

Andy Atkins  
Executive Director  
Friends of the Earth  
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18<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Cc Kenneth Richter, Friends of the Earth,  
John Sauven and Doug Parr, Greenpeace  
Mike Clarke and Martin Harper, RSPB

Dear Andy,

I am deeply disappointed by your current campaigning stance on biomass. I have worked passionately in this space for 18 years and I have great respect for your organisations, but frankly some of what has gone on recently is not output worthy of your stature. I strongly believe it is time we sat down to discuss how we can work together on this going forward.

We all agree that renewables are crucial to our energy future and the future of our planet. We have all worked long and hard to reach where we are today; and (as you are all well aware) the last few years have proved harder than ever to gain public acceptability and political mandate for this shared goal. There has never been a more important time to work together, to send clear messages to the public, and to do everything within our power to present a united front. The only groups who stand to gain from our in-fighting are our opponents, for whom the unintended consequences of your organisations' actions in undermining support for the renewables industry would no doubt be most welcome.

There is unquestionably a debate to be had on how to secure the most sustainable future for biomass as an energy source. However, your organisations are currently promoting a good deal of misinformation as 'science' and - in some instances it appears deliberately - facilitating confusion between the facts and terms of reference in this debate. You have the expertise and experience to know that the "Dirtier than Coal" report is not science; to understand fully the differences between the various industries under discussion (rather than allowing the public to believe rainforest destruction, orang-utans and palm oil are issues of concern to be laid at the feet of the solid biomass power generation industry); to know better than appropriating a half-baked modelling tool without permission from a Government workshop and releasing it publicly as a 'game changing' piece of analysis. This is not conducive to building public understanding and trust; nor to rational, fact-based discussion capable of leading to a realistic and mutually acceptable solution.

The technical detail in this area is just about as complex as any I have come across in my career, and I know we all struggle against the temptation to persuade audiences (ranging from apathetic to downright sceptical) with an eye-catching campaign which tugs the heart strings. But these tactics often come at the expense of a more measured, fact-based approach and the risk is (as we all witnessed with ClimateGate) that in the long run they undermine and erode the credibility of our organisations and our objectives. I would urge you not to take a backseat role in endorsing generalisations and misinformation as 'facts', but to take a robust and critical look at the campaigns, policies and messaging currently being employed to ensure you truly can substantiate and endorse your current positions. There is, in short, a serious disconnect between the theoretical assumptions and out of context data from which your conclusions are drawn, and the reality of the biomass industry.

The companies we represent are engaged in practical action to reduce carbon emissions, improve forestry management, protect biodiversity and provide energy. Given we are all engaged in many of the same objectives, I propose a positive dialogue as soon as possible between us and our expert advisers to ensure that there are robust, workable and transparent sustainability requirements. This is a critical time for our shared cause; working together is our best chance of ensuring success.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'GH', with a long, wavy horizontal line extending to the right.

Gaynor Hartnell,  
Chief Executive,  
Renewable Energy Association.