Celebrating the move to Operations

A formal day of celebration on Friday 19 April 2013 marked Scira Offshore Energy’s move from the ‘Prepare for Operations’ stage of the Sheringham Shoal Offshore Wind Farm to its long term ‘Operation and Maintenance’ stage. Norman Lamb, the MP for North Norfolk and Minister of State at the Department of Health, formally opened Wind Farm Place, the purpose built Operation and Maintenance base three miles south of Wells-next-the-Sea in North Norfolk, into which Scira moved in February 2013.

The formal proceedings were followed by a celebration lunch for guests and employees in the new building, during which catering students from Alderman Peel High School in Wells-next-the-Sea served canapés, and its music students performed for the guests.

Scira’s procurement policy is, wherever possible, to support the local supply chain in North Norfolk, so it was highly appropriate that the buffet was prepared by Walsingham Farm Shops, and a small gift for all guests and employees was sourced from the Chocolate Deli in Walsingham.

Constructed by local firm Mansell Construction of Swaffham, Wind Farm Place is a low energy consumption building featuring low energy lighting, highly insulated walls and a ‘green’ roof to reduce rainwater run-off. With office accommodation and warehousing, Wind Farm Place now houses Scira’s management and administration staff and serves as the base for the wind turbine technicians working on the maintenance of the offshore wind farm on a daily basis.

Einar Strømsvåg, Scira’s General Manager said: “It was good that so many people who have played an active part in the development of the Sheringham Shoal Offshore Wind Farm, and the infrastructure which will now support its operation and maintenance, could join us for this celebration. Now the wind farm is fully operational, the local team is delighted to have moved into its new purpose built home. It will be an excellent base for our activities for many years to come.”

During the course of the celebration, Einar Strømsvåg presented Wells Harbour Master Robert Smith with a painting of the new Wells Outer Harbour, constructed to give Scira, and future developers, offshore access. It was painted by local artist John Hurst, who took part in the celebrations.
The Scira Schools Engagement programme starts with primary school engagement, with members of the Scira team giving introductory talks to local primary schools, usually at one of their general assemblies. A close relationship with Alderman Peel High School in Wells-next-the-Sea has developed, with the company participating in learning activities which now include the Year 7 STEM Challenge and sponsorship of the annual STEM Award. After sponsoring the A-Level company participating in learning activities for the study of practical processes and landforms off the North Norfolk coast, Scira is now working closely with Colin Bye, Head of Geography and Humanities at Fakenham College, on a Year 8 learning module relating to environmental aspects of the North Norfolk landscape, called the North Norfolk Landscape Project. Strong links have been developed with Lowestoft College and Great Yarmouth College which will see site visits by their students. The first of these visits took place on 18 April 2013 when eleven students from Lowestoft College toured Offshore Wind Farm Place and went on board a personnel transfer vessel in the outer harbour to learn a little about what is involved in the management of a £1 billion offshore wind farm. Similarly 30 Environmental Science students from the University of East Anglia (UEA) visited the Scira offices on 9th April to gain further understanding about the construction and operation of an offshore wind farm. Through the Sheringham Scira Community Fund, Scira has also introduced a Bursary Scheme to help young people from lower income families in North Norfolk who would like to study engineering at one of the three Norfolk colleges which offer such courses – the College of West Anglia in Kings Lynn, Great Yarmouth College and City College, Norwich. Each year funding is available for 20 students to receive a bursary of £500 per annum to study the BTEC Diploma in Engineering Level 3 through to graduation.

Now that the construction phase is over, and the business moves into routine operations, the Scira team is continuing to grow and develop with new appointments for permanent team members at Scira’s new home, Wind Farm Place. As an operator, it has two primary focus areas – the daily operation and maintenance of the plant, and the technical integrity of the plant infrastructure. Heading up these two areas are the new managers who will help drive the efficiency of Sheringham Shoal.

Over the last 18 months, Scira Offshore Energy has embarked on a number of education initiatives to support the development of the skills in the local labour market which are relevant to the operation and maintenance of offshore wind farms. The North Norfolk economy has typically characterised by employment in tourism, agriculture and fishing, so it is important that the next generation workforce is aware of the career opportunities which are being created by Scira and other offshore wind farm developers and operators, particularly to enable students to make informed curriculum choices should they wish to qualify for a position in this industry.

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Community Fund supports 4 new projects

The Sheringham Shoal Community Fund receives £100,000 per annum from Scira Offshore Energy to fund grants to North Norfolk community groups, including schools and NGOs, seeking financial assistance for projects or initiatives that meet key criteria and focus on renewable energy, marine environment and safety, sustainability or education.

Since June 2010 grants have been made to 20 such projects, including funds awarded for 4 new community projects made at the last panel meeting held in November 2012. Amongst these projects was a grant to complex needs school Sheringham Woodfields to help pay for the installation of PIR lighting and electric hand driers.

Matthew Smith from Sheringham Woodfields School wrote to say: "Could I please ask you to pass on our thanks for the grant that we have just been awarded. The grant will make a real difference and allow our pupils to be involved in every aspect of school life. The support given is very much appreciated and the school will ensure it keeps everyone informed as the project progresses."

More information about the Sheringham Shoal Community Fund, and the outline proposal form, can be found at www.norfolkfoundation.com. The grant panel will review outline proposals at any time, and selected applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal for consideration. Full proposals are normally considered at meetings held in May and November each year.

Community Fund grant funds solar hot water heating for swimming pool

In May 2012 Alderman Peel High School in Wells was awarded the funding to install solar hot water heating for the school community swimming pool. The pool, which is now 50 years old as it dates back to the original build of the school in 1963, is not only used for school activities but is also serves as the local community swimming facility. The local community can access the pool for a range of scheduled sessions throughout the week and during weekends, including adult and baby sessions on Saturday mornings, ladies only sessions on Sunday evenings, fitness classes and dawn dippers for the early risers in Wells.

The work on the new solar energy heating system was completed in October 2012, and Eddie Kossowicz, Site Manager at APHS, projects an annual saving of £10,000 on costs for heating the pool. Alastair Ogle, Headmaster at APHS, is delighted with the improvements, "This is a brilliant example of how the Sheringham Shoal Community Fund is benefiting the students, as not only do we have an improved facility but also the savings can be ploughed back into learning activities. And the school children are not the only beneficiaries, because now we can keep prices low for those members of the community who regularly enjoy these facilities".

Questions from the community

How do members of the community find out how much electricity is being generated by the wind farm?

The Scira website is currently under review and will soon be rebuilt to reflect routine operations, and longer term we will provide production information through the website. In the meantime those interested can email us at info@scira.co.uk in order to obtain information on our production output.

Are Norfolk’s fishermen now able to fish in the wind farm site?

During the construction phase of the wind farm there was a restriction on fishing over the cable route, before the cable (which transfers the electricity produced offshore to the onshore substation near Cawston) was buried beneath the sea bed. Similarly there were advisory restricted zones of up to 500 metres around some of the heavy construction vessels for safety reasons during the installation of the offshore structures. Now the wind farm is fully operational, fishermen can freely access the site maintaining an advisory safety exclusion zone of 50 metres around each turbine. As there is a 700 metre spacing between each turbine, and the whole site is 35 square kilometres, there is plenty of space for both fishing and the production of wind energy at Sheringham Shoal Offshore Wind Farm.

Contact details and more information

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The Sheringham Shoal Offshore Wind Farm is owned equally by Statoil and Statkraft through the joint venture company, Scira Offshore Energy Limited, the wind farm operator.

If you would like a question answered in the next newsletter, please email info@scira.co.uk

Diary dates 2013

4th July – Skills for Energy Conference, John Innes Centre, Norwich
7th – 8th September – Greenbuild Exhibition, Felbrigg Park, North Norfolk