

# Judge praises Birmingham oil protesters' 'admirable aims'

17 February



JUST STOP OIL

Activists staged said they went to to the Tyburn site at about 04:00 BST

**A judge sentencing seven Just Stop Oil protesters has praised their "admirable aims" after they disrupted operations at an Esso fuel terminal in Birmingham.**

The site in Tyburn was one of several targeted around the UK last April.

The protesters were told by District Judge Graham Wilkinson at Wolverhampton

Magistrates' Court he was moved by their "deeply emotive" explanations.

But he said: "If good people with the right motivation do the wrong thing it can never make that wrong thing right."

The defendants were found guilty on Thursday of trespassing at the Esso site in Wood Lane on 3 April. They refused to leave while other group members sat in front of security barriers intending to obstruct or disrupt activity.

They were each given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay varying costs to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

No evidence was offered by the CPS against two women and their charges were dropped.

Sentencing them, Mr Wilkinson said it was "abundantly clear" they were good people and it had been "a pleasure throughout" to deal with them.



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| A specialist police team removed protesters from Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion from the roof of a tanker

"Your aims are to slow or even stop the advance of global warming and therefore to preserve the planet not just for generations to come but for existing generations," he said.

"No-one can therefore criticise your motivations and indeed each of you has

spoken individually about your own personal experiences, motivations and actions.

"Many of your explanations for your actions were deeply emotive and I am sure all listening were moved by them, I know I was."

He noted "substantial mitigation" in relation to their actions, but added that the wrong thing cannot be made right, even if done by good people with the right motivation.



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The protest lasted several hours at the Birmingham depot

Their protest was part of a joint effort by Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion which saw 10 "critical" sites being blocked including in London, Southampton, Essex, Warwickshire and Staffordshire.

Dozens were arrested and the disruption led to four depots temporarily stopping operations.

The group said its supporters were demanding the government halt licences and consents for any new fossil fuel projects in the UK.

Since Just Stop Oil started its campaign in February last year, it said more than 2,000 people had been arrested.

After Thursday's hearing the group said it was continuing with its cause, adding: "We are going to stop new fossil fuel projects whether those in power agree or not."

The Judicial Office said Just Stop Oil had issued a misleading account of what the judge had said and shared the full wording of his sentencing remarks with the BBC.

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### **The comments of District Judge Graham Wilkinson in full:**

"As a judge my overriding duty is always to uphold the law without fear or favour.

"This is not a court of morals, it is a court of law, if I allow my own moral compass or political beliefs to influence my decisions and ignore the law where it is convenient to me to do so then the court becomes one where the rule of law no longer applies.

"If judges across the criminal justice system did the same then there would be no consistency and no respect for the law, decisions based on the personal beliefs of members of the judiciary cannot be consistent with the rule of law and the ideal that each law will apply to all equally.

"Trust in the rule of law is an essential ingredient of society and it will erode swiftly if judges make politically or morally-motivated decisions that do not accord with established legal principles. Indeed I would become the self-appointed sheriff if I acted in such a way.

"It is abundantly clear that you are all good people, intelligent and articulate and you have been a pleasure throughout to deal with.

"It is unarguable that manmade global warming is real and that we are facing a climate crisis. That is accepted and recognised by the scientific community and most governments (including our own).

"Your aims are to slow or even stop the advance of global warming and therefore to preserve the planet not just for generations to come but for existing generations.

"No-one can therefore criticise your motivations and indeed each of you has spoken individually about your own personal experiences, motivations and actions. Many of your explanations for your actions were deeply emotive and I am sure all listening were moved by them, I know I was.

"In simple terms you are good people with admirable aims. However, if good people with the right motivation do the wrong thing it can never make that wrong

thing right, it can only ever act as substantial mitigation."

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The defendants who were all convicted of trespass and given a 12-month conditional discharge:

- Paul Barnes, 43, Hillside View, in High Peak, Derbyshire, was ordered to pay £500 in costs.
  - Harley Brewer, 30, Rye Lane, in London, was ordered to pay £250 in costs.
  - Oliver Clegg, 20, Olney Street in Manchester, was ordered to pay £250 in costs.
  - Jon Deery, 22, Sandriggs in Darlington, was ordered to pay £250 in costs.
  - Paul Michael Fawkesley, 35, Lakeland Close in Liverpool, was ordered to pay £500 in costs.
  - Diana Hekt, 68, Victoria Road, Holmfirth in West Yorkshire, was ordered to pay £250 in costs.
  - Alan Woods, 58, Greenslate Road in Billinge, Greater Manchester, was ordered to pay £500 in costs.
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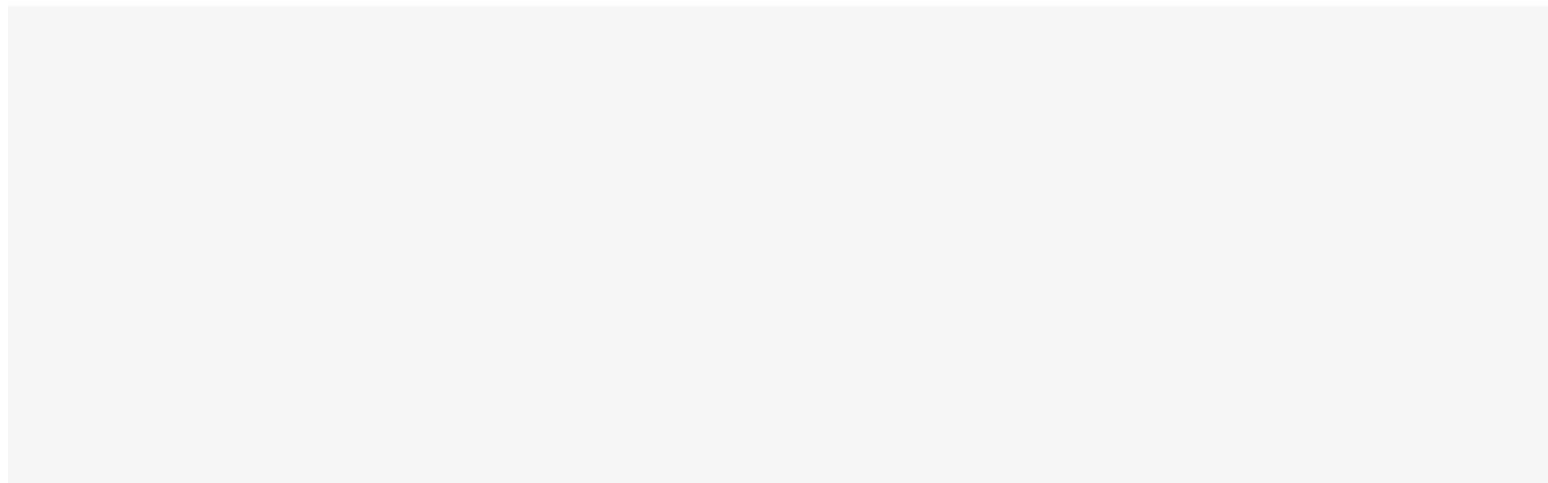
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