

Biofuelwatch submission to the Energy and Climate Change committee.

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Which DECC policy areas do you think require particular scrutiny over the next five years?

Biomass electricity is a very large contributor to UK 'renewable energy'.¹ It consumes a disproportionate share of renewable subsidies² and is long-term dependent upon these subsidies. Drax stands to get nearly £2m day.

Biomass is deemed to be carbon-neutral because the carbon is reabsorbed by regrowth. But the Renewable Energy Directive LCA methodology does not count key GHG emissions sources. A large and growing number of scientific studies³ including DECC's own BEaC study⁴, show that biomass energy is far from carbon-neutral.

The BEaC study showed that there are "bioenergy scenarios that could lead to high GHG intensities (e.g. greater than electricity from coal, when analysed over 40 or 100 years) **but would be found to have GHG intensities less than 200 kg CO₂e/MWh by the Renewable Energy Directive LCA methodology.**" (p125)

There is a high risk that Biomass electricity will actually significantly increase carbon emissions. For instance Drax currently sources biomass from the southern US where whole, hardwood trees are clear-felled from hugely biodiverse native wetland forests.⁵ According to BEaC this scenario (13) produces emissions that are 3 times those of coal⁶, 14 times the 240kg CO₂e per MWh allowed under the 'sustainability standards'. Drax, which only has to account for harvesting, processing and transport emissions, claims 86% saving⁷ on coal emissions which OFGEM and DECC accepts.

White Rose CCS⁸ project is set to receive nearly £1bn capital grant and ongoing CfDs. The chosen technology (oxyfuel) has been deemed uncommercial by energy companies and governments. Despite planning permission for 85% coal with CCS the developer is under no obligation to capture carbon. Legally it could meet its carbon reduction target by burning 50% biomass. It can never achieve 'negative emissions'.

287 words

What should be the Committee's scrutiny priorities over the next twelve months?

- URGENT: Subsidy for White Rose CCS – hype around negative emissions
- Biomass electricity subsidies

13 words

1

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/450298/DUKES_2015_Chapter_6.pdf Table 6.4

2 Drax subsidies nearly £2m a day <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/axedrax-campaign/#4> Overview: <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2013/biomass-faq-2/#C18>

3 <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/biomass-resources/resources-on-biomass/> for example Schulze

4 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/life-cycle-impacts-of-biomass-electricity-in-2020>

5 Dogwood Alliance on Enviva's clear-felling: <http://www.dogwoodalliance.org/2015/06/uncovering-the-truth-investigating-the-destruction-of-precious-wetland-forests/>

6 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/349024/BEAC_Report_290814.pdf figure 38 p 84

7 <http://www.drax.com/media/41983/the-biomass-story.pdf>

8 <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/White-Rose-briefing2.pdf> and article on 'negative emissions' deception: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/oli-munnion/blazing-trail-of-deception-white-rose-project-and-%E2%80%9Cnegative-emissions%E2%80%9D-techno>