



Offshore wind conference: industry meets tomorrow's engineers

The fast-growing offshore wind industry was the focus as key names in the sector gathered recently to meet more than 50 skilled engineers as part of an industry awareness, training and recruitment day.

The goal was to bring together leading employers in the offshore wind industry with engineers from other areas. The aim: to highlight the long-term employment opportunities available through the huge investment and projected growth of the offshore wind sector planned for the East of England and the East Midlands. This will be driven by the projected siting of large numbers of wind turbines off the East coast.

Organised by Renewables East on behalf of the East Midlands and East of England Development Agencies, the event was a great success for potential employees attending, and for prospective employers whose representatives gathered dozens of highly relevant CVs. A second similar, but larger, event is already being planned for early 2009.

Held at E.ON's Empower Training Centre in Nottingham, there were employer representatives from BGB Innovation,

Converteam, Clarkson Associates, the Sub Ocean Group, Airtricity, E.ON Engineering, RLE, Petans, JDR Cables, and Mainstream RP, as well as 55 delegates, most of them engineers in the services looking forward to a civilian career after the military.

The conference was organised and run with support from the East Midlands business support company The Business Advice Team Ltd and The Career Transition Partnership, the national organisation responsible for supporting armed forces personnel move back into civilian life.

Simon Parke of The Business Advice Team said:
"The event was aimed at providing a much greater awareness of the long-term options for jobs within the offshore wind industry."

"The companies outlined what is driving the industry's growth, and the skills required of engineers within this

industry. There was also an overview of the technology that is involved within an offshore windfarm, and the potential for that technology going forward.

Also explained were the sorts of specific skills required for working offshore, such as survival skills, jointing skills, the ability to work at height, and an awareness of working within the power generation industry, including high voltage appreciation. The day was an opportunity to bring together key sector firms looking to employ skilled engineers, to discuss employer needs, and to understand the needs and requirements of potential employees."

The day was a mixture of group information sessions and one-to-one discussions between company representatives and prospective employee delegates.

Opening the event was Steve Clarke, Development Director for Offshore Renewable Energy with Renewables East. He highlighted the "global imperative to address climate change", set out the regional economic and business benefits that offshore wind offers, and detailed the long-term career opportunities available across the sector, both in the construction phase and the long term operation and maintenance phase too.

Steve said "I'm delighted with how well the event was run, and with the calibre of individuals and businesses represented. My sharp focus now turns to the future and the confirmation I need is that numerous job offers have been made and accepted."

Mark Chappell of BGB Innovation said afterwards that the event had been "very useful". Aidan Adkins of Converteam said it was "a great event", while Richard Clarkson of Clarkson Associates added: "The content and intent of the day were excellent. I only wish there had been something similar when I left the Army 14 years ago. If there are future events please send us an invite."

Maggie Lawson, representing RLE and the RLE recruitment arm PlaceTech, was equally delighted, and said: "It was a very interesting day, with a real mix of people that attended from the military.

When the delegates realised how much money is involved in this industry, and the long-term security involved, they became very interested indeed. We have got a ton of resources in other industries with skills that we can use and transfer into the offshore industry. I would say that 85% of the delegates there were ready to travel and to work anywhere in the UK and to work offshore, some of them available straight away and others planning their move into civilian life over the next 18 months or so."

Daniel Greeves of Airtricity said: "It was an excellent day. I was pleasantly surprised at just how relevant the skills that the delegates had were to us and to the industry. I came away with CVs from eight delegates and will be presenting those to our directors. It was a very successful day."

John Sinclair of the Sub Ocean Group said: "I came away with 20 CVs from technicians", while Martin Charles of JDR Cables said: "It was a good event, a good forum and we collected a number of candidate CVs." Keen to be at the next conference also was Nick Fedorkiw of Mainstream RP who said: "Please invite me to the next event."

Simon Parke added: "Companies right across the offshore wind industry, which is enjoying prolific growth, need to find high-calibre, highly skilled and motivated engineers capable of supporting this exceptional business expansion.

"The day gave delegates a very good insight into where the industry came from, how quickly it will grow, and the opportunities it can offer, long-term, for technically skilled people across the East of England and the East Midlands, with significant opportunities specifically off the East Coast, and indeed the whole country."

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