

Leaders behind nuclear fusion plant bid on England-Wales border say it's 'not end of road'

Leaders hoping their bid to build the world's first nuclear fusion plant on the border between England and Wales have said it is "not the end of the road" for the site after the government selected Nottinghamshire for the plant instead.

Earlier this week, the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) [picked a site between Retford and Gainsborough](#) to host the UK Atomic Energy Authority's [pioneering prototype fusion power station](#).

The Western Gateway – a cross-border partnership aimed at promoting economic growth across the West Country and South Wales – had been proposing to build the £220m plant at Severn Edge in Gloucestershire. It was [one of five sites previously under consideration by the government](#).

The Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production programme (STEP) is the national project to develop a prototype energy plant to prove the commercial viability of fusion. Fusion has been described as having the potential to become the "ultimate low carbon energy" source, recreating the reaction that takes place within the sun.

The Severn Edge bid had received support from industry, universities, businesses, political leaders and the local community. During the process the profile of both Oldbury and Berkeley sites were boosted into the spotlight, gaining a wide range of interest within Westminster.

Despite losing out to Nottinghamshire, the UK Atomic Energy

Authority said the Severn Edge site had “many attractive features” and would likely be “an outstanding candidate” for a wide range of developments. It also complimented the “partnership approach” that was taken by the Western Gateway bid and said it was sure Severn Edge would be utilised for “other important projects” in the future.

Katherine Bennett, chair of the Western Gateway Partnership, said: “I send my congratulations to the team behind the West Burton A bid and am reassured that this is not the end of discussions with the UK Atomic Energy Authority about a role for the Western Gateway and Severn Edge in supporting fusion and related technology.

“I am very proud of the work our partners have done as part of the Severn Edge team. We have enormously raised the profile of the area – the incredible strengths and expertise of our communities and built a compelling case for the need to invest.”

Ms Bennett said the Severn Edge site was still “perfectly placed” to benefit communities in England and Wales. She added: “This is by no means the end of the road for this project, I look forward to where Severn Edge goes next.”

Cllr Toby Savage, vice-chair of the Western Gateway partnership and leader of South Gloucestershire Council, said while the team was “disappointed” by the decision, he was looking forward to finding new ways of adapting the site to create low-carbon energy.

“Clearly this is very disappointing news for the Severn Edge STEP bid and my thanks go to all involved and the hard work they put into showcasing the offer we have in Oldbury and Berkeley,” added cllr Mark Hawthorne, leader of Gloucestershire County Council and Western Gateway board member.

“We will continue to look at options for these sites and

whilst we have not been successful, we have established a strong case to be the home of green technology in the future.”

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