

Blowing in the Wind



Wind power has proved itself to be the fastest growing energy source of all others. Last year, 235 new offshore wind turbines with a total power capacity of 866 MW were fully grid-connected across nine offshore wind farms, according to a statement issued by the European Wind Energy Association (EWEA), accompanying the publication of their annual offshore wind statistics for 2011. Across the EU, a total of 1,371 offshore turbines have now been grid-connected, with a total power capacity of 3,813 MW in 53 wind farms in ten European countries. EWEA's target for installed EU offshore wind power capacity by 2020 is 40,000 MW, producing approximately 4% of the EU's total electricity consumption.

In their November 2011 report, 'Wind in our Sails' – The coming of Europe's offshore wind energy industry, EWEA acknowledges the relevance of jack-up platforms as the workhorses of the industry: The industry is seeing increased specialisation of vessels for offshore wind generally and for the specific tasks performed on an offshore wind site. Nevertheless jack-up designs are expected to continue to dominate vital installation procedures and particularly turbine installation. Bearing this in mind our editors visited two brand new jack-up platforms: the sophisticated JB-117 of Jack-Up Barge and the GeoSea-owned Neptune, a DP jack-up platform built by IHC Merwede. At the moment of writing the JB-117 is getting ready for her first assignment on the 400MW BARD Offshore 1 wind farm and the Neptune also is already fully booked. Neptune's first assignment will bring her to the Thornton bank off the Belgian coast, where the self-propelled jack-up platform will install 48 wind turbines for the second and third stages of C-Power NV's offshore wind farm.

However, the price of electricity generated by offshore wind turbines is still higher than market prices for electricity from fossil fuels, which means that one way or another one will be paying significantly more for electricity in the next two decades. For now, though, the consensus seems to be that the price is worth paying to obtain an adequate future energy supply. The energy answer is blowing in the wind.

Dennis Vinkoert

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Front Cover: Following the acquisition and subsequent rebrand of RBG Limited, Stork Technical Services (Stork) now has the experience, expertise and skills to deliver a unique service offering that meets both the projected increase in decommissioning operations and potential step-up in reuse activity.

Background picture contents page: The spacious North Sea depicted from the aft deck of an offshore supply vessel. This unique photo was made by specialised maritime photographer Danny Cornelissen, founder and owner of the website PortPictures. According to the discerning maritime photographer professional photography is not just pushing a small button, it's a huge passion. Respect, honesty, safety and especially close high-level contacts, has made his business into what it is today. As a maritime photographer he travels around the globe, however, the Port of Rotterdam remains his homeport.