

Media Statement

Marine Energy sets sail in the Draft Energy Strategy

The Aotearoa Wave and Tidal Energy Association says it is delighted to see the acknowledgement of the potential for marine energy – wave and tidal energy – in the Government’s draft Energy Strategy.

The Association’s Executive Officer, Dr John Huckerby, said that the Association welcomes the publication of the draft Strategy, ‘Powering Our Future’, and looks forward to contributing to the discussion and formulation of the final Strategy.

Wave and tidal power stations, dubbed ‘blue energy’, could start contributing to our power supply as early as 2010 and eventually meet up to 20% of New Zealand’s electricity demand.

“We are particularly pleased to see the announcement of a marine energy deployment fund. Marine energy technologies are not yet commercially competitive with existing technologies but the pace of development is fast. The first commercial wave farm will be operational in Portugal within the next few months.”

Dr Huckerby said that while overseas technologies were more advanced than marine energy technologies being developed locally, up to 14 marine energy projects are actively under investigation in New Zealand and about half of these were developing new technologies for local conditions.

“We would like to see these get the same chance for funding as those projects seeking to import overseas technologies, and we cannot afford to wait for overseas technologies to mature. In any event we anticipate that marine energy projects will be commercially viable in much less than the 10-20 years forecast in the Energy Strategy.”

“The proposed Government funding will also spur private interest and investment, which will also be critical to the successful emergence of the NZ domestic blue energy industry”.

Dr Huckerby said that the draft Strategy indicated that R & D investment in marine energy resource assessments is a high priority.

“This is very welcome. Resource assessments need to be tied to the types of technologies that will be deployed. New Zealand must also develop both the capacity and capabilities to implement marine energy projects, including R & D, deployment, operations and maintenance skills.”

“New Zealand’s companies and their workforce have shown themselves to be creative, adaptable and outcome-focussed in the past – as with the America’s Cup. We need to harness these skills and imagination to developing marine energy projects.”

Dr Huckerby said that it was not widely appreciated that New Zealand had ‘world class’ wave resources, as well as good tidal resources in some places.

“Our coastline gives us a clear competitive advantage, and just as we’ve done with wind, we have the capacity to become one of the world’s leading nations in marine energy, selling our expertise overseas.”

Dr Huckerby notes that the draft Strategy acknowledges the difficulties that wind and geothermal have suffered in the RMA consenting process.

“With the first consent applications for marine energy projects having just been submitted, the Government needs to give consideration to whether the RMA, which is principally aimed at sustainable management of natural and physical resources, is the best mechanism for allocation of space and marine resources for marine energy projects.”

Dr Huckerby said that AWATEA planned to work closely with Government to get the right incentives and policy package to secure the uptake of marine energy. The Association would support, for example, feed-in tariffs as proposed in companion documents released today. Feed-in tariffs have been successfully implemented in both Portugal and Spain, such that these two countries are now leading sites for device deployments, even though the devices were developed in other countries. “Providing both capital and revenue support to device and project developers will be important incentives for accelerating the uptake of marine energy.”

“AWATEA has also proposed a more detailed marine energy strategy to Government, which will support the implementation of the high-level objectives of the draft Strategy published today.”

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About AWATEA

Established in April 2006, the aim of the Aotearoa Wave and Tidal Energy Association (AWATEA) is to promote marine energy in New Zealand. Its members comprise marine energy project developers, major electricity and generators, marine industry sector participants, research organizations and interested individuals. AWATEA has a work programme to develop a number of initiatives, including developing a dedicated marine energy strategy.

Dr. John Huckerby, Executive Officer, AWATEA

Dr Huckerby is the founder and executive officer of AWATEA. He is also the Treasurer of the Energy Law Association and sits on a number of advisory boards, including the Royal Society of New Zealand President’s Panel for Energy.

He is also the director of Power Projects Limited, an energy industry consultancy advising overseas energy companies, domestic utilities, and public sector organizations on investments in New Zealand’s energy industry.

Dr Huckerby worked for Fletcher Challenge Energy, leading the team that evaluated the Mangahewa and Pohokura gas-condensate fields. Before

coming to New Zealand, he worked in the United States, Eastern Europe, Saudi Arabia, Scandinavia and the North Sea.