

£15m funding bid for maritime research hub at Devon's Appledore docks

A £15m funding bid has been launched to establish a “global-leading” maritime research hub at Appledore dockyards in North Devon.

A partnership involving local authorities, businesses and education providers are behind the bid to create the facility at a site neighbouring the Harland & Wolff shipyard, called Middle Dock.

It is hoped that the proposed Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre can place the region “at the core” of Net Zero maritime developments and boost the local economy.

The innovation centre could see research and industry partnerships from the University of Plymouth and the Centre for Future Clean Mobility (University of Exeter), and provide offices, workshops, a wet lab and aquaculture tanks for local and national businesses.

Organisations behind the bid see the centre as “an anchor” to future floating offshore wind turbine opportunities in the region, with one of the bid’s partners Petroc college developing courses to ensure the “best possible” skills pipeline for future sector needs.

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Councillors have voted to back the bid, the largest Torridge District Council has ever submitted, to the government's Levelling-up Fund. The proposals are also fully endorsed by the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere.

Council leader Ken James said: "This is clearly one of the most important decisions for jobs and growth this council has taken in recent years and we hope that our bid will be the catalyst that unlocks the investment to bring these plans to fruition."

Torridge officers are now working with representatives from the academic institutions, local industry, and other partners to refine the bid that will need to be submitted by July 6. An announcement of winning bids is expected later this Autumn.

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Plymouth, Professor Judith Petts, added: "Appledore has a proud place in the history of maritime innovation. This scheme offers the exciting and genuine prospect of us working to ensure that rich heritage can continue.

"The plans for Middle Dock will create a centre where our

expertise continues to be channelled in a way that addresses some of the most pressing global challenges, while at the same time reinvigorating the local community.

“Working with our long-standing partners at Petroc, we can also ensure it boosts current attainment levels while inspiring and educating future generations.”

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