

Anti Biomass protest at Holyrood

Environmentalists and residents from Dundee, Falkirk, Grangemouth and Edinburgh today gathered outside The Scottish Parliament to call on the Scottish Government to stop subsidising big biomass as 'green' energy.

Shortly before the demo, Fergus Ewing, Energy Minister, agreed to meet with representatives from the three Biofuelwatch, No Leith Biomass Campaign and Friends of the Earth Scotland, and 13 MSPs from all the parties exited the Parliament to meet the crowd.

Biofuelwatch Campaigner Emilia Hanna said:-“We are encouraged to have the Minister’s attention, but there’s still a long way to go. The government needs to remove subsidies for all large scale biomass if community renewables are to be given a chance, and if we are to avoid further deforestation. The biomass industry is being artificially inflated by heavy subsidies, which are driving up demand for wood and pushing up prices.

“We were pleased to see so many MSPs come out to hear our concerns. The issue of biomass subsidies now needs to be fully debated in Parliament.”

Davina Shiell, Head of Campaigns and Communications, Friends of the Earth Scotland, said:-“Industrial-scale electricity generation from biomass has been proven to cause deforestation, increase carbon emissions, cause harmful air pollution locally, and be as inefficient as burning coal. Scotland has plenty of potential for genuine renewable energy technologies including wind, tidal, and solar.”

Forth Energy pulled the plug on its plans for a large biomass

power station in Leith in February. However, it remains committed to building its three other projects at Grangemouth, Dundee, and Rosyth, and its plans for biomass at Grangemouth are now the subject of a Public Inquiry due to the levels of controversy over the plant.

Sally Millar, Campaigner at No Leith Biomass Campaign, said:-
“The Leith community is happy that Forth Energy have withdrawn in our area for now, but other areas of Scotland are threatened with massive, inefficient and unsustainable biomass burning plants. The only way to stop the expansion of big biomass is to stop subsidising it, and that’s what we are asking Scottish Government to do.”

Speaking at the protest, Green MSP Alison Johnstone said:

“Chopping down swathes of foreign forest to burn for electricity in Scotland would be monumentally daft and the Scottish Government must make sure that this is not supported with taxpayer money. Burning trees for electricity on a large-scale is totally inefficient and a waste of money in a country with a world-leading renewables industry that needs investment.

“I want to see greater focus from developers on community-scale renewables, rather than oversized and unsustainable proposals like the Leith project that was defeated in February. I continue to urge Forth Energy to reconsider its plans for other large biomass plants around the Forth.”