Environment Minister Jane Davidson has today thanked all those involved in the Severn Tidal Power Feasibility study for their hard work, and has expressed her hope that the area will continue to play a key role is supporting the UK's renewable energy future.

The Minister was reacting to the UK Government's announcement on the findings of the Severn Tidal Power Feasibility study.

The study has found that there is not currently a strategic case for a very large-scale energy project in the Severn estuary due to the costs of delivery, the impact on the environment and the issues around attracting the private investment necessary.

The Minister said:

"I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who have worked so hard on the environmental, economic, technical and social aspects of this very useful study. It has given us a huge amount of intelligence and information on the renewable energy potential of the Severn estuary.

"Wales has a tremendous marine energy resource and we remain committed to exploiting that potential through the deployment of both wave and tidal technologies. The sustainable exploitation of this resource will play a vital role in moving us towards achieving our climate change goals and those of the UK.

There is no doubt that the Severn Estuary is a rich marine energy resource. I am optimistic that we can build on the evidence gathered to date and work in partnership with the Wales Low Carbon Research Institute, developers and academia such as SEACAMS , to develop the innovative marine technologies that will place Wales at the forefront of the marine energy sector, and support the UK's renewable energy future."

Some of the key findings of the study are:

- a tidal power scheme in the Estuary could cost as much as £34bn;
- over their 120 year lifetime, some Severn schemes represent similar and in some cases better value for society than equivalent investment in offshore wind and coal generation with carbon capture and storage (CCS).
- the scale and impact of even the smaller schemes would be unprecedented in an environmentally designated area. Providing compensation for the damage would be very challenging;
- Some habitats including saltmarsh and mudflat would be lost, this could potentially reduce bird populations of up to 30 species;
- Fish are likely to be severely affected with local extinctions and population collapses for some species, including Atlantic salmon and Twaite shad.
- water levels would also be affected creating an increased flood risk both around the Severn and further afield which would need additional investment in flood defences;
- overall a scheme is likely to benefit the regional economy with net value added to the economy and jobs created. However, there would be negative impacts on the current ports, fishing and aggregate extraction industries in the Estuary.

The report argues that at this time other low carbon energy sources represent a better deal for taxpayers, industry and consumers. The report points in particular to the expansion of wind energy, carbon capture and storage, and nuclear power without public subsidy.

In parallel with the feasibility study, work was undertaken on the development and assessment of alternative technology options which could provide a cheaper and less invasive alternative.

The Welsh Assembly Government, contributed to the half a million pound project to research this under the Severn Tidal Power Embryonic Technology Scheme (SETS).

Speaking about the SETS, the Minister added:

“Two of the three schemes assessed under SETS showed a good deal of potential for extracting renewable energy from the area.

“However further work is needed to develop these technologies to the point where they may be considered as part of any future Tidal Power scheme.

“I would urge the UK Government and others to continue working with us and key business partners such as Veredeg and Rolls Royce on the development of these emerging technologies, not just for applications in the Severn but also in other locations around our resource rich coast line.

"These technologies have real potential to provide a vital source of renewable energy for the whole of the UK, which would enable us to increase our energy security and help in the global fight against climate change”