

Aquamarine Power gets approval for Western Isles wave farm



Edinburgh-based wave energy company Aquamarine Power has today received consent for a 40MW wave farm in the Western Isles. This will be the world's largest fully-permitted ocean energy site.

Here is an animation produced to show you what will be happening out on the west coast of Lewis:-

The announcement was made by Energy Minister, Fergus Ewing, at the All-Energy Conference taking place this week in Aberdeen, and shows further support for the wave energy business in Scotland.

The green light from the government and its regulator Marine Scotland, along with onshore planning which was approved last September, means the Edinburgh firm, through its wholly owned subsidiary Lewis Wave Power Limited, will be able to begin installing their near-shore Oyster wave energy machines at the site in the next few years – once the necessary grid infrastructure has been put in place.

This will ultimately see the deployment of between 40 and 50 Oyster devices along the coast at Lag na Greine, near to Fivepenny Borve, in one of the best wave energy locations in Europe. Once complete, the farm will have the capacity to power nearly 30,000 homes.

Last year the local council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council), approved planning for the onshore hydroelectric power plant which will be connected to the

Oyster wave energy farm.

Aquamarine Power are currently testing their second full scale wave machine, known as the Oyster 800, at the European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC) in Orkney, and are now producing electrical power to the grid.

“This is a significant milestone for our company,” says Aquamarine Power Chief Executive Officer Martin McAdam. “The goal of our industry is to become commercial, and to do this we need two things – reliable technologies and a route to market. Our engineers are currently working hard on getting the technology right and we now have a site where we can install our first small farm, with a larger-scale commercial build out in the years ahead.

“We have worked in close consultation with the people and businesses of Lewis in the development of our proposals and would like to express our gratitude for their ongoing support. We were delighted with the turnout at the series of public exhibitions we held on Lewis last March, and we also commend government regulator Marine Scotland and the Western Isles Council for their positive approach.

“We believe wave energy presents an important opportunity for the Isle of Lewis. Our development could provide significant economic benefit to the local community. In Orkney, for example, we have spent over £5 million in the local economy during the installation of the first two Oyster devices and have worked with over 40 local companies as part of our commitment to sourcing much of the services and expertise we require locally.”

The £18 million Marine Renewables Commercialisation Fund (MRCF), launched at All-Energy last year, will now be used to provide a dedicated support mechanism for the wave sector to enable wave projects get to the first array stage and development.

The Scottish Government has explained that this tailored approach for wave energy will be complemented by an innovation support programme for the enabling technologies that are crucial to the success of the earliest wave and tidal arrays.

The government hope that the new proposal will ensure Scotland remains at the forefront of marine energy and is aimed at accelerating wave technologies towards commercial readiness, alongside their tidal counterparts.

Announcing the launch of the new scheme in Aberdeen today, Energy Minister Fergus Ewing said:-“Scotland has a world-leading resource and is a hot-bed of innovation and talent, making marine energy an exciting green growth sector. The fact that three leading tidal projects in Scottish waters have recently secured funding from other sources – the European Commission’s NER300 fund and the UK Government’s Marine Energy Array Demonstrator scheme – offers the prospect do something different with the MRCF. We now have the chance to provide much-needed support for other marine renewables activities, while still fulfilling the goal of the MRCF – which is to help commercialise the marine energy industry in Scotland.

“Scotland needs both wave and tidal stream technologies to help decarbonise our electricity system, increase energy security, and reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.

“The need for differentiated funding for wave and tidal technologies has been debated for a while now within industry circles. The marine renewables industry has spoken and we have listened. All previous marine energy funding schemes have been open to both wave and tidal projects. We are proposing something very different here in Scotland, making us the first in the UK.”

Dr Stephen Wyatt, Director of Innovation at the Carbon Trust said:-“The Carbon Trust are delighted to be working with the Scottish Government to deliver this dedicated support

mechanism of financial and technical support for the wave sector to enable wave projects to get to the first array stage. This tailored approach for wave energy, complemented by a Marine Energy Accelerator for enabling technologies, will help keep Scotland, and the rest of the UK, in pole position to capitalise on the tremendous opportunity we have in marine energy.”