

Biomass may still make economic sense

✘ The Scottish Government recently published draft proposals for biomass subsidies that could potentially see Forth Energy get a financial windfall of over £170 million per year.

Campaigners from Friends of the Earth Scotland and Biofuelwatch claim these proposals threaten to undermine the Scottish Government's rhetoric to rule out subsidies for large-scale inefficient biomass plants. Forth Energy, which pulled the plug on its plan for a large-scale biomass plant in Leith, Edinburgh last week, still plans to develop large-scale biomass plants in Dundee, Grangemouth and Rosyth. It is estimated these plants would reap over £170 million a year under the new proposals.

FOE Scotland say that the SNP stated in their manifesto that they 'share public concerns over the large-scale schemes now being proposed in some parts of Scotland' and that subsequently the Scottish Government was vocal in its criticism of large-scale biomass and launched a consultation on the matter which closed in January. The proposals published ten days ago, but which are still to be finalised, would leave significant support for large-scale biomass if adopted, claim the charity who say that as well as the money Forth Energy would potentially receive in subsidies from the three biomass power stations they still want to build, Peel Energy, the company that is planning a coal and biomass power station at Hunterston in Ayrshire, would potentially get over £91 million a year from co-firing biomass if their proposal got the go-ahead.

Friends of the Earth Scotland's Policy Officer Francis Stuart said:

"Government rhetoric on biomass has been positive and their

position to support small-scale plants for heat has been the right one. Unfortunately however, these new proposals would provide a financial windfall for large-scale inefficient biomass plants like Forth Energy's proposals for Rosyth, Grangemouth and Dundee. Scottish Ministers needs to go back to the drawing board and come back with proposals which rule out subsidies for large-scale biomass while supporting small-scale, locally sourced, biomass for heat."

Emilia Hanna, Biomass campaigner at Biofuelwatch, said:

"The Scottish Government publicly condemned industrial-scale electricity generation from biomass, saying it was inefficient, used an unsustainable amount of wood, and threatened jobs in traditional wood industries, yet its draft proposes to continue offering heavy subsidies to big biomass which will see big industry profit at the expense of community renewables.

"Big biomass will mean a reliance on imported wood, causing more deforestation and undermining Scotland's efforts towards energy independence. The public knows that big biomass is greenwash. The Scottish Government must take heed and change its draft legislation."

The Scottish Government is expected to publish its final legislation on renewables subsidies at the end of March 2012, with the legislation going to the Scottish Parliament in the summer.