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## **ISHERWOOD: AM CALLS FOR WELSH GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON WOOD PANEL INDUSTRY FOLLOWING KRONOSPAN'S DAY OF ACTION**

A NORTH Wales Assembly Member has called for a Welsh Government statement on the wood panel industry after attending the Day of Action at Kronospan in Chirk, last Friday.

Welsh Conservative, Mark Isherwood, made the request during yesterday's Business Statement in the Assembly.

The Minister for Business and Budget, Jane Hutt, told Mr Isherwood to raise the issue with the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing, Jane Davidson, which he will now be doing. He will also be pursuing the matter with the UK Government.

Speaking in the Chamber Mr Isherwood said : "I call for a statement on the impact of renewable energy policy in the context of biomass power plants on existing users of wood. Last Friday, I joined the local Labour MP at Kronospan in Chirk, which employs 600 people. We joined the management and the workforce as part of a Europe-wide day of action by the wood panel industry.

"The slogans that we saw, read, and supported were, 'Make wood work', 'To burn it is to waste it', 'Use it, don't burn it', and, 'Don't burn our jobs'.

"We heard that Government subsidies are equal to double the amount that the wood panel industry can afford to pay and that subsidies today of about £200 million for biomass are forecast to grow to £2.4 billion if all of the current plans come to fruition. More worryingly, we were told that, if the objective is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, this would be illogical, because, if biomass subsidy disrupted all wood panel producers across Europe, carbon dioxide emissions would increase by 300 million tonnes per annum."

He added: "Minister, the wood-panel industry is not subsidised, although biomass is, and the wood panel industry adds 10 times the value of biomass. Do you agree that we need legislation at a European and a national level to rethink the subsidies, because while biomass has a role with regard to end-of-life timber that would otherwise go to landfill, unless the idea of a hierarchy of use is embedded, and without action, there will be a shortfall of timber in Europe by 2020, and we will only be able to import wood through deforestation, which is responsible for 20 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions. Transporting these imports to our islands would further increase our carbon footprint.

"I know that your Government is only responsible for power plants of up to 50 MW, which are not particularly problematic, because of their small scale, but you have a key role to play in dialogue at European and UK Governmental levels. This is a matter of major importance to the north-east Wales economy and to the wider economy, and it deserves a Welsh Government statement."

**ENDS**