

UK and China work on carbon capture

British scientists are working with their Chinese counterparts to develop a new technology to burn coal without harming the environment.

By Louise Gray, Environment Correspondent

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It is estimated that China builds around one coal power station a week, causing millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide to be pumped into the atmosphere.

In an effort to tackle the problem, the Department of Energy and Climate Change has invested more than £3 million in developing Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) in China, a new technology that will take the CO₂ and store it underground.

A conference of scientists from around the world will meet to discuss the technology at a British Geological Survey (BGS) conference in Nottingham this week. The delegates will discuss the possibility of storing the CO₂ in old oil or gas fields.

The UK is also interested in CCS as a means of continuing to use fossil fuels at power stations like Kingsnorth while meeting strict targets on cutting carbon emissions.

But Jonathan Pearce of BGS said CCS in China it is even more important to tackling global climate change simply because of the scale.

"An awful lot of power stations are being built in China that lock the country into power from coal for many decades to come," he said. "CCS is a way we could help China reduce emissions."

As a developing country China does not have to meet targets on cutting emissions under the Kyoto Protocol.

However after taking over the US to become the world's biggest polluter two years ago, the super power is under increasing pressure to act.

President Barack Obama is expected to work more closely with China to reduce emissions and his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is to visit Beijing this week to discuss the issue.

The two countries hold the key to any replacement of the Kyoto Protocol decided in Copenhagen at the end of this year.

Scientists are due to gather in the Danish city next month for an emergency summit on new studies showing climate change may be happening faster than expected, making it more important than ever to take action.



Carbon Capture and Storage could help cut emissions from coal-fired power stations

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