# public accounts committee warns uk biomass oversight risks taxpayers’ money



A recent report from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has raised significant concerns regarding the oversight of biomass sustainability by the UK government, emphasising that current measures may overly expose taxpayers’ interests. The PAC's findings suggest a reliance on self-reporting and third-party verification in existing certification schemes, leading to doubts about the accountability of biomass generators, who may be perceived as "marking their own homework."

Since 2022, the UK government has committed £22 billion in support for biomass energy, with the largest beneficiary being Drax, which received £6.5 billion. Biomass is regarded as a low-carbon energy source when sourced sustainably, and its inclusion with carbon capture and storage (known as BECCS) is a critical element of the UK’s strategy to achieve net zero emissions. However, the report highlights troubling delays in BECCS deployment and increasing scrutiny of biomass's environmental impact, prompting the PAC to recommend contingency planning should BECCS become unfeasible.

The PAC has suggested that the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) establish backup plans to ensure that the UK can still meet its carbon removal targets, even if biomass solutions fall short. Additionally, they have called for Drax to provide Parliament with comprehensive details from a KPMG review of its Canadian supply chain, which is crucial for transparency.

The report also touches on implications for household energy costs, positing that a new support package for Drax could reduce bills by approximately £6 annually. However, this raises further questions about the value for money associated with the government's investment, particularly as Drax is purported to receive a higher price compared to other renewable energy sources, alongside facing limited competition.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, Chair of the PAC, articulated the urgency behind these concerns: “Billions have been spent with little scrutiny. It is long past time to fully assess what taxpayers are getting. Biomass sustainability must be rigorously verified if it is to play a role in net zero.” The committee underscored the necessity for a review of existing carbon accounting rules, which currently allocate emissions based on the origin of biomass rather than where it is utilised. This reevaluation aims to bolster public confidence in the sustainability of biomass as a viable energy solution.

In summary, the PAC report calls for stringent measures to improve oversight and accountability of biomass energy initiatives amidst ongoing debates about their environmental integrity and financial feasibility.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8906/government-support-for-biomass/> - This UK Parliament committee page discusses the government's support for biomass energy, highlighting concerns about the adequacy of current sustainability measures and the reliance on self-reporting and third-party verification, which may lead to doubts about the accountability of biomass generators.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/b8d64846-d890-4b1e-b49d-12495f7c35e5> - An article detailing allegations that Drax misled the public and government about the sustainability of its biomass sourcing, supporting the claim that biomass generators may be perceived as 'marking their own homework.'
* <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/uks-drax-pay-33-mln-after-misreporting-some-biomass-data-2024-08-29/> - A report on Drax's £33 million payment to Ofgem's voluntary redress fund after misreporting biomass data, highlighting issues with the company's biomass sourcing practices and the scrutiny of its environmental impact.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/21cdb4d8-9118-4865-bdca-7bf9db6369f0> - An article discussing Ofgem's ruling that Drax's biomass power station is environmentally sustainable despite data gaps, and the potential extension of subsidies beyond 2027, raising questions about the value for money of government investments.
* <https://committees.parliament.uk/event/23329/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session/> - A UK Parliament committee session examining government support for biomass, including discussions on sustainability assurance and the role of biomass in achieving net zero emissions, supporting the PAC's recommendation for contingency planning if BECCS becomes unfeasible.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/34550e7d-9d65-4756-8ffa-53f821dd14d0> - An article revealing that Drax's biomass power stations likely burned wood from ecologically significant old forest areas, raising concerns about the environmental impact of biomass sourcing and the need for transparency in supply chains.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMinwFBVV95cUxPTlRSeTRXbUEzRE01OHBkbmxqamVaR0ZleFhzRWlwa2JZM0Ntemp4eGlNV3d1VlZrSWtyQTIxbzhNYXkwbzd5S1JuMjZyV1NyV2tGcXpWUVFOQjVLUzBfakVjUFR1SGFPbXFzOVVodlhJREtzREg0TkJBU2VzVTBPRjVJUzBWNTl1cGZkemREY3VmbFpTaERlYy1xc0lYM2c?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data