

PRESS RELEASE

8 IN 10 BRITS SAY IT'S 'HYPOCRITICAL' FOR THE UK GOVERNMENT TO COMMIT TO PROTECTING 30% OF ITS LAND AND OCEAN, WHILE SUBSIDISING FOREST LOSS OVERSEAS

Poll respondents of all parties agree that the UK should make strong environmental commitments as we approach COP26 and the Convention on Biological Diversity, but worry the Government isn't following through

LONDON – 27TH APRIL 2021 – A new Censuswide poll finds that Brits overwhelmingly (96%) support the UK Government addressing global biodiversity loss but are concerned that it isn't "walking the walk" when it comes to its commitments.

In September 2020, the UK Government committed to tackling the global biodiversity crisis by protecting 30% of the planet's land and oceans by 2030, an endeavour known as "30 by 30". At the same time, the UK is subsidising biomass electricity (the practice of burning trees and other wood in large UK power stations) to the tune of £1.5 billion per year, most of which goes to Drax. Most of the wood burned for electricity in the UK is cut down and imported from overseas forests, harming some of our planet's most precious and biodiverse ecosystems. An impressive eight out of 10 (78%) respondents to the poll – including 78% of Conservative voters – agree this is hypocritical. What's more, 72% agree that this practice violates the Government's 25-year environment plan, which states that the UK will "screen policies and strategies for potential negative environmental effects overseas."

The poll was commissioned by *Cut Carbon Not Forests*, a coalition of NGOs working to shift biomass electricity subsidies to solar, wind and tidal energy.

Rather than cutting down trees and shipping them across the Atlantic to be burned in power stations, 72% of respondents agree that the UK Government should protect forests in the U.S. Southeast, which is where most of the wood imported into the UK for biomass comes from. The UK is currently the largest user of biomass electricity in Europe, and much of the wood in question is sourced from sensitive forests in the United States, Canada and Europe, destroying habitats, wildlife and [polluting](#) low-income communities and communities of colour.

"The UK has made bold commitments to fight climate change and protect nature, but chopping down trees, grinding them up and shipping them across the world to burn in UK power stations threatens to undermine our leadership on the global stage," says Lord Randall of Uxbridge, former Environmental Advisor to the Prime Minister. "With the world watching at COP26 in Glasgow this November, Boris Johnson's government must immediately reverse course and end subsidies to this distinctly environmentally-unfriendly industry. This is aid that should be going to real climate solutions."

"We are in the midst of a biodiversity crisis, with scientists predicting that one million species face extinction, many within decades," said Elly Pepper from *Cut Carbon Not Forests*. "Yet, instead of doing everything it can to reverse this catastrophe, the UK is contributing to the degradation of some of our planet's most precious forests by subsidising the biomass industry. Species like the Cerulean Warbler, Woodland Caribou, White-tailed Eagle, and Canadian Lynx rely on the very forests being cut down for biomass and are suffering as a result of this government hypocrisy. If the UK is truly committed to saving wildlife, it must stop subsidising biomass immediately."

Other key findings from the research include:

- Conservative voters are just as likely as Green Party voters to think policies that protect forests as complex ecosystems are important (91% and 90% respectively).

Cut Carbon Not Forests was launched in June 2020, led jointly by [Biofuelwatch](#), [Dogwood Alliance](#), NRDC ([Natural Resources Defense Council](#)) and the [Southern Environmental Law Center](#).

###

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Richard Scarlett or Emma Briggs
Finn Partners
CCNF@finnpartners.com

ABOUT BIOFUELWATCH

Biofuelwatch is a UK/US non-profit organisation which undertakes research, campaigning and advocacy regarding the impacts of large-scale bioenergy. Biofuelwatch is working for a reform of energy policies to ensure that all support goes towards the lowest-carbon and cleanest forms of renewable energy as well as energy efficiency and conservation. See www.biofuelwatch.org.uk and follow us on Twitter [@biofuelwatch](#).

ABOUT DOGWOOD ALLIANCE

Dogwood Alliance is a nonprofit environmental organisation based in the Southern United States that mobilises diverse voices to protect Southern forests and communities from destructive industrial logging. The group's Our Forests Aren't Fuel campaign is part of an international coalition opposing industrial-scale forest biomass energy. Learn more at www.dogwoodalliance.org and follow us on Twitter [@DogwoodAlliance](#).

ABOUT NRDC

NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 3 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world's natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Bozeman, MT, and Beijing. Visit us at www.nrdc.org and follow us on Twitter [@NRDC](#).

ABOUT SOUTHERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER

For more than 30 years, the Southern Environmental Law Center has used the power of the law to champion the environment of the Southeast U.S. With more than 80 attorneys and nine offices across the region, SELC is widely recognized as the Southeast's foremost environmental organization and regional leader. SELC works on a full range of environmental issues to protect our natural resources and the health and well-being of all the people in our region. www.SouthernEnvironment.org