



**SETTING THE PACE:** Renner Energies has begun build-out of its four-turbine 14.4MW Walcourt project Photo: Renner Energies

Challenges adding years to project timelines, writes **Karolin Schaps**

# Appeals slow up Belgian progress

The pace of new onshore wind developments in Belgium has picked up slightly in recent months, but capacity additions are still well below the 2030 target trajectories.

While just 150MW of fresh capacity was added in 2024, last year saw a rise to 183MW in new installations, and this year around 130MW is on the cards for the Wallonia region alone.

While showing signs of improvement, the annual pace for Wallonia needs to exceed 200MW in order to reach the regional government's 2030 target of generating 6200 gigawatt-hours per annum of wind power.

In Flanders, 175MW of new capacity is needed annually to track in line with the region's 2800MW installation target set for 2030.

"Belgium remains a busy market for us. We have a dynamic pipeline, but it is tough to develop," Renner

*"Successive appeal procedures increasingly result in our projects being blocked for years"*

Energies development director for wind projects Jean-Michel Durand told **reNEWS**.

The Belgian developer is this year building and starting up the 14.4MW Walcourt project, with four Nordex N131/3600 turbines and a tip height of 180 metres. For 2027, it envisages the building of a four-turbine scheme in Momignies with 200-metre tip heights for a total capacity of 22.4MW.

Also starting construction this year will be Elicio and Luminus' 14.4MW Bastogne-Hemroulle project that

will host four Nordex N117 turbines. Building works are set to begin in February, with the first quarter of 2027 eyed for the start of operations.

Meanwhile, Belgian developer Elicio is due to start work on its Bruges 3 repowering project, replacing seven Enercon E66 turbines with four new units. "The current turbines will remain operational until this summer. The new ones are expected to be fully operational by the summer of 2027," said Elicio business development director Emmanuel Van Vyve.

Another Belgian developer, Storm, is starting building works on its 10.8MW Mourcourt and 12.6MW Rumillies wind farms, both aiming to begin operating in 2027.

The largest stumbling block standing in the way of speeding up Belgium's onshore wind build-out is the permitting and appeals process. Some 500MW of permitted projects are currently locked in appeals procedures that can take multiple years, according to Flemish wind energy association VWEA.

"Permit applications are complex. Successive appeal procedures increasingly result in our projects being blocked for years," said Storm head of community outreach Ilse Baele.

In December, the Flemish regional government approved an action plan for improving permitting procedures, suggesting reducing the processing time for appeals to nine months.

"We really ask for this action plan to be rolled out as soon as possible so we can see real-life impact on our sector," said VWEA director Maarten Dedeyne, who also welcomed proposals to diminish grey areas of the law by making regulation clearer and permits less prone to appeals. ■

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**COMPLEX APPLICATIONS:** Storm head of community outreach Ilse Baele Photo: Storm

## Grid connections fog development window

Belgian onshore wind developers are concerned about the growing issues around grid connections for new projects.

These include increasingly longer connection windows, curtailment options on some of the capacity built into connection permits, and rising network costs.

"Access to grid connection capacity is becoming a key issue for the sector. Distribution and transmission grids have not sufficiently anticipated the needs, not only to connect the required additional renewable generation capacity, but also to allow industries to electrify energy usage," said Elicio business development director Emmanuel Van Vyve.

In Wallonia, grid connection can take five years from the time of request and is increasingly expensive, warned Wallonian renewable energy association Edora director general Fawaz Al Bitar.

"Another concern is the fact that the connection requests are now not always granted to the full capacity so that part of the capacity is flexible. It is going to happen more and more often that the grid manager can curtail your equipment," said Renner Energies development director for wind Jean-Michel Durand.

Adding to issues impacting the Belgian development pipeline is uncertainty about the future subsidy regime. In Flanders, a previously

phased-out mechanism was re-introduced in January, but uncertainty about rewards beyond 2029 cloud future investments.

"We hope to evolve towards a stabilised mechanism that will give us a long-term agreement beyond 2029. We are also looking at a Contracts for Difference system," said VWEA's Maarten Dedeyne, adding the lobby group was currently discussing the matter with the regional government.

"Project development is becoming more complex and more costly, so if developers cannot see an acceleration in the development cycle, I fear that some could decide that it is not worth it," said Elicio's Van Vyve. ■