

Campaigners have called on the government to again reject an application for an open cast coal mine at Druridge Bay in Northumberland after its original decision was overturned by a High Court judge.

Banks Mining wants to extract up to three million tonnes of coal, along with sandstone and fireclay from land at Highthorn over seven years.

Its application was originally recommended for the green light by a planning inspector, but was refused when then planning secretary Sajid Javid said that it would undermine the government's attempts to prevent climate change.

Enough evidence

The decision was hailed by environmental campaigners as it was the first time the government had rejected a planning application purely on the grounds of climate change. However, Banks Mining appealed the decision, with its managing director Gavin Styles calling it "perverse" and "totally contrary to the principles of local decision-making".

At the High Court on Friday, Mr Justice Ouseley ruled that the reasoning behind Javid's decision was "significantly inadequate", and that he had not provided enough evidence for his decision.

The application will now go back to the government for a new decision by planning secretary James Brokenshire.

Opencast schemes

Simon Bowens, campaigner for Friends of the Earth, which supported the government in the case, said: "The original decision to say no to the Druridge Bay opencast coal mine on climate grounds was the right decision for the right reason.

"Since then, the case for ending our dependence on fossil fuels has only grown stronger, with the world's leading climate scientists warning that we need to act fast to avoid climate chaos.

"James Brokenshire must take heed of the science and again reject this destructive proposal.

"All opencast schemes should now be banned by the government, and space should be made instead for a low-carbon future," he said.

Source: theecologist