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UK Biomass Strategy – Highly Supportive of Biomass and a Priority Role for BECCS

10 August 2023

The UK Government (the “Government”) has today published a Biomass Strategy (the “Strategy”) which sets out its position on the use of biomass in the UK’s plans for delivering net zero.



The Strategy outlines the potential *extraordinary* role which biomass can play across the economy in power, heating and transport, including a priority role for Bioenergy Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS), which is seen as critical for meeting net zero plans due to its ability to provide large-scale carbon removals.

Will Gardiner, Drax CEO, said:

“We welcome the UK Government’s clear support for sustainably sourced biomass and the critical role that BECCS can play in achieving the country’s climate goals.

“The inclusion of BECCS at the top of a priority use framework is a clear signal that the UK wants to be a leader in carbon removals and Drax is ready to deliver on this ambition. We are engaged in formal discussions with the UK Government about the project and, providing these are successful, we plan to invest billions in delivering BECCS at Drax Power Station in North Yorkshire, simultaneously providing reliable, renewable power and carbon removals.



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“We look forward to working alongside the Government to ensure biomass is best used to contribute to net zero across the economy, through further progression of plans for BECCS and ensuring an evidence-driven, best practice approach to sustainability.”

A priority role for BECCS

The Strategy reiterates the Government’s ambition to deliver 5Mt pa of carbon removals by 2030, with the potential for this to increase to 23Mt by 2035 and up to 81Mt by 2050, with BECCS expected to provide the majority of the total in 2050.

In the period to 2035 Government intends to facilitate the use of biomass for power and heating, whilst supporting projects transitioning to BECCS. BECCS projects, which includes Drax Power Station, are seen as a priority use of biomass given existing generation assets with established supply chains and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology ready to be deployed. Beyond 2035 there will remain a role for biomass without BECCS in harder to decarbonise sectors and in supporting energy security.

The Strategy notes the active work in government to support BECCS, including the development of business models.

Biomass availability and sustainability

The Strategy considers the global availability of sustainable biomass, finding that by using domestic and imported biomass sources there is sufficient material to meet estimated future demand in the 6th Carbon Budget.

Alongside the increased use of sustainable biomass, Government will continue to develop sustainability criteria and Drax supports the development of robust standards across sectors.

A link to the Strategy can be found [here](#).

Scientific assessment of carbon removals from BECCS

Alongside publication of the Strategy, the Government has published an evidence-based assessment of BECCS as a route to negative emissions. The report sets out how “well regulated” BECCS can deliver negative emissions and ensure positive outcomes for people, the environment, and the climate.

BECCS at Drax Power Station

In March 2023, the Government confirmed its commitment to support the deployment of large-scale Power-BECCS projects by 2030 and that the Drax Power Station BECCS project had passed the deliverability assessment for the Power-BECCS project submission process.

Formal bilateral discussions with the Government are ongoing to move the project forward and help realise the Government’s ambition to deliver 5Mt pa of carbon removals by 2030. These discussions include a bridging mechanism between the end of the current renewable schemes in 2027 and the commissioning of BECCS at Drax Power Station.

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Drax believes that BECCS at Drax Power Station is the only project in the UK that can enable the Government to achieve this ambition, in addition to the large-scale renewable power and system support services it provides to the UK power system.

In July 2023, the Government designated the Viking CCS cluster as a Track 2 cluster. Progressing a CO₂ transport and storage network in the Humber represents a significant step toward helping the region meet its net zero ambitions and ensuring that it remains a source of high-skilled jobs and energy security for decades to come. Along with the East Coast Cluster, Viking creates an additional potential pathway to support BECCS at Drax Power Station.

The Government has also confirmed that during 2023 it will set out a process for the expansion of its wider CCS programme for individual projects, including BECCS (Track 1 expansion and Track 2).

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