

Shannon Estuary finds its flow on RTE series

By BRIDAINÉ CONWAY

THE Shannon Estuary is the star of a new four-part documentary beginning on RTE One on Friday May 4.

From flying boats to film-making, wildlife to windfarms, the series reveals how a 100km-stretch of the Shannon waterway has become a major site of innovation in Ireland.

Up to 40 per cent of Irish energy needs are met at the Shannon Estuary, on the shores of a waterway that is also home to Ireland's second largest airport, a ten thousand student university and a massive cargo port. The first duty free shop was opened here, along with the first industrial free zone. Long before Ireland heard of green energy, the estuary was producing it. As east coast over-development threatens the national



The Shannon Estuary is to make waves on a new RTE documentary to be screened next month

economy, this place offers a way out.

Into the future, gas pumped ashore here may well secure Ireland's energy independence, while Europe's superport

on the estuary may lead to the construction of the first tunnel from Ireland to Wales. And amid all this industry, there's room for wildlife and leisure. Ireland's largest

resident pod of dolphins are here, along with a large sailing, rowing and canoeing community, while the Shannon's shores boast some of the best golf courses in the

world.

The first episode in this new RTE series explores how everyone living in Ireland has a toe in the estuary's waters. The programme starts with a

look back at one of the key moments in Irish history, as the Shannon Scheme sparked electrification and industrialisation across the country. Just a few years later, the

estuary was a centre for world aviation as flying boats on the transatlantic route stopped to refuel here.

Since that day, the estuary has continued to power the Irish economy.

Episode two begins with a trip to see the Shannon dolphins, and ends with a seaweed bath in Ballybunion. In

between, there's an examination of how industry and wildlife can live side by side on this waterway. The third episode shows how important the waterway has been to the development of the region, attracting people and trade from across the world. From Bunratty banquets to a ghost story from the Knight of Glin, the programme highlights how the estuary has shaped its people. The final episode looks to the future along this waterway, and reveals that — far from drifting from the national consciousness — this place should continue to play a key role in the affairs of all Irish men and women. The series begins on RTE One at 7.30pm on Friday May 4.