

ENERCON in France

# Wind farm inaugurations in Brittany and the Massif Central

*These days in France, almost every other month sees a new ENERCON wind farm taking up operation. While projects used to cluster primarily in the North of the country, ENERCON now builds more and more wind turbines in the West, the South, and in central regions. Thus the operators of the community-owned wind farm in Plélan-le-Grand in Brittany hosted a great wind festival last May to celebrate the inauguration of six E-82 turbines with 98 m precast concrete towers. Meanwhile in the Massif Central, the first wind farm of the department of Puy-de-Dôme took up operation.*



*Le Saulzet E-48 wind farm (Puy-de-Dôme) in May, situated at 1,200 metres above sea level.*

The shareholders of *Brocéliande Energies Locales* wanted to organise a big spring festival to celebrate the inauguration of their wind farm in Plélan-le-Grand in Brittany. Although the six E-82 turbines in the small town 35 km west of Rennes have already been producing power since January, the time for the festival only came in May. On 16 May, about 4,000 visitors attended the official speeches, took a tour of the tower bases, and enjoyed a performance of sea songs and chanteys. A food buffet and drinks were served, and the festival concluded with a great Breton dance evening.

## Plélan-le-Grand: Community-owned wind farm as basis

“There was a group of twelve local residents who set this project in motion,” says Patrick Saultier, Managing Director of the

operating company and initiator of the wind farm. In 2002, the group became convinced that a wind farm in Plélan-le-Grand would make sense. “Our goal was to generate clean energy at a reasonable price. We also wanted to create a locally-based project that would offer an investment opportunity to anyone interested in becoming a shareholder,” remembers Saultier. The organisers also had the ambition to take into consideration the opinions of all affected parties and to inspire people in the region to become more environmentally conscious – in particular to reduce energy consumption.

The group financed the required expert reports and resolved all issues not related to the technology as such. Then the project entered the implementation phase: At the end of 2004, the company *Brocéliande En-*

*ergies Locales* with twelve shareholders was founded. From the inception of the project until the inauguration of the wind farm, the shareholders talked to local residents about the wind farm almost on a daily basis. “For example, we developed different models for the lease payments to land owners and farmers because ultimately, they hold the key to a fair distribution,” explains Saultier.

## The pride of the community

Saultier can now look upon the fruits of his efforts: The high public acceptance of the wind farm was demonstrated not least by the great number of visitors from the 3,500-inhabitant town who came to the inauguration festival. Seven local clubs and associations helped with organising the event, serving drinks, and setting up and decorating the food buffet. More than 80 volunteers

helped organise the festival. “The wind turbines have become the pride of almost everybody in this town,” reports Saultier. “The involvement in the project has strengthened the social bonds in our community.”

In France, community-owned shareholder companies may not have more than 99 members. The Plélan wind farm company has 70 shareholders who in total raised 550,000 euros making up about 35% of the company’s equity. The remaining financing came in July 2007 from Belgian regenerative energy producer Electrawinds. Even after the Belgians joined, Patrick Saultier stayed on as managing director and key figure in the wind farm company.

### Expertise in wind farm development

Saultier lives right next to the wind farm and checks on the turbines every day. Under the ENERCON PartnerKonzept service agreement, servicing and maintenance of the turbines is provided by the ENERCON Service team located near Brest – in close cooperation with Saultier. Based on his positive experience with developing the project in Plélan-le-Grand, Saultier founded a consultancy company that works with communities in the region who are interested in developing community-owned wind farms.

In the beginning, the towers of Saultier’s wind turbines were frequently smeared with graffiti. Then he commissioned a professional artist to paint the exterior wall of one of

the tower bases. Working with local youths, the artist designed a painting with flowers and bees; if it proves effective, more artwork is planned for the other wind turbines.

### Le Saulzet, Auvergne: First wind farm on Puy-de-Dôme

The Le Saulzet wind farm in the department of Puy-de-Dôme, Auvergne, is expected to produce about 50 million kilowatt-hours of green electricity per year. It was inaugurated in early May with a wind festival at 1,200 metres of altitude. The 26 E-48/800 kW wind turbines have been on the grid since February. Paris-based wind farm development and operating company EOLFI, a subsidiary of Véolia Environnement, operates 18 of the turbines. The remaining eight turbines belong to Jean-Robert Costes and his company Zanieres Eoliennes, based in the town of Roche-Charles-la-Mayrand where some of the turbines have been built.

A crucial factor for the success of this project, too, were the strong local roots through Zanieres Eoliennes as well as the commitment of Bernard Veissiere, mayor of the municipality of Ardes-sur-Couze within whose boundaries another part of the wind farm is located. Veissiere is at the same time president of the *Communauté de communes d’Ardes-sur-Couze*, an association of municipalities in the Ardes-sur-Couze district. He managed to win over the other municipalities on the plateau for supporting the project.



Paintings as protection against graffiti.

The municipalities want to use the tax revenue from the wind farm for the construction of a new tourist centre. Moreover, the necessary service and maintenance work on the wind turbines will create four new jobs in the region.

“The location in the Massif Central and the construction period from August to January presented our installation teams with some challenges,” says Peter Schuster, ENERCON sales director for France. At times, the teams had to work at extremely cold temperatures and while the snow was piling up several metres high. “The West, the South, and the central regions of France are turning more and more into ENERCON’s market,” says Schuster. “The installation of the 800kW turbines in the Massif Central provides us with some excellent references.”



Patrick Saultier welcomes visitors at the inauguration event in Plélan.



The project has drawn the community together: Saultier honours project partners.