

Severn barrage project on the radar of the Western Gateway partnership

A Severn Barrage tidal energy project could be revived as part of net zero strategies from the cross-border Western Gateway partnership.

Backed by local authorities across South Wales and west of England, alongside universities and the private sector, the board of the Western Gateway is considering setting up a independent commission to look at the potential for an array of green energy projects in the Severn estuary – including a barrage with a capacity to produce 5% of the UK's electricity needs.

Established to encourage cross-border economic collaboration, the Western Gateway's reach stretches from Swansea in the west to Swindon in the east – covering a population of 4.4 million. While respecting the devolved settlement in Wales and emerging mayoral powers in the west of England, the initiative is seen as creating an economic powerhouse on a footing with the more established Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine in England.

Over the years a number of Severn barrage projects, creating energy from one of the world's highest tidal ranges, have been proposed, but never realised.

Any commission set up the Western Gateway would though look at the feasibility of other renewable projects in the Severn Estuary.

The last proposed barrage scheme, from a company called Hafren Power, proposed a 18 kilometre barrage from Lavernock Point in the Vale of Glamorgan to the Brean Peninsula on the English

side of the estuary in Somerset.

Costing tens of billions of pounds it said it would have created 50,000 jobs during its construction phase and on completion had produced at least 5% of the UK's electricity needs.

The project though had little support from then the UK Government of David Cameron. However, with the Welsh and UK Government seeking to reach net zero by 2050 – and the recent government agreement between Plaid Cymru and Labour seeking to bring that 15 years forward in Wales – a barrage could now be in a better position to get government backing.

It could also assuage concerns over UK energy security and rising sea levels on both side of the estuary from climate change. To improve transport connectivity between South Wales and the west of England a road and rail link across any barrage could also be explored. A barrage could though raise lost wildlife habit concerns.

A Western Gateway spokesperson said: “We have agreed to explore the possibility of establishing an independent commission to provide an expert view on how we might harness green energy from the Severn. This is still at a very early stage and, if a commission is established, all potential technologies would be considered.

“We hope to be able to announce more following our first large scale conference, Green Growth in Western Gateway, where we will discuss the forward programme of work for our powerhouse partnership.”

The conference, sponsored by Deloitte, will be held at the ICC Wales in Newport on January 20th.

It will look at how to create the UK's first green energy super cluster as part of the national drive to reach net zero emissions. Participants will also discuss how the partnership

can ensure that it reaches communities at risk of being left behind to create a fairer and greener society.

Katherine Bennett, chair of the Western Gateway and a former Airbus executive, said: "This conference will give businesses and academia a chance to share ideas and kick start work to ensure we build on our strengths and realise our potential as the UK's first green energy super cluster whilst levelling up local communities.

Jane Mudd, leader of Newport Council and vice chair of the Western Gateway partnership, said: "Our Western Gateway partnership has been busy gathering evidence on the economic strengths of our area and how we can best put these to use. Now we're ready to set forward our plan for how we act on those strengths to achieve results for the people who live there.

"It's great to be able to welcome people back to Newport where we hosted the original launch of this powerhouse. I welcome our colleagues in business and academia on both sides of the Severn to take part and help steer this conversation as we look to create vital new opportunities and better connect our communities."

Dave Tansley, UK vice chair at Deloitte, said: "Race to net zero is a global issue that needs open collaboration across every level of government and business to make a difference to the communities we serve. Change can be achieved much quicker through utilising the skills and innovation available and working closely with the specialists we already have in South Wales and the West of England.

Deloitte is thrilled to be supporting the inaugural Western Gateway conference to connect the key players in this space and help drive the discussion to shape future goals and a strategy for the benefit of all. The cross-border body is considering establishing an independent commission to look at

energy projects in the Severn to support the race to net zero..”

Read More

Related Articles

▪



[The £1.7bn green energy project for Swansea creating thousands of new jobs](#)

BusinessLive

Read More

Related Articles

▪



[Company behind former Swansea Bay tidal lagoon project loses High Court case](#)

BusinessLive