

Press Release: Environmental campaigners call on Councillors to stand firm against destructive biofuel power station plans

For immediate release

4th January 2010 - Biofuelwatch, East Dorset Friends of the Earth and the West and South Dorset Green Party have urged Councillors to put climate, environment and public health before W4B's plans to burn palm oil and jatropa oil for electricity when considering the application on Wednesday, 6th January. W4B resubmitted their application for a power station at Portland Docks after the Planning Committee voted against their initial application on 16th September, amidst concerns about impacts on local air quality and health as well as climate change and other serious global environmental and social impacts. There have been over 830 objections to the application. Last week, three NGOs from India expressed their concerns about W4B's plans and their claims regarding jatropa in an Open Letter.[1]

Campaigners dismiss new reports submitted by the company about climate and public health impacts as 'deeply flawed'. One of the reports is a 'Human Health Risk Assessment' in which all health impacts of long-term exposure to air emissions from biofuel power stations are ignored. The report also ignores emissions of a formaldehyde, a chemical released by pure vegetable oil burning which is known to cause cancer and birth defects. [2] The other report is a "Carbon Assessment" which does not address any of the concerns about rainforest and peatland destruction for palm oil but instead ignores all such emissions as well as all other greenhouse gas emissions, contrary to European legislation. The groups also point out that company claims about palm oil are based not on credible sources but on statements by a US-based lobby group called World Growth which opposes all measures to curb deforestation and which is led by a long-standing climate change denier and consultant to a company involved in illegal logging and rainforest destruction.[3]

Angela Pooley from East Dorset Friends of the Earth states: " The Carbon Assessment submitted by W4BRE (conducted by RPS Planning & Development Ltd) is fatally flawed as it fails to account for significant greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the use of palm oil in the proposed power station. We believe it is a cynical ploy to persuade the Council that their plans are sustainable. This Company is also deceiving the UK tax payers that are currently paying a subsidy for green electricity. A share of this subsidy will go to W4BRE for producing electricity that is not sustainable and in reality is contributing to climate change.

Brian Heatley from the West and South Dorset Green Party adds: "Weymouth and Portland Council's Planning Committee made the right decision when they refused W4B's power station plans on 16 September. Nothing significant is different in the new application. Instead of addressing any of the serious concerns, with this new application and a pending appeal W4B are simply trying to wear the Council down."

Robert Palgrave from Biofuelwatch states: "W4B aim's to profiteer from 'green energy' subsidies with no regard to public health, climate and communities. For local residents, a biofuel power station will mean a greater risk of respiratory and heart disease, and possibly of cancer, while indigenous peoples and other communities in

the countries where the biofuel feedstock is produced will face more evictions and displacement, more malnutrition, and the loss of their livelihoods.”

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Notes:

1) See www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/docs/anthra_statement.pdf

2) See www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/docs/vegetable_oil_burning_and_public_health.pdf for background and references regarding air emissions from biofuel power stations and their health effects

3) For background about World Growth, see www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=World_Growth#cite_note-3