

CPS reviews environmental activists' convictions

Group that planned to shut down Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station was infiltrated by undercover police officer Mark Kennedy



📷 Ben Stewart and Sarah Shoraka were among 20 activists convicted of conspiracy to commit aggravated trespass. Photograph: David Jones/PA

Owen Bowcott

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The convictions of 20 environmental campaigners involved in a protest at Britain's second largest coal-fired power station are to be reviewed less than two weeks after they were sentenced.

The urgent investigation by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) into the safety of the convictions was welcomed by one of the activists, Ben Stewart, a Greenpeace employee who branded the trial a miscarriage of justice.



📷 Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station. Photograph: Haydn West/PA.

The CPS decision follows [revelations in the Guardian about the role of PC Mark Kennedy](#), allegedly at the centre of a £250,000-a-year undercover operation within the climate change movement. Under the name Mark Stone the former Metropolitan police officer infiltrated environmental groups across Europe.

The demonstrators were convicted of conspiracy to commit aggravated trespass at the coal-fired Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station in Nottinghamshire.

The CPS said: "We will appoint a QC to consider the safety of the convictions arising from the trial ... This will be a thorough review but conducted as quickly as possible."

The convicted protesters were given a mixture of community orders and conditional discharges this month at Nottingham crown court. Stewart, 36, and Sarah Shoraka, 33, another Greenpeace worker, were among the last to be sentenced for their part in the 2009 climate change action.

The cases against six of their fellow demonstrators collapsed because Kennedy was expected to give evidence on their behalf. The trial led to claims that police withheld significant secretly recorded tapes from the defence and the court.

"This is now the fifth supposedly independent inquiry sparked by the Guardian's revelations about [Mark Kennedy](#)," Stewart said. "Crucial evidence was suppressed. There's a recording that Kennedy made of a briefing before the proposed action.

"It would go right to the heart of the case because the jury would have known what was motivating us. The key issue was whether this was an attempt to stop CO2 emissions or whether it was a publicity stunt.

"It was an attempt to stop emissions. It was an attempt to stop 150,000 tonnes of CO2 going into the atmosphere.

"The tape would have been absolutely crucial ... but the police decided not to let the jury have it. They didn't let the judge in the trial have it either.

"We are in an extraordinary position where the DPP is investigating a possible miscarriage of justice only one and a half weeks after our sentences were imposed. The Kennedy affair gets darker and darker.

"There's an Independent [Police](#) Complaints Commission investigation into the suppression of the tape. God knows what we will end up with. It could end up with charges for perverting the course of justice and the only people going to jail could be police officers."

The convicted activists are due to start their community service orders in the next few weeks. There has been no announcement on whether they will be suspended pending the CPS review.

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