



SEA SITE: The 30-turbine windfarm at Scroby Sands could be dwarfed by plans for a new 1,000-turbine complex off the East Anglian coast.

EAST ANGLIA

A windfarm 'windfall' for the region

The building of the world's second-largest offshore windfarm was last night heralded as a step-change in Britain's green power revolution and a golden opportunity for local companies.

Prime minister Gordon Brown is expected later this week to confirm a £100bn third generation of offshore windfarms including a £15bn project off the Norfolk coast, predicted eventually to bring thousands of jobs.

A consortium involving Scottish Power and Vattenfall, a state-owned Swedish power group, is understood to have secured the rights for an area marketed as the Norfolk zone, one of nine put up for auction by the Crown Estates.

The windfarm, which is likely to have at least 1,000 turbines, dwarfing the 30-turbine Scroby Sands windfarm off Great Yarmouth, will be built about 15 miles off the north Norfolk and north Suffolk coast.

Construction work is likely to start towards the end of the decade and the windfarm, built in phases over several years, could ultimately have a generating output potentially five times greater than Sizewell B nuclear power station.

John Best, chief executive of the East of England Energy Group, said the move from the planning to the development phase heralded by Mr Brown's announcement would represent a "windfall" opportunity for companies in the region to cash in on the burgeoning industry.

He said: "Aberdeen spoke with one compelling voice for the oil and gas industry and reaped the benefits. We have a unique opportunity with our geographical location, shallow water, twin ports of Yarmouth and Lowestoft and established skills in offshore engineering to make the east of England the home of renewable energy."

Mr Best said the region was well placed to profit from other planned windfarms off the east coast including one at Hornsea, off the Humber coast, and a project at Dogger Bank, set to become the

By **STEPHEN PULLINGER**

world's biggest windfarm with a 10GW generating capacity, twice that of the proposed Norfolk scheme.

Philip Watkins, chief executive of 1st East, the urban regeneration company (URC) for Yarmouth and Lowestoft, said both towns stood to emerge as winners from the new developments.

PowerPark in Lowestoft is already established as a hub for energy industries involved in developing the round two Greater Gabbard windfarm off the Suffolk coast.

Mr Watkins said: "We commissioned a report by internationally renowned consultants BVG Associates that underlines the big opportunity the area has in the operation and maintenance element of windfarms.

"It estimates that it could create nearly 1,000 jobs directly and an additional 4,000 supply chain jobs."

He said they had been talking with educational establishments that would need to provide the required skills - Lowestoft College already ran a course with direct relevance to offshore marine engineering.

Paul Chilvers, regional director of Yarmouth-based offshore energy firm ODE which project-managed the construction of Scroby Sands, was optimistic the Norfolk windfarm would be one of the easiest of the round three projects to develop with the potential for regional firms to become involved in the operating and maintenance phase as well as construction.

Crown Estates and Eeda will host an event which will act as a marketplace providing information and connections to help companies do business and get involved in offshore wind developments at OrbisEnergy in Lowestoft on March 4.

Mr Chilvers said his one disappointment was that most of the kit and installation equipment would be sourced overseas. "That remains the biggest challenge for the government," he said.

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