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Castle power plans surge on

by [Inderdeep Bains](#)

PLANS for a hydro-plant due to power Windsor Castle will go ahead despite a power company pulling the plug on the project.

South East Power Engineering (SEPE) has stepped in after nPower renewables announced it would no longer continue the development of the plant at Romney Weir in Windsor because of high construction costs.

The company will now work with the Environment Agency (EA) on the project, which is expected to cost several million pounds, generating energy for 300 local households including one-third of the electricity at Windsor Castle.

David Dechambeau, managing director of SEPE, said: "We have been involved in the project providing nPower with our engineering expertise for a number of years and we are very keen to continue it. We will be soldiering on, the plans remain the same and we will have this plant up and running, hopefully, by the end of this year."

He added: "The Queen may have been distressed after reading reports in the media that the plans were in disarray. I hope she is being kept updated with our progress and I'm sure she will be elated with the news."

nPower had said late last week that 'expensive' construction costs meant it was difficult to make the project a viable asset. The move came as a huge blow to the EA, which has been working on the project, which was granted planning permission in August, since 2003.

Clive Coley, the EA's regional strategy manager, said: "It has come as a huge disappointment and it will cause some delays but we have to respect their decision. We are keen for South East Power Engineering to take it on as they are aware of the issues and history of the scheme. However, we will have to go through an evaluation process which could take a few weeks. If all is well we could have the scheme up and running by 2010."

Mr Dechambeau said he was confident his company could make the plant a success despite nPower's concerns. He said: "My company is more flexible on investment returns. I think it is more important to get the rest of the country running on this than to make a lot of money straight away."

A spokeswoman for Buckingham Palace said the Queen would be interested in continuing the project with a new partner.

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