

THE HOLE TRUTH

AS SchNEWS REPORTS FROM THE NEW ROSSPORT FRONTLINE..

There is still plenty of ire left in Ireland as campaigners ready themselves for another summer of action against Shell and their plans to despoil the coast of County Mayo with a new gas pipeline (see SchNEWS 719). The project is already a decade late and three times over budget; pretty impressive for a small community fighting one of the biggest multinationals in the world.

Previous years' resistance and obstruction – whilst met with intimidation, violence, police and legal harassment - have finally led to a rethink at Shell HQ. Their cunning plan is now to avoid going through the troublesome Rosspoint area and instead build underneath the nearby Sruth Fhada Chonn estuary instead.

Preparation for this involves drilling up to

80 boreholes to assess suitability, with work due to start this month. The site is a Special Protected Area (and what self-respecting energy corporation would build anywhere else?), part of the Broadhaven Bay Special Area of Conservation, and the operation will damage parts of the estuary, disturbing the local wildlife, particularly Atlantic salmon and birds found on the intertidal areas.

But, as they have every step of the way, local campaigners and Shell to Sea activists are planning to stop them (without any extra disturbing of wildlife, presumably). They are calling for a "continuous mass act of civil disobedience" and want groups or individuals to pledge to stop a borehole at some time this summer.

The aim is to assemble a rag-tag bag of



'Shell's angels' and assign each borehole it's own 'Beat the Borehole' group. Actions could range from merely walking out on the sands for picnic to full-on boarding of drilling rigs.

Due to the tides, and seasonal nature of the job, any disruption that slows the process down could prevent them getting an adequate survey done this year. Work has to stop in mid-Oct when the protected Brent Geese arrive for the winter.

The Solidarity Camp is now located on land right next to the estuary. Everyone is welcome to stay there and equipment / training can be provided. There is also a camp house and local hostel nearby if camping isn't for your (sleeping) bag.

* To pledge to Beat a Borehole email/ring the camp Ph: +353 851141170 Email - rossportsolidaritycamp@gmail.com

** See also www.rossportsolidaritycamp.org ww.shelltosea.com

DECOMMISSIONERS ALL OUT

Following the celebratory scenes outside Hove Crown Court last week as the Decommissioners walked out after historic acquittals (see SchNEWS 729), it still wasn't completely over as Elijah Smith couldn't be amongst the group, as he was still on remand in Lewes Prison.

He was facing another charge related to EDO ITT, and it was only after a bail application on Wednesday (7th) that he was finally released. A demo was held outside the prison during the afternoon, and he finally walked out the gates to cheers at 6pm. He has been imprisoned since the decommissioning in January 2009 (see SchNEWS 663).

Earlier in the week, on the Monday following the verdicts, the Smash EDO campaign and Decommissioners were back on Home Farm Rd to take their celebrations to the gates of EDO/ITT. From midday onwards Decommissioners and others passed the megaphone around to offer their commiserations to Mr Paul Hills, EDOs managing director. Some familiar phrases rang out across the EDO carpark: "Workers of EDO-MBM..... we'll be here until you're not...".

* See www.smashedo.org.uk
http://decommissioners.co.uk

PARTY & PROTEST

For events listings updated weekly see
www.schnews.org.uk/pap

BOG ROLL OF HONOUR

Protesters in Manchester have been acquitted after an action against peat bog extraction. The Chat Moss site near Salford was the target of an action on April 15th in protest against the environmental impact of removing these natural, ancient carbon sinks – 94% of which have already been destroyed in Britain. Activists locked onto a peat extraction digger and the lorry it was trying to load to halt activity at the site, and two were arrested and charged under the Public Order Act Section 4a for causing 'harassment, alarm or distress' to the employees at the site.

After hearing from three peat employees about how 'harassed, alarmed and distressed' they were, the magistrate didn't even ask to hear from the defence before acquitting the two, saying it was not more than an 'irritation'. He also rejected a request for a restraining order on the pair stopping them returning to Chat Moss. Inside the court and outside were supporters from Save Our North West Greenbelt.

The peat extraction site at Chat Moss is owned by Peel Holdings, a powerful corporate investment firm in the north-west who also own shipping ports, airports, shopping centres and more, and have a large stake in UK Coal. Local public opinion is firmly against the Chat Moss extraction site, includ-

ing the local MP and council, who are proposing a ban on future extraction and seeking to return parts of it back to wet mossland.

Chat Moss has been forming as a peat bog for up to 10,000 years. One part of it is an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), another is an EU Special Area of Conservation. It is also an archaeological site, with the discovery of 'bog bodies' preserved for millennia. Peat bogs like Chat Moss lock carbon into the soil and soak up further carbon, and disrupting them has a great environmental impact: in the UK alone, peat extraction causes 3 million tonnes of CO2 emissions a year. Most of the peat from Chat Moss ends up in garden centres for potted-plant mulch.

* See 'Save our North West Green Belt and Green Spaces' on Facebook

VILLAGE FATE

The appeal by Democracy Village after last week's High Court ruling (see SchNEWS 729) will be heard at 10.30am today (9th) at the appeals court. In the meantime the camp continues on and plans more direct action following last Friday's demos outside the Houses of Commons and Downing St. If the appeal is lost, it could be a matter of days before bailiffs arrive – for more see www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2010/07/455227.html

UZBEKS AGAINST THE WALL

The former Soviet republic known as Kyrgyzstan has recently been making headlines. Following a historic change to long established Scrabble rules allowing proper nouns, Kyrgyzstan stands out as the highest scoring word on the board. They also had a revolution recently; a popular uprising that deposed the corrupt, self-serving and incompetent Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who himself came to power on the back of the last revolution-but-one, the so-called 'Tulip Revolution'.

Waves of revulsion following Bakiyev's massacre of protesters back in April led to his exile and a hastily assembled interim government led by Roza Otunbayeva. The new leaders immediately promised elections and, again, that a new leaf had been turned in Central Asian politics away from authoritarianism towards a democratic future. If only. The Bakiyev family, who controlled lucrative smuggling, transport and energy interests, have been not only sulking but also plotting in exile. Bakiyev's son, Maksim, has been sowing chaos and destruction across the country as a ploy to bring the family back in from the cold.

And with 400,000 refugees and internally displaced persons and perhaps 2,000 dead in inter-ethnic violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities, it looks like Bakiyev junior's plan has come to fruition. Much of the city of Osh and surrounding areas have been burned and ransacked. Fleeing civilians speak of mass rape and pogroms organised by paramilitary groups.

This widespread destruction has left the interim government looking weak and rudderless. The president asked for (and was refused) Russian military assistance to quell the violence. Despite such a large section of the population's absence the government is still insisting that the referendum/election is the most pressing priority. Meanwhile groups as disparate as the International Crisis Group and the Anarchist International Embassy are urging the Kyrgyz government to put their efforts into establishing some peace and stability in the country first.

Having belatedly sent in the security forces, they seem to be concentrating more on policing the Uzbek communities (that have already suffered the worst) than stemming the violence. Just how much attention the security forces, reformed under Bakiyev, pay to the new government is an unknown quantity. Under Bakiyev, the elite, US trained anti-narcotics force was integrated into the country's internal security, their US-honed skills turned on an unarmed civilian population.

Kyrgyzstan is at the centre of the 'new great game' played out in Central Asia between the USA and Russia. Kyrgyzstan is the unfortunate host to both a US and a Russian base at opposite ends of the country, and both have used fair means and foul to force Kyrgyzstan into their respective orbits. The country is one of the main routes to Europe for Afghan opiates, and with the Taliban's attacks on the US' Pakistani transit routes into Afghanistan, it has become central to the US Afghan war effort.

BESETTING A PRESIDENT

The new president-elect of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, was met by a Downing Street picket as he arrived for a chinwag with chinless wonder David Cameron on Monday (5th).

Activists from the Colombia Solidarity campaign and the Colombian leftist opposition – the Polo Democrático – were joined by Chileans, the Movement of Ecuadorians in the UK, and the Latin American Workers Association in demanding an end to aid for the chronic human rights abusers in power in Colombia.

Santos recently defeated Green party candidate Antanus Mockus – a political outsider who surged through the polls on an anti-corruption manifesto. Before running for president, Santos had been the Defence Minister of current hard right president Alvaro Uribe. In his time working for Uribe, Santos found himself up to his neck in scandal. He was in charge of the army throughout the 'false positive' affair, where Colombian soldiers were found to have murdered civilians and dressed them up as guerillas to claim kill bonuses.

He was also allegedly the architect of the air strike on Ecuadorian territory that killed one of the leaders of leftist guerilla group the FARC, igniting a diplomatic crisis in the process. As a result he currently can't set foot in Ecuador because of an outstanding arrest warrant for his part in the raid. Uribe and Santos' political supporters have also been ravaged by the 'parapolitical' scandal which exposed collusion between politicians from their party and paramilitary groups – groups who have admitted securing votes through violence and coercion.

Santos has pledged to continue both the military and economic policies of Uribe – a combination of militarism and neo-liberalism that has led to widespread human rights abuses and economic misery for the estimated 64% of Colombians living below the poverty line.

* Colombia Solidarity are also keeping up the pressure on BP over their abusive treatment of Colombian oil workers (see SchNEWS 724) with a picket outside BP HQ yesterday (8th).

* See www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk

RAVEN'S LAW

An appeal has been set up to raise money for those who were arrested, fined and had sound system equipment and vehicles confiscated after the Mayday Teknival free party in Wales (see SchNEWS 727). Several sound systems including Deep Cartel and SAS lost an extensive amount of gear and are facing fines and late charges after a rental van could not be returned because it was impounded. Six people were arrested and charged with organising the event.

* For more see www.dalera6.co.cc

GETTIN ON THEIR WIKI

The US intelligence analyst arrested for leaking evidence of US atrocities to Wikileaks, Bradley Manning (see SchNEWS 728), has been charged with disobedience and misconduct. Still being held in Kuwait, he faces up to 73 years of jail time and huge fines if found.

* Keep an eye on www.bradleymanning.org for up to date info

THE PAPER TRAIL

Tens of thousands of copies of a spoof *Metro* newspaper with the headline "Gordon Brown to be deported to Scotland" were distributed last Friday (2nd) as part of 'two days of action against racist press'.

The mass spoofing operation saw the *Metro* go out across London, Brighton and Nottingham. Confused commuters were treated to a mix of immigration myth busting, exposure of the racism of the British press, subverts and satire as well as the news that the Brown's recent misery has been compounded by arrest and imminent deportation to his 'home country'.

The *Metro*'s owners, Associated Newspapers, were not impressed with the attempt to muscle in on the free-paper-with-made-up-news market and immediately unleashed the lawyers. They quickly managed to obtain a High Court injunction against "all persons responsible for the publication and/or distribution" of the paper. Unfortunately for the corporate legal whizzes, the publication was produced and distributed anonymously, which left them at a loss about who to serve the injunction on. In the end, they plumped for the coalition of anti-racist and migrant rights groups that called for the campaign against the media, Press Action, and a social centre, London Action Resource Centre, where the website featuring the spoof was registered.

Describing the proceedings as a "desperate search for a scapegoat that is guilty by association", Press Action responded by claiming they had nothing to do with the production and distribution and had only posted it on their blog after receiving an electronic copy. While the Press Action blog has since taken it down, the spoof website remains live and the paper can still be seen at www.metro.co.uk.

* As part of the days of action **Nottingham No Borders** activists also plastered the city with banners accusing local rag the *Evening Post* of racism in its coverage of migrants.

...and finally...

Not content with brushing the western world off over its covert nuclear programme, or savagely cutting off all internal dissent with a vicious crackdown, the Iranian government has also found time for an attack on the real threat to domestic harmony - decadent western hair styles. Police have been combing the streets looking for Iranian barbers offering western styles and some have been raided and shut down.

In an effort to stiffen national morale against immoral backsliding (or back-combing for that matter), the state have issued a fatwa against mullets, pompadours, mohicans, rats-tails and ponytails.

Cuts that make the grade are mostly variations on a 'short back and sides' theme, as a set of official state-approved hair styles demonstrated at the "Modesty and Veil" Festival. If you wanna live on the edge then both eighties flicks and goatees have inexplicably avoided the chop. Anyone seen sportin' a do falling outside the narrow range on offer will be liable to arrest. Iran really are head'n'shoulders above the rest.

SchNEWS is now pondering proposing a similar law to Brighton Council...

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