

File name: offshore_wind__martin_mcbride___invest_ni (1080p).mp4

Moderator questions in Bold, Respondents in Regular text.

KEY: Unable to decipher = (inaudible + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** (ph) + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode), **Talking over each other** = (talking over each other + timecode).

Martin McBride: Okay, let me round this off, I'm conscious it's nearly lunchtime, by going back to something Rachel said this morning which was there's a huge engineering base in Northern Ireland. A lot of them though not working in marine, a lot of us don't. So, how do we explore, I suppose, what the opportunities are for SMEs in this particular market environment? There's a huge corporate investment in the sector and how do we ensure that that trickles down? I'm a Donegal man and there was a bit of a colloquial expression around Killybegs when the Corrib gas field was going on which was-, everybody else came in and Killybegs made the sandwiches. And I suppose that was local to that particular situation. We want to ensure, I guess, that in Northern Ireland that doesn't happen too. It's not happening clearly but, you know, opportunity meets capability. Actually, in this situation, the opportunity is hugely greater than the capability at the moment and we have a window of opportunity now to catch up in building that capability.

And Northern Ireland won't do it by itself. So, I want to talk a little bit about collaboration. And Causeway is about bringing companies together in Scotland and island of Ireland, north and south, to get to know each other, to form relationships. It's multi-sectoral, but my personal interest is in this marine sector and marine renewables and-, I mean for example Sam has a network of companies here, his database was talked about earlier, the formation of the cluster was talked about earlier. But if we take that cluster and we put it together with Enterprise Ireland's cluster and Highlands and Islands cluster and we create events where those clusters get together and interact and engage that creates the potential for great strength. And it maybe creates the potential to draw companies into a supply chain where capacity needs to grow, where companies in aquaculture who have an interest also and who are involved in anchoring systems for high energy sites on the Norwegian coast off Shetland may be able to migrate into anchoring systems for Floating Wind. And we have oil and gas capability migrating into offshore renewables. So, broadening our horizons, bringing companies into the sector that aren't there yet to grow that capacity to match the capability and opportunity.

So, innovation is key. Innovation is one of the objectives of those collaborations and actually just to-, to go back even for a second and pick up a point that was on that stimulating innovation. There was quite a lot of mention of jobs today and, and someone mentioned 7000 jobs, it was also mentioned that one of the main benefits of this whole industry development is jobs. As chair of another company currently building another facility in Armagh who-, which wants to employ 30 people this year and 60 between next-, this year and next year, getting people to work is a challenge. It's not all about the jobs. So, therefore the innovation to me is critically important, the, the automation, the robotics, the artificial intelligence, the

collaborations that facilitate that innovation pathway because we need to perhaps use this industry to fundamentally improve the productivity deficit that Northern Ireland has had for years and years. And throwing labour at it, yes it will create employment, that's great, but it also needs to create a significant boost in productivity and collaboration sometimes fosters that innovation.

So, where are the opportunities? Right through that supply chain, you know, I don't need to walk you through that, you know all about that. The one thing I forgot about there was decommissioning, it was mentioned this morning. I suppose I hadn't get my head that far forward into the game where we were decommissioning offshore wind. I was in Dales Voe last week in Shetland which is designated as one of principle sites for the decommissioning of oil and gas. But that'll be used for the decommissioning of oil and gas for 20 years or more. So, where do we decommission offshore wind? And that-, and, you know, Sean's already talking about the capacity challenge in relation to ports and harbours for constructing offshore wind, never mind the decommissioning. So, those capacity challenges exist across the board. But, apart from that life cycle, analysis of the opportunities that may be there for SMEs in design, development and prototyping. So, if we take those top two, the innovation, it's critically important to the future of the industry. Improving processes, developing new ideas and one of the challenges, of course, that we need to address, is ensuring that as SMEs, it doesn't stop at the design and development and prototyping. But that we're also actually considered credible enough, with enough skill and enough bandwidth and broad shoulders financially to actually get into full scale production, fabrication and installation and all-, all of those stages of that process.

You know, it was mentioned about the critical importance of constant investment, and the challenge and the risk of doing that. Sometimes collaboration can share that investment risk and bring in other skills as well. So, we want to do that, the company concerned has been doing some really interesting prototyping work for ROVs (ph 05.10), for anchoring systems for offshore wind and we want to benefit from the knowledge that they have developed and combine it with our knowledge to hopefully become considerably stronger as a consequence. So, what are the risks for SMEs? Skill, experience, credibility, domain expertise, lots of engineering companies that are good, maybe even have skill, but maybe don't have the credibility in marine or the domain expertise. So, how do we overcome that? And, I suppose, what are the collaboration opportunities for SMEs? Well, actually they're the same, the same four words. It all-, it's all about timing, it's about whether we see it early enough and form those collaborations early enough and actually recognise that we need to prepare by building scale and experience and credibility and domain expertise. Because we can't as engineers walk into marine from crushing and screening, that's not gonna happen because the regulations and the requirements and the pre-qualifications and simply the credibility of knowing how to talk about the requirements of customers in an entirely new market environment.

So, the collaboration that I'm, sort of, advocating, that I've worked with. Not just in kinetics but in-, in a consultancy environment and fostering them through Causeway have been about scoping markets, mapping supply chain opportunities, you know, building key relationships, getting introductions to

people. Somebody who knows someone who can lift a phone and have a conversation. And, helping with pre-qualifications and bid submissions and research and development, and the attraction of funding which always becomes more attractive through collaboration and especially on cross-border collaborations, and obviously in production and delivery. All of those are there. And I've worked on those collaborations, some of them quite informal, some of the joint ventures by contract, some of them full joint ventures with equity investment and shareholders agreements. And those collaborations, provided they're well conceived and well thought through can be hugely beneficial.

So, to close before lunch and perhaps save us a little time, Causeway-, you can't read that, you certainly can't read it at the back of the room but what I'll tell you a little bit about is the fact that Causeway, Causeway approached me initially about five years ago because I was always over and back between Northern Ireland and Scotland working in the sector. And I've since joined the board and found it hugely beneficial in doing what I just referred to a few minutes ago, knowing someone who can lift the phone, make an introduction, put people together, open doors. And those opportunities and terribly important when we're looking at a new and emerging sector that's full of change. So it, it creates that relatively low-pressure environment and I suppose the key point of it is, if we take the likes of Sam's network here and Paul O'Brien's network at Highlands and Islands and Liam Curran's network in the south with Enterprise Ireland. If you put those three networks together, they are immensely powerful. And as I said earlier, Northern Ireland won't do this on its own but the collective strength and the coordination of those networks and the opportunity to share knowledge provides a huge platform for growth.

There is a government commitment to support that between the southern government and north-, and the, the Scottish government but also supported by Invest NI because we've been engaged with Invest NI on that discussion around rural and coastal and island communities. The development of ocean and the blue economy, academic and research links and offshore renewables and technologies. Those four pillars of that particular document and that agreement are there and are in the public domain and Causeway's playing a small part in trying to foster that. And I think it's, kind of, important that we-, we open our minds to it. Scotland-, why Scotland and Northern Ireland and Ireland? Because we have a-, I guess shared interest in one particular way-, or in four actually. Floating Wind, we're going to be moving into deep water environments so we're all interested particularly in those-, in, in Floating Wind in Scotland, Shetland and the only point I would raise about Harland & Wolff's presentation is Shetland wasn't on the map, it only went Orkney, no Shetland. But the Floating Wind, really important. Hydrogen, we all have a common interest in hydrogen. The Internet of Things, people have talked about data, what happens when we start transmitting that data? Sharing that data? Uploading it? Downloading it? How do we protect that data and the whole cybersecurity opportunity?

So, those are things that perhaps we can look at and develop a point of differentiation and collaborate on and actually do something a little bit different from the Norwegians and from the others who have had a-, perhaps a bit of a lead in this sector. So, those are all worth thinking a little bit about. Creating those networks, those opportunities in the latter part of this year and into next year, we're gonna actually run

three pretty major events where we're gonna seek to bring together those networks and we'll be liaising with Invest NI and we'll liaising with the other agencies. So, Sam will hopefully be communicating with you in time, and they'll be in Scotland, and in Ireland, and in Northern Ireland, focusing on how we can work together to maximise the opportunities. Particularly for SMEs, but we want to ensure that it has a real, strong trickle down effect into the SME community and a real positive impact on productivity across the economy. Thank you very much, I hope I saved time.

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