

UK Powers Into Generation From Straw And Farm Biomass

HOUSTON--MAY 17, 2002--*Researched by Industrialinfo.com (Industrial Information Resources, Inc.; Houston, Texas).*

An \$85 million straw-fired power station has just been commissioned at Sutton, near Ely in eastern England. The power plant will burn 200,000 tons of surplus straw a year and produce 36MW, which is enough electricity to heat and light 80,000 homes.

Using new techniques, the plant is claimed to be the largest and most efficient of its type in the world. Drawing on supplies of surplus straw in an 80 km radius the construction of the plant, consisting of 18 meter high straw barns flanking a 25 meter high central boiler, was specially designed to resemble the existing warehouse building on the site and blend in with the surrounding business park.

The plant will generate more than 270 gigawatt hours (GWh) of electricity a year that will be fed directly into the UK national grid by an 11-kilometer connection to an electrical substation.

The project was developed by Energy Power Resources (EPR) Ely, and is a partnership between the EPR and Cinergy Global Power companies. The Danish company, FLS Miljo built the plant and is operating it under contract until 2013. Until that date, all electricity produced will be sold under a UK government non-fossil-fuel obligation contract.

The UK government has announced \$4 million backing for the next generation of green, biomass-fueled technology. The money will support a \$10 million development program involving the Alstom Power UK and First Renewables companies, which is aimed at pushing new technology, that is able to generate electricity from energy crops and other fuels from farming and forestry. It is estimated that 1,000MW of new biomass projects will be required to help achieve the UK's 10% renewables target by 2010.

The UK already has the world's largest power station using poultry litter as feedstock. The 38.5MW plant at Thetford, in eastern England, is one of Europe's largest biomass power producers burning 700,000 tons of poultry litter a year, which is supplemented by 60,000 tons of woodchips and other biomass residues. Power from this plant feeds over 80,000 homes.

The technology of the Thetford plant has drawn interest from the US and Japan. As one of the renewable technologies being developed by British companies, it presents a marketing platform for plant manufacture. Fibrowatt, the company behind the project, has two other UK plants that specialize in burning meat and bone meal for power production. Thetford has been so successful that the availability of poultry litter is becoming limited.

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