

This is the September edition of our monthly Biofuelwatch UK newsletter, with details of recent news from bioenergy campaigns. Please let us know if you would like more information about particular campaign issues/news or if you'd like to find out about getting involved in any relevant campaigns. If you are looking for news about biomass campaigning in the US, then please see <http://energyjustice.net/biomass/monitor>

- 1) Public meeting: A Burning Issue – biomass and its impacts on forests and communities, **London, 29<sup>th</sup> October**. The public meeting will coincide with the launch of our new report, The Chain of Destruction
- 2) Outcome of the European Parliament's vote on biofuels on 11<sup>th</sup> September;
- 3) Reflections on why RWE closed Tilbury while Drax is forging ahead with coal-to-biomass conversion

### **1. Public Meeting: A Burning Issue – biomass and its impacts on forests and communities**

On Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> October, 7-9pm, Biofuelwatch we will be holding a free public meeting: "A Burning Issue – biomass and its impacts on forests and communities", at the Lumen Centre in London (see <http://www.lumenurc.org.uk/lumencontact.htm> for venue details). ***Spaces are limited, so please email us to reserve a place ([biofuelwatch@ymail.com](mailto:biofuelwatch@ymail.com)).***

**Speakers from Brazil and the US will present first-hand experience of the impacts of the UK's biomass policies on forests and people in their countries. This includes a presentation about the first ever case study published anywhere in the world about a land-grab for tree plantations specifically to grow wood to burn in our power stations (in Maranhão, Brazil). Those presentations will be followed by evidence about the impacts of biomass power stations on UK communities, especially on air quality and public health.**

Winnie Overbeek, Coordinator of the World Rainforest Movement will give a presentation about the impacts of eucalyptus plantations for wood pellet production in the Brazilian state of Maranhão on communities and Cerrado forests. Those plantations are being established by the Brazilian pulp and paper company Suzano Papel e Celulose, which has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with UK biomass company MGT Power. MGT plans to build two large biomass power stations in the north-east of England and already has planning permission for one of them.

Scot Quaranda from the US conservation NGO Dogwood Alliance will speak about the impacts of pellet production by Drax's supplier Enviva on southern US forests – including on remnants of highly biodiverse wetland forests.

Sophie Bastable from Biofuelwatch will summarise key impacts of biomass power stations on communities in the UK, especially on air quality and public health. We hope to also have a speaker from one of the affected UK communities.

For more details, please see: [http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2013/burning\\_issue\\_public\\_event/](http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2013/burning_issue_public_event/)

The event coincides with the launch of a new report by Biofuelwatch, called Biomass: The Chain of Destruction. This will include an investigative report of biomass plantations in **Maranhão, Brazil by World Rainforest Movement and CEPEDES (Center for Study and Research for the Development of the Southern Bahia Region)**. **It will**

**also include testimonies from Dogwood Alliance and from several community groups affected by UK biomass power stations.**

## **2) Outcome of the European Parliament's vote on biofuels on 11<sup>th</sup> September:**

Many thanks to everyone who wrote to their MEPs before the vote. Sadly, despite large numbers of people across many European countries having urged their MEPs to vote for meaningful curbs to EU biofuels demand, the outcome of the vote was extremely disappointing.

By a narrow margin, MEPs voted for a 6% cap on biofuels from land-based biofuels – up from a 5% proposal by the European Commission, and up from a current 4.5%. ActionAid have calculated that a 6% cap would mean burning enough food to feed 200 million people.

Furthermore, the European Parliament voted to only take Indirect Land Use Change impacts into account from 2020 when calculating spurious 'greenhouse gas savings' from biofuels, and only under one of the two directives that promote biofuels use. Bizarrely, the whole abysmal compromise will now simply go back to yet another vote in spring 2014. See here for an analysis by Kenneth Richter of Friends of the Earth [http://www.foe.co.uk/news/biofuel\\_vote\\_outcome\\_41135.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/news/biofuel_vote_outcome_41135.html) .

Clearly, this outcome was largely due to intense industry lobbying, as analysed in this article by Corporate Europe Observatory: <http://corporateeurope.org/blog/heated-lobbying-over-parliament-agrofuel-vote> .

## **3) Reflections on why RWE closed Tilbury B while Drax is forging ahead with coal-to-biomass conversion**

As reported in our last newsletter, RWE have closed down Tilbury B, so far the world's biggest biomass power station, despite having invested large amounts of funds into the power station conversion. Yet Drax is forging ahead with an even more ambitious conversion project. Given that both are operating in the same political context and under the same subsidies rules. In an article published on the Global Forest Coalition's blog, we explore the possible reasons behind the two apparently contradictory decisions and what the ramifications may be for forests:

<http://peopleforestsrights.wordpress.com/2013/09/25/why-was-the-worlds-biggest-biomass-power-station-closed-down-and-what-does-this-mean-for-forests/> .

Our conclusions of course are to some degree speculative – after all, RWE are hardly likely to tell us exactly why they pulled the plug on their biggest biomass investment to date. However, they are based on publicly available information about the type of wood that can be burned in coal power station boilers as well as evidence about Drax's wood pellet sourcing from investigations by Dogwood Alliance and NRDC. The closure of Tilbury B without is without doubt good news for forests. Yet if our conclusions are right, the implications of Drax and others going ahead with coal-to-biomass conversions could be even more devastating for North American forests than previously thought.