

Biofuelwatch Newsletter July 2016

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Dear subscriber, this is the July edition of our newsletter, with news of our campaigns, the campaigns we support, and important policy developments.



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Photo: Guy Bell

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1. #AxeDrax: Roundup of protests and events during Drax's AGM

For full background information about Drax and the #AxeDrax campaign see [here](#).

On 22nd April, scores of people of all ages gathered outside the Drax AGM in the City of London to protest against burning millions of tonnes of wood and coal, and against Drax profiting from subsidies which should be going towards truly low-carbon and renewable energy. See a short video from the demonstration [here](#). The protest featured the Draxosaurus, a very chic cooling tower and grim DECC complete with axe. See pictures [here](#) and [here](#). Speeches made by members of Biofuelwatch, Care2, Colombia Solidarity, London Mining Network and the Coal Action Network can be viewed [here](#). Attendees to the AGM were handed a [Warning to Investors](#). A number of people went into the AGM to ask difficult questions. Meanwhile, Drax power station was visited by members of Sheffield People & Planet in a [solidarity action](#).

At 1 pm, a number of protesters moved on to the Department of Energy and Climate Change where a [petition](#) organised by Biofuelwatch and Care2 was handed in, demanding that no more subsidy be wasted on Drax. The petition has now attracted over 130,000

Drax had earlier thrown down the gauntlet to the government saying that they could convert to 100% biomass before 2025 if DECC were to double the subsidy they receive from the projected £600m+ to about £1.3bn a year. We threw down a real gauntlet on the steps of DECC saying 'DECC, don't overdose on Drax. Just say no!' We then ritually slaughtered the Draxosaurus to show DECC what is required.

The Draxosaurus also joined the march organised by Campaign against Climate Change, Going Backwards on Climate Change down Whitehall receiving a cheque for £451m, its subsidy for 2015, from George Osborne outside Downing St. See minute 1.45 of this [short film](#).



2. What does Brexit mean for energy justice and for Biofuelwatch's work?

Right now, none of us can foresee what future UK energy and climate policy will look like following the Brexit Referendum. Clearly, much will depend on who will end up in government over the next few years, and what the outcome of the two years of Brexit negotiations with the EU is going to be (presuming that those will indeed happen). Until such time as the UK leaves the EU (which takes at least two years), EU Directives and policy will continue to apply in the UK as before.

For our campaign, there will be two big priorities now:

Firstly, we will support other environmental NGOs across the UK to defend our environmental regulations, which are under serious threat following the "Leave"™ vote. Outside the EU, air quality and air emissions regulations, the Nature Directives (vital for protecting biodiversity), and many more would be under serious threat. The UK and the devolved governments must commit to preserving " if not improving " those regulations in domestic legislation.

Secondly, we will continue to work with others and campaign for drastic and meaningful changes to energy policy both in the EU and UK. We urgently need an energy policy that genuinely reduces our contribution to climate change whilst protecting communities both at home and abroad. The climate crisis demands a rapid phase out of fossil fuel burning as

solar power are renewable, cutting and down and burning forests in power stations is not. A choice between fossil fuels and big biomass plus biofuels is a dangerous and false choice!

See [here](#) for our full statement and thoughts.

If you live in Scotland, please take part in an [e-alert](#) launched by Friends of the Earth Scotland. They are calling on party leaders in Scotland to commit to protecting environmental regulations, which include the EU Air Quality Directive and the Nature Directives, regardless of what happens with regards to the UK's (or Scotland's) EU membership.

3. Open Letter urges E.On to scrap their biomass plans in southern France

26 civil society groups worldwide have sent an [Open Letter to E.On](#) demanding that the energy corporation scraps plans to convert a mothballed coal power station in Gardanne, southern France, to burning wood pellets. Residents, environmental campaigners and local authorities in southern France have been protesting against those for plans since they were first mooted more than two years ago.

The Open Letter was initiated by German environmental campaigners who want to build pressure on the German energy corporation E.On in solidarity with the grassroots opposition to the plant in southern France.

SOS Forêt du Sud and others fear that the power station will devastate biodiverse natural forests in France, including in the Cevenne National Park. Forests elsewhere, quite possibly in North America, are also at risk because E.On states that at first most of the wood will be imported.

See [here](#) for a joint press release.



Image: Rettet den Regenwald/Rainforest Rescue

4. News from local campaigns against biomass plants in the UK

Biofuelwatch continues to support local campaigns against proposed and existing biomass power stations in the UK. In recent months, we have supported campaigners in West Thurrock, in Andover, in Milford Haven, and in Norwich. For a roundup of news on those campaigns, please see biofuelwatch.org.uk/local-campaigns-uk.

We would love to hear from people who live close to other biomass power station sites, in particular anyone living in Anglesey or Neath and Port Talbot (where Orthios Energy are proposing two huge biomass power stations), ***in Teesside*** (where MGT Power wants to build a large plant) and ***near Lynemouth*** (where Czech energy company EPH is converting the mothballed Lynemouth Power Station to biomass).

5. Updates from GeoengineeringMonitor and Synbio Watch

Synbiowatch.org hosting first in a series of webinars on synthetic biology

Outsmarting Nature? A webinar on synthetic biology for crops and agriculture will take place on Thursday 21st July, streamed live on synbiowatch.org. Join in to hear what the role of synthetic biology is in our food system, and how it relates to "climate-smart" agriculture, as well as the costs and risks of the new technologies being developed. For full info on speakers, timings and how to participate, please see: www.synbiowatch.org/2016/07/outsmarting-nature-webinar/.

Updates from GeoengineeringMonitor.org

GeoengineeringMonitor.org is a collaboration between Biofuelwatch and ETC Group, and aims to provide a platform for civil society voices to be heard in opposition to geoengineering as a climate solution, as well as "negative emissions" technologies, and "net zero" emissions instead of genuine emissions reductions. Here's the latest from the site:

[Response to: Do we need BECCS to avoid dangerous climate change?](#)

[Vultures are circling after Paris agreement: the carbon dioxide removal sector wants more funding.](#)



Movements & Emerging Technologies Webinars present:

Outsmarting Nature?

A webinar on Synthetic Biology for Crops & Agriculture

*What's the role of synthetic biology in our food system and how does it relate to "climate-smart" agriculture?
What are the costs and risks?*

Thurs 21st July 2016
8am (San Francisco)
11 am (EDT New York)
4pm (London)
6pm (EEST Bucharest)

To participate visit:
www.synbiowatch.org

Host: **Tom Philpott**
Food & Agriculture Journalist
with Mother Jones

Expert: **Pat Mooney**,
Executive Director, ETC Group

Commentators: **Teresa Anderson**
Policy Officer, Climate &
Resilience International,
Action Aid

Ramona Duminicioiu,
Eco-ruralis Romania,
La Via Campesina

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www.etcgroup.org

6. Biofuelwatch case study on Mascoma: a US cellulosic company which spent

Biofuelwatch has published an [investigation into Mascoma Corporation](#), a US corporation, that took at least \$100 million and possibly over \$155 million in public subsidies, mostly for building commercial cellulosic ethanol refineries which they never even started to build.

We believe that this case illustrates the dangers of advocating subsidies for 'next generation biofuel' technologies, which have little prospect of commercial success but to which huge sums of public funds have been diverted over many years. Rather than pinning ones hopes on unproven technologies, which would create yet more demand for biomass and land, as well as involving high-risk, genetically engineered microorganisms, we need real, credible policies to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Carbon emissions from the transport sector could be drastically reduced if financial support was shifted from private transport and aviation to cycling, walking and public transport. Policies should be geared towards reducing the need to travel, and imposing strict efficiency standards. Pouring billions into unproven new biofuel technologies is a dangerous distraction from those priorities.

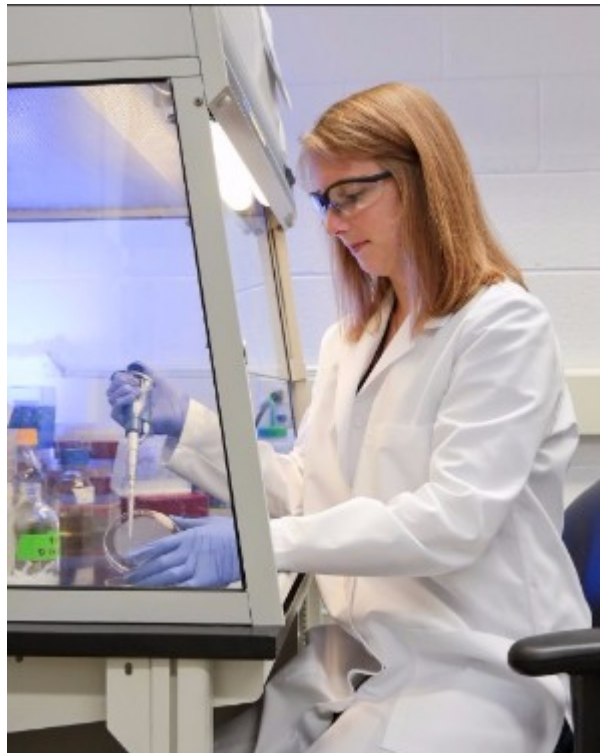


Photo: Oak Ridge National Laboratory working on synthetic biology for the form of cellulosic ethanol production which Mascoma pursued

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