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James Fisher Renewables completes first phase of unexploded ordnance identification at Sofia Offshore Wind Farm



Image credit: RWE

James Fisher Renewables (JF Renewables), a trusted technical and operations solutions provider to the offshore renewables industry, part of James Fisher and Sons plc (James Fisher, the group), has completed the first part of a two-phase contract to investigate unexploded ordnance (UXO) and potential archaeological features ahead of the installation of export cables for RWE's Sofia Offshore Wind Farm, located off the north-east coast of the UK.



During September and October 2021, JF Renewables investigated 35 near shore targets to assess the need for disposal. Observation and work-class remotely operated underwater vehicles were successfully launched from a small vessel to facilitate a diver-less operation, delivering reduced risk, increased accuracy and improved efficiency. As the UK seeks to expedite the construction of offshore wind to achieve its target of generating 40GW of electricity using this method by 2030, efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally sensitive UXO disposal solutions that mitigate risk will become increasingly important.

From May 2022 onwards, up to 125 deep water targets will be investigated using the same proven approach. Any confirmed UXO targets will be removed using an innovative 'low order' disposal technique to minimise the noise from the removal and therefore also reduce the risk of harm to marine mammals and sea life.

Wayne Mulhall, managing director at James Fisher Renewables, said:

"We are delighted to be continuing our established and successful relationship with RWE on the Sofia Offshore Wind Farm. Following a thorough investigation of this particular route, we successfully confirmed all scoped targets as non-UXO."

"Our expertise gained from performing more than 3,000 UXO investigations around the globe enabled us to identify additional targets requiring survey, helping us to ensure phase one of the work was completed to the highest standard with the greatest regard for safety for all those involved. We look forward to completing phase two during 2022."

RWE's Matthew Swanwick, project director for Sofia Offshore Wind Farm said:

"James Fisher Renewables has successfully completed the first of two campaigns to identify nearshore unexploded ordnances (UXO) and archaeological anomalies for Sofia Offshore Wind Farm. Their expertise made them the right company for this job and we were pleased with the efficient way they carried out phase one of the work off the Teesside coast. The experienced team provided professional support throughout, ensuring that the project was delivered safely and on time."

JF Renewables was previously contracted by RWE in 2020 to work on UXO investigation for the Triton Knoll Offshore Wind Farm off the coast of Lincolnshire, UK.

Sofia, located on Dogger Bank in the North Sea, is set to become one of the world's largest offshore wind farms - as well as one of the farthest from shore. Upon reaching full capacity, estimated to take place in 2026, it will generate enough electricity to power as the equivalent of 1.2 million UK homes.

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