

September 17 2007

Government go-ahead for Wave Hub project

The UK Government will today [Monday, September 17] give planning approval for the world's first large scale wave farm off the coast of Cornwall in South West England.

It means the £28 million project, which has been developed by the South West of England Regional Development Agency (RDA), has cleared the last major regulatory hurdle. Funding for the project has already been approved by the RDA.

The consent announcement will be made today [September 17] by John Hutton, Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

Juliet Williams, chairman of the South West RDA, said: "This announcement is a huge step forward for Wave Hub and is a vote of confidence in the RDA's ability to create a groundbreaking renewable energy project in South West England that will lead the world in the development of wave energy technology."

Wave Hub is a world first and will include an onshore substation connected to electrical equipment on the seabed about 16 kilometres (10 miles) offshore via a sub-sea cable.

Companies developing wave energy technology will be able to plug into Wave Hub to test their wave energy devices on a scale never seen anywhere before. Four companies have already been chosen to use Wave Hub.

Wave Hub will put South West England and the UK at the forefront of emerging wave energy technology by providing a leased and consented area of sea for the pre-commercial testing of wave energy devices.

A new independent economic impact assessment, commissioned by the RDA, has shown that Wave Hub could create 1,800 jobs and £560 million in the UK economy over 25 years. Almost 1,000 of these jobs and £332 million would be generated in South West England.

Wave Hub could generate enough electricity for 7,500 homes, directly saving 300,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide over 25 years. This would support South West England's target for generating 15% of the region's power from renewable sources by 2010.

The consent announcement has been welcomed by Maria McCaffery, chief executive of the BWEA, the trade and professional body for the UK wind and marine renewables industries.

She said: "This is a fantastic confidence boost for this emerging industry. Wave Hub will be a crucial part of the learning curve for everyone with an interest in wave energy development around the world and will underpin the growing confidence in these exciting technologies. It's this kind of progress that makes the UK the global hotspot for the expansion of carbon free energy from the sea and we must ensure it remains so."

Matthew Spencer, chief executive of Regen SW, the renewable energy agency for South West England, added: "This is great news. Wave Hub is the right idea, in the right place, at the right time. Now the engineers and the developers can get cracking and make Cornwall the place where wave energy comes of age."

Tim German, director of the Cornwall Sustainable Energy Partnership, which has been focusing on the benefits of Wave Hub to Cornwall, said: "We have been eagerly awaiting this news which clears the way for this exciting project, casting

the world's eyes on the UK's green peninsula. It will be a key feature of the industrial revolution of the 21st century, playing an important role in Cornwall's economic and low carbon future.”

The Wave Hub project will cover an area of sea measuring four kilometres by two kilometres and each wave device developer will be granted a lease of between five and 10 years in an area of approximately two square kilometres. The water at the deployment site is approximately 50 metres deep.

Up to 30 wave energy devices are expected to be deployed at Wave Hub and will float on the surface of the sea. Wave Hub is expected to be operational in 2009.

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Notes to editors

Interviews

Nick Harrington, The South West RDA's Wave Hub Project Manager, will be available for interview on Monday September 17 by contacting Jason Clark in the first instance on 07980-834368, email jason@dca-pr.co.uk

John Hutton, Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) will also be available for interview on Monday September 17 by contacting David Meechan in the BERR press office on 0207-215 5960, email David.Meechan@berr.gsi.gov.uk

1. The South West RDA leads the development of a sustainable economy, investing to unlock the region's business potential. It works in partnership with public and private sector organisations and takes a long term view. It aims to drive up the region's productivity by giving people the skills they need, encouraging enterprise, improving infrastructure, regenerating places and promoting the strengths of the region.
2. The South West RDA is planning to create the world's first large scale wave energy farm by constructing an electrical 'socket' on the seabed around 10 miles (18.5 km) off Hayle on the Cornwall coast in South West England.
3. Called Wave Hub, it will allow developers of wave energy devices to test new wave energy technology. Groups of wave energy devices will be connected to Wave Hub and float on or just below the surface of the sea to assess how well they work and how much power they generate before going into full commercial production.
4. The South West RDA applied in June 2006 for consents to the Department of Trade and Industry (now the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Review) and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs for consent to construct the Wave

- Hub. The applications were made under the Electricity Act 1989, the Coastal Protection Act 1949 and the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.
5. Wave Hub will be connected to the National Grid by a 15.5 mile (25 km) cable linked to a new electricity substation at Hayle. It could generate 20 MW of electricity, enough power for 7,500 homes or 3% of Cornwall's domestic electricity needs.
 6. Four wave device developers have already been chosen to work with the South West RDA on the project. They are Oceanlinx, Ocean Power Technologies Limited, Fred Olsen Limited and WestWave, a consortium of E.On and Ocean Prospect Limited, using the Pelamis technology of Ocean Power Delivery Ltd.
 7. Wave Hub is expected to establish South West England as a world-leader in the development of wave energy technology, potentially creating hundreds of jobs in the future.
 8. The South West RDA is investing in a range of demonstrator projects in the wave, tidal and biomass sectors to promote the development of renewable energy in South West England.
 9. Wave Hub will cost £28 million to build. The Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform has committed £4.5 million towards the cost and the RDA has already invested in excess of £2 million to get it to this stage.
 10. In April the RDA approved £21.5 million of funding for Wave Hub. Half of this is expected to come from the European Regional Development Fund through the Convergence Programme for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

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