U.K. & U.S. offshore wind energy players come together in New Bedford

More than one-hundred thought leaders, public officials, and industry decision-makers on both sides of the Atlantic gathered today at the New Bedford Whaling Museum to discuss the future of U.S. offshore wind energy and opportunities for collaboration and exchange.

Panelists from the U.K. and U.S. offered diverse perspectives on the British offshore wind experience that saw a nascent industry rapidly evolve into a major economic engine for coastal regions in the United Kingdom, including Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Humber in northeast England. With the U.K. now the European leader in offshore wind, local leaders and maritime interests are eager to identify lessons-learned and find ways to emulate the British success.

Featured speakers included U.S. Representatives Bill Keating and Joseph Kennedy III, British Consul General Harriet Cross, Bristol Community College President Laura Douglas, and New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell. Panelists included top executives from all three wind developers competing in the Massachusetts/Rhode Island market: Vineyard Wind, Orsted, and Deepwater Wind.

The Symposium was hosted by the British Consulate-General Boston, the City of New Bedford, Bristol Community College, and the New Bedford Wind Energy Center. Today's event builds on several prior international exchanges between the New Bedford region and The Humber region. In May 2017 Mayor Mitchell led a mission to study the offshore wind staging/ manufacturing port of Hull and operations/maintenance port of Grimsby. Grimsby, the U.K.'s largest fish processing port,

also established a sister-city relationship with New Bedford. And in a follow-up mission, BCC President Douglas entered into an agreement with the Humber-based CATCH Institute to develop offshore wind worker training programs.

“The UK installed 53% of all European offshore wind capacity brought online last year,” said British Consul General Harriet Cross. “Our current offshore wind capacity could power 4.7 million homes, nearly a fifth of UK households, and the growing sector sustains 11,000 skilled jobs across the UK. I’m very proud of the expertise of my home town Hull and the Humber region more broadly. This has been shared through the New Bedford-Grimsby sister city partnership which has helped bring jobs and growth to Massachusetts.”

“A critical need for clean energy makes this one of the most important initiatives in our area,” said U.S. Rep. Bill Keating. “Twenty-five percent of the offshore wind capacity in the entire country is forecast for this region. These investments don’t just mean clean renewable energy. They mean next-generation jobs and making our region a hub of marine and clean energy technology. It’s important that we are bringing together investors and industry leaders from the UK with our state, local, and federal officials who have united to move these projects forward. We share this commitment to wind energy, and together we are working to make sure this industry is an important piece of achieving greater energy, economic, and national security going forward.”

“Investing in offshore wind is no longer just an economic opportunity, it is an environmental imperative,” said U.S. Rep. Joseph Kennedy III. “If we act with the urgency this moment demands, we can create jobs, strengthen our local economy, and combat climate change with an abundant, inexpensive source of clean energy generated in our own backyard. With local leaders along the SouthCoast leading the way, we will create a blue economy in this region that will set an example for our entire country.”

“With New Bedford’s recent emergence as the epicenter of the offshore wind industry in the U.S., it’s become imperative for us to engage our European counterparts who have already developed deep understanding of the policies and strategies that can maximize the industry’s benefits to our local businesses and residents,” said New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell. “The UK trade mission I led last year explored the development of the offshore wind industry in two significant British ports – Hull and Grimsby – which share many similarities with New Bedford. We learned the impact of the offshore wind industry’s development on their local and regional economy, and how existing businesses there, including those related to commercial fishing, interacted with the new industry. Today’s symposium is a natural continuation of that international engagement, and we are proud to have this opportunity to now host our British friends.”

“Bristol Community College is proud to offer the only associate’s degree program in offshore wind power available to students in the United States. The college is completely committed to preparing workers for high-paying careers in the offshore wind industry,” said Dr. Laura L. Douglas, President of Bristol Community College. “We have learned so much from our friends in the United Kingdom at the Team Humber Marine Alliance. Our partnership with the CATCH (Center for Assessment of Technical Competency in the Humber) Institute will prepare Bristol for certification as a training provider by the Global Wind Organization. Moving forward, our CONNECT4WIND partnership with the Massachusetts Maritime Academy and UMass Dartmouth creates the organizational framework to deliver collaborative training and research initiatives to support this emerging industry sector.”

Paul Vigeant, Managing Director of the New Bedford Wind Energy Center said, “For several years now, key institutions in our region, led by the New Bedford Wind Energy Center, Bristol Community College, and the City of New Bedford, have

diligently cultivated relationships with British offshore wind interests. It is a pleasure then to see those relationships flourish and begin to take on concrete form, with today's exchange being a great example. Today's discussion should be understood as an outcome of the substantial work that has come before, as well as a foundation for future partnerships."

About the New Bedford Wind Energy Center

Just a few miles south of New Bedford blow some of North America's strongest and most reliable winds. Those winds, which average more than 20 mph throughout the day and night, are the result of the collision between the warm waters of the Gulf Stream and the cold air of the northern jet stream. The winds have the capacity to produce about 6,000 MW of electrical power – about 40 percent of Massachusetts' current energy needs.

The federal government has identified more than 1,000 square miles of ocean off Massachusetts for developers to build North America's first industrial-scale wind farms over the next decade. Those wind farms will provide1,600 MW of electrical power that can become part of the electrical grid in one of the most populous and energy-starved regions in the United States.

That's enough power to provide electricity for about 500,000 homes. New Bedford's close proximity to federally leased offshore wind development sites near Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New York, its protected deep-water harbor, and first-in-the-nation offshore wind terminal makes the city the ideal location to launch this new American green energy industry. For more information, visit www.newbedfordwindenergycenter.org.