

Coal plant protesters injured in skirmishes with police

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Protesters battled with police yesterday but failed to shut down [Kingsnorth](#) coal plant as the climax of the week-long climate camp ended with a series of skirmishes.

Only a handful of protesters succeeded in getting inside the site near Rochester, Kent. Around 50 were arrested, bringing the total for the week to more than 90.

Climate camp organisers said last night that about 1,500 people took part in the day of direct action and marches. They were matched by nearly 1,500 police officers. The only serious scuffles came when a group of 70 people tried to go into a cornfield. They were met by 100 police, some of whom used batons. Several people were injured.

Police also used horses, dogs, trail bikes and helicopters to control demonstrators as they approached the power station across fields and down country lanes.

Environmentalists are targeting Kingsnorth because they claim the new plant planned there by its owner, the German energy group E.on - the first for nearly 30 years - will usher in six more and make it almost impossible for the UK to meet its carbon emissions targets.

Ten protesters commandeered crowd control barriers to scale the southern perimeter fence of the power station. Four people are believed to have crossed the marshy land between the fences and scaled the second, electrified security fence. They were immediately detained by police with dogs.

Yesterday a climate camp spokeswoman claimed that more than 20 boats and rafts were launched on the River Medway despite a ban by Medway port authority.

The police said that they removed 123 people from boats.

'Most did not get far, but two reached the power station and the crew of one also got over the perimeter fence,' said Madeleine, one of the protesters. 'It was a total success. We stopped any coal getting to the station and disrupted

its operation. If the government gives the go ahead for a new plant, we will be back to stop it. This is not a symbolic protest.'

While a minority tried to get into Kingsnorth, about 1,000 protesters, including many families with children, formed a carnival-like procession along the three miles from the camp to the plant's main gate. They arrived just before noon when the mood was dampened as it began to rain. Police and coastguard helicopters hovered over the area all day.

A great cheer went up as a banner reading 'No new coal' was hoisted on the main gates of the power station. Five mock 'suspect: wanted' boards were also hung up on the gates, each with a silhouette and names of the five key people involved in plans to build the new plant: Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks, Business Secretary John Hutton, Gordon Brown and two E.on chiefs.

About 150 police looked on behind crash barriers as speakers gave passionate addresses and protesters sat down for a picnic. Malcolm Hunter, from Leicester, who was dressed in an orang-utan suit, said: 'This protest is about raising awareness. Hopefully it will put pressure on government not to approve new coal plants.'

Shortly before lunch, the sound system cranked up 'I've been loving you too long' by Otis Redding when a police helicopter circled and a loudspeaker announced: 'This is a police warning. Please disperse in 10 minutes or police horses, dogs and police batons will be used.'

Organisers said that the protest had permission to remain outside the gate only until 1pm. Protesters packed up and turned back towards the camp without any trouble.

Curious locals looked on as the action unfolded. Vic Mortley, 75, from Hoo village, who had served in the RAF, said: 'I don't want any part of the protest. We have lived with coal for 75 years. Are we aware of what coal is really doing - can we see the carbon emissions in the air?'

Other locals were on the side of the protesters. Jo Barrett, from Stoke village, said: 'Opinions are roughly divided. There's plenty of water round here. There must be a cleaner way of generating electricity.'

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