



**Dear Subscriber,**

**Here is our latest newsletter with a roundup of campaigning and other news related to large-scale bioenergy in the UK and beyond.**

**For readers based in Scotland, we are also sharing a callout for a demonstration on Wed, 28th February and for support with a campaign for Equal Right of Appeal by our friends from Planning Democracy.**

**And for any readers based in the UK, we are sharing a callout for support by Coal Action Network.**

**In this newsletter, you will find:**

1. Urgent: Consultation about Drax's proposal for what would be the UK's biggest gas power station ends Tuesday, 27th February at 5pm
2. Your chance to tell the Government what you think about new subsidies for biomass power stations and waste incinerators
3. Scotland: Planning Democracy callout for demonstration on Wed, 28/2 and for support with calling for Equal Rights to Appeal
4. Please support Coal Action Network's call to help stop a new opencast coalmine in County Durham
5. Date for your diary: "Time to twig" masked ball forest flashmob outside the world's largest biomass industry conference - London, Wednesday, 18th April
6. Residents' and workers' health and safety sidelined as large biomass and waste gasifier proposal is considered in Milford Haven: Please contact your AMs if you live in Wales!
7. More evidence of how damaging biomass electricity is for the climate.

## Donate to Biofuelwatch



Would you like to join our pool of volunteers who are helping to counter industry propaganda about biomass by writing letters to newspaper editors? If you are, then please please [email us](#) to find out more. We particularly need volunteers in the north-east of England.

After a successful screening in London during January, the award-winning film *Burned - Are Trees the New Coal?* is available to be shown elsewhere in the UK. If you belong to a group which might want to host a film show, please [get in touch](#). We may be able to provide a speaker, too.

## 1. Consultation about Drax's proposal for what would be the UK's biggest gas power station ends Tuesday, 27th February at 5pm.

Thank you to everybody who has taken part in our email alert to object to Drax's proposal to replace two coal power units - slated for closure in 2025 - with massive new gas turbines. If you haven't send off your email yet, then you can still do so until 5pm on Tuesday, 27th February. Please click [here](#) to send a pre-drafted email and click [here](#) for a detailed briefing about the proposal.

Together, Drax's two new gas units would be 2.6 times the size of the UK's biggest existing gas power station (West Burton).

Drax burns more biomass than any other plant in the world - importing around 13 million tonnes of wood pellets each year, including from trees felled in biodiverse coastal forests. Drax is also the UK's second biggest coal burner, after Aberthaw. Now that the Government has announced a coal phaseout by 2025, Drax wants to regain its former status as the country's biggest fossil fuel burner by investing heavily in gas. Drax's new gas turbines would lock us further into our dependence on dirty energy at a time when we urgently need to

around the UK and beyond.



## 2. Your chance to tell the Government what you think about new subsidies for biomass power stations and waste incinerators

Right now, the Government is consulting on new rules for renewable electricity subsidies for new developments. There is a real chance now to prevent new biomass power plants except for highly efficient combined heat and power ones. It could also become much more difficult for new import-reliant biomass plants to attract subsidies. And we hope that the Government will agree to set high efficiency requirements for all plants that convert biomass or waste to energy, including those defined as “advanced conversion”. Ideally, we would want to see all renewable energy subsidies to go towards genuinely low-carbon, no-burn renewables such as wind and solar power. The proposals which are being consulted on don't go as far as we would like, but they would go a long way towards that aim.

Thanks to everybody who has already taken part in the consultation by sending a pre-drafted or, even better, a personalised email to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. If you haven't done so yet, please [click here](#) to send your email before the consultation deadline on 9th March.



## on Wed, 28/2 and for support with calling for Equal Rights to Appeal

- **Demonstration outside Scottish Parliament, Wed, 28th February, 12 noon to 2 pm**
- **Take part in [e-alert by Scottish Environment LINK](#) and ask your MSPs to call for a fairer planning system**

Across the UK, planning legislation is heavily weighted in favour of developers. One of the worst planning injustices is that developers can appeal if local authorities refuse them planning consent, but communities have no right of appeal if, say, a dirty power station, incinerator, motorway or runway is approved on their doorstep.

Thanks to a long campaign by [Planning Democracy](#), this could soon change in Scotland. The Scottish Government is putting forward a new Planning Bill. Unfortunately, the current proposals would put communities at an even greater disadvantage, however, several MSPs are looking at putting forward an amendment which would give communities the right to appeal against bad planning decisions. If Equal Rights of Appeal are introduced in Scotland, this would set an example for England and Wales, too.

For the last decade, Biofuelwatch has been helping communities fight dirty biofuel and biomass power stations and we know firsthand what the lack of a community - or "Third Party" - right of appeal against planning decisions means. It means that cash-strapped local authorities know that if they refuse any bad development, the developer can appeal and they might end up with costs, whereas residents have virtually no options for challenging planning approvals (except through the courts, which few communities can afford to do). So there is a huge financial incentive to rubber-stamp controversial planning applications no matter what the impacts for the environment and for residents will be. Equal Rights of Appeal would address this injustice.



#### **4. Please support Coal Action Network's campaign against a new opencast coal mine in County Durham**

Despite pledging to phase out coal fired power, the UK government remains silent on mining coal and all the pollution and habitat destruction it brings. In a matter of weeks work could begin in Durham on the UK's first new opencast coal mine since 2014. Our friends at the Coal Action Network are supporting the local community in fighting this proposal, and there is a very narrow window of time to stop it. Here are two things you can do:

- [Click here](#) and sign the petition to Sajid Javid, the minister who could stop this from going ahead before it starts;
- [Click here](#) to donate to the legal fundraiser, so that Coal Action Network and the local community can get help from a solicitor and a barrister.

If you're on Facebook, you can check out the [Shut Your Coal Hole](#) page for updates about activities and developments



**5. Date for your diary: "Time to Twig" masked ball forest flashmob outside the world's largest biomass industry conference - London, Wednesday, 18th April**

biomass conference. On wednesday 18th at 5:15pm, as the delegates start drinking and networking we'll gather outside in our best formal black eveningwear and masks to uncover the truth behind the luxury greenwash veneer.

Inside the conference, Drax plc - the world's biggest biomass burners - and its notorious pellet supplier Enviva will be promoting a business that relies on precious biodiverse forests being clearcut, turned into pellets and shipped across the Atlantic for burning. They and their corporate friends are intent on expanding a business that turns forests and climate targets into sawdust and leaves trashed communities in their wake. They're banking on not getting exposed. So grab your glitz, leave the masks to us, and join us for half an hour of elegant revelations.

Meet 5pm for a 5:15pm start. More details to follow on our facebook event [Time to Twig](#), please share far and wide. If you live in or near London and would like to help make masks and help make the protest a success, then please [get in touch](#). And for more background info on the issues involved, see [axedrax.org.uk](http://axedrax.org.uk).

This is likely to be the same week as Drax Plc's AGM - watch this space for the exact date and venue, and plans for an #AxeDrax banner protest outside.



**6. Residents' and workers' health and safety sidelined as large biomass and waste gasifier proposal is considered in**

In Milford Haven, a startup company called Egnedol wants to build a large biomass and waste gasifier designed in breach of basic safety standards set out in European guidance, and right next to two LNG storage facilities which are classified as Control of Major Accident Hazard sites. The local authority, Natural Resources Wales and the Planning Inspectorate have refused to consider the safety of residents and workers whilst considering the planning application. Please see an [article in The Ecologist](#) which shows how the planning system fails to protect people from the risk of potentially major industrial accidents. If you live in Wales, please write to your AMs and urge them to write to Lesley Griffiths AM, the Minister who will decide whether to approve Egnedol's plans.



## 7. More evidence of how damaging biomass electricity is for the climate

Two new peer-reviewed studies have been published which show just how bad burning wood in power stations is for the climate:

One [study](#) looked at the climate impacts of power stations replacing coal with wood from clearcut eastern US forests. Its authors found that the climate impacts will be even worse than those of coal for a period of 44-104 years, and that replacing natural hardwood forests with fast growing pine plantations for biomass is particularly harmful for the climate. Click [here](#) to see a press release

[Another study](#) finds that even bioenergy from burning forest residues has significantly adverse effects on the climate.

## 8. What does the UK Government's coal phase-out announcement really mean?

At the beginning of January, the UK Government made its long-awaited announcement on a coal phase-out by 2025. A coal phase-out is well overdue and a 7-year delay is disappointing, as is the fact that the Government only wants to phase out burning coal in power stations - not mining coal to be burned abroad.

We have published a [detailed analysis](#) of the Government's announcement which reveals other problems, too: firstly, coal power station operators are offered the option of continuing to burn coal as long as most of the fuel comes from biomass which, of course, is also far from low-carbon. Secondly, the Government keeps open the option of suspending the coal phase-out altogether if not "enough" new gas power capacity comes on stream. This may be the reason behind Drax's and other energy company's new "dash for gas", which is quite incompatible with the aim of keeping global warming to within 1.5 or even 2 degrees C.

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