

# MAKING TOUGH DECISIONS

Laura Hall explains why the wind energy industry must start challenging the status quo



The wind sector must avoid complacency and adopt new approaches to turbine protection

The saying goes, “we often do as we have always done” and that may give security in both outcome and budget spend when it comes to infrastructure maintenance, but it is also a complacency. A complacency that ‘what has always been done’ is the right thing to do.

Our modern world is evolving, the demands on our resources are changing, and so are peoples’ expectations of how we look after those resources. Our commitment to protecting the future, for the planet and our people, especially our younger generations, must now be a critical part of our decision-making process.

Whilst we work towards a net zero future we must be realistic that there will be a combination of energy sources for some time to come, but what we can do is ensure that the infrastructure those existing energies use now is sustainable, by making it last longer, allowing time for the energy transition to develop.

Something we should be considering is how we protect infrastructure and the role that protective coatings can bring to making things last.

Many approaches follow what has ‘always been done’ when identifying a maintenance need. The pre-approved repair is selected, personnel gathered, along with equipment and PPE. Blasting for surface preparation may well be conducted, followed by priming, painting and additional coats as needed. Then various contaminated wastes will be disposed of as required by local guidelines.

But let’s consider blasting for surface preparation – the very process can be hazardous to both the engineer and the environment, contaminants released into the air or sea, the access restrictive or challenging. It’s also an additional cost, taking time and equipment to complete.

Now consider that the role of blasting for surface prep is obsolete. No longer do we need to consider this a step in

the process; instead we use a wire brush, maybe a alcohol wipe, to clean down the asset. The structure is ready for protection in a much safer, to both human and environment, way.

There is nothing new about this, but there are still far too many situations where blasting is a requirement.

## COATINGS INSPIRED BY NATURE

In 1997 Stopaq brought to market the WrappingBand technology, a polyisobutene-based chemistry that is inspired by nature. A coating with permanent adhesion that protects against moisture and contaminants and lasts for 30 years. Think of the outer layers of a tree – the bark and the sap – its doing the same job of protecting the core so that nutrients can travel up from the roots to the top, allowing it to flourish and grow.

Stopaq coating products don’t require blasting, instead it is the simple use of a wire brush and degreasing wipe. The



Easy-Qote application on a wind turbine

application is by hand (or equipment for larger, factory-applied solutions) and doesn’t require extensive PPE because it isn’t harmful to the applicator or the environment, and can be applied to hot or cold equipment.

When you compare this technology with traditional blast and paint approaches, the user can achieve a substantial waste reduction, with zero VOCs and increased maintenance interval to 30 years.

## COATING AS A STICKER

The latest technology to come from Stopaq is the brand Easy-Qote, born of the idea that a coating could be applied as

simply as a sticker. Similar to the Stopaq brand, there is no need to shut down and stop operations, instead everything keeps running and protection is put in place for many years to come.

Easy-Qote has been making great strides in the wind industry over the past year, offering a sustainable and long term alternative solution for wind turbine protection.

A typical approach for protection against corrosion is to use paint, but in the harsh conditions that the turbines operate in, paints may not stand the test of time. They are subjected to extreme environmental exposure: consider driving rain, hail, snow, ice, UV, changing

temperatures, salt spray from offshore locations or sands from onshore – they all create a perfect storm for degradation.

Easy-Qote can be applied with minimal work force, minimal surface preparation and then goes on to withstand these elements, making it an ideal solution to this growing industry.

In addition, these products have an unlimited shelf life, meaning they can be stored and used at installation, maintenance or when any coating damage takes place either onshore or offshore.

Wind farms across the globe are taking advantage of the benefits the Easy-Qote range offers; from onshore in Curacao, where the warm temperatures, sand and salt spray have caused corrosion at the flange connections, to North Africa, where the abrasive winds across the Sahara are causing failures to previous coating options.

Environmentally friendly, simple to apply and long-lasting solutions are going to be the most effective tool in the fight against corrosion to create truly sustainable infrastructure. The question is how quickly will the industry recognise this and start challenging what has always been done? ●



Easy-Qote requires minimal surface preparation

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