

Media Statement

For immediate release

13 March 2007

Marine renewable energy – co-operation is the key

Government, researchers and industry must join forces if the country is to capitalise on marine energy opportunities, or lose out to overseas competitors.

Speaking on the eve of the inaugural conference of the marine energy industry in Wellington this week, Executive Officer of the Aotearoa Wave and Tidal Energy Association, Dr John Huckerby says that joint venture partnerships will be needed if New Zealand wanted to benefit from the opportunities available.

“Given New Zealand’s likely energy demands in a decade, we need to be creating a larger renewable energy ‘pipeline’ now. And if the government wants gas or coal fired power plants to be retired as well, then time is of the essence,” he says. Wave and tidal power stations, dubbed ‘blue energy’, could start contributing to the country’s power supply within the next 5-10 years and eventually meet up to 20% of New Zealand’s electricity demand.

“Marine energy technologies are at the cusp of commercial development. The field is still wide open, but it might not be in 5 year’s time. Scotland is a good example of a similar country positioning itself to be a leader in marine energy. The government there is strongly supporting its development with funding and policy. Portugal is another, using ‘feed-in-tariffs’ or guaranteed minimum prices to kick-start their industry. In both countries government, research institutions and industry are actively working together.”

Dr Huckerby says New Zealand should be capitalising on its ‘world class’ wave and good tidal resources to test home grown as well as overseas models.

“New Zealand must start to see the potential for marine energy, as part of the spectrum of opportunities in sustainable technologies, beyond just being a technology taker. There are significant opportunities for us to patent device designs and fabrication, such as composites and high-temperature superconductors, as well as in operations and maintenance.”

Dr Huckerby says that despite the industry still being in its infancy in New Zealand, at least 14 marine energy projects are actively under investigation here. Over 110 people will be attending the conference, and he hoped that it would start to foster the collaboration that was needed.

ENDS

For more details, please contact:

Dr John Huckerby, Executive Officer, AWATEA

Telephone: +64 (0)4 499 0060

Fax: +64 (0)4 499 0059

E-mail: mail@awatea.org.nz

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.