



VIP expo tour after opening ceremony

# A real and virtual show: a true hybrid

Wind Energy Asia took place in real and virtual format: a true hybrid unfolded in only months! Another great event in a difficult environment. Robert Campbell, Executive Vice President at Wind Energy Asia, reviews the show for PES.





Our strategy was twofold: for exhibitors and visitors.

- For exhibitors that could not come, our O2O (online 2 offline) solution was a real booth in the hall complete with decoration, counter, laptop, bar stools, etc. plus activation to the virtual platform, providing unlimited video, calling and messaging with all participants. To attend to the booth, booth staff sat at their laptops in the office or from home, connected to the platform and could actually see who walked or stopped by their booth.
- Foreign visitors were the other part which were not going to be able to come. Whether buyers, business developers, technicians, directors, students, all typical trade show visitors, for sure the foreigners were not going to attend. For these we offered a competitive price to allow them to access the platform for over a month, from the opening of the show till mid-April.

From the platform they could see the hall in a street view vision that was captured the evening before the opening. With the floorplan they could move from booth to booth, see highlights that exhibitors had uploaded before, ask for a call with a company representative, or make an appointment on their calendar for a meeting. And they could network with all other visitors, watch the forum sessions, ask questions to the speakers, etc.

Initially, our idea was purely defensive because we realized that many foreigners were not going to be able to attend as they had before. But now we see that despite everybody preferring to meet face-to-face, some of these virtual and hybrid alternatives will survive the pandemic. Why? Because acceptance to virtual has already improved

and will increase further, and because they are cost-effective. Travel budgets will not increase to where they were pre-pandemic and given that the cost of virtual visiting and even exhibiting, depending on where you are flying in from, can be a fraction of the cost of real exhibit space and decoration, travel, hotel, then add in time away, jetlag, etc. will make for hard consideration and scrutiny.

Paolo De Berardinis, Asia Pacific Director, from FACCIN GROUP, who has been an exhibitor at all 3 of the exhibition's editions said it like it is: 'Thanks to the team for all the support during last WEA 2021. As you know I was a bit skeptical about being a virtual exhibitor this year, not being able to be in Kaohsiung, but once I got used to it, from my office in Singapore, I could see the people walk by my booth, wave at them, have a business conversation and even show them some presentations. Very useful and different indeed. I appreciate speaking in the Forum too as it gave us visibility otherwise impossible due to Covid limitations. Was great, but unless I have to, next year I will be really in the hall again to interact with all our customers.'

Some of the highlights of the event:

- 2,674 visitors on-site plus over 6,000 online visits. The online platform brought a whole new audience. Registered visitors were from 52 countries, as opposed to 17 in 2020
- Exhibition space was 164 booths with 114 exhibitors from 10 countries with 5 countries having pavilions, namely Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany and Taiwan
- A strong forum, technical seminars, job fair. A total of 49 stage events with 1,960 participants

Again, exhibitors were extremely happy with

After a great show in March 2020, with the pandemic taking off worldwide, but well under control in Taiwan, we expected that by March 2021 the world would be back to normal. Sometime around September it was clear that this would not be the case. Taiwan's 14-day quarantine for all incoming visitors, did not seem like budging and to get foreign companies to exhibit and visitors to plan on coming, was not working. We needed a virtual complement to the real show.

After an intense search of alternatives, we decided on a partner who could provide a solution. It turned out to be a true hybrid. It gave participants who were not able to be in Kaohsiung in person, the feeling of being in the hall and the ability to communicate in a typical exhibition format: meet people by chance to talk and share presentations and ideas/solutions.



Sweden had the largest pavilion at the show



Model of floating wind on display in the expo hall

the quality of visitors with Dennis Schouwenaar, Sales Manager Offshore at Cargostore summing it up: 'It has been a very good exhibition for us! The quality of the meetings was fantastic!'

'NIRAS Taiwan was honored to be a sponsor and we are looking back on a successful

exhibition at KEC. Kaohsiung is a great location, as it is home to some of the leading local champions in Offshore Wind in Taiwan and home to two GWO certified training centers. KEC offers a state-of-the-art exhibition ground, including berthing slots as well as beautiful surroundings for networking events.

Wind Energy Asia is a useful platform for suppliers and clients to come together to network as well as learning about new trends in the APAC region. We are looking forward to next year and hope that Wind Energy Asia can further grow its importance as a fix point in the Offshore Wind calendar not only for Taiwan but also the region.' stated Raoul Kubitschek, Managing Director, NIRAS Taiwan.

Some other valuable testimonials from key players:

'It is a great idea to hold this exhibition close to Smart Energy Week in Japan so that foreign exhibitors can treat it as part of an Asian tour.' remarked Sung-Yueh (Don) Yang, Senior Commercial Officer, Trade Council of Denmark in Taipei. 'Your online platform helps a lot, but businesspeople still prefer face-to-face exhibitions, and in Taiwan fortunately it can still happen. Keep pushing to make it each year bigger and better. Thank you.'

Tom Manning, Deputy General Manager, CWind Taiwan 'Happy to be exhibitors and sponsors for a third consecutive year. Despite the pandemic, WEA is important in our annual calendar due to its supply chain focus. Intercon again organized a very professional event and the Forum was very welcome.



Robert Campbell, opening the WEA Forum



Its strong, topical focus on the growing importance of O&M was a great fit for CWind as was floating wind as an integral part of Round 3. We look forward to supporting in 2022 and plan to bring elements of our training right into the hall, since skill shortage and training are key challenges the industry faces in Taiwan.'

Another repeat exhibitor justified their participation: 'This event is different from others we participate in at home and abroad. Here exhibitors are linked with each other and the customer base is much more targeted. In the process of their industrial restructuring, companies leverage each other's strengths to find solutions and business opportunities. Thank you for hosting it! It's great to see the support it already has!' stated Dr. Kuo-Hong Wu, Vice President, Smart Frequency Technology

The job fair and technical seminars dominated the stage in the exhibition hall on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the show. The job fair looks for answers to an urgent need by the industry to recruit new talent which is lacking in every level in Taiwan. We cooperate with 6 main technical universities, mainly from South Taiwan, arranging to bus students and engineers to the show, thereby exposing them to the industry and giving them the opportunity to sit in on presentations by leading companies searching for talent.

WEA again had a vessel in the harbor next to the venue. This allowed visitors to get a true feel for the industry, with a first-hand view of the large salvage working vessel from Asian Marine Salvage based in Kaohsiung.



Site tour to MIRDC's new facility

A site visit to the Metal Industries Research and Development Center's (MIRDC) brand-new training facility was organized for the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. The state-of-the-art facility will be crucial breaching the talent gap that current starves Taiwan. All technical universities have upped their game with courses targeted at the wind energy industry, and the center is a great complement to this.

The forum held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day (March 11) consisted of 26 sessions by key industry professionals from both Taiwan and abroad. Roughly half were streamed in from speakers that were not able to travel, but virtual

sessions are the norm in these times and the ability to recruit higher talent without having to rely on travel, is certainly an advantage due to its efficiency.

The wind industry in Taiwan is backed by a very strong investment by the Taiwan central government which has committed about US\$ 90 billion towards the goal of obtaining 20% of its power from renewables by 2025 first, and then add 1GW each year thereafter, for a total of 15.5GM by 2035. But the sites with water not deeper than 50-meters can only produce slightly over 2 thirds of this, for which if offshore is to make up for the rest as well, floating wind must be a subject.

In the forum a good part of the afternoon was dedicated to this with a series of great presentations. After his formal presentation in this segment, Yu-Foong Chong, Head of Business Development, RWE Renewables Taiwan remarked about the softer side of WEA. 'The networking events in the evenings are great and from these conversations many opportunities arise. No doubt that WEA is one of the main events in Asia. We will be back.'

For WEA 2022, we expect onshore wind also to become more of a topic. The justification that because Taiwan is densely populated that there is no room for wind energy on land is most certainly not correct. There are many industrial parks or farmland that could very well house onshore windmills. And with the push by the government for all large energy users to buy 10% of their power from renewables by 2025, for sure that onshore will gain in importance.

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Vessel display