

# **PRESIDENT OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS' GROUP VISITS SEMBCORP BIOMASS POWER STATION.**

The President of a body representing mechanical engineers throughout the world has paid a visit to SembCorp's new biomass power station in the UK.

John Baxter, President of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (ImechE), was impressed with the £60 million development at Wilton International.

He said: "I care passionately about engineering and love nothing more than getting my hands dirty. I had been looking forward to this visit and it has not disappointed.

"SembCorp has developed a really fantastic plant helping to address Climate Change issues which has utilised the skills of top class engineers in the design, construction and operational phases and I would congratulate everyone involved in the project."

Phil Morland, the SembCorp Biomass Power Station Senior Project Manager, said: "We were proud and honoured to host the visit of Mr Baxter and several of his colleagues. Quality engineering is at the heart of everything we do and the new power station is testament to the skills and talents of people in this area."

The £60 million plant, which will generate the UK's first renewable energy from a 100 per cent wood source, is in the final stages of commissioning and is due to be officially opened in November.

When operational it will create 30 MW of electricity – enough to power a small town – and save around 200,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions a year compared to a conventional power station. That is the equivalent of the harmful exhaust emissions of 67,000 vehicles.

Mr Baxter was visiting the Tees Valley to take part in a major debate on skills in which SembCorp also had an important role.

The Great Skills Debate, a key event organised by the IMechE at Middlesbrough's Riverside Stadium, involved businesses and academics discussing potential solutions to a predicted shortfall of more than 20,000 workers in the region in the coming years.

The problem was highlighted in a report carried out by the Skills and Education Engagement Team, led by SembCorp's George Ritchie, for the Wilton-based North East Process Industries Cluster (NEPIC).

Almost double the numbers of workers will be needed in the energy and process industry - chemicals, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology – sectors by 2014, according to the research.

Mr Baxter, said: “Skills is one of the biggest issues facing the region. We need to tackle this head on and hopefully by bringing together industry and academia we can come up with a solution.”

Mr Ritchie, senior vice president for HR and IT services at SembCorp Utilities UK, said the survey revealed 20,000 graduate level and technician workers will be needed to replace an aging work force and to meet future growth over the next six years.

The region’s process industry plays a key role in the regional economy, accounting for a quarter of the North-east’s total Gross Domestic Product. It employs 34,000 people in more than 300 companies.

Mr Ritchie, who gave the keynote speech at the Great Skills Debate, added that the stark figure was down to fewer young people entering the science, technology and engineering sectors, meaning that companies were now having to recruit from countries such as Poland.

The problem was so serious, he warned, that firms were already recruiting overseas graduates to bridge the gap and the shortage was already having an impact on growth for businesses and the region’s economy.

“We need people to continue to grow,” he added.

The picture shows Mr Baxter (front) with Mr Morland (right) and ImechE Technical Director Colin Brown sampling the wood fuel in the Fuel Handling area.





Scott Taylor, the SembCorp Engineering Manager, right, shows Mr Baxter the new biomass boiler.