

British Airways' Jet Biofuel Plant Will Open in 2015



British Airways and Solena will soon launch a \$500m biofuel plant

Yesterday British Airways (BA) announced that it has found a site for a bio-refinery that will generate up to 50,000 tons of jet fuel annually. In a partnership with the American aviation biofuel company Solena Fuels, BA will invest approximately \$500 million in the plant, which will eventually provide the airline a steady source of jet fuel for a minimum of 10 years.

The GreenSky Project, which will soon break ground and become fully operational in 2015, will allow Solena to produce up to 16 million gallons of jet fuel and 40 megawatts of power. The project would also score huge achievements on the waste diversion front: 500,000 tons of waste would become diverted from landfills annually and instead become a feedstock for BA's new stream of jet fuel.

Solena will produce the jet fuel using the company's proprietary integrated biomass gasification to liquid process (IBGTL). Solena's gasifiers will churn municipal waste, along with agricultural and wood waste, into jet, diesel, naphtha and MGO fuels via a series of Fischer-Tropsch chemical reactions that in the end will create a greener alternative to conventional hydrocarbons. The strength of Solena's process is that its gasification process can incorporate various forms of feedstock into a cleaner source of jet fuel. According to Forbes, the Solena-BA venture will be enough to power all flights out of London's City Airport.

Solena and BA claim that the bio-refinery project will create 1,000 temporary construction positions and 150 jobs within the facility upon completion. The U.S. engineering and construction firm Fluor will serve as the project engineer.

With its massive investment, BA has joined other airlines that have become keen on biofuels as conventional fossil fuels continue to

rock the aviation industry. United, its pre-merger competitor Continental, Alaska, the U.S. Navy and KLM are among the organizations that have tested biofuels for their fleets of airplanes. The ability to scale and find reliable sources of feedstock are among the challenges airlines face in incorporating biofuels; in fact, once the GreenSkyProject is at full capacity, it will only provide two percent of BA's fuel needs. But as aviation companies grapple with high jet fuel prices, the search for alternatives to petroleum will keep them focused on alternative sources of energy in order for them to remain competitive.

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