

RINA awards first AiP for energy-harvesting ship

BATH, UNITED KINGDOM, May 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- • RINA has awarded an Approval in Principle (AiP) certificate to DRIFT Energy for its energy-harvesting ship design, paving the way for further development and build of the world's first net-positive vessel.

- Announced at Seatrade Cruise Global in Miami, the AiP is the first to be awarded for an energy-harvesting vessel, recognising the leading potential of DRIFT ships to generate and deliver clean energy at sea.
- DRIFT ships harness deep ocean wind to produce and store green energy onboard, using AI-enabled routing technology to follow the wind.
- The vessels can deliver clean energy to wherever it is needed, driving a resilient energy transition for coastal and island communities and sectors that struggle to decarbonise due to grid constraints or renewables availability.



DRIFT Energy flotilla of net-positive, energy harvesting ships

DRIFT Energy, a deep tech startup based in Bath, UK, has been awarded an Approval in Principle (AiP) by RINA for its ground-breaking, energy harvesting vessel design. The certificate was presented to DRIFT's CEO, Ben Medland, by Patrizio Di Francesco, North Europe Special Projects BD Manager and Principal Engineer at RINA, during Seatrade Cruise Global in Miami.

It is the first time that an AiP has been awarded for an energy-harvesting ship and, through RINA's risk based Approval in Principle framework, it confirms that DRIFT's novel design meets safety levels equivalent to established marine industry standards while enabling clean energy generation at sea.

Ben Medland, DRIFT Energy's Founder and CEO said: "Our ships are set to play a pivotal role in the global energy transition, and I am delighted that DRIFT is defining the framework that such innovative vessels will be evaluated against in the future. The AiP validates the vessel's feasibility from a class perspective and is a key step towards full plan approval. We have collaborated closely with the expert team at RINA to get to this point, and I am proud of the focused effort from DRIFT's design team and the wider DRIFT crew that has enabled us to achieve this major milestone."

DRIFT has gained significant global commercial traction in the utilities, ports and maritime operations sectors since its foundation in 2021. The AiP from RINA represents a further milestone on the company's roadmap towards building the world's first net positive vessel. DRIFT plans to launch its first ship during 2027, subsequently moving to series production to fulfil a current orderbook of more than 30 vessels.

Patrizio Di Francesco, North Europe Special Projects Business Development Manager and Principal Engineer at RINA, said: "This Approval in Principle underscores RINA's commitment to supporting the safe and credible development of innovative vessel concepts that contribute to the energy transition through the use of green hydrogen as an energy carrier. Through close technical collaboration with DRIFT Energy, RINA has assessed a novel design that introduces new approaches to the generation and transport of clean energy at sea, while addressing classification and safety requirements from the earliest stages of development."

DRIFT's energy harvesting ships harness deep ocean wind to produce green energy at sea and deliver it worldwide. The vessels use hydro-kinetic turbines under the hull to produce electricity,



Ben Medland (left), CEO of DRIFT Energy, and Patrizio Di Francesco, North Europe Special Projects BD Manager and Principal Engineer, RINA, at Seatrade Cruise Global in Miami



RINA logo



Drift Energy logo



which is then converted via electrolysis into green hydrogen fuel and stored onboard for delivery to ports and other demand centres around the world.

The company's proprietary AI-enabled routing technology, GOLDILOCKS, enables the ships to locate and follow optimal weather patterns, achieving ultra-high load factors compared to other renewable energy sources.

DRIFT aims to drive a resilient, clean energy transition, particularly for coastal and island communities and sectors facing challenges in decarbonisation due to grid constraints or limited access to renewable energy.

DRIFT Energy is committed to driving the transition to clean energy worldwide with a new, mobile class of renewable energy. The company's high-performance sailing ships harness deep ocean wind to produce green energy at sea, using proprietary AI-enabled routing algorithm to find and remain in optimal weather conditions. With a focus on innovation and sustainability, DRIFT is developing and implementing renewable energy projects and partnerships that benefit our planet and its communities. <https://drift.energy/>

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RINA, leading certification and engineering company, provides a wide range of services across the Energy, Marine, Infrastructure & Mobility, Certification, Industry and Real Estate sectors. In December 2023, alongside the majority shareholder Registro Italiano Navale, Fondo Italiano d'Investimento SGR entered the shareholding structure guiding a pool of co-investors. With revenues in 2024 of 915 million euros, over 6,600 employees and 200 offices in 70 countries worldwide, RINA is a member of key international organizations and an important contributor to the development of new legislative standards. www.rina.org

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