

Supporting our friends in high places: working with C&D Access

When specialist rope access company C&D Access needed to strengthen its capability in non-destructive testing (NDT), it reached out to the Offshore Wind Validation Centre Technology Transfer (OSWVC-TT) project.

The Tyneside-based company, established in May 2014, provides rope access, inspection, maintenance and repair services to sectors including oil and gas, power, marine and infrastructure around the world. Much of the work it carries out involves working at great height, its trained engineers and technicians suspended by ropes or perched precariously on the side of structures.

Among the sectors served by C&D Access is the offshore wind industry. The maintenance and inspection of turbines at sea is a difficult and potentially dangerous activity, and, in this area, the company provides cleaning and repair of turbine blades and towers, inspection of coupler and blade cracks, and installation of rigging.



C&D Access approached the OSWVC-TT project, which is managed by leading research and technology organisation TWI, for guidance and support to help it grow its business.



Although it was already winning work in the offshore wind sector, C&D Access felt that by increasing its NDT capabilities it would be in a better position to secure more contracts. After learning that the OSWVC-TT project could provide guidance in this area, the company got in touch to find out how it could help.

TWI's Malcolm Spicer, an expert with over 40 years' experience in NDT, subsequently visited C&D Access's Longbenton office to speak with them about their requirements and to explain how TWI, a company with a rich history of NDT innovation, could support their work.

The OSWVC-TT project provides participating companies with up to 12 days' support completely free of charge, so TWI was able to put together a substantial programme to boost C&D Access's NDT capabilities.



This included drafting an NDT written practice – a guiding document that underpins a company’s NDT activities, aligning levels of experience and qualification with appropriate working responsibilities, and providing a blueprint for training. This was incorporated into the company’s quality manual.

TWI also returned to C&D Access for a series of knowledge transfer sessions focusing on NDT techniques. Five members of staff were given technical advice covering penetrant testing, magnetic particle testing and ultrasonic testing, in the form of theoretical presentations and discussions alongside practical demonstrations and exercises.



Spencer Clift, Managing Director of C&D Access, explains how his company came to be involved with the OSWVC-TT project: *‘We’ve carried out a variety of projects on offshore wind turbines, such as for mitigation projects, and we’re hoping to progress further in this area with NDT inspections and blade repair. Our main aim has been to satisfy the requirements of the relevant ISO standards.*

‘We got involved with the OSWVC-TT project through Alan Whitaker from GROW:OffshoreWind, who passed on our details to TWI. They got in touch, and

came to visit and explain the services they could offer.

‘We received advice in line with ASNT standards of NDT – five of our employees are now at a competence level where they can carry out inspections. It’s made a massive difference to our business. We can see the offshore wind sector increasing its requirements in terms of integrity standards in the future, and thanks to this support, we’ll now be in a much stronger position to meet these tougher requirements.

‘Both Malcolm and Nick [Elbourn, Technology Transfer Project Manager] have been fantastic throughout.’

For more information on the OSWVC-TT project or TWI’s other technology transfer activities, contact Project Manager Nick Elbourn on 01223 899299 or 07765 403465, or by emailing nick.elbourn@twi.co.uk.

