

Powering the future of the region...

A closer look at the North East's new and renewable energy potential.

The energy industry is of vital importance to the future of the UK economy. Between 2007 and 2011, energy companies doubled their investment in the UK to £43 billion and have increased jobs by nearly two thirds.¹

Today, the number of people directly and indirectly employed in the sector is over 600,000.² The North East energy sector alone is valued at £900m and is set to grow over the next ten years.³ In particular, the region will increasingly be recognised for its expertise in new and renewable energy.

The North Sea's untapped oil reserves will guarantee the region's place at the heart of the oil and gas sector for years to come, but significantly, the North East has successfully diversified into other burgeoning areas such as offshore wind, wave and solar power, photovoltaic cells, heat pump technology and biomass boilers. With 15% of the UK's energy demand to come from renewable sources by 2020⁴, the North East is well placed to take advantage of opportunities in the sector.

Narec (New and Renewable Energy Centre) in Northumberland is now recognised as the UK's leading centre for renewable energy research and development. Here new technology for wind, wave and tidal power projects is being tested on a daily basis. Furthermore, the North East is home to the UK's largest offshore wind

turbine complex and biomass power station. The opportunities in nuclear are also well documented. Plant life extension, decommissioning and new build technology are just some of the areas experiencing growth.

The infrastructure to sustain this sector is already in place in the North East. First class road, rail and port facilities make importing and exporting large quantities of materials easy. There is also a strong skills base in the region, both in the scientific and engineering disciplines. Investment in future skills is also prevalent across the industry. The £8 million Siemens' Energy Service Training Centre, which provides technical training for employment in renewable power plants, is testament to this.

These examples just scratch the surface of the region's potential to be at the forefront of renewable energy in the UK and beyond. In this energy supplement, we talk to three key figures in the North East energy industry about what still needs to be done to ensure the sector remains ripe for investment.

¹ Ernst & Young LLP/Energy UK (2012) 'Powering the UK: Investing for the future of the energy sector and the UK', London: Ernst & Young LLP.

² Ibid.

³ <http://live-and-work.northeastengland.co.uk/jobs-north-east-work-in-north-east-one-north-east/renewable-energy-jobs-careers-in-renewable-energy-one-north-east.html>

⁴ Department of Energy & Climate Change (2011) 'UK Renewable Energy Roadmap', London: Department of Energy & Climate Change.