

Biofuelwatch June & July Newsletter

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Dear subscriber, this is the June & July edition of our UK newsletter, with details of recent news from bioenergy campaigns. This edition has details of our Green Investment Bank campaign, protests in Avonmouth, a new report on land-grabbing for biomass and much more.



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#### Help us improve our communication!

We're currently conducting a survey amongst our supporters to find out how we can improve our online communication and publicity. Do you have feedback for us? Please take part in this [5 minute online survey!](#)

Want to get in touch, or get involved in one of our campaigns? Please email [biofuelwatch@ymail.com](mailto:biofuelwatch@ymail.com)

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## 1. Green Bank's dirty investments targeted in London & Edinburgh

Biofuelwatch, supporters, and local campaigners [staged protests at the Green Investment Bank's Annual Reviews in London and in Edinburgh](#) at the end of June.

In Edinburgh an [Open Letter](#) was signed by environmental and social justice groups, MSPs and local residents and handed to the GIB on Thursday 19th June. Then on the 26th, chainsaw-wielding investment bankers were seen [clear cutting precious forest ecosystems](#) outside their Annual Review

In London a [second Open Letter](#) was signed by residents and organisations campaigning to stop a biomass power station in Avonmouth. This was handed to the GIB in London on the 25th of June. At the same time, a violinist [performed a requiem](#) for global forests. The London protest was supported by the UK Without Incineration network since GIB has been supporting waste incineration as well as big biomass.

**We are calling on GIB to stop funding big biomass and waste incineration. The specific demands of the protests were that GIB must:**

1. **Revoke their destructive loan to Drax** which has helped it to burn millions of tonnes of wood and even more coal;
2. **Steer clear of Helius Energy's plans for 2 big biomass power stations in Avonmouth & Southampton** in England;
3. **Make a commitment not to finance 2 consented big biomass power stations in Grangemouth & Rosyth** in Scotland;
4. **Stop financing polluting waste incinerators** which release toxic air emissions and make climate change worse.

**Take Action:** Sign our GIB Avonmouth Alert [here](#).

on Big Biomass's campaign [here](#).



Watch the video "Green Bank: Stop Banking on Big Biomass"

## 2. No subsidies for biomass conversions: Joint NGO CfD consultation response

In June, a group of NGOs based in the UK and US got together to form a joint response to a new DECC consultation on allocation of new subsidy contracts for renewable energy, which included coal to biomass power station conversions. The key message of the response was that there should be no government support for coal to biomass conversions because of the climate impacts of large-scale biomass, and evidence from the southern US of the clearing of highly-biodiverse wetland forests for the wood pellet industry. You can read the response [here](#).

"It's as dangerous as fracking" it means deaths in the almost exclusively working class areas where it's happening" it produces up to 50% more carbon emissions than coal" it's destroying vital hardwood forests" it's displacing entire communities" and it's not being reported anywhere." Please watch and share this film! [Biomass Emergency](#) is a new video by Reel News, UK.

If you would like a DVD of the video, please send a cheque for Â£5.00, made out to Reel News, to 1 Galsworthy Terrace, London N16 0TS or make a donation on their [website](#).

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#### **4. Avonmouth campaigners occupy Helius site & local residents block woodchip trucks**

Eleven activists from Bristol Rising Tide **breached Port security at 9.50am on May 20th to stage a protest stunt** at the proposed Helius biomass site.

The group, who were sporting biohazard suits, dust masks and body paint, scaled the nine foot fence next to the train station with ladders. After spelling out "No Biomess" with their torsos, they were met by a number of port authority police who escorted them out under threat of arrest for breach of by-laws.

A press release was sent out explaining that it was "a friendly shot across the bows to warn investors and the Port Authority that they should expect expensive and embarrassing resistance if they press ahead with plans for Industrial scale Biomass power stations in the area."

See the photos [here](#) and press release [here](#).

At the end of May, **Avonmouth residents twice took to the streets and blocked lorries** from entering and leaving woodchipping sites at the port, in protest at the

The [Avon Coalition Against Big Biofuels](#) is campaigning against Helius' power station. Email [info@avoncoalitionagainstbigbiofuels.org.uk](mailto:info@avoncoalitionagainstbigbiofuels.org.uk) to get involved.



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## 5. Plevin under fire for waste wood facilities

A few days ago, E.On's Blackburn Meadows biomass power station was commissioned in Sheffield. To supply it with waste wood, Plevin & Sons set up the UK's biggest site for chipping and storing waste wood in the village of Crow Edge. So far, there have been two fires, one of them so massive that villagers were told to stay indoors for days, fish died, and soil, water and air were polluted. The Environment Agency is now taking some [Enforcement Action](#), but the permit has not so far been withdrawn and residents are not at all happy that enough effort has been made to protect them from wood dust impacts and the threat of future fires.

Last week, tragically, a Plevin employee died in a work [accident at the Crow Edge site](#).

In Mossley, near Manchester, residents are experiencing ongoing problems with an even larger Plevin site. Wood dust problems in Mossley are covered in Reel News' new film, Biomass Emergency (see above).

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## 6. Markinch Biomass Concerns launched

recently reached completion although due to technical problems has so far only been operating intermittently and at a fraction of its capacity.

It is unknown what the impacts of this development will be on nearby communities over the long-term, with some members of the community already reporting unacceptable levels of noise pollution.

While it is too late to prevent the plant from operating, it is not too late to make sure that the operator, RWE, is held accountable to the local community. [Markinch Community Concerns](#) was set up with support from Biofuelwatch for just this purpose. The aim being to make sure that RWE are held to account and that SEPA (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) continues to monitor the situation in the best interests of the people directly affected. Gathering a collective body of evidence will also allow members of the community to have a bigger impact on informing decision making in the future, rather than registering individual complaints.

The website encourages people experiencing impacts from the power station to share their stories and to register their complaint with SEPA. The site is supported by a facebook group.

You can visit the site [here](#).

MARKINCH  
BIOMASS  
CONCERNS



SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES OF THE NEW BIOMASS  
POWER STATION IN MARKINCH

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## 7. New Report: Land-grabbing in the global South & EU biomass policies

*A new look at land-grabs in the global south linked to EU*

NGOs, policy makers and industry analysts have predicted that Europe's fast-growing demand for wood pellets and woodchips for bioenergy will increasingly be met through imports from the global South, especially from Africa and South America, in particular Brazil. There are serious concerns that such a trend will exacerbate land-grabbing in these regions.

This report examines the evidence for investments which may lead to increased wood biomass imports from the global South to Europe and for any related land acquisitions. Its findings may at first sight appear contradictory: On the one hand there is no evidence of any of the substantial investments being made, which would be required, if countries in the global South were to start exporting significant quantities of woodchips or pellets for energy to Europe. Instead, the southern US, Canada and other European countries, including Russia, are set to continue expanding their wood bioenergy supplies to Europe and thus to continue sacrificing their forests for EU biomass. On the other hand there is compelling evidence of land-grabs for monoculture tree plantations in Africa and Brazil, being justified by companies citing the growing EU biomass demand. Even without actual EU imports from these regions, the expectation of rising EU wood demand and likely higher global wood prices alone is sufficient to exacerbate landgrabbing for tree plantations

Download the full report [here](#), or executive summary [here](#).

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## **8. Biofuelwatch articles on genetically engineered algae and on biofuel standards and incentives in connection with the Convention on Biological Diversity**

Rachel Smolker from Biofuelwatch attended the recent SBSTTA meeting of the Convention on Biological

with civil society groups calling for a moratorium on the release of synthetically modified organisms. An article by Rachel entitled "Synthetic and GE algae for biofuels? - Harmful incentives fund a new and emerging threat to marine - and other - ecosystems" can be found [here](#). Another Biofuelwatch article called "Biofuels subsidies: Is reliance on sustainability standards perpetuating harmful incentives" was published [here](#).