



Drax's Independent Advisory Board – H2 2024 update

In the second half of 2024, Drax met with its Independent Advisory Board (IAB) twice, for a virtual meeting in August and an in-person meeting over two days in November. The November meeting was Professor Sir Ian Boyd's first meeting as Vice-Chair and Sir John Beddington's last meeting on the IAB. We wish Sir John Beddington all the best, and we look forward to all the interactions and discussions to come with Professor Sir Ian Boyd.

At the August meeting, the primary topic was biodiversity, and Drax presented the biodiversity research questions they're planning to commission, focused on Drax's biomass sourcing regions and responsible forestry certification biodiversity standards. The IAB primarily advised on the wording and framing of the research questions. The IAB also advised that Drax co-opt additional expertise for this specific project.

In the interim between the August and November meetings, Drax co-opted additional biodiversity expertise for further guidance on the biodiversity research questions and nature positive more generally. They suggested that Drax look at their biomass sourcing with a natural capital lens for a more holistic picture of sourcing practices impact on nature.

Drax also consulted with the IAB on creating a set of sustainability targets and KPIs, receiving feedback on the overall framework and the sub-targets under each of the three Sustainability Outcomes – nature, climate and people positive.

At the November meeting, the primary topic of discussion and presentation was forest carbon. On the first day of the meeting, Robert Matthews, the IAB's ex-officio observer from Forest Research, spoke about the recently published Dutch Government report '[On the Science of Carbon Debt](#)' which he co-authored. The IAB emphasised how helpful the report is in clarifying the complexities, and the assumptions that have to be made, in calculating carbon debt and payback times. The IAB also suggested that Drax could consider working in collaboration with a third-party to present the content in the report in a more accessible way for the general audience.

Other guest presenters were also invited to speak including Dr Francisco X Aguilar and Dr Consuelo Brandeis, both authors of the [Aguilar et al \(2022\) paper](#), and Dr Bob Abt and Dr Karen Abt who presented the Sub-regional Timber Supply (SRTS) model in SE USA and how it's being applied in other case studies. Dr Aguilar concluded that the wood pellet industry had not impacted forest carbon stocks at a statistically significant level in the US coastal southeast, under the particular conditions and time period of this study. Dr Bob Abt and Dr Karen Abt explained that the purpose of the SRTS model is to identify trends in carbon stocks and explore the sensitivity of results to differing baseline conditions. The IAB emphasised the quality of the US Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data, and the importance of forest modelling tools in understanding forestry dynamics in a specific region.

On the second day of the November meeting, Drax and the IAB discussed opportunities to use a risk analysis approach and the best way to use forest carbon modelling to inform sourcing activities. We also discussed options for Drax to work with forest owners and local organisations to increase forest resilience.

The IAB appreciated the external speakers who presented and would like to invite other experts at future meetings when appropriate.