

# Coal train ambushed near power station in climate change protest

- Demonstrators unload contents on to railway line
- No effect on output, say plant management

---

---

**Martin Wainwright**

Sat 14 Jun 2008 00.01 BST

Climate change campaigners halted a coal train yesterday outside Drax, Britain's biggest power station, and shovelled its contents on to the only line into the plant.

More than 20 tonnes of coal blocked the tracks as protesters strung ropes between the train and the girders of a river bridge as police watched from a distance. More than 30 protesters swarmed aboard the 21-wagon freight service. Hidden in banks of cow parsley beside the line to Drax, North Yorkshire they struck at 8am after watching two empty trains arrive to collect ash in the previous two hours.

The train had halted after unwittingly obeying an exact copy of railway emergency procedures. Posing as rail staff in fluorescent jackets, a small group of protesters waved red flags in a precise sequence to stop the EWS freight train on an iron girder bridge over the river Aire.

Most of the group then clambered up the bridge and dropped food, water and bedding for at least 24 hours from its overhead beams on to the flat tops of the trucks. "We've enough for at least two days," said Ben Tennyson, one of the Climate Camp activists, as a mobile lavatory was swung aboard by a woman campaigner dressed as a canary - coal-mining's traditional warning of danger. A banner was then draped along one of the trucks reading Leave it in the Ground - the slogan of the group's "total war" on mining and burning coal.

"We're stopping the train because it's absolute nonsense to be burning coal when we should be tackling climate change," another protester told a woman commuter, late for work, who was one of a jam of motorists blocked at nearby Hirst Courtney level crossing.

After a standoff which lasted all day, dozens of police officers - some in riot gear - surrounded the train last night and removed several of the protestors.

The protest was meticulously planned, with mobile phone Sim cards altered to avoid intercepts and shovellers given anti-pollution masks to avoid dust.

Some of the demonstrators chained themselves to the train, forcing police to cut them free before they could be led away.

The campaigners promise more protests later this summer. This year's campaign will climax in August with the Climate Camp moving to the Kingsnorth power station site in Kent, from last year's base outside Heathrow airport.

Drax power station said output had not been affected and there was no immediate risk of any fuel shortfall. Drax supplies 7% of Britain's electricity.

The plant was unsuccessfully besieged by the Climate Camp two years ago, and the rail entry to the site is ringed with barbed wire.

Its head of external relations, Melanie Wedgbury, said: "We are the largest power station but also the cleanest and most efficient. It's only because we are the biggest that we produce the most CO2.

"For every unit of electricity we generate, we generate less CO2 than any other of the coal-fired stations."

The protest was criticised by Charles Hendry, the shadow energy minister, who said: "This disruption won't help save the planet. Whatever our concerns about the environment, we must be careful not to jeopardise our current energy security. Coal does have a role to play in the future but only if the carbon is captured and safely stored."

---

---

---

---

---

