

Archived News

:: Scotland "can lead world in wave power" 12/03/04

Scotland can become the world leader in generating electricity using wave power, securing a significant share of an industry set to be worth billions.

Scottish wave energy firm Wavegen predicts that the wave power industry is also capable of creating thousands of jobs.

But the firm also says government support, in the form of revenue funding, is vital now, while the industry is still in its infancy, to ensure it reaches its full potential.

Wavegen, which operates the world's first commercial-scale wave energy device, makes the comments in its submission to an inquiry by the Scottish Parliament's Enterprise and Culture Committee into the future of renewable energy in Scotland.

The Scottish Executive has set a series of targets to increase the amount of electricity generated from renewable energy sources such as wind, wave and hydro power – thus cutting reliance on oil, coal and gas, which will eventually run out.

Currently Scotland produces 12% of its electricity from renewable sources. This is set to increase to 18% by 2010 and 40% by 2020.

"If we are to meet these targets then it is vital that we develop a range of renewable energy technologies," says Wavegen in its submission. "We cannot rely on wind power and hydro-electricity, important as they are, to deliver these longer term targets."

The company warns: "The UK in general, and Scotland in particular, has the chance to establish the lead position on wave energy. It is vital that opportunity is not lost.

"Ongoing government support for this fledgling industry is essential if we are to maintain our lead."

Wavegen argues that the support should be in the form of revenue funding as this would help reduce project risk, make it easier to attract and retain investors and would be less expensive for the Government, and ultimately the taxpayer.

The company also calls for significant investment in the national grid to enable it to cope with a large increase in electricity generation from more peripheral areas.

Wavegen operates the world's first commercial-scale wave energy device that's connected to the electricity grid. The unit, called Limpet, is on the island of Islay.

In 2003 the firm set up a joint venture with Faroese electricity company SEV to work on a project that aims to build a series of Wavegen's air turbine power generation units into cliffs to form the world's first wave power station. The overall project is worth £7 million and will form the blueprint for wave power stations in similar locations both in the Faroes and other parts of the world.

The World Energy Council estimates that twice as much energy can be harvested from wave power as is currently used to supply the entire world's electricity demand.

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Wavegen points out that wave energy is now roughly at the stage where wind energy was 10 years ago. In the early days of wind power, the firm points out, Denmark seized the leading role and developed an industry that has created 15,000 jobs in Denmark alone – an indication of the potential of the wave industry to generate employment.

“The amount of energy in waves around the UK is more than the energy we currently convert to meet our demand for electricity, and Scotland has particularly high potential,” says Wavegen.

“Scotland has the chance to establish itself as the leader in wave energy technology across the world.”

Wavegen’s submission to the inquiry makes the case for more government support to help the industry develop and test technologies not yet at the stage of commercial viability.

Issued on behalf of Wavegen by
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