

Severn Tidal Feasibility Study – Overview of Progress

First public consultation

The first public consultation closed at the end of April with over 700 responses. The Government Response to the consultation has just been published (15th July 2009). The information below outlines the work to be done over the next year of the feasibility study:

- High-level analysis of the impact of five schemes, including the Cardiff-Weston barrage, two smaller barrages and two lagoons. These schemes remain the only schemes that are potentially technically and economically feasible at this stage. They will be considered both singly and in combinations where this is possible.
- Work to bring forward the development of schemes using embryonic technologies. The schemes to be supported with funding are two designs for a tidal fence and a low-head barrage (an environmentally-sensitive fixed barrage).
- A feedback loop to excluded schemes, particularly offshore tidal lagoons, as our evidence base develops to see whether new learning suggests they could be feasible for locations in the Severn Estuary.
- Further work on regional economic impacts, including a peer review to check methods used and conclusions drawn in the initial study.
- A formal Strategic Environmental Assessment of the five options above, together with a 'do nothing' option, covering the environmental, social and regional impacts of each of the schemes.
- Further work on whether the schemes would be compliant with the environmental legislation covering the Estuary.
- Strategic-level examination of whether the UK needs a Severn tidal power scheme, compared with alternative sources of supply.

Severn Embryonic Technology Scheme (SETS)

The Government announced in January that £500,000 would be made available to support Severn tidal embryonic technologies, such as the tidal reef and tidal fence. Applications for this funding closed in May and seventeen proposals were received from various companies and innovators six of which (including tidal fences, tidal reef and a tidal stream 'farm') met the eligibility requirements and progressed through to the next stage. This next stage involved working up bids with engineering and environmental consultancy advice funded through the scheme. The revised bids have now been submitted and are being reviewed again by the SETs Programme Board. A final decision on which schemes the funding will support is expected alongside the publication of the Government Response to Consultation.

Academic peer review of Regional Economic Impact study

Last year work was carried out on an initial assessment of the likely broad impact Severn tidal power schemes might have on the regional economies of the South West of England and Wales. The assessment was published alongside the consultation document in January. Professor Harvey Armstrong from the University of Sheffield has been appointed to independently peer review the regional economic impacts study, with a report expected in autumn this year.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – technical workshops

A number of technical workshops have been held to discuss the plans for the detailed work to be done this year. Sessions covered all the SEA topic areas, including: flood risk and land drainage; marine ecology; geomorphology and hydraulics; historic environment, landscape and seascape; marine water quality; ornithology; terrestrial and freshwater ecology;

migratory and estuarine fish; carbon footprinting, waste and resources; and society and economy.

Ministerial Changes

Following the recent Ministerial reshuffle, Mike O'Brien has left DECC and moved to the Department of Health. Lord Hunt will take on responsibility for the feasibility study with Ed Miliband (who remains DECC Secretary of State). Jim Knight MP has replaced Ben Bradshaw as Minister for the South West. Jim Knight is MP for South Dorset and Minister of State at the Department of Work and Pensions.

Upcoming events

The next stakeholder meeting will be held on the 23rd July to provide an overview of the Government's response to the recent public consultation, detail the progress of the SETS scheme and outline the work to be carried out in phase 2. The next Regional and Parliamentary Forums are likely to be held in late July depending on Ministerial availability.

Further background reports on this issue are available on our website:

www.westofenglandinitiative.co.uk

Full reports are available on the Severn Tidal Power website:

www.decc.gov.uk/severntidalpower

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