

FOLLOW UP: First wind turbine installation at Ecowende

Photo: Ecowende and Flying Focus

Ecowende powers Dutch wind revival

The Netherlands has received green power from a new offshore wind farm for the first time in three years, writes **Karolin Schaps**

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DUTCH LINE UP

Project	MW	Developer
Online in 2026		
Hollandse Kust West 6 (Ecowende)	760	Shell, Chubu, Eneco
Total:	**0.8GW**	
Online in 2027		
Hollandse Kust West 7 (OranjeWind)	795	RWE, TotalEnergies
Total:	**0.8GW**	
Online in 2029		
Ijmuiden Ver Alpha	2000	SSE Renewables, APG, ABP (Noordzeker)
Ijmuiden Ver Beta (Zeevonk) phase 1	1000	Vattenfall, CIP
Total:	**3GW**	
Online in 2032		
Ijmuiden Ver Beta (Zeevonk) phase 2	1000	Vattenfall, CIP
Ijmuiden Ver Gamma A	1000	tbc
Ijmuiden Ver Gamma B	1000	tbc
Total:	**3GW**	
Projects in development		
Doordewind 1	2000	tbc
Doordewind 2	2000	tbc
Hollandse Kust (West) 8	700	tbc
Nederwiek (North) 2	2000	tbc
Nederwiek (North) 3	2000	tbc
Nederwiek (South) 1A	1000	tbc
Nederwiek (South) 1B	1000	tbc
Ten Noorden van de Waddeneilanden 1	700	tbc
Total:	**11.4GW**	
GRAND TOTAL:	**19GW**	

For the first time in three years, the Netherlands has received green electricity from a new offshore wind farm after Vestas turbine installation at the 760MW Ecowende (Hollandse Kust West 6) project was completed by Van Oord in October.

The wind farm entered its operational phase in September with the opening of its onshore service base in the western port of Ijmuiden, from where co-owner Eneco is leading day-to-day operations and Vestas is handling maintenance and repair works. Officially, Ecowende will start operating in January.

In their 2022 winning bid to build the wind farm, Ecowende partners Eneco and Shell scored highly on ecological proposals to build and operate the project, including for making its research findings openly available.

Ecowende is widely seen as the world's most ecologically inclusive offshore wind farm. The partners, which also include Japan's Chubu since 2024, have recently made the first sets of ecological data publicly available which were collected during various studies carried out during the construction phase.

In addition to trialling a red-painted blade on seven of Ecowende's 52 Vestas V236-15MW turbines to test its impact on birds, contractor Van Oord used a vibration-based monopile installation technique for the first time ever to minimise noise impact on marine life, and engineers created biodegradable reef structures made from fruit trees that lie at the intersection of four of Ecowende's cable crossings to attract various fish species and improve marine biodiversity.

"We cannot expect one project to have all the answers," said Hermione van Zutphen, ecology programme manager at Ecowende.

"But we can make sure that the data we collect also becomes available to others. The more data and knowledge we share across projects, organisations and disciplines, the faster we can improve our understanding of how offshore wind can work in harmony with nature."

Its sister site, Hollandse Kust

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32 West 7, where RWE and TotalEnergies are building the 795MW OranjeWind project, is in the middle of construction works that included the first of 53 monopile installations by Jan De Nul's Les Alizés vessel on 1 September. Both Ecowende's and OranjeWind's monopiles were manufactured at Sif's 200-monopiles-a-year Maasvlakte 2 factory in nearby Rotterdam. "Monopile production is ongoing in parallel, and we expect monopile installation to finish by early 2027. The 53 turbines will be installed by Jan De Nul's vessel 'Voltaire' over the course of 2027," said an RWE spokesperson.

Due to a drop in demand on the back of developers worldwide slowing down projects, Sif is currently operating at lower capacity in order to bridge the time until it processed new orders, its chief executive told reNEWS.



PILE DRIVE: Monopile installation at OranjeWind Photo: RWE

"We're stretching a bit within the possibilities of the customers' installation windows. We're also building down personnel, so we are producing with two lines instead of three," Sif CEO Koen Bogers said.

The Maasvlakte 2 factory is now producing four to five monopiles a week, he added. ■

Next wave of projects take shape

The next Dutch offshore wind farms, the 2GW Ijmuiden Ver Alpha and the 1GW first phase of the Zeevonk project at Ijmuiden Ver Beta, are slated for start-up in 2029.

Preparations for SSE's joint venture project with Dutch pension fund ABP and pension investor APG, Ijmuiden Ver Alpha or Noordzeker, are ongoing and include talks with stakeholders about the further development of the project, a spokeswoman for ABP said.

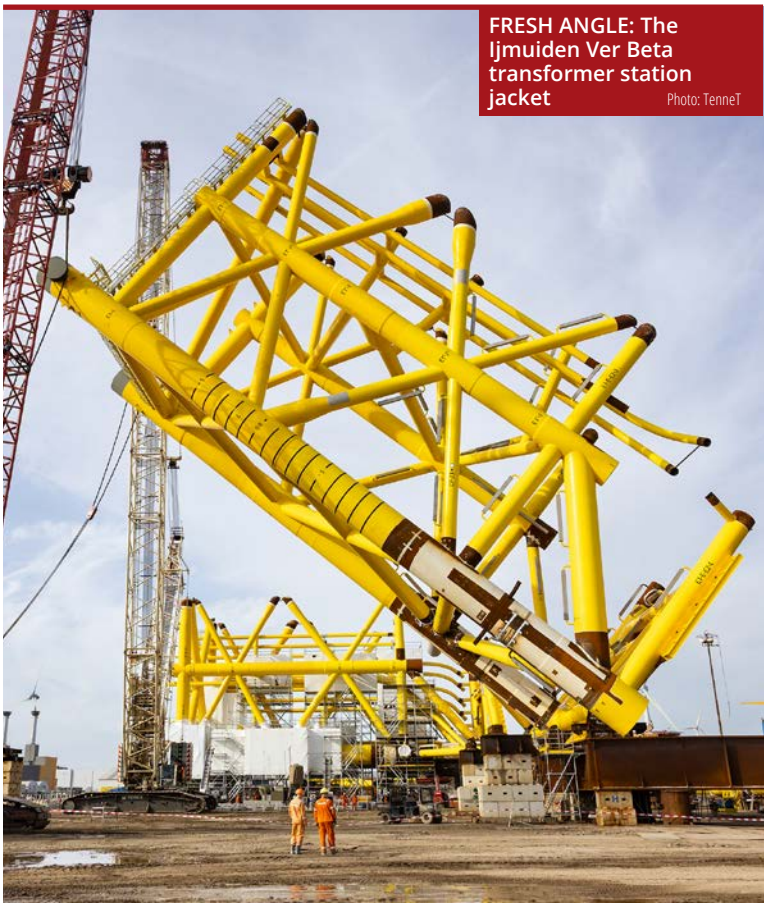
"Since the permit was granted, market conditions for offshore wind have changed. For instance, construction and financing costs have risen, and the demand for renewable electricity is evolving differently than previously anticipated," she said, adding that ABP remained committed to the success of the project.

In contrast to the Ijmuiden Ver Alpha project, the Vattenfall-CIP partnership Zeevonk has made a number of contractual announcements in recent weeks, including an agreement with Siemens Gamesa for SG15-236 turbines to be installed in 2029.

The joint venture has chosen a transition piece-free wind farm design aimed at reducing the project's material usage. Zeevonk's 69 turbines, as well as its foundations, will be transported and installed by DEME, which will use its Norse Energi jack-up transport and installation vessel to carry out the work.

The monopile foundations contract has gone to Germany's EEW and Dutch cable manufacturer TKF is designing, engineering, producing, testing and delivering the wind farm's inter-array cables. A decision on the turbine supplier will follow "before too long", a Dutch-based Vattenfall spokesman said. The partners are expected to take a final investment decision on the first phase of the project before the end of the year.

"It's very important that Zeevonk and Noordzeker get towards final investment decisions. That will create some work for 2027-28 for the supply chain. Because 2027-28 is relatively empty for monopile manufacturers as well as T&I contractors," said Sif's Koen Bogers.



FRESH ANGLE: The Ijmuiden Ver Beta transformer station jacket Photo: TenneT

Zeevonk's second 1GW phase will have to start operating by the end of 2032, as agreed with the Dutch government last year.

On the current progress of building out offshore wind infrastructure, Heerema is in the middle of constructing the transformer station jacket for Ijmuiden Ver Beta on behalf of the GE Vernova-Seatrium joint venture which TenneT selected in 2023 to make the offshore HVDC platforms for Ijmuiden Ver Beta, Ijmuiden Ver Gamma and Nederwiek 2. Heerema is expected to deliver the jacket in the summer of 2027.

Meanwhile, construction of the Ijmuiden Ver Beta HVDC platform is ongoing in Singapore. The platform is slated to be transported to the Netherlands in 2028 and to start transmitting electricity in 2029. The HVDC platform for one of the Ijmuiden Ver Gamma sites is already under construction at the same shipyard.

In onshore preparations, TenneT contractors DEME and Prysmian started laying high-voltage cables on the bottom of Lake Veere in Zeeland in October, a key connection point for landing electricity from Ijmuiden Ver Alpha and Nederwiek 1. ■

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CfD reset sparks fresh interest

Completion of the twin 1GW Ijmuiden Ver Gamma A and B sites, which will open up for tender on 26 November, is also slated for 2032. The double tender will mark the first Dutch subsidised offshore wind auction in 10 years as the government is meeting industry concerns about rising costs.

The tender, which will close on 10 December, will offer a 15-year one-sided Contract-for-Difference (CfD) under a temporary one-year scheme that is designed to move the current SDE++ renewable energy subsidy regime to a CfD-based system.

Bidders can ask for up to €117 per megawatt-hour for site A and up to €116/MWh for site B, allowing for a total subsidy budget of €9.5bn for both projects.

Unlike the failed, unsubsidised Nederwiek 1A tender in 2025, this year's auction is expected to drum up considerable interest.

"Because of the support mechanism it's much more de-risked," said Gijs Nieuwint, principal consultant at Afry Netherlands.

Other sources said many well-known offshore wind investors were seriously considering making bids.

From mid-2027 onwards, the Dutch government aims to move over to a two-sided CfD mechanism that will offer 20-year contracts and also include compensation for negative pricing hours. This move is in line with new EU rules under the electricity market reform. The industry widely welcomes the change in support mechanism, but some are concerned about the lack of long-term strike price indexation.

Other market participants are calling on the government to provide more incentives to stimulate demand for green electricity. "In the longer term, Vattenfall would prefer to develop offshore wind farms with a solid business case without financial support. In order to return to merchant, we need significant policy and support for electrification of industrial demand now," said Ireen Geerbex, Vattenfall's director of market development for offshore wind in the Netherlands.

Dutch industrial carbon emitters have been slowing down investments in reducing their CO2 emissions, including electrification, a recent survey published by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) showed. Deepening grid congestion, which is preventing the connection of new consumers in some areas, was cited as one of the obstacles to making investments in electrification projects.

A long-term outlook was also important for the offshore wind supply chain, said Karen Vennik, commercial director for offshore energy at Van Oord. "It's important that there is a comprehensive policy from the government."

In December, the government is expected to publish an update to its offshore wind roadmap, which will spell out a future tender schedule. It is also set to announce further details of the CfD mechanism that month. In its annual budget announcement in September, the government set aside funds to support tendering 4GW of offshore wind capacity in 2027.

Dutch wind association NedZero is calling for a government commitment to tendering 2GW a year in the long term.

Although the Netherlands reduced its 2040 offshore wind target to 30GW from 30-40GW in its national energy system plan (NPE) published in September, the government remains clear about the crucial role it wants offshore wind to play in the country's energy transition.

The government's 30GW target is possible to achieve from an infrastructure point of view, provided policy decisions and permitting procedures are timely and there is sufficient supply-chain capacity, said a spokesman for Dutch grid operator TenneT. ■

Fabricators sound China alarm

The users of European-made steel in the offshore wind market need better protection against "unfair competition" from Chinese manufacturers, Koen Bogers, chief executive of Dutch monopile maker Sif, told reNEWS.

"We feel there's an unfair competition from the Chinese competitors. They work with much cheaper steel. That steel import is protected by the European Union, so the European steel suppliers are protected, but the monopile suppliers are not. That's not a level playing field," Bogers said.

In July, the European Commission tightened its foreign steel import controls in a bid to protect EU steel producers from global overcapacity and dumping. However, the rules do not apply to the import of Chinese-manufactured monopiles, leaving the European market prone to the impact of foreign imports.



"That really needs to change because otherwise we will trade fossil fuel dependence for geopolitical dependence on renewable energy technology. I don't think that's the idea," Bogers warned.

The manufacturer had discussed the issue with politicians in The Hague and Berlin, but wants quick action to avoid lasting damage. Adding monopiles to the Commission's list of products protected by additional duties would be the "most logical thing", Bogers said.

"Especially when there's more supply than demand and it's a buyers' market, you have to make sure you protect your supply chain at least to some extent. The risk is that if you only let price determine everything, the European supply chain is critically injured," Bogers (*pictured, left*) said.

The European Commission will determine by 30 June 2027 whether the scope of the duties should be extended to products made from steel or containing a significant amount of steel.

A spokeswoman for the Dutch ministry of economic affairs said the ministry was aware of the concerns regarding "competition from cheaper Chinese components for offshore wind farms".

"A level playing field is essential for the competitiveness of European companies. A European approach is the most effective way to create a level playing field," she added. ■

Developers flag indexation omission from subsidy scheme

Offshore wind developers assessing investments in the Dutch market are concerned about a lack of long-term strike price indexation as part of the country's new subsidy regime.

The Dutch government will move to a two-sided contracts-for-difference (CfD) mechanism from mid-2027 onwards which will offer 20-year contracts to offshore wind projects. It will apply inflation adjustment to the bid price over the first two years immediately following submission of the bid. In comparison, the UK and Poland, for example, adjust the strike price annually based on consumer price inflation.

"Indexation is still a big deviation from what we see in other countries. They offer full indexation for the whole duration of the CfD contract; the Netherlands is not doing that," said André Craens, offshore wind energy specialist at Dutch wind association NedZero.

Having seen costs rise exponentially over the past years, offshore wind developers fear that a lack of indexation will expose them to further price volatility.

"The project developers really want indexation because that makes the business case look really good because your income will always be more than your costs," said Remko de Bie, senior account manager for energy and climate at Triodos Bank.

With investment budgets tight and costs still higher than in the past, international offshore wind developers are careful about the markets in which they decide to invest. Many have options to spread their participation across the globe, requiring every market to present itself as attractively as possible.

Some industry figures say that the Dutch tender regime is one of the world's most attractive.

"Even if the Dutch would not do indexation compensation, there are other elements of their framework that are compelling, for example significant preliminary site development work by the government," said Jakob Bervelt, senior director at financial advisory firm Green Giraffe. ■