

Campaign guide: How to talk to your MP about redirecting subsidies from wood-burning to renewables

1. What's the problem with biomass burning?



[Coastal wetland forests](#) in the Southern US are at the heart of a biodiversity hotspot and are home to many endangered species.

They are also a haven for people and protect communities from flooding.

However, they are being clear-felled by companies such as [Enviva](#) which are turning the wood into pellets to burn in [UK biomass power stations](#).

Even if trees are replanted, they are usually replaced by [monoculture plantations](#) which support few species and [absorb less carbon dioxide](#) than natural forests.



This is not only harming forests and wildlife but it is also [polluting communities](#) who live near the US pellet mills and the UK biomass power stations.

Biomass burning is also [making climate change worse](#) and it is destroying the forests which we need to reduce our carbon emissions.

UK biomass power stations receive huge government subsidies to burn this wood.

In 2017, the UK government granted around [£1 billion in renewable subsidies](#) to biomass power stations such as Drax in Yorkshire. These subsidies are paid for by a surcharge on our energy bills.



2. Campaign Aim: Redirecting subsidies from biomass burning to renewables



We are asking the government to [divert renewable subsidies from biomass burning to wind, wave and solar power](#).

This can be done by the Secretary of State through secondary legislation.

Ending subsidies for biomass would automatically free over [£800m](#) for wind, wave and solar energy for which government funding is currently in short supply.

3. How can I take action to save forests from biomass burning?



There are lots of things you can do to help save forests, including emailing your MP via the alert [here](#).

If you would like to arrange a meeting with your MP, we have a guide [here](#).

We have a list of common MP responses and how you can reply [here](#).

You might also like to arrange a screening of the award-winning documentary, [Burned: are trees the new coal?](#) in your area.

Please email biofuelwatch@gmail.com for support and resources for any of these things.

4. What can I ask my MP to do?



You can ask your MP to sign [Early Day Motion 171](#). Some MPs cannot or do not sign Early Day Motions. You can check in advance if they have recently signed EDMs via their MP Profile [here](#).

If your MP does not sign EDMs, you can ask them to sign the [Open Letter](#) to the Secretary of State.



They can also ask a Parliamentary Question about biomass subsidies or

write personally to the Secretary of State ([Andrea Leadsom](#)) and Minister of Energy and Clean Growth ([Kwasi Kwarteng](#)) on your behalf. They can use the Open Letter as a basis to write personally to the Secretary of State.



Suggested resources to take with you when meeting your MP

1. Your (these) notes.
2. [Guide to common MP responses and how to reply](#)
3. [Guide to meeting with your MP](#)
4. [EDM 1771](#) text with references.
5. [Open Letter](#) text
6. [MP Briefing](#)

Additional resources by subject

7. Clear felling of forests for biomass burning: [Report by NRDC \(US NGO\)](#): with photo-evidence of clear-felling for biomass
8. Biodiversity loss: [Burning Trees for Power: The Truth about wood biomass, energy & wildlife](#) - 12 page report with good pictures
9. Information about plantations versus forests :
<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2018/pellets-introduction/>
10. Environmental justice & the impact of mass logging on US communities:
<https://www.dogwoodalliance.org/2017/02/stop-exporting-southern-forests/>
11. Air pollution from the biomass industry: <https://www.environmentalintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Biomass-Report.pdf>

Some useful quotes



False solution to our energy needs

"If we're talking about clean energy, actually green energy, the first thing you have to do is acknowledge that biomass moves us backwards, not forwards," [Ecologist Dr. Andrew George, Adjunct Faculty, UNC Chapel Hill](#)

Drax Power Station, the world's biggest biomass burner. Photo: Dom Fellowes



Impact on forests and wildlife

"[When you look at biomass clearcuts] it looks like like a bomb has gone off, or a tornado has come through. The devastation is going to last for decades. Repairing the ecosystem that has been destroyed is going to take a long time," [James \(JC\) Woodley, Sierra Club.](#)

Clear-felled US wetland forests. Photo by Dogwood Alliance.



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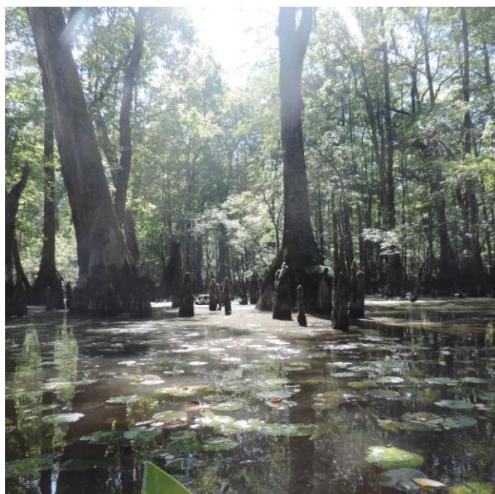
biofuelwatch@gmail.com



Climate impact of biomass burning

"Even if forests are allowed to regrow, using wood deliberately harvested for burning will increase carbon in the atmosphere and warming for decades to centuries [...] even when wood replaces coal, oil or natural gas. The reasons are fundamental and occur regardless of whether forest management is 'sustainable.' " [Letter from 800 scientists to the EU Parliament](#) regarding forest biomass.

Clear-cut US forest for Enviva pellet mill, Photo Dogwood Alliance



The importance of forests for climate action

"While high-tech carbon dioxide removal solutions are under development, the "natural technology" of forests is currently the only proven means of removing and storing atmospheric CO₂ at a scale that can meaningfully contribute to achieving carbon balance."

[Five Reasons the Earth's Climate Depends on Forests](#): Statement from 40 International Scientists in response to the 2018 IPCC Report

North Carolina wetland forests. Photo: Dogwood Alliance



"A safe and proven way to [draw carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere] is to protect and restore natural forests. Logging for biomass does the opposite. [...] Subsidies for forest biomass energy must be eliminated. Protecting and restoring the world's forests is a climate change solution, burning them is not."

[The Biomass Delusion](#) Paper signed by over 120 environmental groups

Clear-cut US wetland forest. Photo: Dogwood Alliance