> *"The ES will be **based on an EIA mitigation hierarchy which seeks to avoid, prevent, reduce and offset** (where appropriate) likely significant adverse effects."*

In response to this, we must return to our position on this proposal, that we do not think this scheme should be approved as we do not consider the mitigation hierarchy can be sufficiently applied. Avoiding

[23] We note: "7.5.7 As the Proposed Development falls under the DCO regime and is scheduled for the submission of a full application in 2026, the approach to BNG will be applied and considered alongside the EIA and HRA." Pg. 182. Calderdale Energy Park EIA Scoping Report, 2025

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significant adverse effects on and around the Site, would mean not developing this Site in the first place.

Links to Local Policy

Local planning policy and development plans are not weighted as highly when deciding an application for DCO approval, unlike National Policy Statements (NPSs) which are the primary consideration. Despite this, they are still a material consideration and are relevant to the Secretary of State's decision making.

The Adopted Development Plan relevant in this case, comprises the Calderdale Local Plan 2018/19 – 2032/33[24], and has been referred to throughout the Report. The Natural Environment Section of the local plan includes the following information:

> *"Ecosystem goods and services provided by the natural environment include the filtration, purification and detoxification of air, water and soils; nutrient cycling, nitrogen fixation, carbon sequestration and soil formation; climate regulation, mitigation of storms and floods, erosion control, regulation of rainfall and water supply; habitat provision."*
> (Pg. 168. 2023)

Peatlands provide almost all these ecosystem goods and services listed within the Local Plan and we believe that the construction of a windfarm and associated infrastructure has the potential to significantly disrupt these.

Whilst recognising the enormous importance of deep peat and blanket bog, this is not to say that shallow peat should be dismissed, as shallow peat forms a key part of the hydrological continuity of peatlands and can increase in depth following restoration and re-establishment of peatland vegetation, in particular *Sphagnum* moss species, which sequester carbon. Any loss, damage or disturbance to shallow peat will likely inhibit this process.

As well as Local Plan, the Report also references additional local guidance that has been considered. In 2021, The Calderdale Ecological Emergency Action Plan[25] was published, stating:

[24] Calderdale Council (2023). The Calderdale Local Plan, https://new.calderdale.gov.uk/planning-and building-control/planning-policy/local-plan
[25] Wilder Calderdale Partnership, 2024. Calderdale Ecological Emergency Action Plan 2024-30, Calderdale-ecological-emergency-action-plan-2024.pdf

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"In 2021, we declared an ecological emergency to address the urgent challenge of nature loss."

YWT, YPP, Moors for the Future and other NGO's fighting for nature's recovery are all referenced in this Report.

In addition, this Report includes reference to Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council (CMBC) Scoping Opinion, which states:

"Impacts and potential benefits will also be considered against the objectives of the Calderdale Wildlife Habitat Network (CWHN) to ensure that mitigation or compensation is sympathetic to the objectives of the network and enhances connectivity."
(pg.187, Table 7-10)

CWHN is a key biodiversity feature in the region which has the potential to be significantly impacted by development through fragmentation and deterioration of habitats, diminishing its ability to function as a wildlife corridor. Corridors and stepping stones of suitable habitat within CWHN, which extend across the district, allow species to move between core areas of important habitat; there is therefore a need for buffer zones which protect these corridors and particularly core sensitive areas (as detailed within the government produced document: The Natural Choice[26]).

Comments from Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council's (CMBC) Planning department are included in Chapter 9 of this Report:

"The proposal in its current form would not be compliant with local plan policies. Ie. The development will need to ensure great consideration to policy CC1(in the Local Plan) and avoid significant environmental harm."
(pg. 286, Table 9-1)

We support this statement and believe the development will be harmful to the environment at a local level, potentially undoing the nature restoration work that has been ongoing in the region and been implemented in Local Planning Policy.

[26] The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature HM Government 2011

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Peat & Hydrology

In Chapter 8.2.3 of this Report, we note the first of many references to a *Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Peat Assessment*. We cannot locate this anywhere within the Report and must enquire whether this is something proposed to be published in the PEIR?

The Hydrology Chapter of this Report states that:

"In the absence of any specific guidance relating to wind farm developments and in accordance with Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) LA 113"

(Table 8-1, pg.235)

This guidance was published by Highways England, intended for the construction of linear structures, i.e. tracks and bridges. In our view, this is in no way a suitable proxy for a windfarm and associated infrastructure on an area of development on deep peat, the following assertion is not supported by evidence:

"Therefore, any impacts to waterbodies beyond 1km from the Site are considered to be negligible"

(Table 8-1, pg.235)

Much of the section on flood risk, concerns whether the development itself will flood and provides little assessment of whether the development will drive flooding in the settlements below. Flooding in Hebden Bridge has been a significant problem and is not been adequately addressed in the scoping Report.

Another factor not suitably identified in the Hydrology Chapter, is how will this installation affect the hydrologically linked waterbodies which in turn, will affect the flow of water from watercourses to aquifers (identified in the Report), then to nearby reservoirs? As a result of this flow, how much peat sediment will be released into the reservoirs that will then need to be filtered out before it enters the drinking supply? Within this Report, there is also insufficient assessment of potential harm to biodiversity in nearby rivers and streams, which should be rectified.

Hydrology within peat is a continuous entity – it is not possible to build a turbine base (or a track) without that work affecting hydrology across the entire Site. This is also true of any cabling, hardstanding's and other associated infrastructure. It is important that no nutrients could be

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released into an ombrotrophic habitat like blanket bog and there appears to be little evidence presented in this Report detailing how the Applicant will prevent this from happening.

It is difficult to see how the disruption associated with such construction is compatible with the Walshaw Moor Estate Catchment Restoration Plan ('WMECRP', 2017-2042). An aim of which is to repair the gulley networks within the bog. We would expect to have seen the Applicant explain how they intend to prevent further erosion in the gulley networks, within the Peat and Hydrology chapters of this Report.

Another factor that does not inspire confidence is the suggestion of reusing displaced Peat across the Site:

"[…] to reuse peat in a positive way to support habitat recreation, e.g. through patch repair of bare ground, restoration of eroded gullies and reinstatement of peat in cutover areas."

Peat can be used to block drainages ditches (grips). It is very rarely used to block gullies (only in shallow areas with low flow) and cannot be used to repair bare peat, bare ground or cutover areas. It could be used in cell-bunding but this Report does not give the impression that its authors are aware of this technique.

The three comments below from Chapter 8 of this Report are of concern, as it suggests that the scale of disruption this scheme will cause has been underestimated:

"To compensate for potential impacts on peat hydrology and habitat, peatland restoration opportunities will be identified to improve the quality of peatland undisturbed by the Proposed Development."

As noted elsewhere, because peatland hydrology is a continuous entity, no part of this Site will be undisturbed. Followed by:

"Where appropriate, access roads will be constructed using permeable materials. Where peat is unable to be avoided, floating tracks will be used where possible, and if necessary other appropriate engineering solutions will be adopted."

Per the IUCN UK Peatland Programme briefing Networks of change: Tracks and roads on peatlands, even floating tracks are massively disruptive to peatlands.

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"Potential for groundwater levels in peat to be reduced in the immediate vicinity of Turbine Area infrastructure."

A lowering of the water table in the immediate vicinity of the Turbine Area infrastructure affects the water table across the entire Site because hydrology is a continuous entity.

Overall, the scoping Report gives the impression that the Applicant has an insufficient understanding of peatland ecology to be preparing an EIA Scoping Report for this much peatland. We would expect the comments above to be addressed in the PEIR.

Carbon and Climate Change

As we have previously mentioned, the Applicant has followed the PINS advice note and utilised the Rochdale Envelope approach to inform this Report, to secure flexibility in respect of the design being emergent at the pre-application stage. As a result, the Applicant has committed to presenting 'worst case scenarios' throughout this scoping Report.

In Chapter 5, the Applicant states:

"5.2.2 The wind turbine foundations are anticipated to be based on a reinforced concrete gravity base design. These will be formed on ***suitable load bearing strata formed at a minimum of 4m depth****"*

We do not view the Applicant providing minimum depth, presents a worst-case scenario regarding the displacement of Peatlands and degradation of irreplaceable habitats. This is crucial when the impacts of degraded and disturbed Peatlands are considered in relation to increased carbon emissions that will occur as a result. Therefore we would encourage the Applicant to rethink the examples they are providing throughout the documentation, to truly present worst case scenarios.

The comments we have included below from statutory consultees whom have also expressed concerns regarding the true extent of negative implications this scheme will have on climate change.

We would bring the Applicant's attention to NE comments in Chapter 9:

"More attention needs to be paid to the impact on peat and what damage will be caused […] Peat if wet will absorb carbon. However, if it dries out because of building the wind turbines and associated concrete pads with excavation down to 4m and other on-site infrastructure such as borrow pits, foundations, and underground cable routes etc., it will become a net carbon emitter."

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(pg. 286, Table 9-1)

And to Heptonstall Parish Councils comments:

"The report fails to identify both the embodied carbon of the proposal manufacture, transportation and construction and decommissioning of the project against the carbon capture ability of well maintained peat moorland."
(pg. 289, Table 9-1)

We support these statements from Statutory Consultees and as a result of both raising the lack of evidence presented regarding the embodied energy and emissions caused through removal and degradation of irreplaceable habitat, we would expect to see these comments addressed in the PEIR and done so robustly. We feel it was remiss not have presented more evidence at this stage due to the magnitude of this scheme and incurrent carbon emissions that will be produced in its manufactory and implementation.

Throughout Chapter 8 there are multiple references to excavated peat being used to restore the moor. Even when used in restoration, this peat will still generate emissions (especially at this scale). We must question whether these emissions been factored in? Excavation of peat for the purposes of (e.g.) building a turbine base, impacts the entirety of the bog because it impacts its hydrological integrity, leading to GHG emissions as the peat dries. Again, we must query whether this has been factored in, or will the calculations be based solely on the peat that has been dug out?

Additionally, Chapter 8.3.5 implies that stone lined tracks will act as fire breaks within the peat. As the entire development will dry out the peat, this will increase the risk of it catching fire in the first place. Furthermore, the construction of those tracks will displace a significant quantity of peat, releasing carbon into the atmosphere and water courses, thus contributing to climate change.

The Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Assessment (Pg. 279) fails to include carbon emissions resulting from disturbance of peatland during operating and decommissioning the Proposed Development. "Disturbed" peatlands do not stop emitting carbon because the initial disturbance has ceased.

Carbon sequestration takes some years to recommence after restoration. Furthermore, peatland restoration is an iterative rather than a single stage intervention – for how many years will the Applicant continue its restoration works?

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Decommissioning

Despite the windfarm being described as temporary, the turbines and associated infrastructure will still be in place for a significant period of time and will have irreversible effects on irreplaceable habitats. At the end of the operational lifespan development (c.40 years), it is usual for the land to return to the landowner's control, with very little regulatory control. We therefore have concerns about the longevity of the habitat creation and enhancement proposed to be delivered as part of the scheme, which we believe should be permanent.

The expectation within the Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles[27] is that compensation sites will be secured for at least the lifetime of the development '*with the objective of Net Gain management continuing in the future*'. To align with this principle, it is essential that benefits delivered by Biodiversity Net Gain are secured for the longest possible timeframe. Consequently, we do not consider the proposal to allow the area of habitat creation to be potentially returned to a different use to be appropriate. Instead, the area of the habitat creation should be secured for nature in perpetuity through legal agreements. We acknowledge the Applicant will be commissioning an Outline Decommissioning Management Plan (oDEMP) which we would expect to see included with the PEIR.

Conclusion

In conclusion we do not believe that the negative impacts on the environment caused by this proposal; climate change, carbon emissions and loss of irreplaceable habitat, can be effectively compensated or mitigated against. We will draw the Applicant's attention to the following excerpt from a paper discussing the implications of construction windfarms on peatland, published by the University of Aberdeen:

"Wind farms constructed on undegraded peatlands introduce higher risks of net loss of C [carbon] than wind farms constructed on mineral soils, and must be strictly managed for maximum C retention if a net C saving is to be realised. Previous work (Nayak et al., 2010) has indicated that a benefit to terrestrial C stocks can be achieved by responsible management of sites and targeted use of resources to improve previously degraded sites. However, when projected changes in emission factors are accounted for, the potential for C saving is very much reduced and most peatland sites will show

[27] Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development. | CIEEM

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no net C saving. Even if constructing wind farms on undegraded peatlands is of value in reducing C emissions today, it is not likely to be so in the future. This suggests that the construction of wind farms on undegraded peatlands should be avoided. If this results in a reduction in renewable energies, the predicted reduction in emission factors might not be realised. However, given that wind farms could be sited solely on non-peatland sites, and that other forms of renew able energy are available to meet emission reduction targets, the exclusion of wind farm development on peatland would not be expected to significantly impact future emission factors. Given the clear advantages in terms of C payback time of locating wind farms on mineral soils, and the marginal future C savings provided by locating wind farms on peats, construction of wind farms on undegraded peatlands is best avoided wherever practicable."[28]

We support this statement and after reviewing this Report, we reiterate that our **Objection to the Principle of this development is sustained**. This is due to the proposed location, which we deem wholly inappropriate for the reasons we have outlined throughout this response.

We trust that you have found these comments informative and we would request further consultation when further information is published.

Kind regards,

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[28] *Wind farms on undegraded peatlands are unlikely to reduce future carbon emissions (2013)*, Jo Smith, Dali Rani Nayak, Pete Smith, *Institute of Biological & Environmental Science, University of Aberdeen*, p.590