Investigating the Hydrodynamic Performance of a Tidal Turbine

Mairéad Atcheson, Professor Trevor Whittaker

Work stream 1:Numerical and physical convergence

Introduction

Ultimately tidal turbines will be installed in arrays, and determining the optimal spacing between tidal turbines in these arrays is required. The wake generated by a tidal turbine is an essential factor in determining this.

The wake may impact on downstream turbines by:

- Reducing flow velocity, resulting in less power produced by turbines downstream.
- Increasing flow turbulence intensity which may impact the power capture factor, and may also increase the fatigue loading on devices downstream.

Research Approach

The wake downstream of a tidal energy device is influenced by four components: inflow velocity conditions, the support structure wake, the structure movement and the wake generated by the turbine itself.

Primarily 10th scale test have been conducted using Evopod, a tidal energy device under development by Ocean Flow Energy.

Figure 1 – Evopod tidal energy device

An initial period of testing in Strangford Lough highlighted difficulties in isolating the characteristics of the turbine wake. Leading to 10th scale towing tests in a lake.

Large Scale Towing Test

The towing test remove two contributing components of the wake, the variable inflow velocity and the movement of the support structure. Both device performance and wake measurements were made during the test programmes, and the parameters to which they are most sensitive investigated.

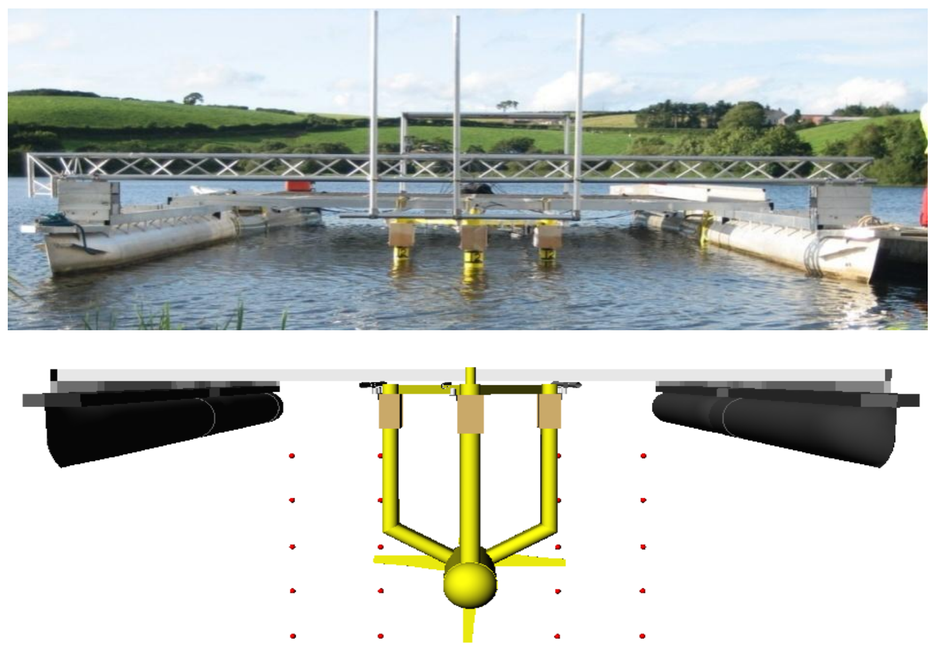

Figure 2 – Towing experiment set-up, acoustic Doppler velocimeter (ADV) measurement matrix shown in red behind the device

Towing Test Results

Towing tests were carried out with both Evopod's turbine attached and removed. Some results are presented in Figure 3.

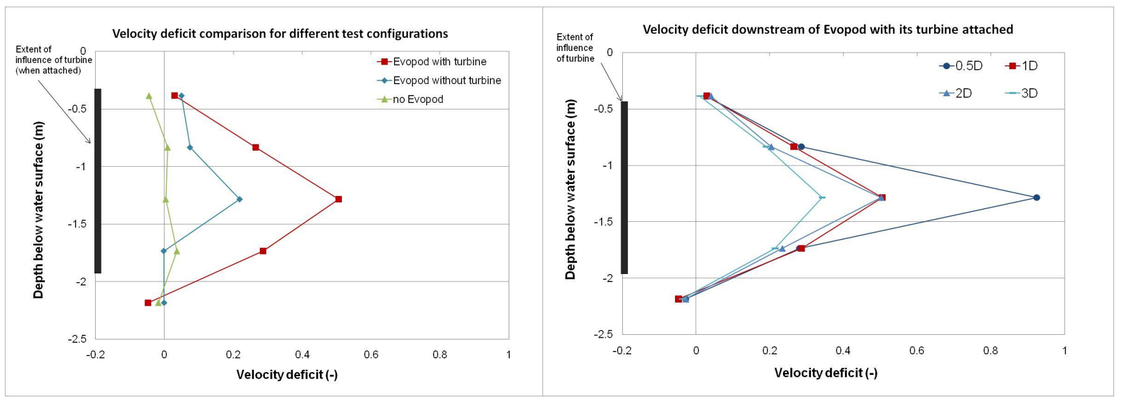

Figure 3 – Towing test results

Ongoing Research

A second phase of towing tests has been carried out after significant improvements have been made to the towing rig set up. A new traversable measurement platform and a streamlined instrument mounting structure were designed and constructed to improve the test procedure. Results from these tests are being used to:

1) Benchmark the performance of the tidal device for uniform and steady inflow conditions at different inflow speeds.
2) Investigate the development of the wake both laterally and downstream at different inflow speeds.
3) Compare turbulence measurements taken using ADVs and acoustic Doppler current profilers in the wake.

Queen's University Belfast

Marine Energy Research Group,
David Keir Building,
Stranmillis Road,
Belfast,
BT9 5AG

EPSRC
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