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BIOFUELWATCH NEWSLETTER MAY 2019

Dear Biofuelwatch supporters,

Welcome to our latest newsletter full of updates about campaigns that we – and you – have been supporting, and policy developments.

Important reading for anyone who wants to see meaningful responses to climate change and who is concerned about protecting forests and the people and wildlife depending on them from pro-corporate false climate solutions.

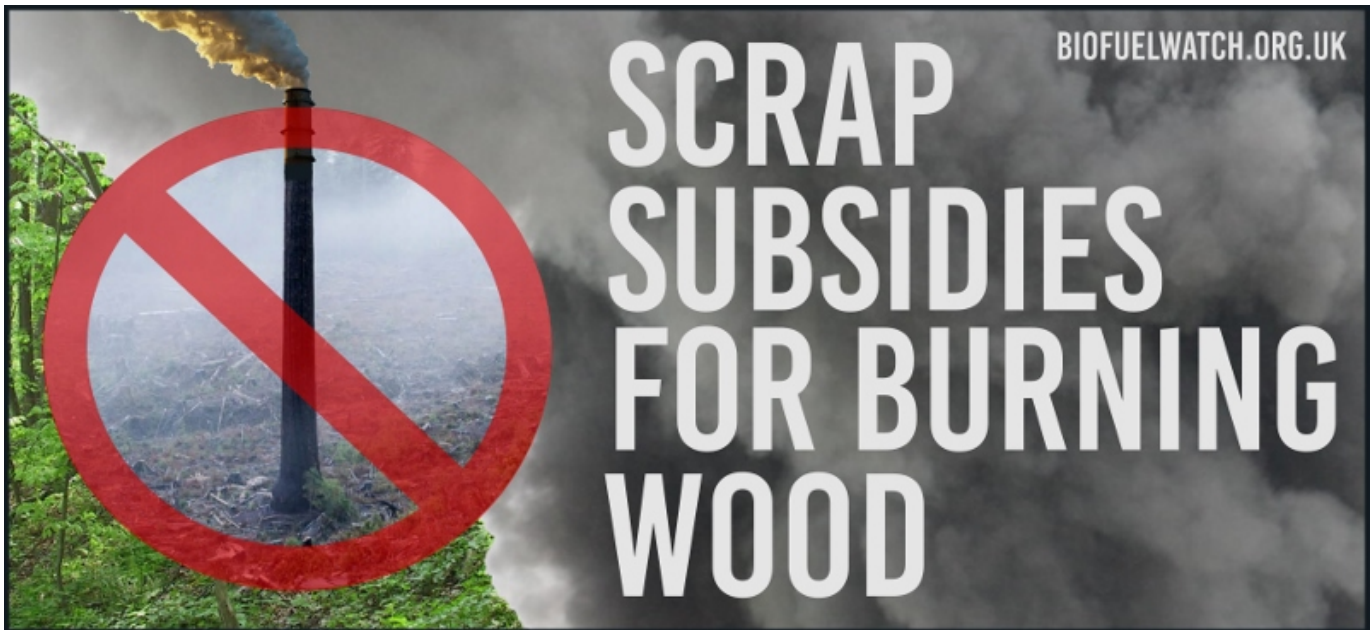
In this update you will find information on:

- 1) **How you can help build the campaign against UK subsidies for biomass electricity;**
- 2) **Petition to help prevent genetically engineered trees from being planted across US forests;**
- 3) **An exciting Reclaim The Power Camp in July to target Drax Power Station;**
- 4) **NGOs warn investors against putting money into forest biomass;**
- 5) **The largest #AxeDrax protest(s) so far in April;**
- 6) **Petition and Open Letter urging the Government to refuse Drax's mega gas power plans.**

1) How you can help build the campaign against UK subsidies for biomass electricity

Thank you to everybody who has written to their MP and urged them to call for the £1 billion annual biomass power subsidies to go to low-carbon renewables instead.

If you haven't done so yet, please [click here \(https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2018/subsidies-alert/\)](https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2018/subsidies-alert/) to take part in our e-alert to MPs. We're now looking for people who'd like to do more to help and get more MPs on board so that we can stop forest destruction for UK power plants for good!



(<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ROCs-graphic-2-1-800x368.jpg>)

The best way to get your MP to listen is to go along to his or her surgery. This is particularly helpful if your MP is not one of the 40 who have already signed the Early Day Motion (EDM) in support of our campaign (click [here](https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/52243) (<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/52243>) to see the list of supporting MPs).

To find out more about how to get a meeting with your MP, click [here](https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Biofuelwatch-Guide-to-meeting-with-your-MP.pdf) (<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Biofuelwatch-Guide-to-meeting-with-your-MP.pdf>). We have put together a resource to help you prepare for a meeting which you can download [here](https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Biofuelwatch-Campaign-Guide-How-to-talk-to-your-MP-about-redirecting-subsidies-from-biomass-burning-to-renewables.pdf) (<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Biofuelwatch-Campaign-Guide-How-to-talk-to-your-MP-about-redirecting-subsidies-from-biomass-burning-to-renewables.pdf>).

Please feel free to [contact us \(https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/home/contact/\)](https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/home/contact/) if you'd like to talk through this before seeing your MP. We will be happy to speak with you over the phone or email if you like.

2) Petition to help prevent genetically engineered trees from being planted across US forests

Please sign an important [petition by the Campaign to Stop GE Trees \(https://stopgetrees.org/new-petition-stop-the-release-of-genetically-engineered-trees-into-forests/\)](https://stopgetrees.org/new-petition-stop-the-release-of-genetically-engineered-trees-into-forests/), which Biofuelwatch participates in. The petition urges the US Department of Agriculture to refuse the unregulated release of genetically engineered American Chestnut trees in US forests.



(<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/GE-eucalyptus.jpg>)

To find out more about this proposal and the problems with GE American Chestnut trees, please [click here](https://stopgetrees.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/biotechnology-for-forest-health-test-case-american-chestnut-report-WEB-1.pdf) (<https://stopgetrees.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/biotechnology-for-forest-health-test-case-american-chestnut-report-WEB-1.pdf>) to see a new white paper entitled “Biotechnology for Forest Health? The test case of the genetically engineered chestnut” which has been released by Biofuelwatch and the Campaign to Stop GE Trees.

The American Chestnut, a beloved and iconic species, was almost entirely eliminated from North America by an introduced fungal pathogen. Attempts to breed hybrid resistant chestnuts are proceeding slowly along, but now some scientists have developed, and will soon file for regulatory review, a genetically engineered chestnut. The GE chestnut is the first forest tree species to be engineered with the specific intent to release it into nature and allow it to spread freely and uncontained. Doing so would be a huge unregulated and irreversible experiment. The GE chestnut has been engineered to produce an enzyme that inhibits the fungus, but it is highly unlikely that this modification on its' own will facilitate restoration of the species, especially given multiple other pathogens that also threaten chestnut. Yet the GE chestnut is being promoted for “restoration”, in the context of debate over the use of biotechnology to address forest health threats, and the even broader debate over the use of biotechnology to “save nature”. The GE chestnut is aimed to win over public opinion and regulatory support for GE trees in general. That is of great interest to those with a stake in profiting from trees engineered for commercial pulp and paper or bioenergy applications, and use of industrial monoculture cultivation – not forest health. The GE Chestnut is explicitly referred to as a “test tree” for tree biotechnology – aka a “trojan horse” for GE trees.



Burned: Film screenings

If you are interested in putting on a film show of the award-winning documentary "Burned - Are Trees the New Coal?" in your area please contact us here. We will be able to advise you and we might be able to send a speaker, too.

(<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/home/contact/>)

3) An exciting Reclaim The Power Camp in July to target Drax Power Station

On 26-30 July, some of us will be joining our friends at Reclaim the Power (<https://reclaimthepower.org.uk/>) for an action camp focussing on the UK's hostile environment for migrants and on new gas infrastructure.

Drax Power Station has been the UK's largest single emitter of CO₂ as well as the world's largest burner of biomass for some time. This autumn, Drax plans to start work on replacing its current coal-fired units with the UK's largest ever gas power station.

If this goes ahead, we will be locked into a system of dirty energy for generations to come, destroying any chance of meeting our commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement to stay within 1.5 degrees of global warming.

The camp will be a great opportunity for coming together to learn from each other and take action together. It will be in the south east of England, in a secret location to be announced on the first day of the camp. Reclaim the Power is organising transport from London and other cities so keep checking the website and Facebook event [link here](https://www.facebook.com/events/584658665344782/) (<https://www.facebook.com/events/584658665344782/>) for updates.

To find out more about the camp, [click here](https://reclaimthepower.org.uk/news/power-beyond-borders/) (<https://reclaimthepower.org.uk/news/power-beyond-borders/>) and to read more about the reasons for the camp, please [click here](https://www.redpepper.org.uk/our-activism-will-be-intersectional-or-it-will-be-bullshit/) (<https://www.redpepper.org.uk/our-activism-will-be-intersectional-or-it-will-be-bullshit/>) and [here](https://reclaimthepower.org.uk/uncategorized/drax-power-station-burning-all-the-things/) (<https://reclaimthepower.org.uk/uncategorized/drax-power-station-burning-all-the-things/>).



(<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Reclaim-the-Power-Three.jpg>).

4) NGOs warn investors against putting money into forest biomass

We have co-produced a briefing to investors which can be found [here](https://environmentalpaper.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Risky-Biomass-Business.pdf) (<https://environmentalpaper.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Risky-Biomass-Business.pdf>), together with the Environmental Paper Network (an alliance of over 140 non-profit organisations) and the Global Forest Coalition (a coalition of 99 NGOs and Indigenous People's Organisations from 64 countries). We hope this will be a useful resource for anyone working on responsible investment. ***If you have any contacts with investors – e.g. local pension funds – please do share this information with them!***

The briefing is entitled “Risky Biomass Business – The reputational and financial risks of investing in forest biomass energy”. It summarises the environmental and climate arguments against large-scale forest biomass, and also highlights the financial and regulatory risks.



(<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/money-into-forest-biomass-Four.jpg>)

5) The largest #AxeDrax protest(s) so far in April

On 17th April, we had the largest protest yet outside Drax’s AGM in London. Thanks to everybody who joined the colourful banner and music protest.

At the same time, University of Sheffield Clean Energy Switch students in Sheffield held a solidarity protest, while Yorkshire campaigners staged a banner protest outside Drax power station.

The protests were supported by campaigners from Reclaim The Power, UKYCC, Extinction Rebellion, London Mining Network, Treesponsibility, Doncaster Green Party and York Green Party amongst others. Thank you very much to everyone who was involved!



(<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/AxeDrax-protest-five.jpg>).

6) Petition and Open Letter urging the Government to refuse Drax's mega gas power plans.

Drax wants to build the biggest ever gas power units in the UK, to replace its two (smaller) coal units which will have to close by 2025 under government policy. This would lock the UK into decades of more fossil fuel burning – and help Drax power station continue to stay open and burn millions of tonnes of wood every year.

On 4th April, we presented a [petition signed by over 96,000 people](https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2019/drax-gas-petition-handover/) and an [Open Letter signed by 92 organisations](https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2019/drax-gas-petition-handover/) (<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2019/drax-gas-petition-handover/>), urging the government to refuse planning consent as well as subsidies for this mega gas plant.

We'll be in touch again soon with news about the next steps for the campaign.



(<https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Petition-Five.jpg>)

← [PREVIOUS \(HTTPS://WWW.BIOFUELWATCH.ORG.UK/2019/GE-CHESTNUT-PETITION/\)](https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2019/ge-chestnut-petition/)

[NEXT → \(HTTPS://WWW.BIOFUELWATCH.ORG.UK/2019/CTFS-ASSEMBLY-LETTER/\)](https://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2019/ctfs-assembly-letter/)

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