

upper ribblesdale dam... to build or not to build?

Context

Ribblesdale is an area in North Yorkshire, named for the river Ribble, which flows through it. There is a debate about the value of building the Upepr Ribblesdale dam, flooding the Ribbesdale valley and forming a resevoir. Local opinion is divided.

For

Economic

- + Northern Leisure Ltd. wants to develop recreational facilities around the lake. This would bring in tourists and therefore income. The company has a good reuptation in educational and outdoor activities.

- + North West Water PLC needs another 500 million ltrs of water per day, which the resevoir could provide. The valley is perfectly suited to a resevoir, having impermeable lithology and the right morphpology, being the site of an old glacial lake. It is also strategically positioned for water distribution to the area.

- + Local businesses would take on more staff as a result.

Social

- + Less young people would leave the area if there were more job oppurtunities, which would be offered by the resevoir.

Environmental

- + The resevoir would offer new habitats for fish and bird life. Farmed animals could be fed from it.

Against

Economic

- Eight farms would be ruined and others would have to change from dairy to sheep farming. This could affect 200 jobs. Land, property and equipment would be lost by the farmers.

- The Settle Chamber of Trades has worries about outside competition.

Social

- In Giggleswick there are worries about sewage, algae, midges and flooding. Long Preston is against it, and villagers in Rathmell worry about the closure of the road to Settle.

- The Ramblers' Association worry about the loss of local and long-distance footpaths.

- The flooding of farms destroys the farmers' heritage, which can be traced back to the Domesday book.

- Some of the buildings near Wigglesworth Hall are grade 2 listed.

Environmental

- Eight farms would be flooded.

- Large swathes of land would be lost.

- Environmental groups such as English Nature and The Council for the Protection of Rural England oppose the plans, and claim there would be a loss of local biodiversity

- The EFG have already surveyed the area with regards to planting Lodgepole pine; this would obviously be impractical underwater.

map

key

Conclusion

As is often the case, the scheme would overall be economically beneficial but environmentally damaging. However, it would also further contribute to the degeneration of the farming industry, resulting in even fewer jobs in the area.

I think that the dam would have far too damaging an affect upon the area as a whole. On top of the loss of habitat for local animals, the residents don't seem all to ecstatic about the prospect, and it would force serious lifestyle changes upon the farmers in the area. It would also cause a loss of footpaths, though this probably minor; the lesuire facilities offered around the lake would surely compensate for this.

Although it is is important for areas to flourish econimically, it is surely also essential that they preserve their heritage, whether that be in the form of listed buildings or traditional methods of income. Local people must be happy. Making them richer isn't the only way to do this, and if you make them marginally richer at the expense of their quality of life then you lose sight of what you originally set out to achieve.

I think alternative, less permanant and smaller changes could be made in the area which wouldn't have such a great impact ecologically but would benefit the area in a more subtle way. The planting of a forest would eventually bring income in, and more investment in the natural, rather than synthetic, attractions of the area would also serve to bring in tourists, income and employment.

The Upper Ribblesdale dam shouldn't be built.