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Report slams Cardiff-Weston tidal barrage

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Plans for a tidal barrage between Cardiff and Weston-Super-Mare would cause “untold damage” to the environment and to the local economy, according to an inquiry report.

The inquiry was last year established by Liberal Democrat MPs, Assembly Members and councillors in the West of England and Wales last year to examine government plans to generate energy by harnessing the tidal power of the Severn Estuary.

The government is currently holding a public consultation on a shortlist of schemes including proposals for two smaller barrages sited further upstream, as well as two lagoon proposals, which would involve enclosing a section of the estuary.

The key recommendations of the inquiry are:

- that a barrage near the Second Severn Crossing (the 'Shoots Barrage') would be better than the much larger 'Cardiff-Weston' barrage;-
- that there should be pilots of 'lagoon' technology in the estuary;-
- that there should be serious investment in innovative technology such as the tidal 'reef' and into methods for storing tidal power so that it can be used at times of day when it is most needed.

Commenting on the report, Northavon MP Steve Webb said: "For over a century people have rightly been highlighting the potential for power generation from the Severn Estuary. With the threat of climate change getting steadily greater there is now real urgency that we get on with harnessing this source of renewable energy in an environmentally responsible way."

"We therefore reject the large 'Cardiff-Weston' barrage which could take decades to come on stream and could do untold damage both to the environment and to the local economy through its impact on the Port of Bristol. We believe that a smaller barrage offers the best mix of power output with reduced environmental impact and also offers the chance for a major upgrade to public transport through Wales and the West of England."