

Barrage

Backers say new Severn Estuary plan is cheaper and is gaining political support.

By Declan Lynch

Plans for a cheaper, scaled back £25bn Severn tidal barrage scheme were revealed this week.

Backer Hafren Power has trimmed £7bn off the cost the scheme and is now seeking £30M to fund a full environmental impact assessment (EIA) for an 18km barrage between Brean in England and Lavernock Point in Wales.

It also needs funds to support efforts to push a hybrid bill through Parliament to allow its construction.

Once the bill is enacted Hafren will seek to sell on the scheme.

"Once the project has a hybrid bill and EIA we can then look to sell it on to a sovereign wealth fund to take the project forward," said Hafren Power chief executive officer Tony Pryor.

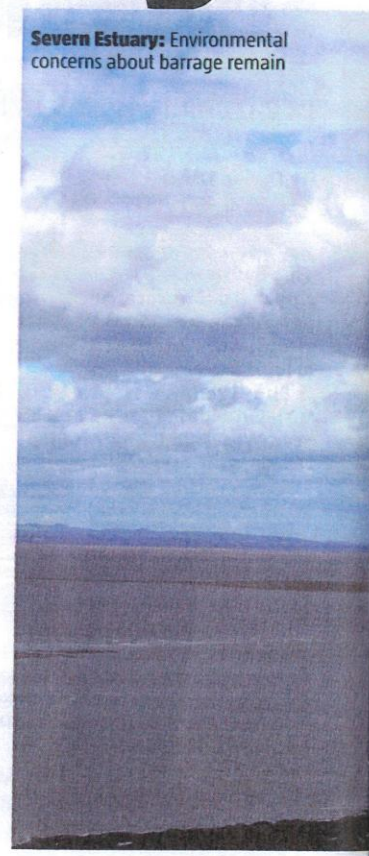
He said several million pounds of funding had already been secured to support the EIA and hybrid bill.

Previous proposals for a £32bn Severn barrage were ruled out by the government in 2010 because of its high costs, the need for £600M of public money, and the high risks associated with seeking planning permission (NCE 21 October 2010).

Since then the Corlan Hafren consortium led by Halcrow and Arup with consultant KPMG has been working on plans for a new scheme that requires no public money up front (NCE 10 November 2011).

Corlan Hafren has now morphed into Hafren Power with existing partners relinquishing their shareholdings. Arup is still involved, however, and is acting as lead consultant for the firm.

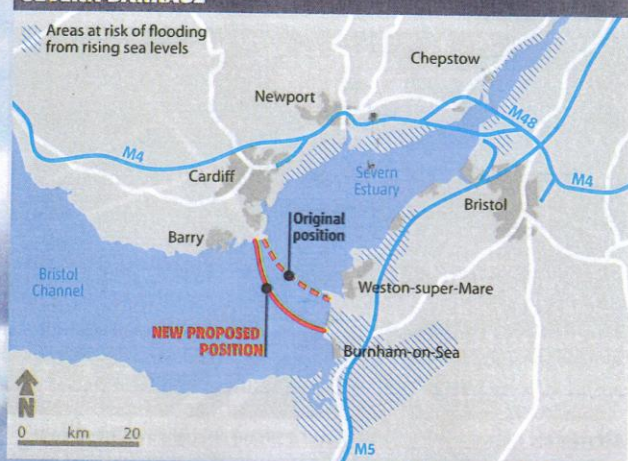
Pryor said he was confident Hafren Power's new proposals



Severn Estuary: Environmental concerns about barrage remain

is back

SEVERN BARRAGE



CONCERNS VOICED

Long-held environmental and economic concerns to the Severn barrage were heard by the Energy and Climate Change Committee this week.

The Bristol Ports Company urged MPs to reject the latest proposals on the grounds that they would threaten the commercial viability of its operation.

Bristol Ports Company chief executive Simon Bird said large vessels would be unable to dock at the port if the barrage was

will get support from MPs and from within Parliament. He said that the Energy and Climate Change Committee – which began scrutinising the scheme this week – had also asked to view Hafren's proposals.

Hafren is also in negotiations with the Treasury and the Depart-

constructed because it would lead to a build-up of sediment that would reduce water depth.

"The loss of high tide is a killer," he told MPs. "We already dredge 24/7."

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds also expressed concerns about the impact of the barrage on salt marshes and mudflats that support 69,000 birds each winter along with over 100 fish species using the estuary.

Hafren Power is to give evidence to the committee later this month.

ment of Energy and Climate Change over the level of consumer funding subsidy that would be made available to the scheme. It is hoped this could work in the same way as subsidies for other low carbon energy projects.

Hafren's barrage would feature 1,026 low head ebb and flow

turbines across the 18km long barrage – up from about 200 turbines which only operate when the tide is going out, which were part of in the previously proposed scheme.

The scheme could supply the National Grid with predictable energy that would meet 5% of the UK's electricity demand. This makes it attractive to investors, said Pryor. It would also act as a flood barrier for areas within the barrage.

Pryor said Hafren Power will work with all stakeholders including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds which has long-held concerns about the effects of the barrage on wildlife. It is also to work with Bristol Port which is concerned over the impact on shipping (see box).

"All the problems can be worked through," said Pryor. "We are committed to providing low carbon energy."