

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Blown away by Scottish

● First minister filled with praise as she officially opens huge Aberdeen wind farm

BY DAVID MCPHEE

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon lauded the Scottish energy sector's "huge potential" for the future as she officially opened the Aberdeen Bay offshore wind farm development yesterday.

Ms Sturgeon was speaking on board the Northlink ferry as it circled the newly opened North Sea wind farm.

Also known as the European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre (EOWDC), the £300 million project has been generating energy since July 1 and boasts the world's most powerful turbines.

Swedish firm Vattenfall became sole owner of the 11-turbine wind farm in 2016 when it bought a 25% stake from Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group (AREG), which was established in 2003 to promote green power.

The first minister said: "I am proud that as part of this ground-breaking project, the world's most powerful offshore wind turbines are now up and running in Scotland.

"Projects like this deliver enormous economic benefits in terms of jobs and in terms of the support for innovation.

"There's some really innovative technology used in the construction of these turbines. It's quite mind-boggling."

Ms Sturgeon also paid tribute to north-east oil and gas expertise and the benefits it brought to the project.

She said: "We're really lucky we have oil and gas in this area, and this project has borrowed much of the expertise from the sector, in terms of technology. This is an important project for the Scottish energy sector and for renewable energy."

During the wind farm's official unveiling, the first minister could not resist taking an indirect verbal swipe at the US

president, Donald Trump. In 2013, the future US president launched a court battle against the Scottish Government in which he claimed the mammoth structures would blight the view from his Balmedie golf course.

Fighting his legal objections delayed the project by nearly four years.

Ms Sturgeon said: "I think it's fair to say the project has had its opponents along the way, but I hope – and I'm going to use this word deliberately – the 'beauty' of what we're seeing today will in time be capable of persuading even the sternest critic of this fantastic new centre."

The first minister was joined by Scottish

"Projects like this deliver enormous economic benefits"

Energy Minister Paul Wheelhouse who vowed to use the project's success to push for a Scottish offshore wind developer similar to the Swedish state-owned Vattenfall.

He said: "We are very impressed by what other countries have been able to do with their own state-owned energy companies, in terms of Equinor in Norway and Vattenfall in Sweden, who help develop the economies of their country but also help develop the low-carbon infrastructure.

"It's early days, but it's certainly an aspiration that we want to explore.

"We can't say at this stage what role a public energy company might have in furthering projects like the Aberdeen Bay wind farm elsewhere in Scotland, but it's something I'm keen to look at."

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Figuring things out

Here are some key numbers related to Scotland's largest offshore wind test and demonstration facility:

£300 million

Vattenfall investment in the European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre (EOWDC)

1.5 miles

Distance of the EOWDC from Aberdeen shore

191 metres

Height of the 11 turbines

80 metres

Length of the turbine blades

164 metres

Size of the turbine rotor

1,800

Weight in tonnes of each of the turbine's foundations

312 GWh

The centre's annual energy production



First Minister Nicola Sturgeon checks out the view from one of the flyovers above the AWPR during her visit

Breathing new life into

OPINION

BY NICOLA STURGEON
FIRST MINISTER

This weekend communities will have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to walk along the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route. As the AWPR reaches its final stretch, this event – the GoNorthEast Road Festival – will be the first community festival of this kind held on a major new Scottish road project.

I was fortunate to go behind the scenes and see

the set-up at Milltimber yesterday and it looks like it will be an incredible weekend with activities and entertainment for all ages.

From the initial discussions around the merits of a bypass in the late 1940s to the recent opening of major new sections, the region has been on a 70-year journey to make this road a reality.

This weekend's free festival is about thanking people for the patience and understanding they have shown, particularly during the construction

period. As well as street performers, interactive displays, historic exhibitions and country walks, 120 vintage and modern vehicles will be on display while cyclists will have a unique opportunity to experience an 18km loop of the route on Sunday morning.

This festival will give people a glimpse of how, working with local authorities, communities and government, a £745 million engineering project can be delivered.

And in a way that is sympathetic to the environment, as well as give people an