

# Westminster Report



Left: Discussing the potential of the Severn with Chris Huhne MP, local councillors and others.

Below: Blasting at Wickwar Quarry



You can read what Steve had to say in these Parliamentary debates on his website ([www.stevewebb.org.uk](http://www.stevewebb.org.uk)) or you can obtain copies of the Hansard report of the debates by ringing Steve's office



Steve Webb MP addresses a packed House of Commons

## Energy from the Severn

For over a century people have been talking about taking advantage of the tidal power of the River Severn.

Now local MP Steve Webb has taken the issue up in Westminster, leading a debate on the issue and challenging the Prime Minister at his weekly question time.

Steve has surveyed local residents and found huge support in principle for some form of Severn tidal power scheme.

### Study needed

He is now pressing for a full assessment of the different ideas, including a full-blown barrage but also looking at smaller 'tidal lagoon' schemes or

underwater turbines. Steve said: "Any such study needs to take full account not just of the potential benefits of a major new source of renewable energy, but also of the potential downside for the environment in the estuary. We need a full and independent assessment as soon as possible so that we can make an informed choice and then get a scheme moving".

## Wickwar Quarry and planning enforcement

Dozens of local residents contacted Steve when their local Wickwar quarry applied to South

Gloucestershire Council to extend its operating hours and to quarry a much larger area.

Residents were particularly concerned that the quarry appeared to have been operating for many years in breach of its permitted level.

Steve responded by holding a public meeting in Charfield Village Hall, by meeting quarry chiefs at his Yate office and by visiting the Council's planning enforcement section.

### MPs debate

He was sufficiently concerned by the lack of enforcement of existing conditions that he initiated a debate at Westminster on the whole issue of planning enforcement in which several other MPs took part and to which a Government minister had to respond.

Whatever the outcome of the present applications, Steve is

pressing for the quarry to be a 'better neighbour' in future by responding more effectively to local residents, and also for any future planning conditions to be more effectively enforced.

Hard-working staff at the Trust have been under huge pressure to get costs under control whilst having to meet steadily more demanding targets for treatment times.

### Debt worry

Earlier this year Steve led a Westminster debate on the position of Trusts such as North Bristol which have borrowed huge amounts, either from the rest of the NHS or from the Government.

He has discussed the issue with health ministers and is pressing for a clear statement that the Trust will not face crippling debt repayments as it plans for the future.

Negotiations are ongoing, but the MP remains hopeful that a compromise will be reached which will enable our local hospitals to operate effectively without a long-term burden of debt repayments.

## NHS Trust Deficits

North Bristol NHS Trust, which is responsible for both Southmead and Frenchay hospitals has had a turbulent time financially in recent years.

It ran up debts approaching £50 million before a rescue plan was put in place and has needed to borrow a further £50 million over recent years whilst it was getting its finances back into balance.

## Steve is easy to contact



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## MP Direct!

### Steve's e-mail group

Over 5,000 local residents currently receive occasional e-mail updates on local and national issues from Steve. If you would like to join them, simply e-mail your name and address to [steve@stevewebb.org.uk](mailto:steve@stevewebb.org.uk)

### Steve's Blog, Facebook, Bebo and MySpace

See page three for information about Steve's blog or becoming a "friend" on Facebook, Bebo or MySpace.