



Press Release 09 March 2007

Clearance work at Lake carried out without Permission

Is npower above the Law?

We have today learnt, from Oxfordshire County Council, that recent works carried out by RWE npower at Thrupp Lake, Radley had not received the permissions they required.

Although planning permission was granted to RWE npower in January to use Thrupp Lake as an ash dump to take 500,000 tonnes of fly ash from Didcot 'A' power station over the next 8 years, the power station operators are not permitted to start development work until nine preconditions, known as "Conditions Precedent", have been complied with to the satisfaction of Oxfordshire County Council. The Council are still considering these conditions.

RWE npower also need to obtain an IPPC (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control) licence from the Environment Agency before any ash can be put into the lake. The Environment Agency "strongly advises" that no site development work should commence until such a licence is granted, since they reserve the right not to grant the licence or to require modifications to the design and operation of the facility. (Save Radley Lakes has made repeated enquiries with the Environment Agency to determine the status of the IPPC licence application for the existing operational site and whether an application has been made to operate Thrupp Lake for ash disposal. To date we have received no response to our recent questions about this, and cannot understand why the Environment Agency, who are normally quite forthcoming, would not give straightforward answers to simple questions.)

It now appears that npower should have obtained a licence from the Forestry Commission before undertaking tree felling work. This they did not do. The Forestry Commission is currently considering what action to take.

The clearance work was undertaken in great haste, without due regard for the unusually warm weather and consequent early start to the nesting season. Reports have been received of birds being harassed and swans' nests being destroyed. Npower say that this work was undertaken under the supervision of an ecologist. It is difficult to see how one individual could have supervised the activities of 40 workmen scattered over numerous islands. Also, we understand that he was on holiday for part of the time. We have now been informed that npower have halted work supposedly "because a coot's nest

has been discovered on the lake"! In view of preceding events, this is an unlikely excuse. (We suspect they have hit a more substantial obstacle.)

Oxfordshire County Council has also determined that the change of use of the Sandles dwelling, containers stored within the curtilage of the house and new fences also need planning permissions; permissions which now, it seems, need to be obtained retrospectively from Vale of White Horse District Council.

In 2005, RWE npower wrote to save Radley Lakes promising that *no work would be undertaken at the Lakes until all necessary permissions had been obtained.* (A copy of that letter is attached.) This was an empty promise as it turned out. What other promises have they made?

Basil Crowley, chairman of Save Radley Lakes, says that "the recent activities of this company, carried out under the cover of a draconian injunction prohibiting protest and photography, have shown it to be totally out of control. Its actions are not only irresponsible, both socially and environmentally, but are being carried out with flagrant disregard for the laws and regulations that exist to protect our green and pleasant land. Not only have they pre-empted the outcome of a Town Green public enquiry by starting work last month, but it now seems that they may have done so illegally. If so, that is vandalism, plain and simple. It is extraordinary that any company, let alone one of such importance and substance, should behave in this utterly shameful way."

A public demonstration to protest about npower's activities, involving a march from Abingdon to the Lakes, is planned for tomorrow (10 March).

Background Notes

RWE npower, operators of Didcot A power station, recently received planning permission to use Thrupp Lake at Radley for dumping "waste" fuel ash from the power station, despite that the lake, an old gravel pit, had become naturally restored over more than 50 years, and that it is located in the Oxford Green Belt. The Lake has the capacity to take half a million tonnes of ash over the next 8 years.

However npower have not yet received final approvals necessary before they can proceed with the development; nor have they received an IPPC (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control) licence from the Environment Agency to use the site as an ash dump. In 2005, RWE npower wrote to Save Radley Lakes promising that it would not start work on the site until all necessary permissions had been obtained.

In December last year, local people applied to have the Lake and surroundings designated a Town Green under the Commons Registration Act 1965. This would protect the area from development. A Public Enquiry is due to be held in April to determine the outcome of this application.

For further information,

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