



Eolfi's lead-off French project, Groix, will use 6MW GE Haliade 150s. Photo: Naval Energies

France 'could have 16GW of floating wind by 2040': Eolfi chief

Calculations by developer with national TSO point to future grid capacity and connection points for world-leading build-out

by Darius Snieckus in Hamburg

01 October 2018

Developer Eolfi forecasts as much as 16GW of floating wind could be moored and turning off France by 2040 – if the country's government moves ahead “at the right pace” with commercial-scale tenders for the fast-emerging technology.

Speaking to *Recharge* on the sidelines of the Global Wind Summit, chairman Alain Delsupexhe, said its calculations, which point to 5GW of floating wind turning in the French Atlantic and Mediterranean “already as early as 2025”, are borne out by national transmission system operator Réseau de Transport d'Électricité's (RTE) expectations of future capacity allocation along its coastlines.

“We looked at how to inject future floating wind production into the French grid and we have identified, earmarked and named [the connection points], said Delsupexhe. “By 2040, we expect [16GW] coming into France and this has been checked against the capacities and connection points that RTE believes it can slice and dice on the coasts.

“When we decided to focus on floating in 2012 we decided to go global – because this market is going to go global very quickly – by addressing both Europe and Asia, starting with France because we believe it is ultimately the market with the best potential in the mid-term.”

Delsupexhe underlines that reaching 16GW of floating wind plant would be “equivalent to eight tranches of nuclear, or 14% of the existing French [nuclear] portfolio.

“So floating wind will not replace nuclear straight away, but it can be one of the cornerstones of the French energy transition,” he said.



Act urgently to secure floating lead, WindEurope tells EU

Read more



“The challenge is overcoming the short-term view of refurbishing the existing nuclear plant for another ten years and in the process avoiding the new investments that will be necessary when [France’s] 58 nuclear plants are out-of-date.”

Eolfi is leading one of four developer consortia pressing ahead with landmark 25MW array projects that are slated to be online off France by 2021, as well as having plans to develop 2.5GW off Taiwan, via a deal with Spain’s ACS Cobra.

“We certainly take the global view of floating wind, but we are particularly encouraged by the potential off France, which we see as offshore territory where floating will overtake bottom-fixed quite quickly,” said Delsupexhe.

“This would mean offshore wind could take over 40% of the nuclear capacity – remember, in the Mediterranean there is no potential for [conventional] offshore wind [because of water depths out of site of the shoreline].”

Eolfi’s lead-off French project, Groix, being built with partner China General Nuclear in the French Atlantic in 54-71 metres of water, will use 6MW GE Haliade 150s mated to steel advanced-semisubmersible hulls. But Delsupexhe notes that “all commercial projects now in planning [at Eolfi] are working with 10-13MW turbines”.

France’s wind power association, FEE, has been lobbying the country’s government for several years to hold a 2GW tender targeting commercial-scale floating projects as a launch-pad to switching on as much as 6GW by 2030.

The first offshore turbine – the floating 2MW FloatGen unit designed and built by Ideol as part of a €25m (\$29m) EU technology development programme – was installed this summer and switched-on last month.

Some 3GW of bottom-fixed offshore wind off France has been stalled due to the government wanting to renegotiate the flagship projects’ feed-in tariffs down from the original € 200/MWh (\$247/MWh) – an impasse apparently unblocked in June by an agreement to cut support by 25% to €150/MWh.

