

WIND POWER PLANTS OR UNESCO HERITAGE SITE?



Abbey Mont-Saint-Michel and its bay has been a World Heritage Site since 1979. Nevertheless, current construction of wind power plants worries UNESCO representatives. They are considering the site's deletion from the UNESCO list as the island's landscape faces 'destruction' because of the construction of wind turbines.

The famous French Gothic-style Benedictine abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel might lose its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. UNESCO representatives are concerned with the planned construction of wind power plants in the vicinity of the abbey on the coast between Brittany and Normandy. The organization demands explanation from the French authorities.

As magazine Ceskenoviny.cz reported, there are only three wind turbines on the rock near the abbey so far. However, **according to the construction plans six more wind farms with 28 wind turbines in total will be built there.** UNESCO officials fear that the landscape, which now looks more or less the same as years ago, will be radically changed due to the construction.

UNESCO officials are concerned with the impact the construction will have on the character of the surrounding landscape. They will decide whether the site should be kept on the list or not at the meeting in Bahrain in June. The abbey was listed in 1979. It is not very common that a site loses its heritage site status but it happens at times. For example Dresden Elbe Valley was deleted from the list in 2009 because the city authorities decided to build a four-lane bridge in the heart of the historical landscape.

Since 2006 an effort has been made to conserve the natural character of the Mont-Saint-Michel's island. Part of the project is to get rid of the 900-meter-long dam with a road that connects the island with the mainland since 1879. Instead of the dam the local authorities plans to build a bridge. The dam blocks sea currents and as a result more sand is accumulated in the Mont-Saint-Michel bay. According to experts, due to the sand layers and growing vegetation the island may cease to be an island after only 40 years. The cost of conservation works are estimated to reach at least 140 million euro.

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