

News

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Wave power to make a splash in Lewis

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A new chapter in the UK's search for a sustainable future has been opened with the announcement of proposals to develop a new wave power station at Siadar on Lewis in the Outer Hebrides.

The scheme is a joint project between npower renewables¹, one of the UK's largest renewable energy companies, and Wavegen², a world-leading wave power company based in Inverness, owned 100% by the hydro equipment supplier Voith Siemens Hydro since 2005.

The development would consist of building a new breakwater similar in appearance to those frequently used around our coastline for the provision of harbour facilities. Where this breakwater differs is that, if developed, it would have a wave energy scheme built into it.

This site has fantastic potential and if the obstacles can be overcome - of which the availability of a connection to the electricity grid is the most significant - then when fully operational the project would harness power from the Atlantic waves to generate up to 3 megawatts of electricity. This is enough to supply the needs of around 1500 homes each year - equal to almost a fifth (18%) of all households on the Hebridean Island of Lewis and Harris³.

Bill Langley, Marine Development Engineer at npower renewables said, "This is a really exciting time. So much

Councillor Iain Morrison, Barvas & Arnol went on to say, "As the local councilor I see this as the answer local people are looking for. The benefits from the project are obvious; the most exciting part for me would be any spin-off that would result in having a fully functional harbour on the west coast."

The next step for the project is to take it through a feasibility study which will last about 6 months. Initial studies are set to take place in the coming weeks which will involve an on-site survey of the sea bed, and investigation of the local wave resource. These will enable the project to be simulated at Wavegen's tank testing facilities in Inverness, in order to provide a more accurate understanding of the likely energy output of the scheme. The feasibility study will also involve some engineering design work to determine the precise size, location and cost of the project, and some preliminary planning and environmental work.

David Gibb, General Manager, Wavegen added, "In working together, Wavegen and npower renewables form a strong partnership based on experience and a good range of skills in developing renewable energy schemes. If the feasibility study shows this site to be suitable, and the grid issues can be overcome, then this project holds great potential for both renewable energy generation and benefits to the local community."

Notes

1 npower renewables - a leading UK renewable energy developer and operator with a portfolio of 15 wind farms and 12 hydro schemes across. It has a

has been said about using wave power to generate electricity, and those words are now beginning to be turned into actions. The Siadar project could be the gateway to the best wave resource in the UK and, if developed, would be a very tangible step towards marine renewables taking its place at the energy table.

"It should be recognised that as with any such development, there are some major hurdles to be overcome - the most significant being whether a grid connection will be available in time. Meeting this challenge will take lots of work from us, from Government and from the electrical grid companies, but we are confident that if we all start now, a connection will be possible and the full potential of this project will be realised."

The concept for a new breakwater on Lewis could fit well with the needs of the local Siadar Pier Group, who are looking at rebuilding the local slipway at Siadar. The new breakwater could also have added benefits in providing some protection for a harbour facility for small scale commercial and leisure craft. If offshore wave projects are developed off the Lewis coast in the future, this new facility could also be used for the necessary service vessels.

Donald Macleod, Chairman, Siadar Pier Group said, "The Siadar Pier Group is pleased that npower renewables and Wavegen are interested in this exciting project. We are hoping for a successful outcome to the feasibility study and that the project proceeds."

history in hydro power dating back 100 years and has been developing wind farms since 1991. Through its parent company it is involved in co-firing biomass whilst its sister company operate an extensive energy efficiency and micro-generation programme. For further information please visit www.npower-renewables.com

The company is already supporting the development of new renewable energy technologies through the npower juice fund - for more information, please visit www.npower.com/juicefund

2 Wavegen - Founded in 1990 and acquired by Voith Siemens Hydro in 2005, Wavegen is a leader in the construction of wave energy systems and in the research and the development of this technology. The team developed, deployed and now operate Limpet, the world's first commercial-scale wave energy device on the island of Islay. For more information, please visit www.wavegen.com. For information on Voith Siemens Hydro please visit www.voithsiemens.com

3 Based on Scottish 2001 census records, reported in 2003, Lewis and Harris have total of 8506 households.

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