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EMR and MBA collaborate to build high-tech plastics plant in UK



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A trans-Atlantic union between two large plastics and metals recyclers will see a “state-of-the-art” plastics recycling facility built and operational in the UK by early 2009. UK metal recyclers European Metal Recycling (EMR) and American plastics company MBA Polymers have announced a joint venture called MBA Polymers UK to plan and run the facility. The two companies were described as having “impressive business and strategic synergies,” by MBA Polymers chief executive Richard McCombs.

EMR director of technical services David Ireland commented: “It is a very significant step not only for EMR and MBA but for the UK as this investment will allow us to recover the previously untapped plastic resource in the materials we recycle.”

Two legislative changes have helped to drive the market for increased plastic recycling facilities as well as changes in metal recycling processes. In 2003 the End of Life Vehicle Regulations brought targets to reduce the amount of waste from scrapped vehicles and in 2007 the introduction of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) regulations meant more material from this waste stream needed processing.

Ireland added: “[The collaboration] will put EMR at the forefront in meeting the very demanding recycling targets set under producer responsibility regimes in vehicle and electronics recycling. These targets are very exacting and can only be met by applying new technologies to the recovery of plastics.”

MBA founder and president Michael Biddle said: “Rather than build expensive and energy-consuming chemical plants, our company provides a way for Europe to manufacture the plastics it needs at significantly lower economic and environmental costs. Much like aluminium, and for some of the same reasons, our plants require much less energy compared to a traditional petrochemical-based plastics plant to make the same amount and types of plastics.”

Plastics for the facility will be recovered from upgraded shredder residue, from vehicles and electrical goods and other plastic- and metal-rich streams.

EMR will concentrate the plastics fraction from its large-scale metal recycling operations. This additional processing will also allow EMR to capture a higher percentage of the metals. MBA Polymers UK will receive concentrated plastics-rich material from EMR facilities to process, which will then be sold as high quality plastics to MBA customers.