

31 January 2006

UK bioethanol industry takes off

Following the news last month that British Sugar had begun construction of a £20 million bioethanol plant at its Wissington site, the fledgling UK bioethanol industry has today received a further boost.

Peterborough based British Sugar has now reached agreement for the sale of part of the 55,000 tonnes per annum which will be produced at its new bioethanol plant.

These two events represent the launch of the UK bioethanol industry which has also received a recent boost from the announcement of the Government's intention to introduce the Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation.

Baroness Gillian Shephard of Northwold attended a breaking ground ceremony at British Sugar's Wissington site on Friday 27th January and assisted in the initial earthmoving and excavation. The plant will be completed and operational by February 2007 and will manufacture 55,000 tonnes (70 million litres) of bioethanol each year.

Announcement of the supply agreement was made at a celebration event at The Brewery, Chiswell St, London on Tuesday 31st January where British Sugar were joined by other representatives of the new UK bioethanol industry. Guests included Stephen Ladyman, Minister of State for Transport and Jonathan Nash, Managing Director of Saab GB.

Stephen Ladyman, Transport Minister, said "Last year the Government announced the Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation which will mean that by 2010, 5% of all the fuel sold on UK forecourts will have to come from a renewable source. I'm delighted that this announcement has helped give companies like British Sugar the confidence to invest in biofuels, and hope that others will shortly follow. This project is excellent news for the burgeoning UK biofuels industry - and ultimately for motorists, and the environment. "

Mark Carr, British Sugar Chief Executive said, "We are delighted to take the lead in this exciting new industry. Our bioethanol plant will be a significant step in the development of renewable fuels in the UK. Renewable fuels are an essential part of our future and our children's future which will contribute significant benefit to the environment".

Technology also exists which allows higher rates of bioethanol inclusion. Both Saab and Ford exhibited cars at the celebration event which can run on any fuel from 100% petrol to 85% ethanol (E85). Projects are developing in Somerset and East Anglia for the provision of E85 blends at petrol pumps.

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Editors notes:

- Bioethanol is a biofuel - or green fuel - that can produce up to 70 per cent fewer carbon emissions than petrol.
- Nearly a quarter of all UK carbon emissions come from road transport and emissions in this sector are still growing.
- Bioethanol can be used in any ordinary unleaded petrol at inclusion rates of up to 5%.
- If bioethanol replaced 5 per cent of petrol in the UK, it would amount to the equivalent carbon saving of taking one million cars off the road.
- In the UK, bioethanol will be produced from sugar beet or wheat. British Sugar will produce bioethanol from sugar beet at its Wisington plant.
- It is simple to use because it is mixed with petrol in a blend of 5% bioethanol, 95% petrol and dispensed through normal unleaded petrol pumps.
- A DVD showing the lifecycle of bioethanol manufacture and use and featuring an animated drawing of our proposed plant is available on request