

Media Statement

For immediate release

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Lively competition for marine energy funds predicted

Lively competition is predicted for shares in a new government fund designed to encourage the development of marine energy in New Zealand.

“We are aware of over 20 proposed projects at various stages of development,” said the Executive Director of the Aotearoa Wave and Tidal Energy Association (AWATEA), Dr John Huckerby.

AWATEA represents the New Zealand marine energy industry, with membership including many of the country’s big electricity generators and marine project developers.

Dr Huckerby was commenting on today’s launch of the Marine Energy Deployment Fund, which forms part of the New Zealand Energy Strategy, released last week. A total of \$8 million will be available from the Fund over the next four years. Applications for the first \$2 million close in February 2008 with the first awards being made by the Minister of Energy in May 2008.

“Whilst full details of the fund, published today, need to be studied in detail, we’re encouraged that the draft proposals were both prudent and workable,” he said.

MF ... (2)

Dr Huckerby said the first devices should be in the water by the end of 2008, but he cautioned that “the day we see electricity going into the National Grid from wave and tidal power stations is still some time away.”

“You’ve got to remember that marine energy is where wind power was 10-15 years ago. We don’t yet know which devices will work best, and which ones will suit New Zealand conditions. And getting from a prototype to a full scale commercial operation requires several years of testing and trial, and significant investment.”

Dr Huckerby said that because of this, further government support for the industry would be needed.

“Governments around the world are encouraging investment in marine energy, using a range of incentives from renewables obligations through to ‘feed-in tariffs’ that give incentives for the early use of marine power.”

“New Zealand does need to do further work on these and other issues. Co-ordination between central and regional government is also needed. We think the best way forward would be for the Government to develop a dedicated marine energy strategy.”

“Nevertheless, today marks a major step forward, and we welcome this new fund. New Zealand does have huge marine energy resources, and wave and tidal power has the advantage of relatively little visual and noise pollution.”

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“Marine energy, along with wind and geothermal, is going to be a key to achieving the renewable electricity target of 90% by 2025, and to reducing the country’s carbon emissions,” he said.

ENDS

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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.