



*Left: Jeremy Sainsbury: "Need for cheaper windpower"
Below: Speaking up for the gas industry (from left) Rob Nibbelke, John Sewell and Paul Lafferty*



Southern North Sea remains a treasure trove for East of England

Massive investment in both gas and wind energy resources in the Southern North Sea (SNS) will generate increasing wealth for the East of England economy and business world in coming years.

More than 200 delegates at the SNS 2011 Conference staged in Norwich by EEEGR heard the upbeat overview from industry leaders.

John Sewell, operations manager for oil and gas company Perenco at Great Yarmouth, said that in the last year nearly half of the company's £125m UK investment was in the eastern region and it was planning to drill three new SNS wells this year as the industry picked up after the world recession.

He was delighted that energy minister Charles Hendry had acknowledged that gas was vital to the energy mix for at least another 40 years and Perenco was among the companies prepared to take up the challenge of extracting maximum amounts from the remaining resources in the North Sea.

"Energy is a great industry offering a great career in the region. We take on 4-5 apprentices each year, have a graduate recruitment programme and actively support EEEGR's Skills for Energy programme."

Paul Lafferty, E.ON Ruhrgas UK operations manager, said that 30% of future gas reserves in the UK were in the SNS. "It's a massive resource we cannot walk away from. We hope to be spudding the Tolmount well in the North Sea this year and the second phase of Babbage in the second quarter of 2012. Babbage produced its first gas last August."

Rob Nibbelke, plant installation manager for Shell, said that the Bacton gas terminal



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in Norfolk was key to the UK's supply and the plant would enjoy more investment over the next three years to ensure reliability and integrity for the future.

Delegates at the Holiday Inn, Norwich North, also heard how other opportunities for the region could open up through the development of Carbon Capture and Storage - with empty reservoirs in the SNS being ideal for storage.

There were concerns, however, at whether a bottleneck caused by demand for skilled workers from across all aspects of the energy industry could be met.

EEEGR chairman Alan Barlow said they had long recognised the challenge which was why the Skills for Energy project was created and it is now planning the EPISCentre, an energy skills hub for the region as a business-driven focal point for the issue.

Conference sponsors were E.ON Ruhrgas, Perenco, Shell, OrbisEnergy and Amec.





Vattenfall's £20bn boost for region's windpower

Vattenfall director David Hodkinson told SNS delegates that with partner Scottish Power, they hoped to start building the first stage of the East Anglia Array windfarm, off Norfolk, in 2014 and produce first power in 2016.

The entire project – hopefully to be completed by 2023 and producing 7.2GW – would mean a £20bn investment into the region and leave a legacy of skills which could transfer across the UK and the world.

He was delighted to be working with EEEGR which they saw as an extremely powerful, no nonsense, business-driven body which delivered the job. It was an ideal partner for Vattenfall and he had accepted an invite to join EEEGR's board.

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They had a philosophy of working with local suppliers wherever possible and practical and would be bringing lots of work to the region – and encouraging new entrants into the sector. But the emphasis would always be on safety, quality, reliability and cost-effectiveness.

A project team would be based in the region although central administration would more likely be in London because of the international nature of the business.

Mr Hodkinson also outlined his company's involvement in the Thanet windfarm which opened last September, making it the largest operating windfarm in the world.

Jeremy Sainsbury, director of Natural Power, warned that windpower had no automatic right to be part of the European Union's future energy mix and would need to become cheaper and use more effective technologies to make it sustainable. More thought needed to be given to the design of offshore turbines which did not need the same criteria as those onshore.

Experience gained and lessons learned over 40 years by the oil and gas industry could help shape a more successful future for the windpower sector, said Mr Sainsbury, outlining some of the findings of a study funded by the EU through POWER Cluster.



Top: Vattenfall's David Hodkinson: "£20bn investment for region"
Left: Full house for the 2011 Conference

Diver's delight as scour prevention idea scoops innovation award

During 30 years as a commercial diver Bob Durrant was often intrigued by the impact discarded car tyres had on the seabed.

So instead of retiring, he launched a company to investigate whether linked tyres could prevent sand scouring which causes problems for turbines, cables and other sub-sea structures.

Now Bob is celebrating his company, Scour Prevention Systems, winning the EEEGR Energy Innovation Awards – with his patented idea about to be given on-site trials by international energy company E.ON.

"We first talked about the idea eight years ago but didn't start the company, at Lowestoft's OrbisEnergy Centre, until two years ago," said Bob. "We've been testing our SPS solution ever since. Winning the award is out of this world; it's the pinnacle of everything."

"I'm 69 now and had put off retiring to get this off the ground – I can take it a little easier now that it has been recognised."

He thanked EEEGR for its encouragement and praised the three other members of his company – his son and fellow diver Richard, engineering specialist David Watson and sales and marketing director Mark Aspinall, for their support.

E.ON tests should begin at the end of April on the device which links car tyres to form a mat to rest on the seabed and fill with sand. It forms an inert protective 'skin' over



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the seabed which is too light to sink and which he believes will eliminate scour.

Runner-up in the awards was CHPV, another Lowestoft company, in which owner Alan O'Neill developed an innovative use for miniature HD cameras to film footage of previously inaccessible sites or close-up activity of key aspects of the energy industry. The footage could be invaluable for media, marketing, documentaries, training, safety and other uses.

Winner of the low carbon award was eTRV Chalmor's heating control energy-saving system using innovative electronic

thermostatic radiator valves. Steven Henry, from the Luton-based firm, said the valves brought the industry into the 21st century and could be used for DIY upgrades and operated by remote control.

EEEGR chairman Alan Barlow told guests that last year's winner Neftemer, of Woodbridge, had just announced initial field tests for its Slug Detection System with a major international oil company in the North Sea.

Trophies, created by EEEGR member Active Technologies, were presented during a gala dinner attended by 210 guests at the Holiday Inn, Norwich International Airport, with Clare Weller as compere.

Sponsors were OrbisEnergy, Dummett Copp, DECC and UEA's Norwich Business School.

3sun rise to Member of Year challenge

EEEGR's member of the year award was presented to Graham Hacon, director of the 3sun group at Great Yarmouth, during the evening.

The control, instrumentation and supply company, pipped Oilennium and CHPV for the award given annually to members who go the extra mile in support of EEEGR's work, the winner chosen by members' votes.

3sun was nominated for its consistent output and ongoing support in helping EEEGR to evolve over many years.

The gala dinner also included a talk by Andy Wood, chief executive of Suffolk brewers Adnams, who talked about his own company's 'green' ambitions and innovative work in energy efficiency for its new premises.

Special recognition awards for outstanding contributions to the work of EEEGR over many years were presented at the end of the evening to former chairman Mark Goodall and to John Sewell of Perenco and John Balch of Nautilus Associates.

Above: Triumphant trio: Bob Durrant (centre) with the Energy Innovation Award with Alan O'Neill (left) the runner-up and Steven Henry, winner of the low carbon award

Below: Graham Hacon, of 3sun, receives the EEEGR Member of the Year Award from chief executive John Best and compere Clare Weller





