

## Kronospan workers urge Government to step in over subsidies

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THE head of a chipboard factory warned yesterday the UK Government has to come up with a strategy to avert a crisis in the timber industry.

Yesterday 600 workers downed tools at the Kronospan plant, Chirk, for two hours as part of Europe-wide protest at unfair subsidies for biomass energy.

Kronospan works director Mike McKenna said it was vital the Government went beyond sympathising and started acting.

The problem is caused because power generating companies are offered government subsidies to burn the same wood that is used in manufacturing. This is resulting in a shortage of timber and pushing up prices.

Wood that has been used for making furniture, wood panels or used in the paper industry is now being sent to feed the new biomass-fired plants.

Environmental groups also say there is not enough wood in the UK to supply the increasing demand for biomass.

Mr McKenna said: "It is the whole industry it is affecting not just the UK.

"We had 180 plants across Europe taking part in the coordinated action. Europe already has a problem, and it is being felt in the UK.

"They really need to change the focus from using virgin timber to use timber that is near the end of its useful life.

"The Government has expressed its sympathy, but what we need is for them to come up with a solution that gives a level playing field."