



“Offshore Europe continues to be a fantastic technology showcase for a diverse industry”



David Rodger

This month as Offshore Europe rolls into town I caught up with Jeremy Cresswell of Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group (AREG) which is working to promote the capabilities of Aberdeen City and Shire in renewable energy, helping to put Scotland firmly on the global renewable energy map.

In fifty words or less can you tell me what you do?

Probably energy journalist/analyst and founder/chairman of AREG fits best. I have the pleasure of leading the team which is driving forward renewables in the area with key projects including Aberdeen Offshore Windfarm, the Energy Futures Centre and the ever growing All Energy show.

I wonder if you could reflect on the success of Offshore Europe and what it really means for the area?

Offshore Europe continues to be a fantastic technology showcase for a diverse industry attracting people from the four corners of the earth. It's difficult to imagine an Aberdeen without the oil industry. Were it not for the quirk of fate ... geology and local politics ... the area would not be as it is and I would argue not nearly as prosperous as it is today. What has been achieved is incredibly important not just for where the North Sea is today or where it is going, but in terms of the global picture. This engineering, project management, technology development capability is all about energy and the skills within this town are eminently transferable.

From your experiences around the world how does Aberdeen compare as an Energy City?

Aberdeen is far more recognised for its achievements and for what it can offer the world

from outside the UK than within. It's true to say that as a country we do not always appreciate the phenomenal asset that is concentrated here. I have travelled extensively and Aberdeen genuinely is a world energy capital - quite literally this is a jewel in the UK's crown and should be treated as such.

What would your message be to oil and gas companies thinking of diversifying into renewables? If you are going to diversify your business – do it in something complimentary like marine renewables rather than something totally foreign. This kind of thinking was part of the agenda of the UK Oil and Gas Industry Task force back in 1999 when the North Sea was coming out of its second major crisis. I believed at the time this was the way forward and as AREG continues to help that strategic push I am convinced it is still the way forward. The oil and gas industry is booming and there are resource issues but that doesn't mean to say that you should not be looking to your long-term future as a company. Part of that future is about anticipating downturns in your core business and the opportunities for diversification.

The large traditional petroleum companies the public loves to hate are making great strides with renewables ... among the biggest. BP, Shell, Chevron, Statoil are among the world leaders developing a range of sustainable technologies. If anything they are the ones who are really going to drive the agenda in years to come and who will want to dominate. Do not underestimate the role of Big Oil in the future of renewables!

So what can the oil and gas industry really offer renewables?

Take wind power - the turbine is a well proven piece of onshore technology commoditised and produced in thousands. But going offshore changes the game and I think if you go back five years, the technological challenge and true impact of marinising this technology was not really appreciated by the turbine manufacturers. There have been a number of notable problems with WT in offshore applications and I have said time and again, learn from the oil industry. This kind of experience could be easily transferred to the wind turbine, which is simply a piece of rotating machinery where reliability is a crucial issue. So, lessons can be learned from offshore oil by the manufacturers and the companies who develop, build and operate wind farms.



Jeremy Cresswell

The conditioning techniques and services are just as applicable to wave and tidal industry?

Yes, what you are dealing with out there is an incredibly hostile environment and challenging installations of devices and sub-sea connectivity. The oil and gas industry has already demonstrated ready-made solutions and highly experienced offshore supply chain companies are getting the message across and winning work too.

The oil and gas industry seems to be populated by many 'champions'.... who do you see emerging as new renewable energy champions?

It strikes me as strange but there seem to be very few within renewables. Yes, there are people like Richard Yemm of Ocean Power Delivery, Brian Wilson former energy minister /chairman of Airicity and television presenter Dick Strawbridge. It is important that characters like these are prepared to speak their minds and I do hope we see more coming forward.

Looking at a future energy mix with a greater emphasis on renewables where do you see Aberdeen in that Future?

Aberdeen is a fantastic brand recognised the world over and let's not forget that. If we can build on the energy, the self-belief and the vision that exists within its people then this City could quite seriously become the Energy Capital of Europe ... and infinitely sustainable in that role. But it will take guts, even brazenness to achieve that....