

The logo for Biofuelwatch, featuring the word "biofuelwatch" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font on a dark green background.

**Dear subscriber, this is the August edition of our UK newsletter, with details of recent news from bioenergy developments and campaigns. This edition has the latest news about the Green Investment Bank and biomass, about a new report published by the UK government (DECC) about carbon emissions from biomass, and about threatened commercialisation of Genetically Engineered trees in Brazil and the US. We also have some good news about two successful local campaigns against power stations which we helped oppose.**

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**1. UK government report admits that biomass electricity can be worse for the climate than coal - but doesn't let facts get in the way of its multi-billion pound support for the biomass industry**

The Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has finally published a long-awaited [report](#) about carbon emissions from burning North American wood in UK power stations. The report confirms that electricity from burning North American wood can be worse for the climate than electricity from coal for the foreseeable future. Worse still, it makes it clear that bioenergy that is particularly bad for the climate would still be classed as 'low-carbon' under the greenhouse gas methodology proposed by the European Commission. DECC's proposed greenhouse gas standards for biomass rely on the same deeply flawed methodology. Under their standards, biomass will continue to be subsidised even if, by DECC's own

Can we now expect a government U-turn, at least over their flawed proposed standards?Â Sadly, there are no signs of that.Â DECC continue to insist that they will go ahead with standards that ignore most of the carbon emissions associated with biomass.Â But we need to be careful not to jump to the conclusion that 'better standards' would be the answer.Â Firstly, there are no mechanisms for enforcing standards. But what's more, the DECC report shows that all of the genuine 'low-carbon biomass' scenarios are based on assumptions about what would happen to wood, to wood prices and to land without any European demand for wood pellets.Â Asking companies to report carbon emissions based on what 'might have happened' would be absurd.Â We believe that the only way to stop large-scale forest destruction and massive carbon emissions from biomass is to top the subsidies for biomass electricity.Â To find out more about the report and our analysis of it, please see our [article published on the Red Pepper blog](#).



Image: Dogwood Alliance,

<http://www.dogwoodalliance.org/campaigns/bioenergy/maps-graphics/>

**2. Threat of GE Trees grows in Brazil and the US, but so does the global opposition to it**

could, for the first time, be permitted in Brazil and in the US. In both countries, unprecedented applications to grow millions of GE eucalyptus trees are currently pending. Biofuelwatch is part of the global Stop GE Trees alliance, which is expanding and stepping up mobilisation against those proposals and against GE trees worldwide: <http://stopgetrees.org/genetically-engineered-eucalyptus-trees-brazil-us/>

In Brazil, Futuragen, a subsidiary of Suzano Papel e Celulose, has applied for permission to commercially release Genetically Engineered eucalyptus trees. A public hearing on the application will take place on 4th September. Readers may be familiar with Suzano as the company responsible for [land-grabs and deforestation for eucalyptus plantations in Maranhão](#).

In the US, ArborGen has requested permission to commercially plant millions of freeze-tolerant GE eucalyptus trees. As Stop GE Trees explains: "Because GE trees, unlike GE crop plants, can live for decades and spread their seeds and pollen for many kilometres, if planted on an industrial scale they are likely to invade and contaminate ecosystems. The Campaign is also concerned that GE trees will deepen the already proven harmful ecological and social consequences of industrial tree plantations, including the loss of land and water shortages for neighbouring communities".



Source: <http://stopgetrees.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/MSTCamp.jpg>

Over the past month, the Green Investment Bank has backed a highly controversial biomass plant in the Scottish Highlands and a waste incinerator in Derby which has faced major local opposition.

According to local campaigners, the Derby incinerator will be so inefficient that under EU/UK legislation it doesn't even qualify as 'energy recovery'. The Scottish biomass plant (in Craigellachie, Speyside) may not sound too bad, if you listen to developers Estover. Estover claim they can source all of the wood from residues within a 50 mile radius. Yet figures clearly show that there's not nearly enough residues available nearby, so instead they will have to either truck in residues across long distances or burn wood from whole trees which have taken 70 years to grow or, most likely, both. Government [figures](#) show that burning whole trees from the UK for energy will be worse for the climate than burning coal for at least a century! And while this will be a combined heat and power (CHP) plant, it will only be around 38% efficient - whereas genuinely efficient CHP plants can reach 70-80% efficiency.

Meantime, in the US, [another biomass gasification plant by a company called Nexterra failed](#), this time because key parts corroded in just 18 months.

Previously, a similar plant had exploded. GIB has invested £12 million of public funds to help Nexterra build one of the same plants in Birmingham.

To find out more about what's wrong with the Green Investment Bank's approach, please see [here](#).

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#### **4. Two destructive biomass plants and a biofuel one stopped in UK**

Good news from Anglesey and Mid Suffolk, where two destructive power station developments have been

+ **Llangefni, Anglesey:** Since 2011, Biofuelwatch - together with Friends of the Earth Anglesey and local residents - had been opposing plans by a company called EcoPellets, who wanted to build a biofuel (bioliqid) as well as a biomass (wood) plant and a pellet plant in Llangefni. Anglesey Council refused the original application back in 2012 but the company appealed. We have just learned that the Appeal was refused so this destructive development can't go ahead.

+ **Mendlesham, Mid Suffolk:** Biomass company ECO2 wanted to build a 40 MW biomass power station outside the village of Mendlesham, which would have largely burned straw, as well as some wood. There is already a straw-burning power station in Cambridgeshire and three others have been approved in the east of England. Local pig farmers and businesses dependent on them were deeply concerned that yet another such plant would threaten their livelihoods and the local economy, because of their dependence on affordable straw. And if smaller pig farmers were put out of businesses by energy companies that push up straw prices, this would likely mean more reliance on factory farming and on large-scale soy imports from South America, where forests are being destroyed and small farmers are losing their livelihoods to soy for EU animal feed. Mid Suffolk Council had rejected the application and ECO2 had appealed - but shortly before the appeal was heard, they withdrew it, thereby dropping their planning application.