

Energy Minister opens UK's first large scale wood burning power station

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The Energy Minister recently performed the official opening of the UK's first large scale wood burning power station.

Malcolm Wicks MP, who is responsible for energy policy in the UK, including sustainability and the environment, is on Teesside to open the Sembcorp Biomass Power Station at the Wilton International manufacturing site.

The station, which cost more than £60 million, uses 300,000 tonnes of sustainable wood a year to generate 30 MW of electricity – enough to power 30,000 households.

The renewable energy initiative saves around 200,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions a year compared with a conventional power station – the equivalent in greenhouse gas reduction terms of taking 67,000 cars off Britain's roads each year.

Mr Wicks said: "The UK energy market is one of the strongest and most diverse in the world. Our challenge is to find innovative ways to generate energy sustainably. The Sembcorp Biomass Power Station is a real success story - providing carbon-neutral power to the homes of thousands, using fuel from local sources. I salute the efforts of Sembcorp's workers and management today."

Paul Gavens, executive vice president and managing director of Sembcorp Utilities UK, said: "We are greatly honoured that the Minister of State for Energy has agreed to open our plant.

"Sembcorp is proud to be at the forefront of this type of biomass power generation and we are committed to creating a greener future for our business."



The intention to build the UK's first 100 per cent wood-to-energy power station was formally announced in March 2005. Work on the station began later that year and following commissioning, full commercial production started in September this year.

The wood for the station comes from four separate sources:

Recycled wood - this is received, stored and chipped at the £8 million UK Wood Recycling site at Wilton.

Sawmills – the wood comes to the site already chipped as offcuts from sawmills.

Managed forests - Sembcorp is working with the Forestry Commission and UPM Tilhill to utilize small roundwood logs from north east forests –

items sometimes left on forestry floor after normal tree felling operations.

A specially grown energy crop - a type of willow known as short rotation coppice. Sembcorp is working with farmers and other landowners locally. The power station will eventually require the growth of around 7,500 acres of coppice in the region – the equivalent of around 3,000 football pitches.

All the chipped wood is mixed in careful proportions before being fed into the boiler, which encompasses technology already in use in Scandinavia and other areas.

The electricity is being sold to E.ON – the UK's largest integrated energy company, generating and distributing electricity and retailing electricity and gas. ■