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3D FINITE ELEMENT MODELLING OF NON-CRIMP FABRIC BASED FIBRE COMPOSITE BASED ON X-RAY CT DATA

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Abstract. Due to the high number of fatigue load cycles during the life of a wind turbine blade, fatigue is one of the main design concerns. However, it is still not possible to realistically predict the fatigue life of the non-crimp fabric based fibre composites commonly used for the main load carrying parts of wind turbine blades. Existing modelling attempts generally consider the fibre bundle structure as a perfect pattern, however recent experimental X-ray CT studies [1,2] have shown that the local variations in the fibre bundle structure have a large influence on the observed fatigue damage initiation and progression in the material. In the current study, the real bundle structure inside a non-crimp fabric based fibre composite is extracted from 3D X-ray CT images and imported into ABAQUS for numerical modelling. The local stress concentrations when loaded in tension caused by the fibre bundle structure are examined and compared to experimental observations of the fatigue damage. In the current study the bundle structure is manually segmented, however the possibility of automatic segmentation in the future is also discussed. The study shows the potential of X-ray CT based modelling for increased understanding of the fatigue damage mechanisms, but also sets the stage for modelling across scales including the variations caused by manufacturing process.

Keywords: Non-crimp fabric based composite, X-ray CT based modelling, Finite element modelling, Fatigue damage.

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