Press release

Quimper, 29th July 2018

Confidence into the future perspectives of a French tidal energy industry!

The recent decision of a French actor to withdraw from the tidal energy market could suggest that the sector is being deserted by its protagonists, correlated with the trend inflated by the French Government inaction.

However, this suspension by one actor of its tidal activity must not be interpreted as the death knell for the tidal industry in France. There are tidal turbines currently in operation and others will be deployed in the coming months, asserting the sector's dynamics!

The building of a new field put the players to the test on many different aspects to prove its viability, be it in terms of technology, strategy or finance. The withdraw or step-back of actors is part of the process and understandable. They have always had, and probably always will have and it is a clear mark of the living state of the sector.

For the record, other major industry players such as GE-ALSTOM, SIEMENS or VOITH had developed tidal energy technologies and decided to retreat at some point, due to a lack of optimistic results from the technology. These decisions can result from technological choices not admitted by the energy operator or from the lack of a long-term vision toward the development of a mass market that could legitimate an industrial implantation.

SABELLA has been strengthened by the success of a pre-commercial project in the Fromveur strait, nearby the coast of Ushant island, in 2015 with the immersion of the first grid-connected tidal turbine in France. D10, a 10-meter diameter turbine with a maximal power output of 1 MW, was deployed during an entire year, proving its viability along with its acceptability by Ushant's population. SABELLA pursues its strategy and remains determine to prove the suitability of the tidal power solution especially to the niche market of islands or coastal remote and off-grid communities. This solution represents a clean and predictable alternative to the pollutant and costly use of diesel power plant currently installed in most of these communities. The lack of industrial maturity is in this way counterbalanced by a competitive advantage in terms of environmental and economic benefits.

SABELLA would be able to fully reach an optimal and stable technology thanks to the development of pilot tidal farms. They will initiate, through this first commissioning of commercial exploitation, the beginning of the costs reduction, leading the way to a credible development of commercial tidal farms of large capacity. Following this path, SABELLA is closely working with the Brittany region to further enhance the industrial development of Brest port for the 2020 horizon. Further work on cost-savings and productivity gains are part of the mid-term economic model under development. In the meantime, the team in Quimper, France, initiate the reflection and studies on the future next generation of upscaled turbines, with emphasis on its reliability and standardisation of the range of products. By looking back at the accomplished work and looking forward to the ongoing projects, SABELLA feels confident on both the energetic and economic adequation of its tidal energy solution along with its integration into the energetic mix of tomorrow.

This September, the tidal turbine D10, improved with an optimized electrical chain, will be deployed for the second time in the Fromveur strait and grid-connected to Ushant island for a 3-year exploitation. Thereafter, the project entitled PHARES, led by AKUO ENERGY, will secure a hybrid solution (tidal, wind and solar photovoltaic energy) coupled with a storage system provided by EDF SEI. This multi-energy model will significantly participate into Ushant decarbonization and become a showcase for this new “Fuel Free Island” model that can be exported overseas. In parallel, the company investigates new areas of prospection and works on preliminary projects both in France and abroad while remaining focused on the needs of the island or remote coastal communities concerned by their future energy transition.

Faithful to its commitment to tidal energy development for more than ten years, SABELLA stays resolved to pursue its work by keeping its credo “simplicity – ruggedness – reliability” that has already been tried and tested with success.