

Darren Jones MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

05 November 2021

Dear Darren,

Re: Floating Wind

I am writing to bring to your attention an issue with the UK's plans for the deployment of floating offshore wind farms in the South West, most specifically, the Celtic Sea.

As you are no doubt aware the UK's fixed foundation offshore wind turbines are primarily located off the East Coast of England and Scotland in the North Sea which is largely shallow. Key to opening up other parts of the UK coastline, such as the Celtic Sea off the South West Coast of England and Wales, where the sea is too deep for conventional fixed foundation turbines, is floating wind.

Floating wind is much less mature as a technology, and it is welcomed that BEIS has recognised this in ringfencing part of the upcoming CfD AR4 renewables bidding round. Unfortunately, the Government has only allocated sufficient resources within this ring fence to allow one project to proceed and given there is a project in the North Sea, where there is established supporting infrastructure and that project is merely an extension to an existing fixed foundation wind farm, it is likely the Celtic Sea will lose out.

Fixed foundation wind in the North Sea has had a transformational effect on the North East coast which now has a thriving infrastructure of operations, maintenance and fabrication facilities. Development of the Celtic Sea would offer similar opportunities for South West England and Western Wales. Clearly, recent announcements on port infrastructure investment for floating wind in Wales and Scotland shows that Government does understand the importance of supporting the sector. However limiting the CfD award in AR4 to just one project seems extremely counterproductive to ensuring the Celtic Sea development as a key area for the future of floating wind in the UK.

A considerable pipeline of floating offshore wind projects is forecast in the Celtic Sea and off the south coast of Ireland. Servicing these projects from elsewhere in the UK will be logistically challenging and increase expense giving the South West of England and Wales an strong opportunity to service this pipeline, however, confidence in opportunities is essential for suppliers to invest in the necessary infrastructure.

It is therefore vital that at least one project in the Celtic Sea is successful in the AR4 bidding process to act as a steppingstone project, which can open up the opportunities in the region that have been so transformatory for the North East coast.

The issue is not about the fate of any one project but if there is no Celtic Sea project in this round then the ports that are ready to invest to support floating wind will not do so and the infrastructure will not develop. This will lead inevitably to the same happening in the following AR5 bidding process leading to a major loss of development for the South West and West Wales. It will also lead to UK offshore wind resources remaining concentrated in the North Sea rather than the increased geographical spread and reduction in vulnerability to low wind speed events, which development of the Celtic Sea will produce.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to raise this with ministers and call for an increase in the ring-fence to allow for a steppingstone project in the Celtic Sea to move forward.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'SJ', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Simon James
Senior Advisor