



## Waste not, want not

Business is booming in the UK for Canadian company Knowaste, even before its new plant in Birmingham has been completed

Recycling has become increasingly important in recent years, as people become more environmentally aware. Demand for goods and services that promote a greener way of living has opened up new opportunities for businesses creative and savvy enough to make the most of them.

Knowaste has done just that. Tackling an area that others may have avoided, the company has found a way to recycle disposable nappies and adult incontinence products.

“We see ourselves as the pioneer of the world’s first cost-effective and environmentally friendly solution to meet the worldwide challenge of nappy and adult incontinence product waste,” says Roy Brown, President and CEO of Knowaste. “We have devised technologies that allow us to recycle every element of the product, and pass them on for use by manufacturers. Not only does our recycling process divert this waste from landfill or incineration, it also creates new products.”



### Fast facts

**Company:** Knowaste LLC

**Country:** Canada

**Industry:** Energy from Waste

**Website:** [www.knowaste.com](http://www.knowaste.com)

### Right timing

In April 2007, Knowaste decided that the time was right to look overseas. The company wanted a location that would offer a well-educated and experienced workforce, and easy access to the whole of Europe. It was also looking for universities with which to work to develop its technology further.

“Every day, eight million disposable nappies are used and thrown away in the UK,” says Roy. “This equates to a massive 800,000 tonnes of waste every year. We had been receiving phone and email enquiries from the UK about our technology and people were asking whether we had a presence in the UK yet. We knew that UK Government Directives for getting up to European Union standards were very strong. We also found out that there were tax and other incentives for foreign businesses to set up in the UK.”

### Informed decision

Knowaste’s first step was to consult UK Trade & Investment in Canada. The team was able to give the company crucial socio-economic and demographic facts and figures, and introduce it to a variety of groups and organisations, including members of the Welsh Assembly, that the company would not have found on its own.

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UK Trade & Investment also offered other support, including information about financial options and help finding premises.

“Once we had decided to introduce our technology to the UK, we were welcomed with open arms, both by government and industry,” says Roy.

“UK Trade & Investment supplied us with everything we needed to make an informed decision, in very quick order. We only decided to look into the UK in April, and by October we were ready to move our Head Office to Monmouth in the Wye Valley. I myself moved to Wales in December 2007, and soon enough had a strong management team in place.”

## System upgrade

Knowaste plans to build five plants around the UK, each one employing 20 to 30 people and processing around 30,000 tonnes of disposable nappy material every year. Its first UK plant is set to open in Tyseley, Birmingham early in 2010. The company has already contracted for business amounting to 36,000 tonnes of waste, and is on the way to building a second plant even before the first is up and running.

“There is clearly a demand here for our work,” says Roy.

“Thanks in large part to UK Trade & Investment, we have been able to set the wheels in motion quickly and smoothly. We are confident of a bright future in the UK.”

**“Coming to the UK has given us the opportunity to upgrade our system”**



### Making the most of it

Knowaste’s innovative technology allows it to make use of every element of the disposable nappy. The outer layer, made of a polyethylene and polypropylene mix, is deactivated and separated into pulp and plastics. The plastic is then cleaned and dried and made into a pellet that can be used for injection moulding products, such as roof tiles and other building materials. The pulp of the nappy, which contains super absorbent polymers to contain the waste, is then separated, and sold on to companies making products as diverse as shoe insoles, wallpaper and oil filters.

“We’ve been using our technologies for years,” says Roy. “But, coming to the UK has given us the opportunity to upgrade our system and, for the first time, create green energy with the organic residue. The European Union regulators decided that the organic residue was not eligible for land farming through compost, because of the super absorbing polymers it contains. These polymers were considered to be plastics. So, we began to look for other uses and through testing we carried out with the University of Cardiff, we found that the KiloJoule value of the residue was significant. Now we are working on ways to make use of this as a renewable energy source.”

## Sector focus

- The UK has one of the most vibrant and internationally valued renewable energy and environmental technology sectors in the world
- This has been achieved through progressive government policies, innovative and experienced companies, and vast natural renewable energy resources
- The Government’s aim to reduce CO2 emissions by at least 80 per cent in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 offers a robust framework for continued investment in the UK
- Onshore and offshore wind, biomass, wave and tidal energy are just some of the renewable energy sectors presenting opportunities for investment



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