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# Police arrest 114 people in pre-emptive strike against environmental protesters

- Activists held in Nottingham over alleged power station action
- Campaigners suspect tipoff from informer



📷 Police officers at the scene of a raid at the Iona independent school in Sneinton, Nottingham, where more than 100 environmental protesters were arrested. Photograph: Rui Vieira/PA

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Police have carried out what is thought to be the biggest pre-emptive raid on environmental campaigners in UK history, arresting 114 people believed to be planning direct action at a coal-fired power station.

The arrests - for conspiracy to commit criminal damage and aggravated trespass - come amid growing concern among campaigners about increased police surveillance and groups being infiltrated by informers.

Nottinghamshire police said the raid on an independent school in [Nottingham](#) was made just after midnight this morning. The force said it seized "specialist equipment" thought to be linked to a planned protest at nearby Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station, a coal plant owned by the utility company E.On.

No group has claimed responsibility for the alleged demonstration.

Experienced campaigners said no group had claimed responsibility for the alleged demonstration because they could face charges of conspiracy and a possible jail sentence.

Activists said emails setting out planned action could be used by police to prove conspiracy to commit aggravated trespass and criminal damage, as could any equipment or documentation found during the arrests, or other evidence of coordinated preparations.

No formal details of the proposed action have been released, but campaign veterans speculated that the demonstrators could have been planning to chain themselves to the conveyor belts taking coal into the power plant in an attempt to stop the turbines when fuel ran out.

The tactic has previously been used by activists at Ratcliffe and another E.On coal plant, at [Kingsnorth in Kent](#).

The secretive nature of the operation is similar to previous actions organised under the umbrella of the Climate Camp network, a loose affiliation of independently-organised protest groups, but nobody from the movement could be contacted today.

Nottinghamshire police said the 114 people arrested were from across the country. "In view of specialist equipment recovered by police, those arrested posed a serious threat to the safe running of the site," police said. "There were no injuries during the arrests and the police investigation is ongoing."

Some of those arrested were taken to police cells in Leicestershire and Derbyshire.

E.On issued a statement saying: "We can confirm that Ratcliffe power station was the planned target of an organised protest during the early hours of this morning.

"While we understand that everyone has a right to protest peacefully and lawfully, this was clearly neither of those things so we will be assisting the police with their investigations into what could have been a very dangerous and irresponsible attempt to disrupt an operational power plant."

The arrests follow a growing number of demonstrations and "direct actions" by campaigners angry at government plans to expand airports and build a new generation of coal-fired power stations with no firm commitment to capture and store the emissions.

As well as chaining themselves to conveyors, protesters have scaled the cooling tower at Kingsnorth, blockaded E.On offices, protested at events sponsored by the German-owned company, stopped a coal train and invaded or blockaded several airports around the country.

There has also been increasing concern about police tactics. Last month, a Guardian investigation revealed police were targeting thousands of political

campaigners in surveillance operations and storing their details on a database for at least seven years.

Policing of the recent G20 protests has also come under scrutiny after [newspaper vendor Ian Tomlinson died](#) following, according to video evidence, was an attack from behind by a police officer.

Some environmental activists said there was a suspicion the arrests in Nottingham followed a tipoff from a police informer inside the campaign group. Others pointed out that the size of the protest group made it more vulnerable to information leaking out during routine police surveillance.

Shami Chakrabarti, the director of Liberty, said: "In the light of the policing of the G20 protests, people up and down the country will want to be confident that there was evidence of a real conspiracy to commit criminal damage by those arrested and that this was not just an attempt by the police to disrupt perfectly legitimate protest per se."

Nottingham city councillor David Mellen said the police raided the privately-run Iona School at Sneinton as the result of "an intelligence-led operation".

He said: "I don't know whether it was the school itself being used or the car park. Neighbours reported a lot of noise after midnight. It seems to have been used as a rendezvous for people from a wide area."

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