

Dear all,

This is the third edition of our monthly newsletter, with details of recent and upcoming events and news from campaigns throughout the UK. Please let us know if you would like more information about particular campaign issues/news. If you are looking for news about biomass campaigning in the US, then please see www.energyjustice.net/biomass/monitor .

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1) Draxtic Action Round Up

On 24th April, around 50 people took part in a demonstration and rally outside the annual general meeting of Drax Plc, at the Grocers' Hall in London. Biofuelwatch called the demonstration to oppose Drax power station's plans to convert half of its generating capacity to biomass, and to highlight the impacts that this will have in terms of increased deforestation, land-grabbing and carbon emissions.

The demonstration coincided with the publication of an international Open Letter "Converting Coal plants to burn biomass only replaces one disaster with another" which was signed by 48 international organisations and networks. For a link to the Open Letter and a list of the supporting groups, please see www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2013/drax-signon-letter/

As shareholders approached the entrance to the AGM, demonstrators handed them briefings highlighting the reasons why they should not be investing in these plans. They chanted "Drax Drax, what do you say? How many trees have you killed today?" and held banners reading "Big Biomass: Fuelling Deforestation, Land-grabbing and Climate Disaster", "Big Biomass is Greenwash not Renewable Energy" and "Drax the Destroyer!"

You can read the full article here: <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2013/drax-agm-targeted-over-biomass-conversion-plans/>

There is a short video of the event available

here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNIGgx9L4o4>

And photos here: <http://www.demotix.com/news/1991096/protesters-say-drax-biomass-threatens-our-planet-london>

2) Biofuelwatch FoI request reveals why Drax has to burn pellets from whole trees

Evidence by the US conservation NGO, Dogwood Alliance, has already shown that pellets sold from the southern US to Drax and other UK and EU energy companies are made from whole trees. See <http://www.dogwoodalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Whole-Tree-Wood-Pellet-Production-Report.pdf>

Now, a Freedom of Information request by Biofuelwatch to the UK Government reveals why Drax and other companies burning biomass in power stations built for coal have to burn pellets made from whole trees. According to technical information which Drax

shared with the Government in May 2012, the only type of biomass that can be burned in coal power station boilers (except in tiny quantities) is wood from slow-growing trees with little bark. Forget straw, miscanthus, poplar, waste wood and other things mentioned on Drax's website and in the media – burning any of those types of biomass corrodes the boilers. As does bark – which rules out most sawmill residues, too.

This means that the impact from the new demand by Drax, E.On, RWE and other big energy firms on North America's remaining biodiverse forests will be even worse than expected. But it does not mean that countries like South America and Africa will be safe from the UK's and EU's fast growing demand for wood. Dedicated biomass power stations can, and likely will, be burning wood from fast-growing trees, such as eucalyptus plantations in Brazil or timber plantations in West Africa. At Holyhead Port in Anglesey, plans for importing large quantities of woodchips and pellets from Ghana have just been announced.

The documents received through Freedom of Information further show how closely Drax and the Government have been colluding – see our press release here <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2013/drax-lobbying-pr/>

3) The Royal Bank of Scotland: Greening Its Image with False Renewable Energy Projects

This month Biofuelwatch has been putting the spotlight on the Royal Bank of Scotland. In reaction to negative publicity and increasing public pressure, RBS has been making ever greater investments into so-called renewable energy projects in recent years in an attempt to green its image. However a considerable number of the investments that RBS classifies as renewable, are in fact extremely environmentally and socially damaging energy generation projects such as big biomass and biofuels.

This is why, on 14th of May Biofuelwatch participated in a media stunt organised by Friends of the Earth Scotland outside the RBS AGM at their headquarters in Edinburgh. We wanted to draw attention to the fact that RBS is using our money (since RBS is a taxpayer owned bank) to invest in false renewable solutions such as biomass and biofuels.

We will continue to put the pressure on the financiers of big biomass and biofuel projects, as these are the companies that make these otherwise untenable projects financially viable.

You can read the full article about RBS here: <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2013/the-royal-bank-of-scotland-greening-its-image-with-false-renewable-energy-projects/>

4) Green Investment Bank: It's official - They stopped Drax being shut down

We are still running our Green Investment Bank (another big financier of biomass projects) alert, which you can participate in here: <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2013/green-bank-alert/>

And now it's official: In a comment published by the Financial Times on 9th May, Secretary of State Vince Cable praised the Green Investment Bank's loan for Drax and confirmed: "It would have closed down because it has to meet European rules on coal use and it wouldn't have been able to survive." So the Green Investment Bank's first big loan ever has allowed the UK's largest coal power station to keep burning coal, as well as imported wood pellets, for years or decades to come. There can be no better picture for what the UK's bioenergy strategy looks like than this, by the Association of British Ports. This is an artist's impression of the Immingham Port terminal that supplies Drax in future. The four silos will be used to store woodchips, while the large coal storage area

remains:



5) Update on local biomass and biofuel power station campaigns

There have been two very recent disturbing decisions approving a biofuel power station application in Shoreham-by-Sea and a biomass power station in Trafford.

In **Shoreham**, Adur District Council approved Edgeley Green Power's application for a 32 MW biofuel power station which we and other campaigners believe would (if built) likely burn palm oil. At least 560 people had objected to the application and hundreds more had signed petitions. The Planning Committee decided that concerns about the impacts of biofuels could be addressed by requiring the company to make sure they were inedible on arrival at the port. Shipping biofuels in dirty containers (something the company had said would be an option for them!) apparently addresses all concerns about deforestation, land-grabbing and hunger! Biofuelwatch and local campaigners from NO2 Shoreham Biofuels have deep concerns about the way the application was handled and the decision was made and are considering the next steps for that campaign. If you live in or near Shoreham or Brighton and would like to know more/get involved, please email us.

In **Trafford**, Secretary of State Eric Pickles has overruled a unanimous decision by the Council's Planning Committee to refuse Peel Energy's plans for a 20 MW biomass power station. Local residents and their Breathe Clean Air Group have been fighting against the proposal for three years and will continue to campaign against the plans: <http://www.breathecleanairgroup.co.uk/>

The decision raises serious concerns in relation to air quality. The site is one of the regions where, according to a recent Supreme Court judgment, the government is in breach of EU legislation because of dangerously and persistently high levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). NO₂ is linked to respiratory and heart disease and premature death from both. The power station would further increase NO₂ levels, as well as emitting many different toxic pollutants. A US expert who submitted evidence to a Public Inquiry into the proposal observed: "Of the many biomass facility proposals that I have reviewed, the Barton [Trafford] plant strikes me as one of the most dangerous I have seen in terms of potential impacts to human health and general lack of oversight and rigor in permitting." <http://www.pfpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/PFPI-comments-on-Barton-plant.pdf>

The first 'air quality measure' announced by the UK Government since the damning Supreme Court judgement has been an announcement in the Queens Speech that air quality monitoring in polluted areas will be curtailed in future! As in Shoreham, local campaigners and residents will continue to oppose these power station plans.

In **Portland Dorset**, W4B has put in an application for a change of planning permission which we and local campaigners fear could (if approved) take them one step closer to being able to build a palm oil power station. They obtained planning permission for such a power station in 2010 but have not yet been able to attract investment. If you live in Dorset, then please go to <http://nope.org.uk/> for details on how to object to this latest application and to get involved in the local campaign.

In **Scotland**, no decisions on any of the Forth Energy biomass power station applications have been made but the Dundee application has moved one step closer to a decision: Back in 2010, Dundee City Council requested further air quality monitoring and evidence before they would decide whether or not to object to the application. Such evidence has now been submitted – evidence which Biofuelwatch and the local Friends of the Earth group, FoE Tayside believe to be deeply flawed – and the Council's Planning Committee will vote on the application on 10th June. If they object, then the plans will go to Public Local Inquiry. If they don't object, then they could be approved by the Scottish Government at any time. Biofuelwatch and Friends of the Earth Tayside are working hard to convince Dundee City Council to object to Forth Energy's plans to build a new biomass power station in Dundee on air quality grounds.

If you live in Dundee and would like to get involved in this campaign, please email us. Dundee residents can take part in an online alert here: <http://foes.do/biomassdundee>

You can support the campaign on its facebook page "**No Big Biomass in Dundee**"

6) Fundraising Appeal:

Thanks to everybody who has given donations for our campaign against coal-to-biomass conversions so far. If you would still like to donate to that campaign, you can do so through Paypal, standing orders or electronic bank transfer: <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/donate/>