

## Open Letter calling on the Government to redirect renewable subsidies from biomass burning to genuinely renewable energy

To sign the Open Letter, please email: [biofuelwatch@gmail.com](mailto:biofuelwatch@gmail.com)

**To the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, and the Energy Minister**

The UK spends well over £1 billion a year subsidising burning trees for electricity, with most of the wood shipped in in the form of pellets sourced from high carbon, [biodiverse](#) forests overseas. The UK's demand for wood-fuelled electricity contributes to [climate change](#), [forest degradation](#) and [environmental injustice](#), and is destroying the habitats of many at-risk animals and plants.

A [major expansion of the wood pellet industry](#) is now underway, supported by subsidies in the UK and several other European countries. The UK remains the world's biggest wood pellet importer.

**Therefore, we urge you to initiate proceedings to remove subsidies paid to companies that burn solid biomass for electricity under the Renewables Obligation scheme, and redirect the money to support genuinely renewable wind, solar and wave/tidal power.**

Keeping forests standing must be a priority of all governments seeking to address the climate emergency. Burning wood in power stations threatens that priority by leading to more forests being felled. In January 2018, 800 scientists set out the climate impacts of burning wood in an [Open Letter to the EU Parliament](#): *'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".'*

Moreover, burning wood causes air pollution [comparable](#) to burning coal and [new research](#) has found that burning trees from so-called 'sustainably managed forests' increases CO2 pollution in the atmosphere for more than 40 years. This is well beyond the timeframe critical to tackle the climate emergency.

Moreover, Drax, which gets over £2.1 million in renewable energy subsidies every day, routinely burns pellets sourced from clearcuts of [mature coastal hardwood forests](#) in the Southeastern USA, forests which lie at the heart of a global [biodiversity hotspot](#).

We believe we have a responsibility to act on climate change and to ensure that the UK can meet our international commitments to work towards keeping global temperature rises to 1.5C.

In 2018, the government made a positive first step by [effectively ruling out new subsidies for large-scale](#) biomass electricity that is dependent on imported wood. However, existing biomass power stations are due to continue receiving subsidies until 2027.

Fortunately, most of these subsidies can be stopped through secondary legislation. This would free up hundreds of millions a year which, under the Levy Control Framework, must then be spent on genuinely clean and renewable energy.

Yours faithfully,

The undersigned organisations