

Ratcliffe coal trial: James Hansen gives court a crash course in climate change

Nasa scientist tells jury he began speaking out about global warming for the sake of his grandchildren



📷 James Hansen, whose speech to Congress in 1988 is seen as pivotal in first bringing climate change to the world's attention. Photograph: Melanie Patterson/AP Photos/The Daily Iowan

Tim Webb

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Nasa's top climate scientist Jim Hansen told a jury at the trial of 20 environmental activists that he had begun speaking out about climate change again in the past five years because of his grandchildren.

"I did not want them to say: 'Pa you understood what was happening but you never made it clear,'" the 69-year-old told the trial last Monday.

The activists were found guilty of conspiracy to commit aggravated trespass by the court today, and could now face suspended prison sentences.

Hansen had flown overnight from his home in the US to give evidence about the science of climate change and in particular the threat posed to humanity by the burning of coal at plants such as E.ON's at [Ratcliffe-on-Soar](#).

During his two-hour testimony and cross-examination, Ed Rees QC, for the defence, stopped him repeatedly to ask him to explain the technical terms he was using. But the message he delivered was the clearest - and starkest - crash course in climate change the jury, the judge and members of the public in the gallery are ever likely to get.

Hansen, whose speech to Congress in 1988 is seen as pivotal in first bringing climate change to the world's attention, is well-versed in speaking out against the coal industry. Nottingham is not the first British court where he has given evidence. He testified last year in the [case of the "Kingsnorth Six"](#), who had [climbed up E.ON's coal plant](#). They also used the [climate change defence](#) - that their actions were designed to prevent immediate harm to human life and property from climate change - and were acquitted.

The day after last Monday's trial, he flew to Switzerland from East Midlands airport to try to dissuade the government there from building a new coal



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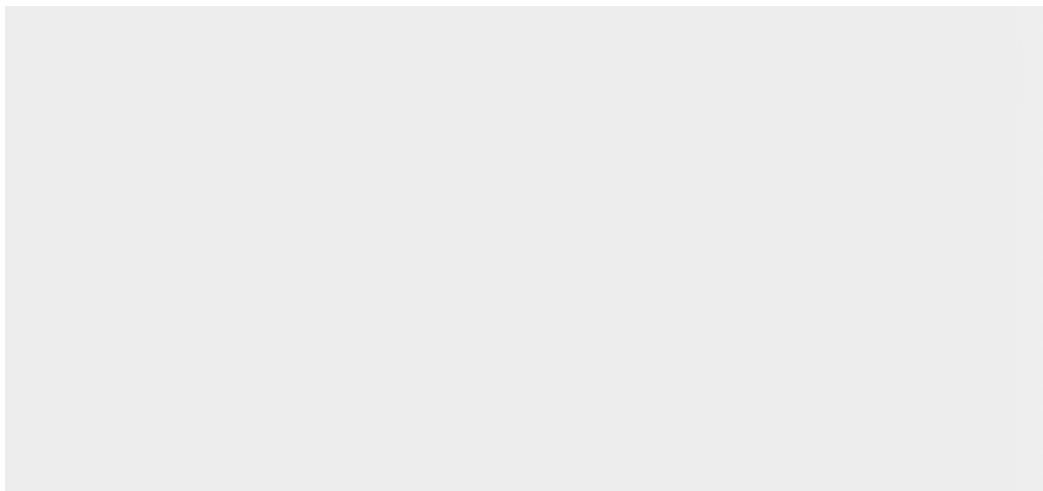
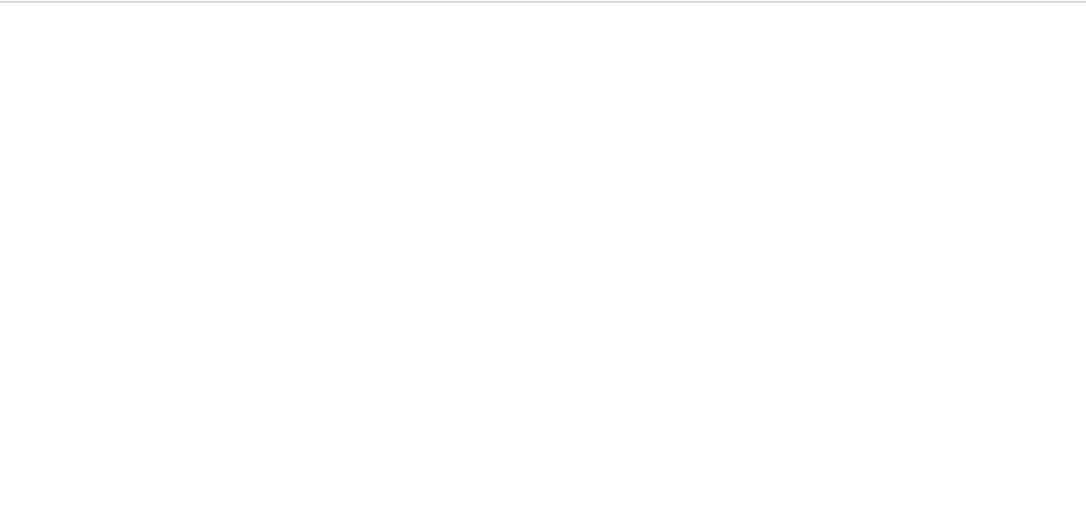
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