

We need level playing field for offshore renewables'



We were promised a 'Saudi Arabia of Renewables' but today we need political intervention

BiFab trade unions GMB and Unite have today (Thursday 7 March) said a 'level playing field' is needed if Scotland is to secure the large-scale manufacturing contracts from its own offshore renewables sector – and they are asking the First Minister and the Scottish Parliament to intervene.

It comes after lucrative contracts for the fabrication of turbine jackets and floating platforms from the Moray East and Kincardine offshore wind farm projects were awarded to firms in the UAE, Belgium and Spain, leaving empty handed BiFab yards in Fife.



Unions say that despite the best efforts of BiFab owners DF Barnes, the firm cannot realistically compete for major contracts on the basis of cost against European and international competitors who are heavily backed by state subsidies and sovereign wealth funds.



Union leaders will write to the First Minister and the Convenor of the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, and ask what steps the Scottish Government have taken to ensure offshore developers commit to domestic manufacturing and for an inquiry to identify the barriers which have prevented Scottish based firms from capitalising on a renewable manufacturing bonanza.

And on the same day the UK Government launch a New Offshore Wind Sector Deal with aspirations of tripling employment in the sector. GMB and Unite say the empty yards in Fife are a sobering reminder of long-term political failure at both Holyrood and Westminster.

GMB Scotland Secretary, Gary Smith and Unite Scotland Secretary Pat Rafferty said:



“Ten years ago we were promised a ‘Saudi Arabia of Renewables’ but today we need political intervention to help level the playing field in Scottish offshore renewables manufacturing.

“The truth is that state funded European energy and engineering firms, backed by Far East finance and Middle East sovereign wealth funds, are carving-up thousands of jobs and billions of pounds from our renewables sector, and firms like BiFab are left fighting for scraps off our own table.

“That one hundred per cent of the manufacturing of the turbine jackets for Moray East and five platforms for Kincardine will be done in yards outside of Scotland is an absolute scandal. This cannot continue unchallenged.



“To working class communities in Burntisland and Methil there’s no ‘just transition’ or ‘green jobs revolution’ here, just a future that looks heavily rigged against their hopes for employment and prosperity. That’s the real cost of long-term political failure at all levels of government.

“The Scottish Government and the public have a stake in BiFab and with it our renewables manufacturing future; we owe it to our ourselves to tackle the spaghetti bowl of vested interest groups that’s dominating our renewables sector and to fight for Scotland’s share.”

Press office

07958 156846

press.office@gmb.org.uk

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info@gmb.org.uk

