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European offshore wind heavyweights gather in Blyth for blades conference

20 September 2017



Conference delegates witnessing an innovative remotely-operated vehicle carrying out an inspection of a wind turbine blade

Leading offshore wind farm developers, turbine blade manufacturers and researchers gathered in Blyth this week ahead of a major industry conference to address key challenges in the test and certification process for offshore wind turbine blades.

The two-day conference was hosted by the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Catapult at their National Renewable Energy Centre in partnership with Danish blade strengthening specialists Bladena.

The event brought together developers and manufacturers with world-leading research institutions to discuss the latest challenges in wind turbine blade testing, validation and certification and the latest research and innovations being developed to tackle them. Specific topics for discussion included blade testing and type certification requirements that go beyond existing standards and technical requirements around blade design, manufacturing, materials, testing, repair and operations.

E.ON's blade specialist Birgit Junker said: "This wind turbine owner network is of great importance to us as we are able to have technical discussions with a number of like-minded colleagues and experts (test, innovation and research centres). The importance of increasing the requirements for full-scale testing is essential to reduce the risk of blade damages – especially as the size of the blades increases."

Both ORE Catapult and Bladena have a strong track record as specialists in wind turbine blade design, operations, testing and validation. ORE Catapult operates a 100m blade test facility, the largest of its kind in the world and capable of testing the world's longest blades. It also leads a collaborative industry programme tackling blade leading edge erosion. Bladena specialises in blade structural enhancements, which can be retrofitted or used on new as well on ageing blades to improve their performance.

Bladena's Chief Technical Officer, Find Mølholt Jensen, said: "It is interesting to see the latest developments that European test centres have achieved in full-scale testing with combined loading. This way of testing is possible today statically but is a challenge dynamically for very large blades. With the knowledge that has been shared at this seminar I believe that it is possible to promote this process in the future."

ORE Catapult's Test Facilities Director Tony Quinn added: "The seminar has helped to give a better understanding of the issues affecting blade performance and explored the opportunity for improved design and more representative testing – developments that are important in further reducing the levelised cost of energy from offshore wind."

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