

News

PM Sunak announces 'dream' scenario for capturing energy

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AN announcement by Rishi Sunak may herald the arrival of a brand new industry on the East Coast, and a green one too.

The plan is to capture tonnes and tonnes of the carbon dioxide that we produce when we burn fossil fuels and stop it from floating up into the atmosphere.

As a part of that plan, a new pipeline is expected to be built to Immingham from Theddlethorpe, an area already affected by a proposal by Lincolnshire County Council and Radioactive Waste Management to build a nuclear waste underground disposal facility.

Harbour Energy's Viking 'Carbon Capture and Storage' project has been given priority status so it can be built quickly without too many delays in the planning process.

Together with the Acorn project in Scotland, Viking, here in Lincolnshire, has been picked for development by 2030.

However carbon capture and storage or CCS hasn't gone well in the rest of the world.

According to the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) in Ohio, USA, the dream of reducing our carbon emissions from our power stations by 90 percent using CCS just hasn't been achievable in practice.

The IEEFA reports that one project off the coast of Western Australia and another one project at Boundary Dam in Canada were both only half as effective as expected. A third project at Shute Creek in the U.S. underperformed its carbon capture capacity by around 36 percent.

We all know how carbon capture is supposed to work because it's the same principle as a fizzy drink.

Carbon dioxide, the same gas that we breathe out and that is warming our world, is stored in a bottle of soft drink by dissolving it in water.

When we open a bottle of lemonade, the carbonated water inside it

NEWEST PLAN IN PIPELINE FOR THEDDLETHORPE - AREA ALREADY UNDER SCRUTINY FOR NUCLEAR WASTE DUMP



Prime Minister Rishi Sunak during his visit to Shell St Fergus Gas Plant in Peterhead in July this year to announce millions of pounds in funding for the Acorn carbon capture project, a joint venture between Shell UK and other companies.

PHOTO: Euan Duff/PA Wire

releases the highly concentrated carbon dioxide and makes a pleasurable fizz as the CO₂ is released into the atmosphere.

The fossil fuels industry says that we can use the same principle of the gas stored inside our lemonade to absorb some of the many thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide produced by our power stations in a solvent and hide it underground.

However, environmental activist George Monbiot says that carbon capture and storage is an industry that hasn't materialised over 20 years and never will.

Writing in the Guardian last week, he characterised CCS as a smokescreen: "Its sole purpose is to create the impression that oil and gas drilling is compatible with a habitable planet."

He was also suspicious about Rishi Sunak's motives: "Any politician promoting it is working for the fossil fuel industry."

Indeed, the same day that he announced the fast-tracking of Viking's CCS, Mr. Sunak granted 100 new licences to the mine oil and gas in the north sea.

The Viking 'Carbon Capture and Storage' project, proposed by Harbour Energy now seems likely to be

built but what will it be worth?

Whilst scientists dismiss it as a smokescreen, it is seen by the UK government as a project of national importance.

Supporters argue that the project could be transformational in a positive way for the East Coast, potentially unlocking up to £7 billion of investment across the full CO₂ capture, transport, and storage value chain over the next decade.

The MP for Cleethorpes, Martin Vickers, welcomed the PM's announcement about carbon capture projects.

He said: "This announcement by the Prime Minister that the Viking Carbon Capture project is confirmed as one of the Government recognised clusters is good news for northern Lincolnshire and the wider Humber region with a potential for thousands of jobs both direct

and in the supply chain".

Theddlethorpe councillor Travis Hesketh said: "Theddlethorpe residents are very concerned about the safety of this project and I have asked Harbour Energy to meet with residents."

He also raised safety concerns about a 25 metres high eight-storey vent stack on the edge of the Kings Nature Reserve.

We trust that Harbour Energy will engage with the public in a meaningful way and involve the community in their planning decisions to benefit both the climate and the local people.

Meanwhile if the magical CCS is to be effective in slowing our emissions, there is a tight timetable. The government wants to ramp up its use from nothing in 2020 to capturing between 20 and 30 megatonnes by 2030.

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