# Norfolk flood chief backs £2bn Wash tidal barrage despite environmental opposition



Henry Cator, chairman of the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance, has publicly endorsed Centre Port's ambitious plans for a £2 billion tidal barrier that would stretch across The Wash from Hunstanton to Skegness. He has urged that this proposal, which also includes the construction of a container port and a new dual carriageway, be taken into serious consideration, not only for its potential to protect the Fens from flooding but also for its economic benefits. Cator argues that such infrastructure could be vital for the future of the region, particularly in light of climate change and the rising threats of extreme weather.

Despite Cator’s support, the project faces staunch opposition from various environmental groups. Critics, including the RSPB, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, and Wetlands Trust, warn that the tidal barrage could have catastrophic consequences for the sensitive ecology of The Wash, which is recognised as a vital habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. The coalition of conservationists has pointed out that similar projects in different parts of the world have resulted in irreversible damage to ecosystems. The environmentalists fear that this barrage could transform the area into a "green, fetid lake," disrupting established habitats and releasing substantial amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, thereby exacerbating climate change impacts.

Cator acknowledges these concerns but believes that pragmatism should guide discussions surrounding the project. “People look at the world through rose-tinted spectacles, but the world is changing around us,” he remarked, asserting the importance of adaptation in the face of climate threats. He also mentioned that the barrage would create a freshwater reservoir behind it, a potentially valuable asset given the increasing risks of water scarcity in future decades. The project is said to promise lucrative economic benefits, potentially creating around 1,200 jobs and improving transport efficiencies by simplifying logistics between the East of England and other major markets.

Centre Port is currently in the process of seeking a Development Consent Order (DCO) from the government, a prerequisite to proceed with the building phase of the project. CEO James Sutcliffe has confirmed that the necessary investment for the scheme has been secured, though obtaining the required consent could take several years, followed by an additional period of construction. The barrage would be designed to operate with hydroelectric turbines set on the seabed, aiming to generate power for up to 600,000 homes.

While the potential for green energy generation has garnered attention, the contrasting voices of concern highlight the complex interplay between environmental stewardship and developmental ambition. The project encapsulates a broader conversation in the UK regarding infrastructure reform and the urgent need for proposals that balance ecological integrity with economic growth. The Labour Party has expressed an intent to foster the UK’s standing as a clean energy superpower, vowing to streamline planning processes to facilitate infrastructure advancement; however, the Centre Port scheme’s long-term environmental implications remain to be thoroughly addressed.

In conclusion, the proposed tidal barrage across The Wash has rallied both support and dissent, illustrating the challenging dynamics of modern development. As climate change continues to pose existential threats to vulnerable ecosystems and communities, the unfolding debate will likely serve as a focal point for policymakers striving to balance ecological preservation with the pressing need for infrastructural enhancements in response to these challenges.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25174956.norfolk-flood-chief-backs-centre-ports-wash-barrage-plan/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-63708269)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.rspb.org.uk/media-centre/wash-barrage-would-cause-catastrophic-damage), [[5]](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/controversial-wash-barrage-plans-would-be-catastrophic-nature)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25174956.norfolk-flood-chief-backs-centre-ports-wash-barrage-plan/?ref=rss), [[6]](https://www.power-technology.com/news/proposed-uk-tidal-barrage-criticism-environmentalists-wildlife-groups/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25174956.norfolk-flood-chief-backs-centre-ports-wash-barrage-plan/?ref=rss), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-67321119)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25174956.norfolk-flood-chief-backs-centre-ports-wash-barrage-plan/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-63708269), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-67321119)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](https://www.power-technology.com/news/proposed-uk-tidal-barrage-criticism-environmentalists-wildlife-groups/), [[7]](https://wildkenhill.co.uk/the-wash-barrage-guest-blog/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25174956.norfolk-flood-chief-backs-centre-ports-wash-barrage-plan/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lincolnshire-63708269> - Centre Port Holdings has unveiled plans for a £2bn tidal barrier across The Wash between Lincolnshire and Norfolk. The 11-mile barrage aims to generate tidal energy, protect homes and businesses from flooding, and include a dual carriageway, container port, and create 1,200 jobs. However, conservationists express concerns about its potential impact on the sensitive habitat for wildlife in the area. The project is still in the planning stages, with no formal application submitted yet.
3. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/media-centre/wash-barrage-would-cause-catastrophic-damage> - The RSPB and other conservation organizations have raised alarms over the proposed tidal barrage across The Wash. They argue that the development could lead to catastrophic damage to one of Europe's most important wetland habitats, potentially turning it into a 'green, fetid lake.' The barrage could release vast quantities of carbon into the atmosphere, exacerbating climate change, and increase flood risks for communities upstream. The local fishing industry could also be adversely affected by the construction of a new deep-water port.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-67321119> - Developers have proposed a £3bn tidal barrage across The Wash, featuring a road, railway line, hydroelectric power plant, and offshore container port. Centre Port claims the barrage could provide power for 600,000 homes and help protect the coast from flooding. However, environmentalists argue that the project could harm the environment and the fishing industry. The planning and construction of the barrier could take another 11 years, according to Centre Port.
5. <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/controversial-wash-barrage-plans-would-be-catastrophic-nature> - The Wildlife Trusts, along with other conservation groups, have expressed deep concerns over the proposed tidal barrage across The Wash. They warn that the development could cause catastrophic damage to one of Europe's most important wetland habitats, potentially turning it into a 'green, fetid lake.' The barrage could release vast quantities of carbon into the atmosphere, exacerbating climate change, and increase flood risks for communities upstream. The local fishing industry could also be adversely affected by the construction of a new deep-water port.
6. <https://www.power-technology.com/news/proposed-uk-tidal-barrage-criticism-environmentalists-wildlife-groups/> - A proposed tidal barrage linking Norfolk and Lincolnshire has faced criticism from environmentalists and wildlife groups. The Centre Port project claims that the barrier would generate power for around 600,000 homes and businesses in the region. The project proposal also includes a dual carriageway, potentially creating 1,200 jobs. However, the area of salt flats, known as the Wash, provides a unique habitat for wildlife, including seals and rare wading birds, leading to concerns about the project's impact on the environment.
7. <https://wildkenhill.co.uk/the-wash-barrage-guest-blog/> - Wild Ken Hill, a nature reserve in Norfolk, has expressed concerns over the proposed tidal barrage across The Wash. They argue that the claims made by the developers about protecting the existing ecology of The Wash are baseless, as the developers have no in-house ecological team or experience. The blog highlights the potential risks to the area's wildlife and the lack of credible evidence supporting the developers' claims.