



Legco  
Panel on Environmental Affairs

Dear Hon Members,  
Please see the self-explanatory media articles herein.

11<sup>th</sup> February 2013

International conglomerate Air Products has a design - build- operate agreement for the Teesside UK gasification plant so it costs the UK Government just the lease for the land; Air Products then will charge by the tonne to gasify the MSW and sell the resultant syngas generated electricity to the grid and the process residues, vitrified slag, for road construction. Alternatively a Fischer-Tropsch back-end could be added to create biofuels from the resultant syngas. A win-win situation for Air Products, the Government and the local populace – not one single complaint letter was raised against the EIA for the plant. Air Products has announced they will build a second modular gasification plant at the same site.

The British Airways 'Green Skies' project <http://energy.cleartheair.org.hk/?p=1612> using gasification of MSW to create biofuel is underway in London. Ten World airlines have signed up with Solena for like plants. Again a bilateral win-win situation for the parties involved.

Even the HK Government's MBT consultants **AECOM** have lauded the plasma gasification technology as being ready for commercialization <http://energy.cleartheair.org.hk/?s=zabell> <http://energy.cleartheair.org.hk/?p=1226> and will design- procure – construct -operate a plasma gasification plant in the UK.  
<http://www.gazettelive.co.uk/business/business-news/2012/11/21/75m-waste-to-energy-plant-plan-for-billingham-84229-32276544/>

This evidence totally negates the former ENB's mantra that plasma gasification technology is not tried and tested and that it cannot handle Hong Kong's MSW quantities.

A single Solena MSW-to-biofuel plant requires 500,000 tonnes of MSW a year. More MSW to handle = add another modular plant and produce more biofuel for local aviation and shipping to use.

It is time for Hong Kong Government to realise that technology has advanced since the decision to use MBT was taken in the absence of legislating mandatory recycling measures, bite the bullet handed to them by the previous non-performing Tsang administration and ENB minister and move on with the gasification technology; this will also make redundant the current medical waste / carcase incinerator at Stonecutters for alternative development as an additional benefit.

Plasma gasification is not a form of incineration.

Incineration is the thermal conversion of materials in the presence of air at 850 degrees Centigrade leaving 30% of what was burned as toxic ash that needs landfilling in ash lagoons (in Hong Kong's situation this will require the building of expensive man- made islands in the sea to be the new ash lagoons.)

Plasma (the fourth state of matter) gasification operates at the temperature of the surface of the sun in the absence of air and vaporizes materials into their molecular gaseous form (syngas) that is scrubbed to leave clean hydrogen which can drive electricity generation turbines or through another process (Fischer-Tropsch), create biofuels. The residues of a gasifier are inert vitreous slag that can be used for

8/F Eastwood Centre - 5, A Kung Ngam Village Road - Shaukeiwan, Hong Kong  
Tel: (+852) 2693-0136 Fax: (+852) 2602-7153/7159 Email: [chair@cleartheair.org.hk](mailto:chair@cleartheair.org.hk)  
[www.cleartheair.org.hk](http://www.cleartheair.org.hk)



road works' construction, at a time when shortage and construction aggregate prices have gone through the roof in Hong Kong.

**Legco should not approve the funding of outdated dinosaur technology.**

***There is already enough clinical evidence of deaths and cancers caused to populations downwind of incinerators with more reports already in the pipeline.***

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412012002279>

Conclusions **“ Our results support the hypothesis of a statistically significant increase in the risk of dying from cancer in towns near incinerators and installations for the recovery or disposal of hazardous waste.”**

<http://news.newclear.server279.com/?p=5875>

Report on the health impact of the MIWA-waste incinerator in Sint-Niklaas Belgium

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:k8-6Xje1qDIJ:www.greatmichigan.org/additional-priorities/air/detroit-incinerator+health+michigan+incinerator&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk>

Detroit Incinerator: While other cities and counties struggle to reduce landfill waste through recycling programs, Detroit still burns its garbage — and the garbage of its neighbors — within blocks of residential neighborhoods. For the last 20 years, the Detroit Incinerator, also known as the Greater Detroit Resource Recovery Facility, has cost the city an estimated 1.2 billion dollars, and continues to increase air pollution levels throughout the city. *These pollution levels persistently exceed National Ambient Air Quality standards, and consequently contribute to the rising rates of asthma. Detroiters are three times as likely to be hospitalized for asthma compared to Michigan as a whole, and asthma death rates in Detroit are two times that for the state.*

<http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/MultimediaFiles/Live/FullReport/3809.PDF>

In a House of Lords enquiry on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1999, Environment Minister Michael Meacher said, “Incinerator plants are the source of serious toxic pollutants: dioxins; furans; acid gases; particulates; heavy metals; and they all need to be treated very seriously. There must be absolute prioritisation given to human health requirements and protection of the environment. I repeat the emissions from incinerator processes are extremely toxic. Some of the emissions are carcinogenic... We must use every reasonable instrument to eliminate them altogether”.

<http://www.macaudailytimes.com.mo/macau/36605-cuhk-to-start-10-year-plan-on-ka-ho-residents%E2%80%99-health.html>

Home | Macau | CUHK to start 10-year plan on Ka Ho residents' health **CUHK to start 10-year plan on Ka Ho residents' health – Macau** 18/06/2012 10:05:00

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/NewsCentre/NationalPressReleases/2012PressReleases/120124Incineratorstudystatement/>

The English Health Protection Agency announced last week that they have approved funding for a Small Area Health Statistics Unit study to ***investigate whether there is any potential link between municipal waste incinerators and reproductive health.*** This is for a two year study starting in April 2012. Results will be made publicly available once accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

(Dr) Anna Hansell MB BChir MA MRCP MSc PhD FFPH Clinical Senior Lecturer Assistant Director, Small Area Health Statistics Unit (SAHSU) MRC-HPA Centre for Environment and Health Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics

**8/F Eastwood Centre - 5, A Kung Ngam Village Road - Shaukeiwan, Hong Kong**  
**Tel: (+852) 2693-0136 Fax: (+852) 2602-7153/7159 Email: [chair@cleartheair.org.hk](mailto:chair@cleartheair.org.hk)**  
**[www.cleartheair.org.hk](http://www.cleartheair.org.hk)**



School of Public Health Faculty of Medicine Imperial College London St Mary's Campus, Norfolk Place LONDON W2 1PG  
Phone: +44 (0)20 7594 3344 Fax: +44 (0)20 7594 0768 Email: [a.hansell@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:a.hansell@imperial.ac.uk) Small Area Health Statistics Unit,  
Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, **Imperial College, London, UK**

Yours sincerely,

*James Middleton*

Chairman

MEDIA ARTICLES

<http://oilprice.com/Energy/Energy-General/Garbage-in-Power-out.html>

## Garbage in - Power out

By [Peter McCusker](#) | Thu, 07 February 2013 23:05 | 0

Work has started on the construction of the world's largest plasma gasification plant with its development signalling the dawning of a new era in the UK's Energy from Waste sector.

The £300m plant on Teesside, North East England, is being built by US industrial gases outfit Air Products using the latest plasma gasification technology developed by AlterNRG Westinghouse.

The 50MW, Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant will convert domestic and commercial waste into a syngas, which can generate steam for electricity, or for producing chemicals or liquid fuels.

The current technology deployed by the UK's limited number of EfW plants is mass burn incineration which turns the waste into steam to power turbines. Emissions from these plants have led to concerns over the environment and health. Air Products has subsequently unveiled plans for **a second plasma gasification EfW plant, next to the first one**, and the two plants between them have the potential to recycle the rubbish from over one million households. – powering 50,000 homes.

But, as things stand the UK lags well behind the rest of the Europe in the EfW sector. One reason for this is that it has always sent more waste to landfill than on the Continent.

Around two-thirds of the UK's domestic waste is currently sent to landfill but this is set to change markedly over the coming years.

Waste companies are increasingly anxious keen to divert household and commercial rubbish from landfill with **landfill taxes currently at £72 a tonne and rising to £80 a tonne in 2014, and penalties for failing to hit recycling targets of £150 a tonne.**

In a bid to give the sector a shot in the arm the UK Government announced last October it would **subsidise CHP EfW plants at the same ratio as offshore wind - the highest available - through the ROC (Renewable Obligation Certificate) scheme.**

**It was this announcement that prompted Air Products to confirm its intention to build its Teesside plant.**

### Half the world's food thrown out

Using household waste to generate electricity seems like the perfect alternative energy.

It's an abundant commodity. Recent research shows that as much as half of all the food produced in the world is thrown away.

It also diverts waste from landfill and **the new generation of plants emit around the same levels of carbon dioxide as low-emission solar.**

The added benefits for the plant operators in the UK **are that they are paid to make the power and they're also paid to take the waste.** But waste is a poor commodity from which to generate power, possessing a relatively low calorific value. The 100MWs generated by the two Air Products plants is less than one-tenth of the 1,875MWs generated by Teesside Power's nearby gas power station at Wilton - equating to 4% of UK's total power output.

This means an EfW energy plant can be over seven times more expensive to build and operate than a gas-powered station and over three times more expensive than onshore wind.

**8/F Eastwood Centre - 5, A Kung Ngam Village Road - Shaukeiwan, Hong Kong**  
**Tel: (+852) 2693-0136 Fax: (+852) 2602-7153/7159 Email: [chair@cleartheair.org.hk](mailto:chair@cleartheair.org.hk)**  
**[www.cleartheair.org.hk](http://www.cleartheair.org.hk)**



Consequently, Air Products is cute enough to hedge its bets.

Lisa Jordan, business manager, bio energy, at Air Products said: “The economics of offshore wind are marginal at the existing subsidy level and for ourselves too, the challenge is to fully commercialise what we do and make the economics work for us.”

She continued: “Our history of working with oxygen and gases will allow us to deploy our own clean-up technology at the back-end of the gasification process.

“This allows us some flexibility in what we can do with the recycled waste.

**“If the market for fuel-class hydrogen develops we can change the back end and increase our production of hydrogen.**

**“We have the ability to deliver different treatments to the syngas, which can create different end products.”**

#### **Low carbon emissions**

The syngas produced by the Air Products plasma gasification plant is composed mainly of carbon monoxide and hydrogen, with smaller quantities of carbon dioxide and nitrogen.

**The carbon dioxide emissions are around 52g/kWh, which is far lower than coal, at around 850g/kWh, and gas, at around 350g/kWh, according to figures from the World Nuclear Association.**

Optimists suggest that when the sector matures EfW can contribute up to 8% of the UK’s 100GW power needs.

But Ben Messenger, of Waste Management World says: “It’s difficult to get planning permission for waste to energy plants. They’re not liked by those living nearby.”

Ms Jordan explained why Air Products chose Teesside.

“This is a fairly large scale industrial process and we were looking for somewhere with an industrial feel.

“We were looking around the UK for brownfield sites, with the appropriate support infrastructure and access to the grid.

“Teesside is a unique bubble. It has a long chemical heritage and this will look more like a refinery, like a chemical plant.

There is also a need for jobs and investment in the area.

“There is nowhere like it in the rest of the UK.”:

Ms Jordan added: “The UK is seeking more sustainable ways to manage and dispose of its waste, and is looking to diversify its sources of electricity generation- our technology is able to deliver on both counts,

“It certainly has to be part of the mix as more waste is diverted from landfill.”

“Waste is an habitual energy platform. It cannot fill the whole gap, but it is a renewable energy source which can operate as a base load option.”

**Looking to the future Air Products say it has plans for more plasma gasification plants in the UK.**

“The UK now has, as we see it, a very stable regulatory environment to enable us to make those future investments,” she added.

**Elsewhere in the UK Swindon company Advanced Plasma Power has secured planning permission for a number of plants.**

A spokesman for the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) said: “When Air Products’ plant is built, at 50MW, it will be the largest gasification plant operating in the UK.

“As one of the leaders in their field they intend to use plasma technology. The plasma technology means that the syngas is clean enough for a range of potential applications, not just power but potentially could be used for making transport fuels, hydrogen or bio-methane in the future.

“This direction of travel is consistent with the aims set out under the UK Bioenergy Strategy. **DECC is highly supportive of gasification projects of this type.”**

By. Peter McCusker

*\*Peter McCusker is a freelance energy writer, based in the North East.*

#### **Background Information**

##### **Energy from waste is expensive**

The new generation of EfW energy plant can be seven times more expensive to build and operate than a gas-powered station and three times more expensive than onshore wind.

A recent study by engineering consultancy Arup for the DECC showed capital expenditure (capex) of between £3,561 per kW to £6,446 per kW for some EfW Combined Heat & Power (CHP) plants.

The DECC has estimated a new gas station has a capex of between £719/kW to £864/kW, while onshore wind is £1,174/kW to £1,858/kW.

Operating costs for EfW CHP are also high at £16/MWh to £24/MWh.

This is three to four times as expensive as operating costs for dedicated biomass plants at £4/MWh to £8/MWh.

**8/F Eastwood Centre - 5, A Kung Ngam Village Road - Shaukeiwan, Hong Kong**  
**Tel: (+852) 2693-0136 Fax: (+852) 2602-7153/7159 Email: [chair@cleartheair.org.hk](mailto:chair@cleartheair.org.hk)**  
**[www.cleartheair.org.hk](http://www.cleartheair.org.hk)**



Ben Hall, a senior renewables analyst at London-based Cornwall Energy, said: "It is also worth noting EfW CHP is an infant technology in the UK and is currently underdeveloped compared to other EU countries, such as Germany, France, Denmark."

Last October the UK Government confirmed that EfW plants would be awarded two Renewable Obligation Certificates for every MW/h of energy they produce.

With a ROC being currently valued at £40.71 the **Air Products plant will receive subsidies of £81.42 for every MW of energy produced.**

By 2017 the ROC rate will fall to 1.8 and after that new energy subsidies will come into place under the Contracts for Difference scheme.

#### **Plasma gasification**

The Air Products plant at Billingham will operate by heating non-recyclable waste (domestic and commercial) in a process known as plasma gasification.

A gasification plant heats the waste in the presence of a controlled amount of oxygen, **but without combustion.**

The main product of gasification is syngas, which is composed mainly of carbon monoxide and hydrogen, with smaller quantities of carbon dioxide and nitrogen.

The syngas can generate steam for electricity, or can be for producing chemicals or liquid fuels, such as hydrogen.

**The residual waste from the process is a solid, vitrified glassy slag - like black glass - and can be used in the construction industry for building roads.**

## **£75m waste-to-energy plant plan for Billingham**

- by Kelley Price, Evening Gazette
- **Nov 21 2012**



Scott Brothers Group's managing director Frank Cooke on the site where the £75m waste-to-energy plant is set to be built

A MAJOR waste-to-energy plant is being planned for Teesside.

The £75m Billingham Energy gasifier, on the old Haverton Hill ICI Billingham site, will be the largest UK scheme of its kind if it goes ahead.

The 14 megawatt plant, a joint venture between Haverton Hill-based Scott Brothers Group and Devon company O2N (Old 2 New), will create around 150 construction jobs over two years and up to 40 permanent positions.

**AECOM - the company that built the Shard in London - will carry out the design, procurement, construction and operation of the project.**

The plant, which will take 160,000 tonnes of household, commercial and industrial waste a year and turn it into clean energy, could be up and running by 2015.

**8/F Eastwood Centre - 5, A Kung Ngam Village Road - Shaueiwan, Hong Kong**  
**Tel: (+852) 2693-0136 Fax: (+852) 2602-7153/7159 Email: [chair@cleartheair.org.hk](mailto:chair@cleartheair.org.hk)**  
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Bosses say financing is at a “well advanced stage” - and 20 similar UK plants could also be in the pipeline over the next 10-15 years.

They claim their project, which comes hot on the heels of Air Products’ announcement of a second energy-from-waste facility at Billingham, will help cement Teesside’s growing status as a major hub for waste-to-energy technology.

Scott Brothers Group managing director Frank Cooke said: “Often with gasification technology in the UK, projects turn out to be long-term and are difficult to get off the ground.

“This is an American design, there are more than 20 similar ones in operation around the world, particularly in Scandinavia and Germany - it’s tried and tested technology.

“There are some in the UK, but none of this size at the moment.

“We are in well advanced discussions on finance. We are also talking to both local and national waste suppliers.

“The majority of the electricity generated could be used by local chemical companies.”

He added: “The old ICI site employed tens of thousands of people in the 50s and 60s; now we are hoping to create employment there once again.

“This project will not only create jobs but renewable electricity using clean technology.

“We are so confident in the technology that O2N is developing, we’ve taken a 25% stake in the company

Read More

<http://www.gazettelive.co.uk/business/business-news/2012/11/21/75m-waste-to-energy-plant-plan-for-billingham-84229-32276544/#ixzz2KXnkX3E5>

Yours sincerely,

*James Middleton*

Chairman

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**8/F Eastwood Centre - 5, A Kung Ngam Village Road - Shaukeiwan, Hong Kong**  
**Tel: (+852) 2693-0136 Fax: (+852) 2602-7153/7159 Email: [chair@cleartheair.org.hk](mailto:chair@cleartheair.org.hk)**  
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