



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
Secretary of State

Department of Energy & Climate Change
3 Whitehall Place
London
SW1A 2AW

Biofuelwatch
[REDACTED]

www.gov.uk/decc

Our ref: [REDACTED]

19 May 2016

Dear Biofuelwatch,

Thank you for your letter dated 20 April, enclosing a petition about the sustainability of biomass utilised by Drax.

Biomass conversions of coal power stations are just one part of the energy mix. They have played a transitional role in decarbonising the electricity grid in a cost effective manner and helping to ensure energy security. I am clear that, under the right circumstances, biomass can have a valuable role to play in the secure, affordable, low carbon energy mix which this Government is determined to deliver.

This cannot be achieved without careful consideration of the effects which biomass can have on the wider environment. The fuels on which biomass is dependent need to be sourced responsibly and sustainably and in a manner which realises the carbon and greenhouse gas savings which biomass is capable of delivering.

As you may know, the Government has introduced sustainability criteria for biomass generators. These criteria take into account a range of social, economic and environmental issues including protecting biodiversity, land use rights, sustainable harvesting and regeneration rates. Generators over 1MW must also have their sustainability sourcing independently audited. Biomass power generators must achieve a minimum of 60% greenhouse gas lifecycle savings (against the average EU fossil electricity grid intensity) and these thresholds will be tightened to 75% by 2025.

With our Climate Change Act, the UK has ambitious climate change goals to achieve into the 2030s. We need to look at our energy mix to ensure it delivers these ambitions. I am clear that unabated coal is not consistent with meeting our decarbonisation goals, and that is why last autumn I announced that my Department would consult on proposals to close unabated coal power stations by 2025 and we will proceed if we can be sure there will be no impact on the security of our electricity supply.

Government policy, as set out in paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework, states that planning permission by mineral planning authorities should not be given for the extraction of coal unless the proposal is environmentally acceptable, or can be made so by planning conditions or obligations; or if not, provides national, local or community benefits which clearly outweigh the likely impacts to justify the grant of permission. The Framework may be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf>.

Once again, may I thank you for your letter and petition.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amber Rudd', written in a cursive style.

AMBER RUDD