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:: Cliff-based Wave Power Potential for UK 05/01/05

Wave power plants built into cliff faces around the UK coast could be a reality within the next decade thanks to a pioneering new wave energy plant being developed in a cliff on the Faroe Islands.

Inverness based Wavegen, the company behind the world's first grid-connected wave power station on Islay, have been working in partnership with SEV, the Faroese electricity company, to develop a wave power station in the Faroe Islands.

As Wavegen Managing Director Jimmy Ferguson explained, the technology that is working so successfully on Islay, and is being adapted for the Faroe Islands, will open up many more opportunities for the company:

"This really is breaking new ground in wave energy technology. We have been working on the Faroese project for eighteen months now and at the same time we have been testing a new smaller turbine at the LIMPET plant on Islay. This new turbine will allow us to adapt the Faroese blueprint for use on a smaller scale and we are currently looking for sites in the North that would be suitable for a demonstration plant."

For its work in the Faroe Islands, Wavegen and SEV formed a joint venture, SeWave. The company brings together Wavegen's expertise in wave energy and the tunnelling experience of the Faroese.

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But before we could begin work we had to make sure our wave energy conversion technology could be housed in cliffs. So we recreated the North Atlantic at our state of the art wave tank test facility. And the results have been very promising indeed."

The Faroese device will be based on the existing oscillating water column technology used in Wavegen's Islay plant. The key innovative feature is the use of tunnels cut into the cliffs on the shoreline to form the chamber which captures the energy. The new power plant could be generating power as early as 2006 and is likely to be followed by more, larger scale plants.

The Faroese currently meet their electricity needs through a mixture of diesel-powered generators, hydro electricity and wind power.

They are keen to develop other green energy sources but face particular challenges with on-shore wave power due to the high cliffs which surround the islands.

And the same is the case for some areas of the UK, particularly the Highlands and Islands. The coast in parts of Caithness, Orkney and Shetland could be suitable for wave energy conversion and Wavegen is currently looking for a site for a small tunnel-based demonstration project in the area.

Ends For more information contact Natalie Buxton at Platform PR on 01463 783018.

