



LAUNCH ACADEMY

PROGRESS REPORT 2020

INTRODUCTION

The Launch Academy is a national technology accelerator programme for the offshore wind industry, designed to enhance the UK's offshore wind supply chain, enable greater UK content and support cost reduction through innovation.

The programme provides the complete ecosystem to support the commercialisation of ambitious companies launching new products and services in the sector. ORE Catapult brought technology development and business support under one roof, allowing companies to access its own in-house technical capability alongside a range of business growth expertise from its partners.

The Launch Academy is supported by nine industrial and business support specialists including Red Rock Power, Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy (SGRE), Barclays Eagle Labs, investment body Green Angel Syndicate, accountancy firm BDO, IP specialists Murgitroyd, law firm Shepherd and Wedderburn, ScottishPower Renewables and Quaybridge.





Industry panel discussing the days pitches

SELECTING THE COHORT



SMEs and supply chain companies were asked to submit solutions to a series of technology innovation challenges set by Red Rock Power and SGRE. There was also an Open Category for ambitious innovations seeking to make a significant impact on the sector. The partners held a webinar to promote the initiative to the supply chain and competition to join the programme was intense.

The selected companies have been given access to a unique package of support from the delivery partners, including; legal, marketing, accountancy, IP, HR and investor readiness support as well as modules delivered by ORE Catapult such as technology assessment, supply chain readiness and business case review.

CHOSEN COMPANIES

Greenspur Wind Ltd
 BladeBUG Ltd
 Offshore Survival Systems
 First Airborne Britannia
 Ventus Engineering GmbH

Microsense Technologies Ltd
 Renewable Dynamics
 Intebloc
 REOptimize Systems



Building a cohort community at the opening session

BUILDING A COMMUNITY AND COPING WITH COVID

The opening event was held at Barclays Eagle Labs in Edinburgh before the onset of COVID-19, which gave the opportunity for the first cohort to meet one another and all the delivery and industry partners. For any accelerator programme, it is important to establish a community within the cohort because as business leaders they are all going through similar experiences and can benefit hugely by learning from one another. Also being a founder can be a lonely place. When you are in the hot seat, the pressure can be unrelenting, but mixing with other founders can offer some respite.

The opening event turned out to be the last get together for the cohort in person. Since March 2020, COVID-19 has set unprecedented challenges to business continuity, but the Launch Academy was quick to react by moving to online teaching and mentoring using video conferencing, both for group and individual sessions. The cohort community spirit was maintained through a Slack page, a social media platform for a closed private group, so that the cohort could keep in touch.

THE VALUE OF MENTORS

“The mentoring support has been phenomenal - we have been given access to heavy lift equipment to trial our technology and we’ve got an open door to a highly experienced and successful individual who knows what it takes to build a business in offshore wind.”

ROSS MCLEOD
FOUNDER
INTERBLOC

The companies had the opportunity to choose a mentor at an evening pitching session. Mentors also chose which companies they wanted to work with and where both parties had selected one another we made a match. The Launch Academy had twelve mentors who gave up their time to support the innovators, from successful entrepreneurs through to highly experienced senior executives from sector-leading companies. The mentors worked closely with the companies throughout, helping them with their strategic decision making and introductions to their contacts.

Boaz Peled, CEO of First Airborne, developing drone technology for autonomous inspection, was mentored by James Manketlow, founder of Mindtools.com. “James is a seasoned entrepreneur, CEO

and investor, with an extraordinary track record and with exceptional insight and experience. It is a rare thing to have the opportunity to be coached by someone who is credibly able to relate to the challenges a CEO faces, and from whose guidance, profound theoretical and practical knowledge, your organisation and you as a leader, can benefit immensely. Truly rare.” (Boaz Peled)

Ross McLeod, founder of Intebloc, who are developing several solutions to increase safety and efficiency of heavy lifts, is mentored by Hugh McNally, founder of Wind Hoist. Hugh founded Wind Hoist in 2005 and grew a business which erected over 6000 turbines and had operations around the globe, which he sold in 2019.

Such was the quality of the mentoring within the programme, most of the cohort companies are choosing to continue working with their mentors beyond the Launch Academy, as they look to strengthen their Boards and Management Teams.



Photo of Cohort1 companies, industry and delivery partners

UNLOCKING DOORS THROUGH INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

“The addition of the Mentorship scheme provided by Launch Academy’s Delivery Partners brings added value in helping to develop start-up companies to be commercially ready to engage with the industry, bringing new technologies which otherwise might be ‘lost’ and strengthening the industry’s supply chain.”

CHRIS BRIGGS
REGIONAL INNOVATION MANAGER,
CORPORATE TECHNOLOGY
SGRE

The success of the programme largely hinges upon the engagement of industry. Without their input, Launch Academy would be just another accelerator in a crowded market. What sets Launch Academy apart is how deeply the end users/ customers are entrenched into the programme. From setting the initial innovation challenges, sitting on the judging panel to select the cohort, right through to setting up R&D projects, demonstrations and in some cases commercial contracts with cohort companies. This gives the programme an edge when it comes to the cohort

achieving commercialisation, as the customer relationships are established early on and the route to market laid out.

“We have been excited to work with the Launch Academy over the last year. It is great to see companies within the programme gain traction in the sector. Accelerator programmes, like Launch Academy, are vital for bringing real innovation into what can often be a conservative sector.” (Zoe Barnes, Quaybridge)

Much of the value to the industry partners comes from unearthing novel solutions that can solve the

operational challenges they are facing. Solutions found within Cohort 1 will potentially help the industry to build and operate wind farms more efficiently, helping to reduce costs and bring new UK content into the supply chain.

Scott Love, Head of Engineering at Red Rock Power Limited, said: “The Launch Academy programme has opened the door for us to work closely with three SMEs that we may not have been aware of otherwise. This has allowed us to invest in the future of the industry and an opportunity to work with excellent people whose innovations will play an important role in supporting the development and operation of wind farms moving forward.

“We set our supplier partners specific challenges that would address key concerns within our business and the sector as a whole and have been very impressed with their expertise and insight so far. Intebloc’s work on alternative lifting procedures and innovative use of cameras has already proven valuable in informing plans for the Inch Cape Offshore Wind Farm, allowing us to mitigate risks associated with working under suspended loads. Likewise, REOptimize Systems and Renewable Dynamics’ technology has helped us identify and deliver real and tangible improvements to some aspects of our Afton Onshore Wind Farm and in turn support our ‘value-driven’ asset management strategy. We look forward to working with them

as they continue to grow their business and prepare to enter the supply chain.”

Chris Briggs, Regional Innovation Manager, Corporate Technology for SGRE commented: “Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy undertakes many different technology scouting activities, in the UK, across Europe and globally, constantly seeking to identify, evaluate and adopt new and innovative technologies to enhance our products and services. Scouting takes many different forms from desktop searches and external scouting studies to technology forums and industry accelerator schemes.

“Launch Academy, conceived and run by ORE Catapult, is one such scheme. SGRE have participated in the 2020 edition as an Industry Challenge Owner, and we have been impressed by the organisation of the scheme and the breadth of new innovations and technology companies they have managed to assemble, not just for our own challenges, but across a broad range of offshore wind technology needs.

“2020 has been a year like no other, and it’s a credit to ORE Catapult that they have been able to deliver the scheme throughout the current disruption. We all look forward to better times, and for Launch Academy to continue with new industry partners and challenges in future.”

MEASURING SUCCESS

The success of any accelerator/business support programme is measured by the ongoing achievements of the cohort of companies, which come about as a result of their work on the programme.



7 OF THE 9 COMPANIES

have test and demonstration activity planned at ORE Catapult's facilities



VENTUS ENGINEERING ARE MOVING PART OF THEIR OPERATIONS **TO THE UK**

having already hired their first technical role in scotland

WITHIN **6 MONTHS** OF JOINING THE PROGRAMME



two companies have secured commercial contracts with an end user/industry sponsor



OVER **25 MEETINGS**

have been arranged between the companies and end users



9 NEW HIGHLY SKILLED JOBS

have already been created since the start of the programme

INDUSTRY PARTNER **COLLABORATION**

ON 4 COMPANY TECHNOLOGY R&D PROJECTS

with the aim of witnessing demonstrations



SDIC Red Rock Power Limited

SCOTTISHPOWER RENEWABLES

SIEMENS Gamesa RENEWABLE ENERGY

Quaybridge



£1.9M R&D GRANTS

were secured for technology development projects

> £13M PRIVATE INVESTMENT

currently being raised by cohort companies to commercialise their technologies

COMPANY EXPERIENCES ON THE PROGRAMME



The Launch Academy has been transformational for my business. We've been able to generate real traction with end users, forming partnerships with Red Rock Power and SPR for R&D projects. With expert support, we've secured investment and won two grants to support our technology development, we've got an IP strategy and we really understand our value proposition to the offshore wind sector. The Launch Academy has put a turbo charger into our commercialisation programme.

SAM MAYALL,
FOUNDER OF OFFSHORE SURVIVAL SYSTEMS (OSS)



As a start-up coming from the oil & gas sector we had limited exposure to offshore wind. The programme has opened our eyes to the huge market opportunity for our products. We've been able to develop our proposition with the support of a wind turbine OEM and Red Rock Power, who have gone on to partner in an R&D project worth £560k.

ROSS MCLEOD
INTEBLOC



In the course of this year, by being part of the Launch Academy, we managed to take our sensor solution to the next level, ready to be validated at the ORE Catapult's Levenmouth 7MW Demonstration Turbine. Furthermore, to expand our growth and stay ahead, in September this year, Ventus Wind Services UK subsidiary was opened and onboarded the first employees. The Launch Academy has indeed brought together "technology development and business support under one roof". During the program we encountered brilliant experts from the wind business, mentors, and industry partners, always open to assist, support and give feedback, even when sharing crazy ideas and cutting-edge solutions. We are very grateful and delighted to be working together with a team that goes the extra mile in support of Ventus Group R&D portfolio, and we look forward to our continuing collaboration as future unfolds.

POUL ANKER LÜBKER
VENTUS ENGINEERING

WHAT'S NEXT?

With the end of Cohort 1, ORE Catapult is working hard with the partners to ensure the continuation of the Launch Academy venture, aiming to run Cohort 2 in early 2021, supporting the the UK offshore wind sector to find the next big innovations to support cost reduction and increase UK content in this ever-growing sector.

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