Holyrood approves tidal stream project

The world's largest tidal stream energy array will be built in the Sound of Islay following approval by the Scottish Government.

ScottishPower Renewables £40 million tidal array development will harness the power of the Sound of Islay and generate enough electricity for over 5,000 homes – more than double the number of homes on Islay.

The 10 Megawatt facility will further develop emerging tidal energy technology, provide economic and community benefits to Islay and Jura and cement Scotland's position as a global leader in marine energy.

Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth John Swinney determined the application as it is in Energy Minister Jim Mather's Argyll & Bute constituency.

Mr Swinney said:

"With around a quarter of Europe's potential tidal energy resource and a tenth of the wave capacity, Scotland's seas have unrivalled potential to generate green energy, create new, low carbon jobs, and bring billions of pounds of investment to Scotland. This development – the largest tidal array in the world – does just that and will be a milestone in the global development of tidal energy.

"ScottishPower Renewables array will work in harmony with the environment and use the power of the tides in the Sound of Islay to generate enough green energy to power double the number of homes on Islay. There is simply nothing like it consented anywhere else in the world.

“Developers must also work with host communities to provide local benefits. I am pleased that ScottishPower Renewables will work with the Islay Energy Trust to maximise social and economic opportunities, for instance using local marine contractors during installation or creating new local jobs in the onshore construction phase. And the wider Scottish supply chain is set to benefit, with Scottish businesses set to benefit from £4 million worth of contracts in making the turbines to be used in the development, including manufacture of a test prototype at BiFab in Arnish.

“The Scottish Government has the right incentives for commercial marine energy generation. With the highest support levels in the UK for wave and tidal energy, our £10 million Saltire Prize – Scotland’s energy challenge to the world to inspire innovation in marine energy – and our low carbon investment project, Scotland is one of the most attractive markets in the world for investment in marine renewables. We will continue to work with our enterprise agencies and with other partners to develop to our full potential and cement Scotland’s position as a global leader in marine energy.”

First Minister Alex Salmond met Scottish Power Renewables and Hammerfest Strom (a company jointly owned by Scottish Power Renewables and Norwegian energy companies) in Norway last year. Hammerfest Strom is developing one of the world’s most advanced tidal turbines, the HS1000 device which will be used in the Sound of Islay development, and Burntisland Fabrication Limited (BiFab) has a £2 million contract to build the turbines.

The tidal array is in addition to plans already underway to generate 1,600 MW of marine energy in the Pentland Firth, following the world’s first commercial wave and tidal leasing round announced last year.

The Scottish Government’s target is to meet 80 per cent of electricity demand from renewables by 2020. In 2009, 27 per

cent of electricity demand came from renewables. There is around 7 Gigawatts (GW) of renewables capacity installed, under construction or consented around Scotland, which will take Scotland beyond the interim target of 31 per cent of Scotland's electricity demand from renewables by 2011.

The Scottish Government has now determined 48 energy applications, including approval for 40 renewable and three non-renewable projects since May 2007 – more than double the number of determinations than over the whole of the previous four years, in which 19 energy projects were determined and 17 were approved. The Scottish Government's Energy Consents and Deployment Unit is currently processing 34 applications (25 onshore wind, three hydro and six thermal).