

Chilean targets boost offshore wind aspirations

Offshore wind industry leaders are sizing up opportunities in Chile as the government begins to nail down details of a proposed Decarbonisation Plan.

The Plan, which recently opened for consultation, is designed to help the South American country to increase renewable energy to 80% of electricity generation by 2030, and to reach carbon neutrality by 2050. Offshore wind is expected to play a key role in achieving these targets, experts say.

"Offshore wind energy has the potential to position Chile as a leader in renewable energy," Rodrigo Paredes, executive director of Chile's marine energy research and innovation centre (Meric), told developers, researchers and government officials at a wind seminar in December.

"However, we are (conscious) of the significant

challenges we face, from the development of infrastructure and technology to growing the appropriate regulatory framework and sustainable integration with other sectors," he added.

Daniel Dawson

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The seminar concluded a busy 2024 for the offshore wind sector in Chile, with two European companies announcing plans to develop up to 3.4GW by the start of the coming decade.

At the end of October last year, Norwegian developer Deep Wind Offshore said it had filed applications for a 1.4GW floating and 900MW fixed-bottom lease off the coast of the country's

central Biobío region. The announcement came six months after UK-based 17 Energy and Chilean developer SC Power unveiled their 1GW Viento Azul Biobío project off the coast of Concepción.

Overall, eight applications to develop more than 9GW have been submitted to maritime authorities since 2022. Six of these are planned for Biobío, which has strong wind resources, adequate bathymetric conditions and developed infrastructure.

"Currently, the projects are in the pre-commercialisation stages and require technological centres that



JOINING FORCES: (L-R) 17 Energy directors Daniel Perdomo and Peter Mazurenko, alongside Viento Azul Biobío advisor Dan Kyle Spearman

Photo: Viento Azul Biobío

understand and adapt these technologies to local conditions," commented Nicole Ehrenfeld, assistant director of the National Agency for Research and Development's research centre.

Despite growing interest in Chile, developers and local officials cited a range of challenges that need to be addressed.

"Offshore wind is a new industry opportunity for Latin America, and one of the key challenges ... is building a supply chain to support the industry," said Dan Kyle Spearman, director and advisor for Viento Azul Biobío.

While Chile already has a legal framework governing maritime concessions within 12 nautical miles of the coast, officials and developers said the next step for the sector is to work with the government to develop new regulations.

"It is time to focus on making a good regulatory framework for floating wind and offshore wind," said Gonzalo Tampier, lead researcher at Meric.

"Our priority should be making the best possible regulatory framework

based on the best data and science to attract investment, protect the environment and ensure an equitable energy transition."

Still, developers said they are happy with the existing regulations.

"The current regulations are sufficiently robust for the projects we are developing," Deep Wind Offshore chief commercial officer Hans Petter Øvrevik and LatAm regional manager Juan José Gari told reNEWS. "From a technical point of view, it would be challenging to develop sites further off the coast with today's technology in a cost-efficient way."

Spearman said the current regulatory framework is a good starting point, but it should be expanded to include areas outside the maritime concession. He added that Chile has a tremendous opportunity to learn from more mature markets.

"Some key lessons learned include providing a steady policy and regulatory platform, visibility of pipeline for investors, and setting clear targets for offshore wind," Spearman concluded. ■

Biobío coastline takes centre stage

Developers and government officials have identified the central Chilean region of Biobío as the ideal location for the first offshore wind developments.

According to Gonzalo Tampier, chief investigator at Meric, the Biobío coastline has the highest winds and suitable bathymetric conditions for offshore wind. Other areas

further north have lower wind speeds, while windier areas to the south have more difficult topographic conditions.

Biobío is the second-largest energy-consuming region in the country after the capital, and the third most populous. The region also boasts 21% of national port capacity and several large manufacturing hubs.

"Our basis for wanting to

develop in [Biobío] is that the fundamentals are right in terms of strong winds, industrial capabilities and local mindset, governmental support to develop renewables, and the appreciation for conserving the environment," said Deep Wind Offshore chief commercial officer Hans Petter Øvrevik and LatAm regional manager Juan José Gari. ■

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