BABCOCK TO PROVIDE HELICOPTER SUPPORT TO WORLD'S BIGGEST OFFSHORE WIND FARM

News / Business aviation



Babcock Mission Critical Services (MCS) Onshore has been awarded a multi-million pound contract by DONG Energy to provide specialist helicopter support to the new Walney Extension offshore wind farm.

The windfarm will be the largest in the world when it becomes operational in 2018, with 87 turbines providing clean electricity to around half a million UK homes.

The helicopter support contract, which runs for five years from 2018, will see Babcock operate a brand new hoist-equipped H135 aircraft, as well as a back-up EC135T3, to transport people and cargo to and from the windfarm. The aircraft will be custom-configured by Babcock to meet DONG's specifications. Highly skilled Babcock pilots and hoist operators will lower passengers and equipment onto the massive turbines to carry out vital repair and maintenance works. Specialist helicopter engineers will ensure the aircraft are maintained to exacting requirements laid down by European regulators.

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DONG Energy has submitted a planning application for development of an aircraft hangar within Walney Airfield, and the local authority is expected to issue its planning determination early in 2017. The scheme will also require approval by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Tim Shattock. managing director of Babcock MCS Onshore said: “We have decades of experience in providing safe and reliable helicopter operations including for offshore wind farms and we are delighted to be selected to provide critical support to such a large and prestigious project. Helicopters are the most effective and efficient way of ensuring the right people and equipment are in the right place to keep the windfarm operating.”

Walney Extension is expected to be fully commissioned in early 2018, at which time it will be the biggest offshore wind farm in the world, surpassing the 630MW London Array Offshore Wind Farm which was commissioned in 2014 by DONG Energy and its partners. The wind farm will be constructed and operated under the UK's EMR FID-enabling regime with a fixed price for the first 15 years of production.

Tim Shattock added: “This new contract will create or sustain jobs for pilots, hoist operators, engineers and meteorological officers who will provide and verify vital local weather information for us which will maximise the efficiency of the operation.”

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