

Biofuelwatch Newsletter January 2015

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Dear subscriber, this is the January edition of Biofuelwatch's monthly newsletter, with news on our campaigns, campaigns we support and important policy developments.

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Interested in hosting a talk about the impacts of biomass power stations, biofuels or large-scale bioenergy in general? If you're in the UK please contact us and we will try and get a speaker.

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1. Please tell Defra today: Clamp down on air pollution, not on air quality monitoring

If you haven't done so yet then please take part in our [urgent email alert today](#) and tell Defra to clamp down on air pollution, not on air quality monitoring. Please share your concerns with your MP and let others know about this alert!

Back in 2013, Defra was forced to drop plans to scrap local authority monitoring and reporting amidst protests. Now they're trying to sneak similar plans through the back door. They are claiming that their proposals won't get rid of air quality monitoring but their own Impact Assessment confirms that this is exactly what would happen.

Without comprehensive air quality monitoring and reporting, communities have little hope of stopping

data to show that air pollution limits are being breached, local authorities will have no incentives to do anything about this. Defra's consultation runs until 30th January.

2. Statement from 1st International meeting on Wood-based Bioenergy, Paraguay

On the 20th and 21st November, the Global Forest Coalition hosted the 1st International Meeting on Wood-based Bioenergy in Asunción, Paraguay. Around 30 people from all over the world, representing a diverse range of organisations, gave presentations on the bioenergy-related issues facing their communities and regions, and discussed campaigning ideas for the future. A strong statement was produced during the 2-day meeting, calling for an end to subsidies for industrial-scale bioenergy, a change to definitions of renewable energy that excludes bioenergy, and commenting on how sustainability standards and criteria are a dangerous distraction from the hugely unsustainable demand for wood that already exists globally. The statement can be downloaded [here](#).

Paraguay was a fitting place for the meeting to have taken place. The Chaco forest, dominating much of Western Paraguay, is currently experiencing the highest rates of deforestation in the world, partly as a result of industrial charcoal demand, but predominantly because of livestock ranching to feed growing appetites for beef in Brazil, Russia, Europe and elsewhere. The already deforested East of Paraguay is dominated by vast GM soy plantations, most of which is sold as animal feed with some going to produce biodiesel. Eucalyptus plantations are also an increasing problem, as they are in neighbouring Brazil, and their current proliferation is in part a response to growing demands for biomass globally.

A report has also been published by the Global Forest



Industrial soy processing facility in eastern Paraguay, surrounded by GM soy plantations. The soy is dried using wood from trees, as shown by the wood piles in the background. This puts further pressure on Paraguay's remaining fragmented forests.

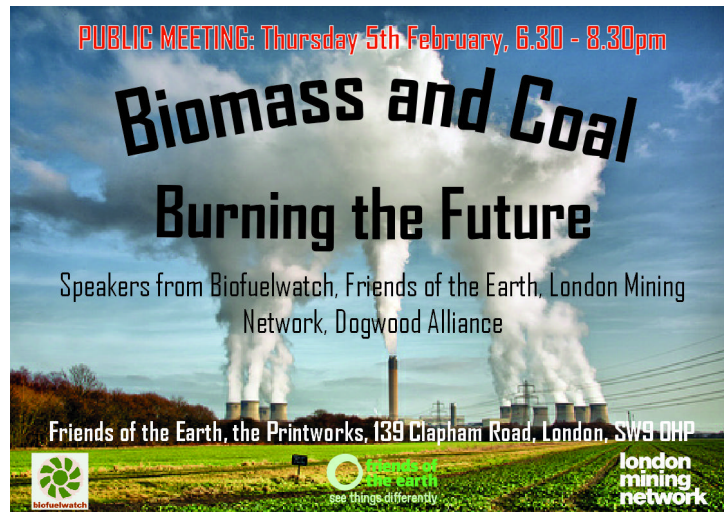
3. Public Meeting: Biomass and Coal - Burning the Future?

On Thursday, 5th February (6.30 - 8.30) Biofuelwatch, Friends of the Earth and London Mining Network will be hosting a public meeting in London: Biomass and Coal - Burning the Future.

It coincides with a European tour by representatives of three US conservation organisations who will be here to raise awareness of the destruction which our demand for wood pellets is causing to their country's forests. The event is currently fully booked however if you book now there is a high chance that you will still get a place via our waiting list: <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/biomass-and-coal-burning-the-future-tickets-8286261431>

The main focus will be on Drax, who are importing huge amounts of pellets from the southern US where remnants of highly biodiverse and carbon rich wetland forests are

recent visit to the world's largest opencast mine in Colombia, Cerrejon, a mine linked to brutal evictions, pollutions and malnutrition amongst local communities. Drax burns coal from Cerrejon and wood pellets from the southern US.



4. Over 50,000 SOS messages sent from US campaigners to Ed Davey

On November 13th, US conservation organisations held a highly successful Day of Action to Save Southern Forests. As part of it, individuals across the US sent 50,000 messages to send an SOS to Ed Davey, UK Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, urging him to Save Our Southern forests. Thanks to all of you who participated in our solidarity email alert to your MP!

As well as sending the SOS' to EU policy makers, US activists, organisations, and concerned citizens shared the SOS message on Facebook and Twitter, reaching more than 400,000 people. The Dogwood Alliance also hosted a press conference outside an industry conference which was celebrating wood pellet exports, and, when conference participants were being shown round Enviva's flagship wood pellet port facility, a boat carrying Dogwood activists and a huge SOS banner greeted them! You can read a full round up of the events on the [Dogwood](#)



5. Genetically Engineered chestnut trees in the US

In the US and elsewhere tree biotechnology researchers are working to genetically engineer trees to grow faster, be freeze tolerant and thus extend their range, as well as for other characteristics designed to make them suited to providing massive quantities of wood biomass and for conversion to biofuels and chemicals. Public resistance to GE trees has been strong however, and the industry and researchers are wary. In what appears to be a PR strategy, researchers are now working to develop an engineered American Chesnut under the guise of restoring this species that was decimated by a fungal blight at the turn of the century. Capitalizing on people's strong sentiments about chestnut restoration, researchers at State University of New York and the "Forest Health Initiative" aim to use the chestnut as a "test case" for the regulatory process. Meanwhile, tree biotech company Arborgen is seeking deregulation of their engineered eucalyptus, currently being field tested in the southern US.

<http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/28189-engineering-chestnut-trees-biotechnology-takes-a-walk-in-the-woods>

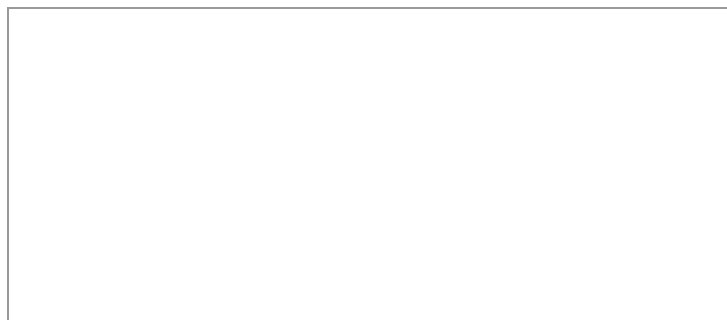
6. Good news: Ironbridge Power Station to close this year

vast quantities of coal were burned at Ironbridge. E.On, owners of the power station since 2001, had tried to avoid having to close it down under EU sulphur dioxide regulations by converting the plant from coal to biomass in early 2013. Since then, Ironbridge has been the world's second largest biomass-burning power station (after Drax) and has burned more wood than any other UK plant except for Drax, nearly all of it imported. Following a major fire last year, E.On has now concluded that keeping Ironbridge open as a biomass power station is not in their interest - just as RWE decided when they closed down Tilbury B. We hope Drax will be next in line to be closed!

7. Bad news: Drax is now targeting Brazil for wood pellets, too

At the end of November, the Brazilian plantation company Tanac announced that they had entered into an agreement with Drax and that they would build a large pellet plant in order to supply Drax power station. Previous plans by other companies to build pellet plants for export in Brazil had been shelved (for now).

Tree plantations in Brazil are responsible for large-scale destruction of forest ecosystems and biodiversity (especially in the Cerrado), for the displacement of traditional communities and Indigenous Peoples, for soil and freshwater depletion and pollution. If Tanac succeed in building their pellet plant, it will be the first time that any EU energy company will burn large amounts of wood pellets from the global South. A deeply worrying development - and another reason why Drax must be shut down!





Cerrado forest having been bulldozed to make way for eucalyptus plantations for biomass by another Brazilian company, Suzano Papel e Celulose, with a view to producing wood pellets (though Suzano has had to put their pellet plans on ice for the time being). *Photo: Ivonete Gonçalves de Souza*

8. Protest at Drax AGM, April 2015

At the end of April, Drax will hold their next AGM. We'll be back to protest against the devastation caused by Drax's vast-scale burning of coal and biomass and against the hundreds of millions in subsidies which the Government has guaranteed them. Without these subsidies - now paid for coal as well as wood burning - Drax would be forced to close.

Watch out for the protest details which we will send out as soon as we know the exact date of the AGM!



Biofuelwatch 2019 . Contact us: biofuelwatch@ymail.com biofuelwatch.org.uk