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ENERGY

Big offshore
wind farm
opens in UK

LONDON: The world's largest offshore wind farm was scheduled to open yesterday off the northwest coast of England when Danish energy group Orsted A/S unveiled the Walney Extension project.

The wind farm has a capacity of 659 megawatts (MW), enough to power almost 600,000 homes, and overtakes the London Array off England's east coast which has a capacity of 630 MW.

Walney Extension is made up of 87 turbines built by Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy and MHI Vestas Offshore Wind, and covers 145 square kilometres (55 square miles), which is equivalent to around 20,000 football pitches.

The 40 eight-megawatt MHI Vestas turbines being used stand 195 metres (213 yards) tall and are the largest wind turbines in operation globally.

Orsted said they have been optimised to generate as much as 8.25 MW each.

Matthew Wright, Orsted UK managing director, told Reuters in an interview

that Britain's offshore success was due to a combination of strong wind speeds and shallow waters in the North Sea and Irish Sea as well as continued support from the government.

"For the last 10 years governments of all colours have supported renewable energy

and offshore wind in the UK, leading to a thriving industry," he said.

Britain is the world's largest offshore wind market, hosting 36% of globally installed offshore wind capacity, data from the Global Wind Energy Council showed.

Walney Extension was among the first

renewable projects to secure a so-called contract for difference (CFD) subsidy from the British government in 2014.

The contract guarantees it a minimum price for electricity of £150 (\$195) per megawatt hour (MWh) for 15 years.

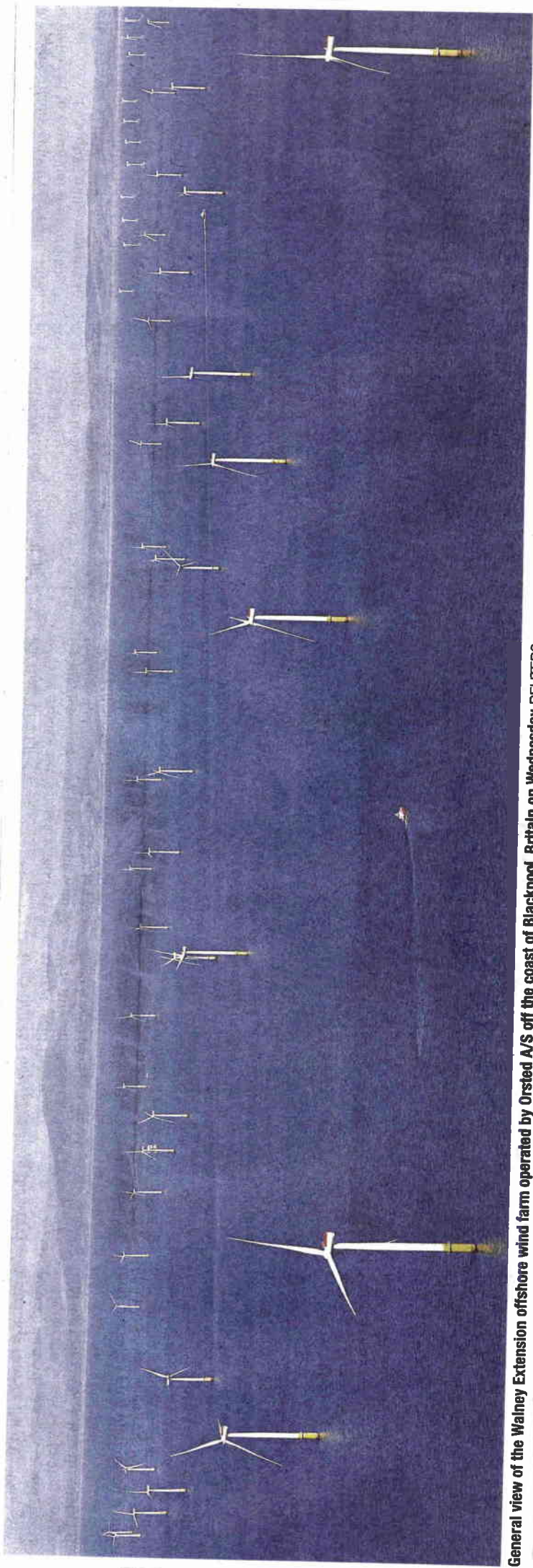
Since this was awarded, the cost of

offshore wind has fallen dramatically to a low of £57.50 per MWh in the last auction held in 2017.

Blades for both sets of turbines were made at British factories, in Hull and the Isle of Wight, and Wright said the company was keen to use local facilities.

"Approximately 50% of the value of the project over its lifetime will have come from UK sources," he said.

Walney Extension is a shared-ownership project between Orsted (50%) and two Danish pension funds — PFA and PKA (25% each). REUTERS



General view of the Walney Extension offshore wind farm operated by Orsted A/S off the coast of Blackpool, Britain on Wednesday. REUTERS