

East Anglian offshore energy fund delivers first round of grants

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Tidal Transit's passenger transfer vessel Tia Elizabeth

Operators of the Supply Chain innovation for Offshore Renewable Energy (SCORE) grant programme have announced the first three East Anglian SMEs to receive funding to drive forward their innovative products and processes.

One of the first grants - totalling £48,000 - has been awarded to North-Norfolk based Tidal Transit, a firm of offshore transport and transit service providers to the North Sea wind energy industry.

The latest addition to Tidal Transit's fleet is being developed in collaboration with Norwegian company, Umoe Mandal, and the SCORE funding will be used to enable the Tidal Transit team to be involved at every stage of the design and build process, which is being undertaken in Mandal, Norway.

Leo Hambro, commercial director of Tidal Transit says: "With the heritage of the company laying in the day fishing industry, innovation has been key to the evolution of the company and was pivotal in our bid for SCORE funding.

"Securing such a significant grant enables us to be totally 'hands on' throughout the development and build of the first WaveCraft vessel which, when operational, will reaffirm our position as pioneers in supporting the region's latest generation of offshore wind farms."

Lowestoft-based specialist energy recruitment company, PWE Recruitment Group Ltd, which has an office at OrbisEnergy, has been awarded £10,000. This enabled the company to progress its outsourced recruitment project with a PWE dedicated member of staff based at 3Sun Group's Great Yarmouth office.

Stuart Smith, managing director of PWE, commented: "Our plan to provide a recruitment outsourcing service to companies in the offshore energy sector is an innovative first in East Anglia and when we heard how SCORE funding could be available to drive forward our ideas we jumped at the chance.

"The project wouldn't have got off the ground if it wasn't for the SCORE funding, which we have used on time developing the project, salaries, recruitment specific software and marketing.

"The whole bid process was very straight forward, with help available at every stage, and it was good to know you're only ever a few weeks from knowing if the bid is successful. This initial project concludes in April but we are already in discussions to replicate the outsourcing model with other organisations recruiting for the region's offshore renewable energy sector."

The third company to successfully bid for SCORE funding is Lowestoft-based Scour Prevention Systems which has also secured £10,000. Scour Prevention Systems offers a field proven, patented and innovative solution for the prevention of scour around offshore structures and cables.

Scour, the erosion of sediment around objects located in flowing water, can lower the seabed below the specified design level for a structure, which can affect structural stability and accelerate fatigue damage to components.

Scour Prevention Systems' mats are made using recycled vehicle tyres laid side-by-side, which trap sediment in their centres and thus form a protective layer. This method is particularly innovative and has higher success rates than alternative methods due to the ideal density of the tyres meaning that they do not sink into the seabed.

Warren Hoskins-Davies, project manager at Scour Prevention Systems said: "We were delighted to secure the funding for our system which assists offshore engineers in combating the considerable challenges scour presents.

"The grant has enabled us to secure intellectual property rights for our technology as well as investigating the practicalities of installation, such as anchoring techniques."

The SCORE programme delivers a £2.5 million funding investment through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). SCORE grants range from £2,500 up to

a maximum of 30% of the project's eligible costs, or £50,000, whichever is the lower.

Richard Salmon, project manager and business adviser for SCORE said: "Many companies and start-ups can be deterred from applying for funding as they perceive the level of information and form filling required too time consuming. That isn't the case with this grant fund.

"Where SCORE differs from many grant opportunities is that we are supported by a team of industry specialists whose job is to support companies and start-ups; find out more about their innovative ideas to evaluate funding viability and then assist with the development of a funding business case.

"Our region's offshore renewable energy sector provides East Anglian businesses with a unique landscape on which to develop innovative ideas, processes and services. Recipients of SCORE funding will all help strengthen the area's capability for innovation and as we announce news of the diverse range of projects funded, we hope others will be encouraged to apply for grant funding."