

Open Letter to data centre companies: Don't partner with Drax

14th May 2026 - The 78 signatory organisations to this letter call on your company to refrain from partnering with Drax Group, either by entering into a power purchase agreement, or by developing a data centre on the premises of Drax Power Station, which is the world's largest wood-burning plant. Below, we summarise the severe impacts that Drax's biomass burning is having on forests in North America and elsewhere, on the climate, and on the health and well-being of communities living next to pellet plants that are either operated by Drax or otherwise supply Drax Power Station. We believe that partnering with Drax would expose your company to both reputational and economic risks. The economic risks are discussed below, under our documentation of Drax's impacts on forests, climate and communities.

Harmful to forests

75% of the wood pellets burned by Drax come from the Southeastern USA. Every year since 2014, [on-the-ground investigations](#) have shown that pellets sourced by Drax routinely include wood from the clearcutting of mature, highly biodiverse hardwood forests. Those forests are located inside a [global biodiversity hotspot](#). Some of the pellets come from monoculture pine plantations in the region, which provide little or no habitat for wildlife. [Expansion of tree plantations has long been a driver of native forest loss in the Southeastern USA](#). This contributes to less resilient forests ill-prepared for increasingly powerful storms in the region, less clear air and clean water.

Around 12% of the pellets burned by Drax in 2025 came from Canada, where the company also operates nine pellet plants. For its own pellet production, Drax's pellet plants in British Columbia have been [found to repeatedly source whole mature trees from the clearcutting of old growth forests](#), including [habitat of the endangered caribou](#). Drax has [announced](#) that it will stop burning pellets from its own Canadian pellet plants from 2027, all of which will instead be sold to Japan and South Korea. As their annual accounts show, those pellet plants are only viable because of revenue, including from subsidies, in the UK.

The third main pellet sourcing region for Drax are the Baltic States, especially Latvia and Estonia. There, too, logging is primarily done by way of clear-cutting. In both countries, logging volumes have been so high for the past decade that tree cover and thus the amount of carbon stored in forests [have been shrinking](#). In 2022, the Estonian government [suspended logging in Natura 2000 areas](#), where biodiversity must be protected under the EU Habitats Directive. This followed infringement proceedings by the European Commission following [evidence](#) of highly destructive logging in nature reserves, including by a subsidiary of the region's largest pellet company, [Drax supplier Graanul Invest](#). However, a [new investigation](#), published in February 2026, revealed that logging in Natura 2000 sites has resumed, and that clearcutting licences were issued even inside the restricted, supposedly highly protected forest that is Eurasian pygmy owl habitat, and in forests home to capercaillie, whose number of breeding pairs is declining.

Harmful to the climate

Drax Power Station emitted [14 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2025](#), making it by far the largest emitter of CO₂ in the UK. Those CO₂ emissions accelerate the climate crisis in the same way as carbon emitted from burning fossil fuels. A [2021 open letter signed by 500 scientists](#) states that increased logging for biomass energy results in “a large initial increase in carbon emissions, creating a ‘carbon debt’, which increases over time as more trees are harvested for continuing bioenergy use...As numerous studies have shown, this burning of wood will increase warming for decades to centuries. That is true even when the wood replaces coal, oil or natural gas”.

The sole reason why Drax gets away with claiming that burning wood is ‘low carbon’ is that, through a loophole in international carbon accounting rules, it is assumed that the climate impact will be fully accounted for in the country where the trees are cut down. Even if this was the case, it doesn’t make the 14 million tonnes of CO₂ emitted by Drax Power Station any less harmful. Moreover, the USA, where three quarters of Drax’s wood comes from, has withdrawn from the Paris Climate Agreement and thus from any commitment to reducing emissions altogether.

Harmful to communities living near pellet plants that supply Drax

Wood pellet plants in the Southeastern USA, Drax’s main sourcing region, are predominantly sited in low-income communities or communities of colour who are already exposed to high levels of industrial pollution. Violations of air permits are widespread, including by Drax and by Drax’s biggest external supplier in the region, Enviva, as [documented by the Southern Environmental Law Center](#). [Land and Climate Review found](#) that, by the beginning of 2026, Drax had violated environmental limits over 18,000 times in the US, and 6,000 times in Louisiana alone. In Mississippi, Drax has had to pay [\\$2.725 million in fines](#) for permit violations.

An [investigation by Land and Climate Review](#), published in May 2024, shows that Drax’s Canadian pellet mills had by that time violated environmental regulations 189 times. According to the report, “*infringements include polluting the Endako River in British Columbia with industrial waste and repeatedly failing to test and report air pollution*”.

Economic Risk

Drax Group is highly dependent on subsidies. According to the company’s [2025 Annual Report](#), they received £950.6 million in Renewable Obligations Certificates and the subsidy-element of a Contract for Difference (CfD) combined. Those subsidies exceeded their entire EBITDA, which was £947m. Without subsidies, Drax would thus have incurred net losses.

Drax’s current subsidies end on 31 March 2027. The government has approved a new CfD, from 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2031 to help maintain grid stability. However, those subsidies will be limited to around 42% of Drax Power Station’s 2025 electricity generation. Although the [CfD Agreement](#) allows Drax to supply electricity to a data centre in future subject to permission from the Government, they are nonetheless required to ensure that the plant’s full 2.6 GW capacity is available for the grid if required.

This means that any electricity that Drax might supply to a data centre will not be subsidised and thus be significantly more expensive to generate. We are not aware of any biomass power station anywhere that operates without subsidies. Furthermore, for the duration of the 2027-31 CfD, direct electricity supply to a data centre appears liable to be interrupted if the grid operator, NESO, calls up Drax's full capacity.

We therefore hope that your company will refrain from partnering with Drax, and we will be grateful if you confirm that you are ruling out such a partnership. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you.

Campaign against Climate Change UK



Christian Climate Action UK



Climate Emergency Science Law UK



Coal Action Network UK



Derbyshire Climate Coalition UK



EcoNexus UK



Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland UK



Friends of the Earth Selby UK



Fuel Poverty Action UK



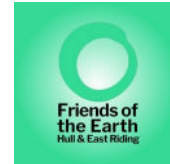
Global Action Plan UK



Green Christian UK



Health for XR UK
Hull and East Riding Friends of the Earth UK



MP Watch UK



Mums for Lungs UK



Norwich Friends of the Earth UK



Operation Noah UK



Stop Burning Trees Coalition UK



The Lifescape Project UK



The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds UK



Tipping Point UK



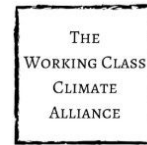
Weald Action Group UK



Earth Thrive UK / Balkans



The Working Class Climate Alliance UK/International



Biofuelwatch UK/USA



Global Forest Coalition International



Biomass Action Network International



FÓRUM CARAJÁS Brazil



Bulkley Valley Stewardship Coalition Canada, B.C.
Science Alliance for Forestry Transformation Canada, B.C.



Stand.earth Canada
BirdLife Estonia Estonia



Save Estonia's Forests (Päästame Eesti Metsad) Estonia



Latvian Ornithological Society Latvia



Puse Latvijās Latvia



Acréscimo - Associação de Promoção ao Investimento Florestal Portugal



ZERO - associação sistema terrestre sustentável Portugal

350 Deschutes USA



350 Seattle USA



A2 (Anthropocene Alliance) USA



A Community Voice USA

Anthropocene Alliance



A
Community Voice ~
Louisiana

Alliance for Community Engagement (ACE) SW WA USA



Athens County's Future Action Network, acfan.org USA (Appalachia)



Cherokee Concerned Citizens USA



Clean Air Action Network of Glens Falls USA



Climate Communications Coalition USA



Corporate Watch UK



Cyber x Climate USA



Dogwood Alliance USA



EarthNeighborhood Productions USA



Ecology Center USA



Friends of the Earth US USA



GAIA (Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives) USA (HQ in Berkeley, CA)



Global Justice Ecology Project USA



Heartwood USA



John Muir Project USA



Mighty Earth USA



MIGHTY EARTH

Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center USA



NC Climate Solutions Coalition USA



NC Disaster Response and Resilience Network USA



NRDC USA



Old-Growth Forest Network USA



Olympic Climate Action USA



Partnership for Policy Integrity USA



Pivot Point USA (Washington State)



Protect Our Streams RESTORE: The North Woods USA



SOS Save Our Sumter USA



Southern Environmental Law Center USA



SOUTHERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER

Standing Trees USA



Southern Forests Conservation Coalition USA



Tennessee Heartwood USA



The Rachel Carson Council USA



Three Rivers Waterkeeper USA



Troublemakers USA



Valley Improvement Projects USA, CA



Young, Gifted & Green USA



Zero Waste Ithaca USA

