Offshore China, 19-21 June 2013 Shanghai

The 2013 edition of *Offshore Wind China*, the fourth in the series, was held in Shanghai from June 19-21. While the exhibition was of a similar size to last year, and not terribly dynamic, the conference itself improved considerably in terms of the quality of the debate. The industry is maturing and this is reflected in the contribution of the participants, and the willingness to grapple with the serious issues of quality, grid integration and the other difficult issues which face the industry not only in China (although it is still unique), but globally.

While the Chinese offshore market is developing, it is going more slowly than originally planned, and although China’s market is the world’s 3rd largest, it’s still going to be a while before it dominates annual markets the way it does for onshore; although I have no doubt that that will come, likely before the end of the current decade.

There was a ‘consensus’, however, among the participants that the 5 GW target for 2015 was very likely not going to be met, and that it would be more like 3 GW. The 2013 market is likely to be very much in the range of 2012, i.e., 1-200 MW, mostly or exclusively intertidal projects; 2014 will be a bit larger, and things will really start to take off in earnest in 2015...at least that’s the view from last week in Shanghai.

As for the intertidal projects, the ones in very shallow waters which dry out at low tide, while they will dominate over the next year or two, the environmental concerns that would have prevented these projects in most other jurisdictions are now coming to the fore, and we’re not likely to see a large roll-out of these projects in the next few years, creating even more pressure to move further offshore. This conflicts with information I had received earlier this year, i.e., that inter-tidal projects would be rolled out in large numbers over the coming few years, and would be the primary means to meet the 2015 target. That now seems not to be the case.

As for the overall performance of the Chinese market, panelists felt that the 2013 market would be about the same size as the 2012 market (just under 13 GW), or perhaps even lower. However, there is considerable pressure from within the central government to get the industry moving again, so for now, we’ll stick with our projection of about 15 GW for the 2013 market in China.

*By Steve Sawyer, GWEC Secretary General June 2013*