

Thursday, 30th April 2009

## Dutch firm plans wind farm off Pembroke

Claudia Calleja

A Dutch company will be testing the waters 20 kilometres off the coast of Pembroke where it hopes to build a deep water offshore wind farm.

Blue H Technologies' has filed a preliminary application to instal 30 wind turbines in the island's north, in waters 150 metres deep. The Times has learnt.

The news comes after the government on Tuesday proposed two land-based wind farms in Wied Rini, limits of Baħrija and Ħal Far and an offshore wind farm at Sikka l-Bajda reef, off Mellieħa.

A spokesman for the Resources Ministry welcomed Blue H's preliminary application saying it did not conflict with the government's planned wind farms in any way.

The Netherlands-based company's plans, outlined in the application filed with the Malta Environment and Planning Authority on Friday, are based on new technology it is developing in Italy which, it says, will allow for the installation of turbines in depth of over 50 metres. They will have a life span of about 20 years after which they will be dismantled.

The government too had been working on plans to develop a deepwater wind farm in 2005 but abandoned the project last year on grounds that it was not commercially viable. Unveiling the government's plans earlier this week, Resources Minister George Pullicino said that "until today the deep-sea technology has not developed at the speed we were expecting four years ago and our country cannot wait to start achieving its targets".

In fact, a ministry spokesman said yesterday the government did not exclude that, in future, it would be applying for deepwater offshore wind farms once new technologies (like the one proposed by Blue H) had been proven to work.

The depth of the sea around Malta varies between 60 metres and 190 metres and wind turbines must be firmly grounded into the seabed. Though technically possible, installing a pole at a depth of over 25 metres involves very expensive operations. However, Blue H is planning to develop turbines that will be set up in two phases.

Six turbines, with 21 mega-watt rated power, would be set up in the pilot phase. This would be followed by an extension phase of 24 turbines with a rated power of 84 mega watts, totalling 30 turbines with 105 megawatt rated power. That would be equivalent to the average electricity consumed by about 44,000 households, a bit less than the electricity expected from the 36 turbines in the three sites proposed by the government.

The company installed a prototype of this technology in southern Italy last year.

The site in Malta was chosen because the company feels it does not conflict with the different interests of tourism, military, shipping and fishing, which make this sort of project closer to shore all the more difficult.

According to Blue H, the chosen site is outside the "no-go areas" listed by the government when it issued the call for expressions of interest for an offshore wind farm in 2006.



The area off Pembroke where the Netherlands-based company Blue H Technologies is proposing to build a 30-turbine deepwater wind farm.

Investigations during the implementation stage that would last up to five years, would include an environmental impact assessment, a shipping risk study, background noise study and a geographical and hydrological study. In the operational period a constant work force for maintenance will be required and should be recruited from Malta, Blue H says.

"The creation of value for Malta will be significant. About 40 per cent of the investment will be done in Malta, thus preventing the island from uncertainties and high prices of fuels like coal and fuel oil. Additional use of the offshore wind farm area will generate jobs in fisheries and other businesses," Blue H wrote in the Mepa application.

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### Comments

**Mario Tabone-Vassallo (6 hours, 43 minutes ago)**

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