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# Quo Vadis Conference BARCELONA

In an industry that is very much driven by government incentives that have a tendency to change, it is refreshing to have a few constants in all of this volatility.

One of these constants is Quo Vadis, the annual conference organised by Kevin and Sigrid Donovan of GWA Supplies Ltd for owners and operators of windfarms. To call it a conference is actually a gross injustice as it is so much more than that. Quo Vadis is an annual gathering where invited delegates (Kevin and Sigrid would call them guests) attend a free event that takes place over two days in October, and this year they hosted 92 guests at the 9th Quo Vadis in the award winning Hotel Porta Fira in Barcelona.

### BUS TOUR

The event started off with a guided tour of Barcelona and you had to have a bit of sympathy for the tour guide who talked about the highlights of the city. This was because the bus was like a bunch of friends at a family gathering with more desire to catch up with each other than to listen to the guide. Kevin had to remind them that there was plenty of opportunity to talk later at the evening dinner. This was held in the Nixe restaurant and it was a relaxing atmosphere with great food and the craic went on late into the night.

### CONFERENCE

The conference was held on the following day and we heard from a wide range of presenters, all with practical O&M experience.

### O&M EXPERIENCE

David Morgan from ZF Services UK explained how they had developed the capability to perform an increasing number of up tower repairs on gearbox and main shaft components, significantly reducing downtime costs. Steven Lindsay from Renewable Advice outlined the need to manage the condition of blades and how it was possible to improve overall performance with a structured approach to blade care. There was a focus on the experience of two windfarms that had taken over responsibility for O&M in the past year.



### CHALLENGES

Tim Morgan of E.ON told us how the year had thrown significant challenges at his team at Robin Figg and how they were stronger and more capable as a result. Laura Peach from Centrica shared how the team at Lynn windfarm were able to deliver value adding services now that they had control of the windfarm.

### ENGINEERING PROBLEMS

Two presenters provided a more detailed engineering analysis of problems that they had experienced. Markus Billmann of Fraunhofer IBS entertained us with some fascinating videos of IGBT units exploding. Markus pointed out that in addition to destroying the IGBT, these explosions caused a lot of collateral damage in the turbines. A protective cover had been developed to contain this damage which Markus demonstrated in a video that was much less exciting to watch, but showed the impressive qualities of the cover.

### PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION!

Paul Sheldon of RWEE used a hula hoop (you had to be there) to explain the problems that can be generated by not appreciating the possibility that a turbine's yaw ring might not be concentric, and the solution being to 'know what you have got and manage it', to avoid his experience of learning the hard way.

Other presenters included Keir Harman of DNV GL who introduced us to a new capability being investigated for squeezing a bit more output from turbines by using the momentum of the blades, and Richard Smith from Romax Technology who presented a data-driven inspection approach for end of warranty and maintenance activities.

### HALL OF FAME

However, Quo Vadis is so much more than just good presentations and it has developed three special qualities that, again, set it apart as a unique event. Firstly, there is the family atmosphere created by a growing number of regular attendees. In fact, Sigrid now presents the hall of fame which includes some who have been at all 9 events, and many who have attended seven or eight.

### SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Secondly, there is plenty of time to talk with each other. This is achieved by having the city tour and pre-event dinner, and then on the day of the conference, by having sufficient time for networking amongst the exhibits of the sponsoring companies. Secondly, the presentations during the day are from practitioners in the industry sharing real experiences without the presence of turbine manufacturers. So experiences and lessons learned can be easily shared.

### CHAIRMANSHIP

And thirdly, there is Clifford McSpadden, Clifford, co-director with Kevin Donovan of GWA Supplies, lifts the art of chairing a conference to a new level by getting the delegates at all times to engage with each presentation and keep active between presentations. This year, there was cheering and booing, active listening, 'Aha' moments, and somehow we all ended up playing 'Simon Says' with no embarrassment.

### MEMORABLE

It was another memorable Quo Vadis, with great feedback from those attending, and we are all looking forward now to the big 10th Quo Vadis next year. We don't yet know where it is going to be, but Kevin and Sigrid usually manage to raise the bar each year, so 2016 will be special indeed. Quo Vadis is a Latin phrase meaning 'where are you going?' So, Kevin and Sigrid, Quo Vadis in 2016?

### GWA Supplies Ltd

