

Gerry Brownlee

29 JULY, 2010

Chatham Islands wave project receives backing

A project to harness wave energy on the Chatham Islands has been awarded funding under the government's Marine Energy Deployment Fund, Energy and Resources Minister Gerry Brownlee announced today.

The proposal put forward by Chatham Islands Marine Energy Ltd (CHIME), to install a shore-based device to capture wave energy, has been awarded \$2.16 million, subject to conditions, including receiving resource consent.

The project will see the construction of an oscillating water column to power two 110 kilowatt Wells turbines. The device will be installed on the south-west coast of Chatham Island, and will supply electricity into the island's electricity network.

"This renewable energy project is suitable for the Chatham Island community, which is seeking to reduce its reliance on costly diesel generation for electricity," Mr Brownlee said.

"The project developers expect the turbines will be able to supply more than half the island's electricity needs.

"A project like this could have potential for other isolated areas of New Zealand, and our Pacific Island neighbours.

"It contributes to this government's aim, expressed in the recently released draft New Zealand Energy Strategy, to develop our resources, and provide secure and affordable energy to New Zealanders," Mr Brownlee said.

The technology involves using the motion of rising and falling waves to compress air and rotate a turbine to generate electricity. The device is completely shore-based with a concrete collector and turbine fixed to the shore. The technology has been used for more than a decade in the United Kingdom.

"I'd like to congratulate CHIME, and I look forward to seeing this project progressing in the near future," Mr Brownlee said.

Background / Q&A

What is the MEDF?

The Marine Energy Deployment Fund was established in October 2007 when Cabinet allocated \$8 million over a four year period for the development of emerging and tidal marine technologies.

What projects have been funded through the MEDF?

The fund provides capital grants to developers who wish to deploy pre-commercial wave and tidal stream energy devices in New Zealand.

- Crest Energy received funding from round one for up to three tidal stream turbines to be located in the Kaipara Harbour.
- Wave-Energy Technology New Zealand (WET-NZ) received funding from round two for a pre-commercial, half-scale wave energy device. This has received resource consent to be located in Taranaki.

Where can I find out more about the project?

More information about CHIME and its project can be found on its website:

www.chatwave.co.nz or contact Garry Venus on (09) 367 0631 (09) 367 0631 .

Why is the government funding marine energy projects?

The waves and tides in New Zealand's coastal environment are a world-class resource for marine energy generation, with an estimated potential of more than 7000 megawatts. Marine energy projects are under development here and overseas, and marine energy is likely to play an important role in New Zealand's future energy mix.

The fund assists projects to get off the drawing board and into the water.