

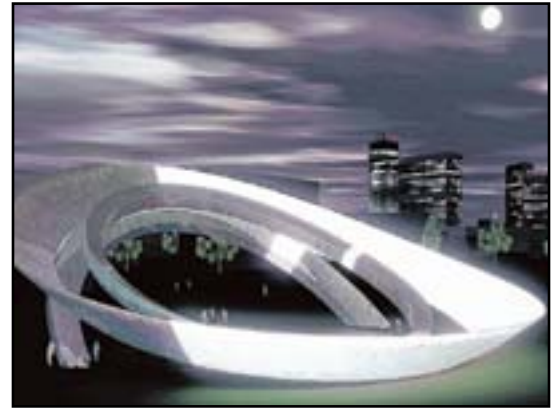


Unique wave sculpture may be lost in red tape

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By Liam Murphy, Daily Post

WIRRAL'S waterfront could lose out on an ambitious and unique sculpture because of bureaucratic "red tape".



The Aluna project which is based on the tides and wave power was originally designed to be built on the Mersey, according to its creator, Laura Williams.

But now other areas have shown an interest in the stunning design which is still being examined by regeneration experts at Mersey Waterfront Regional Park who are conducting a "pre-feasibility study".

Following the collapse of the Fourth Grace, the unique scientific sculpture could be snatched away by other countries more prepared to push ahead with the scheme.

But Wirral cabinet member for economic regeneration Cllr Pat Hackett has said he will be doing everything in his power to ensure the scheme goes ahead.

Ms Williams said she still strongly supports the sculpture being located on the Mersey, and a site near Seacombe in Wirral is one of the favoured areas.

She said: "Aluna embodies the Mersey's internationally-famous maritime and cultural heritage, which is what makes the river such an exciting and resonant location."

Described as a modern day Stonehenge, the sculpture was intended to be built on the banks of the Mersey as part of Wirral's contribution to Liverpool's Capital of Culture celebrations.

The massive structure is a beautiful tidal-powered moon clock which it is hoped could become a massive tourist attraction.

Known as the Aluna project, the glass sculpture has three concentric rings made from glass and measuring around 50 metres wide, and rising up to six storeys. Embedded in the glass are thousands of small LEDs

which illuminate it.

Powered by the waves, different parts of the artwork light up according to the phases of the moon and will also display the lunar day and the tidal changes.

Ed Forbes, public relations advisor to the project, said that, while they remained committed to trying the make the project work on the Mersey, other countries had shown an interest in the scheme.

He said: "If it fell through, we believe in its viability. We have been working on it for the Mersey, but it is not site-specific. There are other locations. We have been progressing the structure so it can be put somewhere else.

"We will await the pre-feasibility study, but we do not want to hold the design process up because the scheme is tied up in red tape.

"A lot of money has been invested in this, and a lot of what will be involved in the structure will be cutting-edge technology."

Mr Forbes said: "The project people are very keen, having invested so much effort, for this to happen in Merseyside - but we are getting to the stage where we have to look at other sites and where there is public interest that might move at a faster pace.

"The key thing is not to let the timetable compromise what is a viable project in its own right."

Cllr Hackett said he believed the project would be an important part of Wirral's tourism strategy, and fitted in with the Spaceport being built at Seacombe, with the regeneration planned for New Brighton, Hoylake and West Kirby.

He added: "At a time when Liverpool waterfront has been awarded World Heritage Site status, this is an opportunity not to be missed.

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