

# Colombian strategy raises expectations

Delayed blueprint elevates country's ambitions to new heights, writes Daniel Dawson

Following months of delay, officials in Colombia have published draft documentation for the country's first seabed lease auction.

"(The National Hydrocarbons Agency) has developed a comprehensive suite of documents and a timeline which would see the winners of the competition being selected by November 2024," said World Bank offshore wind program lead Mark Leybourne.

According to UPME – the government body responsible for planning Colombia's green energy transition – the country aspires to install 18GW of capacity by 2052.

"This even exceeds the deployment capacities of the 'high growth' scenario in the World Bank's offshore wind roadmap for Colombia," said Leybourne. "It makes it clear that there is a role for offshore wind in Colombia's future energy mix and its contribution could be significant."

The government originally planned to hold a seabed lease auction in the second half of this year, but an abuse of power scandal that resulted in the resignation of Mines and Energy Minister Irene Velez resulted in months of delay.

As a consequence, initial expectations that steel would be in the water by 2030 now seem unlikely, with many analysts expecting this to be pushed back to 2032.

At first, the government intends to auction sites located in an area off the

coast of the northern Atlantic and Bolivar departments, near the largest population centres with the most developed infrastructure.

Developers will submit their bids for sites smaller than 270 square kilometres to DIMAR, the national maritime authority. Government officials will then rate each entry and award areas based on highest ratings.

*"This makes it clear that offshore wind in Colombia could be significant"*

Nevertheless, the delays and ministerial reshuffle have put Colombia's earliest mover at unease.

BlueFloat Energy had been in the vanguard of Colombian offshore wind development, having secured exclusivity on its Vientos Alisios site 32km north of Barranquilla, the country's largest coastal city.

It also announced plans to develop two floating wind sites off the north-eastern La Guajira peninsula.

"Currently, the situation regarding offshore wind farm developments is quite challenging," BlueFloat Energy spokeswoman María Alejandra Dueñas told reNEWS.

"The government has not yet authorised the allocation of areas for these projects, and we are awaiting

## COLOMBIA FIGURES

Project	MW	Developer
Bergantín	825	BlueFloat Energy
Goleta	825	BlueFloat Energy
OWF Astrolabio	825	OWF Astrolabio
OWF Barlovento	825	OWF Barlovento
OWF Barlovento I	50	OWF Barlovento
OWF Barlovento II	50	OWF Barlovento
OWF Barlovento III	50	OWF Barlovento
OWF Barlovento IV	50	OWF Barlovento
OWF Bitácora	510	OWF Bitácora
OWF Galeón	825	OWF Galeón
Vientos Alisios	200	BlueFloat Energy
<b>Total 5GW</b>		

(confirmation of the auctions) that will determine which companies and projects can move forward in the coming years."

Together with BlueFloat Energy, eight other offshore wind projects are in early stage development, bringing the total pipeline to 5GW.

While the companies behind these developments have not been publicly disclosed, observers believe state-owned oil and gas outfit Ecopetrol and supermajor Shell are among them.

Miguel Lotero, a Colombia-based expert advisor for consultancy OWC, told reNEWS that an update to a state resolution requires developers to work with a government-run energy company.

"Ecopetrol will definitely enter the offshore wind sector," said Lotero. Furthermore, the company has been involved in offshore oil and gas for 20 years, making the move to wind a natural transition.

Neither Ecopetrol nor Shell responded to requests asking for comment. ■

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78 offshore wind developers. The Japanese company is developing offshore wind projects in 10 countries across Asia and selected Brazil for its first development in the Americas.

"Offshore wind presents a big window of opportunity because Brazil has special conditions that make projects very attractive, such as shallow waters, high wind velocities and constant wind," she said.

"So we have a perfect scenario for low capital expenditure and high capacity factors, which provide a good future scenario for us."

Correia added that the country's extensive offshore oil and gas supply chain could be adapted to offshore wind. However, she warned that developers face many challenges before projects come online, including improving transmission lines across the country and investing in the electrical grid.

Others have said that port and coastal infrastructure also need significant investments to adapt to offshore wind construction needs. ■

## Further turbulence facing project hopefuls

Once seabed lease auctions are held and temporary permits granted, developers and Colombian officials will face various challenges.

Global Wind Energy Council president of Latin America Ramón Fiestas and OWC's Lotero agree that the route to market for offshore wind developments remains the most significant challenge.

"Policy and regulation to enable long-term power purchase agreements for offshore wind is probably going to be the next step to make these projects happen," said Fiestas.

Lotero added that the competitive process outlined in the resolution does not include a mechanism to allocate the offtake.



OFFTAKE CONCERNS: OWC advisor Miguel Lotero Photo: OWC

"This is a key point, even though we are far in advance of the commercial operation date of the project," he said.

University of Valle associate professor of natural resources and

environmental engineering Juan Gabriel Rueda-Bayona has worked with the offshore wind sector and said significant investments in associated infrastructure also need to be made.

These include expanding ports to accommodate increasingly large turbines and blades, laying submarine power cables and increasing transmission capacity.

Fiestas is nevertheless sanguine that offshore wind projects will continue to progress.

"Colombia is being very transparent and open," he concluded. "There is fluent communication between the government and developers. The situation is much healthier for developers." ■