

## POWER Cluster project finishes with a flourish

The POWER Cluster project, which helped develop the offshore wind industry in the North Sea region of Europe, has recently concluded after more than three years of hard work.

German based Bremerhaven Economic Development Company lead the project from the start with ongoing involvement from Suffolk County Council and the East of England Energy Group (EEEGR). The project's aim was to highlight the need for a collaborative approach to meet the challenges facing the wind industry. Key achievements included organising a series of international business to business events which lead to more than 2,300 new business contacts and the award of contracts, as well as the production of two detailed studies.

One such event was a special conference held on 16th-17th June at OrbisEnergy, the specialist technology, innovation and incubation hub for offshore renewables in East Anglia, which was attended by Swedish officials and politicians. Delegates spent two days talking to key energy figures and discussing the positive social acceptance of offshore wind farms experienced in the UK, and in particular East Anglia.

The POWER cluster's final conference entitled 'Sharing Learning in Offshore Wind Energy' focused on key project findings and took place at the Klimahaus in Bremerhaven on 30<sup>th</sup> May – 1st June.

Speaking at the final conference John Best, CEO of EEEGR, presented key highlights from the business element of the project, such as the launch of the POWER Cluster Mapergy; a free to join interactive web-based map showing products and services offered to the offshore wind industry in Europe, enabling more efficient collaboration of resources.

John Best also talked about how the offshore wind industry can learn from the oil and gas industry, emphasizing the importance of learning from how they have dealt with challenges such as maintaining cost efficiencies, and working in harsh offshore environments.

Anne-Bénédicte Genachte, Regulatory Affairs Advisor for Offshore at the European Wind Energy Association, spoke about the trend in moving offshore wind farms further from the shore and into deeper water. She also stated that in Europe in 2010, 308 wind turbines were installed and connected resulting in 883MW of installed capacity - enough to power more than 500,000 homes. This is an increase of 53% from 2009.

John Best, CEO of EEEGR said "The project has enabled EEEGR to put the East of England at the heart of Europe's key players in offshore wind industry. This has ensured that we have a greater

profile and that there is a growing recognition of our skills and expertise. It is important to recognise that we will best achieve a reduction in costs for offshore wind farms by collaborating and sharing knowledge with our European neighbours.”

Judy Terry, Suffolk County Council’s Portfolio Holder for Greenest County, Economy and Skills said “We are delighted to have been involved in a European project which supported the offshore wind industry. It demonstrates the need to work with our European colleagues to overcome some of the challenges facing the industry particularly the need for a European super grid. This would enable the UK to export surplus energy produced by our offshore wind farms.”

Thanks to the success of such events, the POWER cluster project was one of the finalists in this year’s RegioStars Awards 2011. Recognising good practice in regional development and highlighting original and innovative projects, the project was shortlisted in the ‘Networking and cluster initiatives supporting regional growth and SMEs access to global markets’ category.

Since the end of the POWER Cluster project, partners have jointly agreed a declaration which illustrates their lasting commitment to lobby for action to tackle the key challenges facing the industry. These challenges include the need for more funds to support research and development. The declaration was handed over to European Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn by Mathias Grabs on behalf of the project at the RegioStars Awards in Brussels.

-ENDS-

#### **Notes for editors**

POWER (Pushing Offshore Wind Energy Regions) cluster is a 3 year €4,998,942 project which aims to help develop the offshore wind industry in the North Sea region of Europe. It involves 18 partners from six European countries - Germany, the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

OrbisEnergy is the hub for offshore renewables at the UK's most easterly point in Lowestoft, Suffolk. It is a leading technology, innovation and incubation centre, acting as a catalyst for sector growth and supply chain development.

OrbisEnergy is owned by Suffolk County Council, and managed by NWES Property Services. The East of England Energy Group (EEEGR) is the industry association for energy in the East of England, representing over 350 members across the supply chain.

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