

French offshore wind – and the first shall be last...

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The winner of France's third round of offshore wind tenders will be confirmed later this year and – amusingly – the Dunkirk project stands a good chance of being operational before projects from either of the first two tenders are generating.

A bit of a Johnny-Come-Lately to the offshore wind scene, France has thrown its weight behind the sector and the government plans to have 40% of electricity production from renewable energy sources in place by 2030, slashing back reliance on nuclear from around 75% in 2015 to 50% by 2025.

France plans to have 6GW online by 2023 with offshore wind responsible for a hefty percentage of that figure.

The first two tenders – launched in 2012 and 2014 – saw 2,916MW awarded while the third tender, which was launched in December 2016, is likely to be granted shortly before the end of this year.

The French offshore wind programme is impressive and – should fortune change in its favour – it will end up being a global leader in this sector thanks to its three rounds of projects.

Round 1 projects (1,924MW):

- [Saint Brieuc Offshore Wind Farm \(496MW\)](#) – Iberdrola, Eole RES and CDC
- [Calvados Offshore Wind Farm \(450MW\)](#) – EDF, Enbridge and WPD
- [Fecamp Offshore Wind Farm \(498MW\)](#) – EDF, Enbridge and WPD
- [Saint Nazaire Offshore Wind Farm \(480MW\)](#) – EDF, Enbridge and WPD

Round 2 projects (992MW):

- [Le Treport Offshore Wind Farm \(496MW\)](#) – Engie, EDPR, Sumitomo Corporation and CDC
- [Noirmoutier Offshore Wind Farm \(496MW\)](#) – Engie, EDPR, Sumitomo Corporation and CDC

Round 3 projects (currently at 750MW, and a further 750MW in the pipeline):

- [Dunkirk Offshore Wind Farm \(750MW\)](#)

Another project in the third round – [Parc Eolien en Mer d'Oleron Offshore Wind Farm \(500MW\)](#) – will be brought to market this year. Also in this round and logged in the IJ database is: [Berck-sur-Mer Offshore Wind Farm \(250MW\)](#).

D Day...

Bidders on the Dunkirk project have the market on the edge of its collective seat, waiting to see who will scoop this

landmark deal – the biggest one being tendered by the French energy regulator, Commission de Régulation de l'Énergie (CRE).

Ten bidders have pre-qualified:

- Boralex with CMI5i Pastor
- Deme Concessions Wind
- EDF with Innogy and Enbridge
- Elicio
- Engie
- Iberdrola with RES
- InControl France
- Parkwind with Valeco
- Statoil (recently, like so many other oil majors, having [rebranded: to Equinor](#))
- Vattenfall with WPD and Caisse des Dépôts

IJGlobal hears dark mutterings that one of these bid team has dropped out with sources close to the tender hinting that the Iberdrola/RES JV has exited. However, this could not be confirmed to *IJ*'s satisfaction at the time of publication.

The third round tender will be delivered under the implementation framework of the multi-annual energy programme (PPE) which plans for the delivery of 3GW of offshore wind capacity by 2023, and a further 3GW after that.

RTE – Réseau de Transport d'Électricité – will provide the grid connection, the first time the organisation will be getting its feet wet.

Shades of Cape Wind...

But why are the first two rounds taking so long to deliver, and how does the Dunkirk project stand a chance of being the first to generate energy?

Fundamental issues that hampered progress are entirely separate from the brouhaha over the renegotiation of earlier contracts which priced at around €200 per MWh, a tariff that feels a tad pricey for the French government in these days of zero bidding – especially for projects in fairly shallow water, reasonably close to the shore.

This is a touch disingenuous as tariffs of €184 per MWh had been agreed in Germany around the same time and [Gemini Offshore Wind Farm](#) came in at around €170 per MWh... and they have not fallen over. But then again, as [zero bids](#) rule the market it takes a strong government not to “do a Spain”.

An agreement will have to be reached on the tariff for these projects before the end of June or the first two rounds stand a good chance of never making it off the drawing board, thereby reducing France to the laughing stock of the international renewables community.

The issue, however, that has held up the first two rounds is that in France no legal framework was in place to cope with the deluge of objections. This meant that citizens had the right to approach any court in the land and submit their objection... mostly that their view was being spoilt.

Projects were bogged down in legal cases in numerous courts, but the framework has now been formed with the appointment of one competent court – in Nantes, Brittany – where objections have to be lodged.

Developers now no longer have to run from pillar to post to deal with the latest deluge of complaints stopping them from breaking ground.

And why so many objections? Everyone who recalls Cape Wind – the offshore wind farm that was to be the US pathfinder on Horseshoe Shoal in Nantucket Sound off Cape Cod, Massachusetts – will be experiencing a curious sense of déjà vu.

The first two waves have been hampered at every turn by rich people whose delightful gites give on to La Manche and will be damned if they're going to have their Atlantic views blighted by a ruddy great wind farm.

Sadly – with all the first projects located off the coast of Brittany and Normandy where the scenery's quite delightful – this is the weekend and summer retreat for a plethora of rich Parisians.

The same cannot be said of Dunkirk.

The arrival of a windfarm offshore Dunkirk – even for people who find such things offensive – can only improve the view.

Round three... forging ahead

Taking all the above into account, it's entirely feasible that Dunkirk will serve as a landing point once again... this time for offshore wind in France.

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