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## BIOFUELWATCH POSITION: WHAT DOES BREXIT MEAN FOR ENERGY JUSTICE CAMPAIGNING?

Right now, none of us can foresee what future UK energy and climate policy will look like following the Brexit Referendum. Clearly, much will depend on who will end up in government over the next few years, and what the outcome of the two years of Brexit negotiations with the EU is going to be (presuming that those will indeed happen). Until such time as the UK leaves the EU (which takes at least two years), EU Directives and policy will continue to apply in the UK as before.

For our campaign, there will be two big priorities now:

Firstly, we will support other environmental NGOs across the UK to defend our environmental regulations, which are under serious threat following the 'Leave' vote. Outside the EU, air quality and air emissions regulations, the Nature Directives (vital for protecting biodiversity), and many more would be under serious threat. The UK and the devolved governments must commit to

preserving – if not improving – those regulations in domestic legislation.

Secondly, we will continue to work with others and campaign for drastic and meaningful changes to energy policy both in the EU and UK. We urgently need an energy policy that genuinely reduces our contribution to climate change whilst protecting communities both at home and abroad. The climate crisis demands a rapid phase out of fossil fuel burning as well as the

protection and regeneration of forests and other ecosystems. 'Cleaning up' renewables policies is a vital contribution towards this aim. Sustainable wind and solar power are renewable, cutting and down and burning forests in power stations is not. A choice between fossil fuels and big biomass plus biofuels is a dangerous and false choice!

### 1) A SERIOUS THREAT TO ALL ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATIONS IN THE UK

Biofuelwatch has been supporting local communities fighting to stop dirty and destructive biofuel and biomass power stations since 2008. Nearly all of the legal planning arguments which we have been able to use (and which in several cases have successfully stopped planning proposals) are based on EU Directives.

The same is true for every single campaign against destructive developments, from fracking, to waste incinerators, to airport expansion.

Almost every environmental regulation that went beyond the minimum standard set by the EU was torn up by the Government

during the recent "Red Tape Review". Outside the EU, all of the environmental and public health regulations that remain in place in the UK will be under serious threat. Thus **Farming Minister George Eustice** had boasted before the Referendum that Brexit was a chance for Britain to free itself from "spirit-crushing" green directives,

such as the Nature Directives! He is also keen to 'free' the government from having to observe the precautionary principle (which of course they have been ignoring anyway, e.g. over bee-killing pesticides).

EU Regulations are incorporated into UK and/or devolved legislation. Environmental NGOs are preparing to mount a strong campaign to prevent environmental regulations from being torn up if or when the UK leaves the EU. We will actively support such a campaign.

## 2) MOBILISING FOR AN ENERGY POLICY THAT GENUINELY REDUCES OUR CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE REMAINS AS VITAL AS EVER

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Biofuelwatch has long been campaigning against EU biofuel targets and against flawed renewable energy policies which reward dirty and high-carbon energy. We believe that energy policy – both at the EU and at the individual country level – is in urgent need of fundamental reform.

A reform of renewable energy policies must be a vital part of the larger policy changes we need. Right now, the EU is debating a new Renewable Energy Directive for 2020-30. **Together with over 130 organisations worldwide**, we believe that changing the definition of renewable energy is fundamental to addressing the climate crisis. We have to end the current situation in which the vast majority of energy classed as 'renewable' across the EU comes from burning wood and other biomass and where Drax is the biggest recipient of renewable energy subsidies in the UK! We will continue working with our allies worldwide towards this aim.

A choice between fossil fuels and industrial bioenergy is a false choice. Both are high carbon, and both are responsible for massive environmental injustice and

destruction worldwide. We need to ensure that all support goes towards genuinely renewable and low-carbon forms of energy, such as sustainable wind and solar power, and that energy use is drastically reduced, including through greater efficiency and energy conservation.

Whether inside or outside the EU, we need such a shift in energy policy in the UK, too. Scrapping EU renewable energy targets in favour of coal and fracking would be disastrous. But current government energy policies are disastrous, too. This is a government which is massively subsidising oil drilling, pushing fracking, and which wants to meet renewables targets by burning vast amounts of wood in power stations whilst slashing subsidies for onshore wind and solar power, as well as for home insulation.

Some might be tempted to hope that at least subsidies for Drax or biofuel targets would end outside the EU. But there's no guarantee of that: It has been entirely the UK government's own choice to reward the likes of Drax. Tellingly, Drax's shares have been stable since the EU Referendum and Drax could benefit from EU State Aid rules no

longer curtailing their subsidies. And the UK has its own strong and loud biofuel lobby, including the National Farmers Union.

But simply fighting to "keep EU renewable energy targets" makes no sense either. We need a renewables and a wider energy policy which actually benefits the climate.