# Government subsidies propping up controversial biomass industry amid energy security concerns



At the recent Future of Energy Security conference in London, the UK’s Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero reaffirmed the government’s insistence on a swift shift to so-called “homegrown clean energy.” Yet the bright rhetoric masks a disturbing reality exposed by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which revealed the truth behind the lavish subsidies handed to the biomass giant Drax Group plc—funding that has ballooned to an eye-watering £22 billion.

The government’s ‘green’ ambitions are fatally undermined by their blind support for biomass power stations that consume millions of trees annually, raising serious questions about the sustainability and environmental integrity of this approach. The biomass facility operated by Drax in Yorkshire emits 20% more carbon dioxide per unit of energy than the coal plants it replaced—refuting claims that this is a clean alternative. The subsidies provided, under a façade of “sustainably managed” sourcing, are in fact propping up importation of wood from ancient, carbon-rich forests in Canada and Louisiana. Investigations including the 2022 Panorama exposé have conclusively shown that much of the claimed “waste wood” is anything but, yet regulatory bodies remain complacent at best, and complicit at worst.

This wealthy subsidy bonanza is tolerated despite minor fines and limited oversight, and astonishingly, the regulators tasked with enforcement appear plagued by conflicts of interest, with the Climate Change Committee itself having members tied to Drax. This glaring lack of accountability has the effect of rewarding companies that “mark their own homework,” allowing abuses to continue unchecked—while the taxpayer foots the bill.

No surprise that this scandal bears the imprint of government involvement at the highest levels. The energy secretary’s own past advocacy for biomass during his tenure in 2008 and his constituency’s proximity to Drax suggest a troubling closeness. Meanwhile, Drax CEO Will Gardiner maintains cosy royal connections, feeding into the revolving door narrative that underscores politics of energy in Britain.

Despite grand promises that carbon capture and storage (BECCS) would render biomass “carbon negative” by 2030, progress is anything but certain. The latest PAC report criticizes recurrent delays and raises red flags over the viability of applying BECCS at scale—especially as companies in which Drax invested have recently shed much of their workforce. The government talks of “game-changing” technologies but fails to deliver, leaving taxpayers exposed.

Furthermore, the government’s hypocritical stance is laid bare by allowing a 13% rise in biomass electricity prices—despite banning new oil and gas exploration in UK waters. This policy ignores that imported biomass energy produces substantially more carbon emissions than domestic gas or oil, burdening consumers with higher costs and a less reliable energy supply.

The current trajectory almost ensures the UK will become dependent on unreliable renewable sources like wind and solar, whose intermittency is set to destabilize the grid further, with nuclear energy sidelined by political neglect. The government’s failure to properly subsidize and develop reliable, proven energy technologies leaves plants like Drax’s biomass station as a crucial, yet environmentally questionable, linchpin for the nation’s electricity needs—a situation that no forward-thinking policy should tolerate.

In reality, the enormous public funding pouring into biomass—subsidies that dwarf those for other renewables—continues despite seismic doubts about sustainability, value for money, and genuinely reducing emissions. This chaotic energy policy, driven more by political posturing than practical strategy, betrays the British public. True energy security requires transparency, accountability, and an honest reassessment of which technologies genuinely serve the country’s interests—not the vested, well-connected corporate interests that currently dominate the scene.

The contrast with the promises of “homegrown clean energy” is stark. A responsible opposition champions policies prioritizing real energy independence, supporting reliable nuclear and clean fossil fuel alternatives in transition, and demanding rigorous oversight of subsidies to protect taxpayers. This government’s reckless zeal for biomass is an expensive experiment that endangers Britain’s environmental goals and economic stability alike.

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

## Bibliography

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