

Port of Blyth chosen as construction base for huge offshore wind farm

A North East port has been chosen as the construction base for one of the world's largest wind farms.

The recently redeveloped Bates Clean Energy Terminal at the Port of Blyth will be used for RWE's Sofia offshore wind scheme in the North Sea. The new-build facility will include office space, a storage area and a car park, with the facility in place for the next three-and-a-half years.

Following the decision two years ago to site an operations and maintenance base for the Dogger Bank wind farm at the Port of Tyne, the decision cements the North East's position as a key region in the lucrative and fast-growing offshore energy sector.

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The base will host RWE's Marine Coordination Centre personnel, who are responsible for the planning and coordination of all offshore activities during the construction phase of the Sofia Offshore Wind Farm. It will have direct access to the port's heavy lift quay, as well as other services.

Martin Lawlor, chief executive of Port of Blyth, said: "We are delighted to have been selected by RWE as the base for the construction of such a significant UK development. Having over 21 years of experience in the offshore wind sector, the port is proud to be at the forefront of projects of this scale contributing to the energy transition. With the addition of strategic partners like RWE, Bates Clean Energy Terminal will continue to attract major offshore energy companies to join the clean energy revolution here in Blyth."

Matthew Swanwick, RWE's Sofia project director, said: "Choosing the base for Sofia's offshore construction has been a key decision as it will be home to the team for more than three years and will play a vital role in the successful completion of the project. The Port of Blyth offers us not only a strategic location and access to a strong marine supply chain but also an impressive new facility that will also ensure a legacy beyond the project."

The 1.4GW Sofia Offshore Wind Farm project is located on Dogger Bank in the North Sea, 120 miles off the North East coast. The construction base is the Port of Blyth's second announcement related to the Sofia project, following a decision by Dutch firm Van Oord to use the port for the storage and mobilisation of cables for the wind farm.

A number of reports in recent weeks have highlighted the opportunities for the North East to capitalise on the global shift to decarbonising power generation and other areas.

But the reports from the likes of Deloitte, Onward and ORE Catapult have also pointed to significant challenges for the sector, including skills shortages, lack of public investment and competition from other parts of the world.

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