



Platform Energy Port Zeeland acts as a network platform and linking pin, between government, industry, and education.

Photo courtesy of Energy Port Zeeland.

A tighter collaboration

Platform Energy Port Zeeland and Fieldlab Zephyros have been working together for quite some time and now they have decided to further strengthen ties.

PortNews talks with Tilly Stroo, Program Manager of Platform Energy Port Zeeland, and Ferry Visser, Program Manager Smart Maintenance Fieldlab Zephyros at Worldclass Maintenance about how they will create a win-win situation from this tighter collaboration.

Smarter maintenance

“At Fieldlab Zephyros, educational and research institutes are working together with the industry to make offshore maintenance smarter”, Mr Visser explains. He continues, “Our first focus lies on offshore wind, however in the near future other renewable sources at sea will become common too, such as solar energy, marine energy, and the production of green hydrogen. The things we learn now for the offshore wind industry can also be adapted to those sources. Our ultimate goal is to reduce offshore maintenance and repair. I often take satellites as an example. They are operating high up in the sky without the need of on-site maintenance, and they are inspected remotely from control centers on earth. Looking

at this, it should be possible to reduce the level of on-site inspection, maintenance, and repair of offshore locations too. Besides a reduced logistic operation, this will also reduce downtime of the turbines. In order to further reduce costs and achieve a higher level of safety, the use of technicians at sea should be limited or even made unnecessary.”

Innovative potential

Currently, Fieldlab Zephyros has several projects running, of which AIRTuB is the most developed. Zeeland educational institutes HZ University of Applied Sciences and Scalda are also involved in this project. “AIRTuB,” Mr Visser says, “stands for automatic inspection and repair of (offshore) turbine blades. It focusses on the inspection and repair of offshore rotor blades by means of drones and robot crawlers. Of course, we highly value the input of HZ and Scalda, however we know that there is a lot of innovative potential too at Zeeland companies. Although we have been promoting our activities and projects at various occasions, for example at Energy Port Zeeland



Photo courtesy of Ørsted.

With Platform Energy Port Zeeland having a large network in Zeeland, joining forces will hopefully help to attract more Zeeland companies to join.

“ Platform Energy Port Zeeland acts as a network platform and linking pin, between government, industry, and education.

meetings, not many Zeeland companies have joined our projects so far, which really is a missed opportunity for them. With Platform Energy Port Zeeland having a large network in Zeeland, we now hope that joining forces will help us to attract more Zeeland companies to join us.”

Linking pin

Ms Stroo adds, “Currently, we have hundreds of companies located in Zeeland partnering with Energy Port Zeeland, and the input of those partners in the existing projects of Fieldlab Zephyros can help to realise the goal of reducing maintenance at sea. On the other hand, our partner could also make use of the expertise of the Fieldlab for their own innovative challenges, as the Fieldlab, together with HZ and Scalda, has ample facilities available in their research and innovation centre De Kaap that can be helpful. Platform Energy Port Zeeland acts as a network platform and linking pin, between government, industry, and education, and we can help Fieldlab Zephyros in their process of promoting their activities and opportunities for the Zeeland industry.”

Evolving role

Although Fieldlab Zephyros’ goal is to reduce the human interference at sea, Mr Visser is realistic about the fact that no matter how, technicians will remain important. “In Zeeland, with HZ and Scalda the educational level for training offshore technicians is already high. Young people are currently trained to become offshore renewable energy technicians. It is important to look at how the role of these technicians will evolve and how education and training can adapt to remote inspection and autonomous unmanned repair and maintenance. Together with Energy Port Zeeland



Ferry Visser, Program Manager Smart Maintenance Fieldlab Zephyros at Worldclass Maintenance, and Tilly Stroo, Program Manager Energy Port Zeeland in front of the test wind turbine nacelle at innovation center De Kaap.

and its network we can play a role in preparing for the new profession of technicians. For this, it is good to know that the collaboration of the Fieldlab is not restricted to Zeeland. As a national initiative, we also collaborate with other educational and research institutes such as TNO, NLR, TU Delft, the Offshore Wind Innovation Centre (OWIC), and Noorderpoort College in the Groningen Seaports area. This way, our knowledge and expertise in the field of offshore maintenance is rapidly increasing which can also help accelerate the innovation power of the industry in Zeeland.”

Opportunities in store

Joining forces also means that both organisations will work together in organising events and by inviting people from both their networks to these events. “Being present at the Fieldlab Zephyros events will surely help promote Zeeland as offshore partner,” Ms Stroo says. “Yes, that sure is true,” Mr Visser says, “and the Fieldlab being present more often and openly at the platform’s events, will surely help us to talk about the opportunities we have in store for the Zeeland industry. Working together will make us and the industry stronger, as alone you will go faster, but together you will reach further and be capable of bridging the so-called innovation valley-of-death.”

I. ENERGPORZEEELAND.NL

I. WORLDCLASSMAINTENANCE.COM