

SUSTAINABLE SEVERN

MAKING THE MOST OF THE ESTUARY

In April 2013, 90 senior leaders, policy makers and business people from Wales and the West of England came together to explore the potential for energy, jobs and wildlife in a Sustainable Severn. What they heard, from a range of speakers, and what they discussed, was very clear.

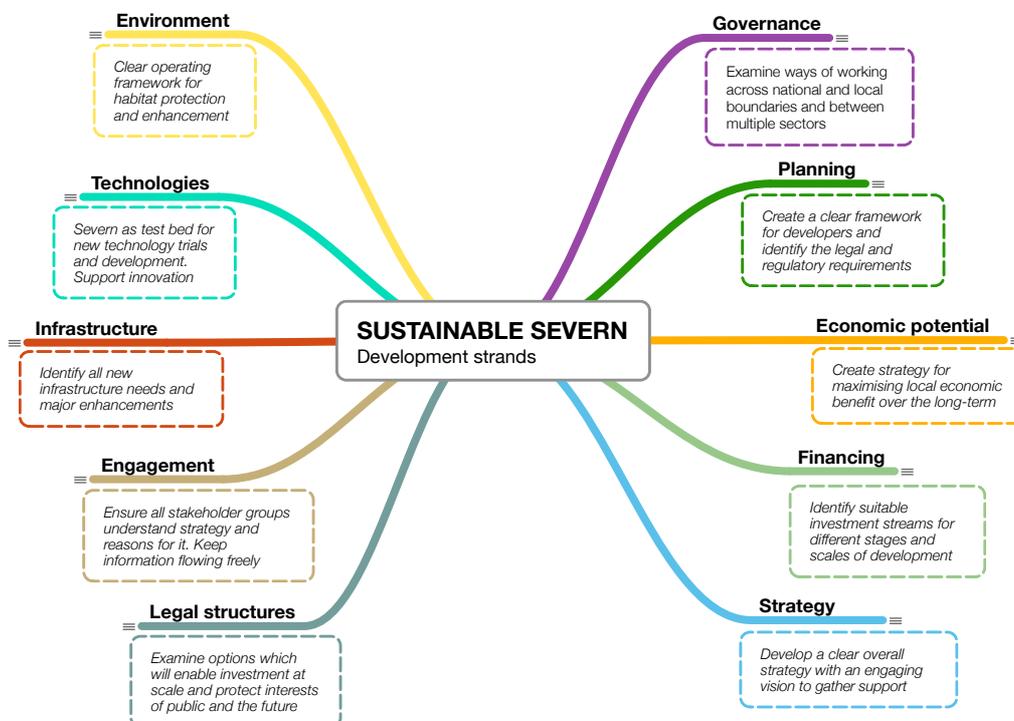
The best way to get a sustainable Severn is to create a mixed technology approach to capturing energy; a long-term approach to creating economic benefit; and a restorative approach to the estuary's environment.

Everyone agreed that there is a huge opportunity in the Severn.

MOMENTUM

It is now important to maintain momentum - to ensure that everyone who is enthused by the potential in the Severn can see that progress is being made. The opportunity is there to create a West of Britain approach, using the clutch of port cities that cluster around the country's largest estuary.

There is much work to be done to map out what comes next: the critical issues that need agreement, research and planning; the key organisations that can provide resources, political support and experience; and a group of people that can drive this exciting agenda with urgency and skill.



ENABLING ACTION

It is critical now to get the right, intensive conversations in place that will enable the development of something as large scale and complex as this. We need to identify all the right players that can bring strategic insight; experience and knowledge; planning and regulation; delivery expertise and resources.



It is not an easy thing to plan for the long-term, across multiple jurisdictions, in a complex ecosystem and involving several different sectors. However, it is clear that there is an appetite from many organisations to get on with this and to be involved in the next stages.

A NEW ROLE FOR GOVERNMENT

While all this is happening, there has to be an important role for government. At all levels - in Whitehall and Cardiff, as well as more locally - we need Government to show clear leadership for, and work towards, a job-rich, nature sensitive approach to marine energy across the whole of the estuary system. We need them to be clear that they want the rapid deployment of multiple energy generation technologies in the Severn.

We need to know that a new development and planning framework for the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel will have impact on the ground. We need the government to provide support for the development, testing and implementation of new technologies. Critically, we also need the government to give some certainty to the emerging markets and sectors for marine energy.

In its broadest sense, we need a new governance approach for a Sustainable Severn that will enable a step by step transformation of the estuary.

TAKING THE OPPORTUNITIES

We are living in challenging times. We are struggling to kick-start the economy, we are facing the uncertainties of climate change and we are losing precious natural resources. The Severn is blessed with an abundance of wildlife; with important and innovative businesses and with the potential of huge amounts of energy - if it can be captured sustainably.

There is a great cultural and economic history around the Severn. Politics, finance, innovation and leadership all have an important role but there is little time to lose. New EU funding programmes are being finalised by the end of this year - and we need to ensure that plans for the Severn are included. Elections for the Westminster parliament happen in 2015 which offers opportunities to create momentum, clarity and support.

STAYING INVOLVED

Over the coming weeks, we will be working to find the people and organisations best placed to take forward the development strands listed above and to ensure the momentum is not lost. We will keep everyone who came to the event in April informed, to provide a sounding board for emerging ideas and plans, as well as holding further meetings and events as required.

More detail on the specific outcomes of the Sustainable Severn Conference, including the presentations and debates, is available on the website: www.sustainablesevern.co.uk

We believe that there are optimal solutions for the Severn. We believe that we need to move fast - creating a momentum for action.

We believe in a truly Sustainable Severn.

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