

ENERGY NOW TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT SCOTLAND, WHICH IS SEEN BY MANY AS THE POWERHOUSE FOR RENEWABLES IN THE UK



The Crystal Rig II project in Scotland

Welsh contractors see great potential in windy North

An expanding Welsh civil engineering contractor has launched a strategy to win more work north of the border with the opening of its first operations base in Scotland.

Jones Bros, which is currently installing infrastructure for wind farms in East Lothian and Aberdeenshire, has opened offices at Linlithgow near Falkirk in central Scotland.

Founded in the 1950s, the privately owned company has grown rapidly in the past decade. It is currently working on contracts in various sectors including landfill, highways, flood and marine defence and renewals around the UK.

The Linlithgow base is the firm's first permanent office apart from its head office in Ruthin, North Wales – and it already has a track record of delivering

contracts north of the border.

It has completed a number of contracts at the Avondale landfill site, and is presently undertaking the balance of plant contract for the 60-turbine Crystal Rig II wind farm near Dunbar and the seven-turbine Tullo wind farm near Aberdeen.

While it has recruited a full-time quantity surveyor and an additional contracts manager to help run the operation, regional manager Andrew Aikman said that the operational workforce would be recruited locally as and when new contracts were won.

He added: "We secured the £18m Crystal Rig contract against strong competition from the major national firms, based on Jones Bros' experience building Welsh wind farms. Renewables are going to be a particularly strong area for us going forward."

Born and brought up in Stirling, Mr Aikman worked in civil engineering in Australia for a number of years before moving to North Wales, where he has worked for Jones Bros for a total of 15 years. ■

Conference aims to unlock 'real rewards'

A leading Scottish corporate and commercial law practice will be holding its second renewables mini-conference for landowners, businesses, and land managers in Perth on March 25.

Entitled "Unlocking Renewable Value In Your Land," it aims to provide a detailed overview of the opportunities and challenges in developing renewable energy projects of all sizes, said a spokesman for Brodies LLP, which is co-hosting the event with the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association and Ernst & Young.

It will feature guest speakers from the Scottish government and surveying industry, alongside experts in financing, planning, tax and contracts.

"Set against the current policy landscape, our team of experts will guide you through the various stages of a renewables project, from concept to completion, and highlight the very real rewards of getting it right," said the spokesman for the Edinburgh-based legal firm, which was short-listed for the 'Best Green Initiative' in the KnowList Awards 2010. ■

For further details and to register, telephone Rachel Osborne on 0131 656 0054, or email her at seminars@brodies.com as soon as possible

Report points to key role for hydropower

A recent report which revealed Scotland's hydro potential is nearly double than previously thought, highlighted the number of jobs available in micro hydro sector, which is particularly suitable for farmers and landowners.

Welcoming the report's findings Johanna Yates, policy manager for hydro and marine at Scottish Renewables, said: "Hydro schemes are an essential part of Scotland's energy mix, nationally for meeting renewables targets, but the smaller schemes can also provide local economic benefits.

"Scottish Renewables welcomes the government's commitment to promoting all scales of hydro through recognising local benefits, while working within the sensitivities of the water environment."

Ms Yates added: "What we need to see now is a commitment to delivery of these 1200mW of renewable energy by encouraging investment in the hydro sector." ■

The go-ahead has been given for the Beaully-Denny power line over the Ochils escarpment

Beaully-Denny power line is seen as key to the future for renewables

The decision by Scottish ministers to give the go-ahead to upgrade an existing 137 mile power line through the Highlands earlier this year has provided a crucial boost for the connection of onshore and offshore renewable energy generation capacity to the Grid.

But as the largest ever such infrastructure project in Scotland, with construction costs of around £320 million, the decision has not been without controversy.

The route passes through the south-western corner of the Cairngorms National Park. It also runs within the Ochils Area of Great Landscape Value and the historic gardens and designed landscapes of Taymouth Castle and Drummond Castle.

Finding ways to mitigate the visual

and environmental effects on these unique and important locations has, therefore, been a key concern at the heart of the proposal. Working as part of a large team of consultants, environmental and engineering consultancy Wardell Armstrong has been closely involved in helping to minimise the environmental impact on the rural landscapes through which the vital new grid connections will pass.

"As the demand grows for secure and sustainable supplies of energy, so does the strategic requirement for effective, high capacity infrastructure to transport it to the places where it's needed," said Gill Beauchamp, of Wardell Armstrong.

"At the same time it's essential that we find ways to mitigate the environmental impact as far as we

possibly can."

According to Jim Mather, Scotland's energy minister, the Beaully-Denny upgrade will be the most significant grid infrastructure project in a generation.

"Scotland's electricity network needs significant reinforcement to allow our vast renewables potential to be harnessed, transmitted and exported," he said. "Currently we simply do not have the transmission capacity to carry the green energy which Scotland will generate over the coming years.

"There are very strong arguments for a whole line solution and I have therefore granted consent to upgrade this power line, which will be key to unlocking Scotland's renewables potential." ■

Renewable heat incentive welcomed

Scottish Renewables, the voice of the green energy industry in Scotland, has welcomed plans by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to introduce an incentive scheme for renewable heat through the new Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

This will provide guaranteed payments for those who install technologies such as ground source heat pumps, biomass boilers and air source heat pumps from April next year.

Daniel Borisewitz, policy manager for bio-energy and heat at Scottish Renewables, said the plans would benefit the renewables industry and

local economies, as well as individual homeowners.

"The Renewable Heat Incentive will stimulate demand for renewable heat systems, reducing CO₂ emission, providing energy security and helping Scotland meet its 11% target for renewable heat," he said.

"It will provide a 12% rate of return on investment making these systems an exciting financial opportunity for businesses and householders alike."

Under the proposed tariffs set by DECC, the installation of a ground source heat pump in an average semi-detached house with adequate

insulation levels could be rewarded with £1,000 a year and lead to savings of £200 per year if used instead of heating oil, he added.

Details of funding for the scheme are expected to be published in the Budget this year.

Scottish farmers and landowners who are keen to find out more about this scheme, or any of the other various forms of renewable energy and opportunities for them to develop renewable energy projects on their land can obtain information and advice from Scottish Renewables by telephone on 0141 353 4980. ■