

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you to as a cross-party group of MPs and peers to call on your Government to invest in cleaner and renewable energy sources, like wind and solar power, instead of burning wood from some of our planet's most sensitive forests for fuel.

The recent IPCC report, which you called "sobering", highlights that we will not keep temperature rises below 1.5°C without cutting the use of fossil fuels and ending deforestation. But the ongoing burning of trees for energy threatens forests around the world. The UK is the world's top importer and subsidiser of biomass, with this demand for wood-fuelled electricity accelerating climate change, degrading ecologically diverse forests and exacerbating biodiversity loss.

We are concerned that bioenergy subsidies, which support the cutting and burning of trees from overseas to fuel our power stations, are public money invested in environmental destruction. This public money could instead be spent on supporting the truly lower-carbon industries needed to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and ensure that the UK can build back greener. Like coal, burning trees to produce electricity exacerbates climate change, emits deadly air pollution, degrades forests and harms some of our planet's most biodiverse ecosystems.

Subsidising large biomass power stations to the tune of £3 million per day - predominantly to Drax Power Station in Yorkshire, the largest biomass burner in the world - is undermining the Government's commitment to protect biodiversity and address deforestation and forest degradation. By actively subsidising this dirty energy, the UK Government is increasing logging of forests around the world, including in the United States, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Canada, damaging already-imperilled wildlife and ecosystems. The pellet manufacturing process also releases unsafe air pollution which directly threatens the health of those living nearby, with Drax's top pellet supplier Enviva, having been found by the US based Environmental Integrity project to have air quality violations at many of its U.S. pellet mills.

Building back better after the COVID-19 pandemic cannot mean a return to business as usual, including incorporating biomass within the Energy Charter Treaty. However, without genuine reform, the UK will continue to waste billions on this dirty energy source, rather than subsidising genuinely lower-carbon and renewable energy sources like solar and wind.

The UK has an unrivalled opportunity to become a world leader in sustainable development through its Presidency of COP26. Redirecting subsidies from biomass to cleaner technologies would help safeguard the UK's climate commitments and signal to the world that reliance on large-scale biomass electricity generation is incompatible with international commitments to address the climate emergency and meet our global biodiversity commitments.

In order to achieve this, we will support you to build a cleaner energy economy and redirect wasteful biomass subsidies to truly clean energy sources, like wind and solar power. We hope that you will enshrine this decision in law within the lifetime of this Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Randall of Uxbridge

Peter Bottomley MP

Barry Gardiner MP

Helen Hayes MP

Caroline Lucas MP

Tommy Shepherd MP

Philippa Whitford MP