

MAINSHILL SOLIDARITY CAMP & COAL ACTION

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER
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For too long now Scottish Coal, South Lanarkshire Council and Lord Home have ripped up and devastated the Douglas Valley, causing untold health problems for local communities through open cast coal mining. This time the community and Solidarity Camp won't let them get away with it.



Mainshill Solidarity Camp's 6 Month Birthday!

In the dead of night on June 18th 2009 a merry band of tree-climbers and tunnel-diggers acting in solidarity with the communities of the Douglas Valley occupied Mainshill Wood to prevent Scottish Coal's planned open cast coal mine. Six months on and a lot has happened: defences have been built to delay our removal; successful community picnics and gatherings have been held to bring new energy to the camp and skillshare with others engaged in similar struggles; regular actions have stopped Apex and Scottish Woodlands' preparatory tree-felling and drilling work; Scottish Coal has been hit in the pocket and significantly delayed through the sabotage of machinery by autonomous people acting in solidarity with all those who oppose the mine; a comprehensive Douglasdale Edition of the Coal Health Study has been put together by community and camp members; the Camp for Climate Action Scotland came to Mainshill drawing attention to the links between coal and climate change; Lord Home, South Lanarkshire Council and Scottish Coal have been embarrassed and exposed as the greedy profiteers that they are; and a beautiful specially made burner was installed in the newly cosy camp communal. Phew! We've got a lot to celebrate.

And the campaign against the open casting of Mainshill is going international – we've had emails of support from Ireland, Germany, Denmark and Finland, visitors from all over the world, and solidarity actions disrupting Apex's main compound in Wales. With the fight ongoing we thank everyone for their support over the past 6 months and encourage you all to come and get involved. A lot has been done but there's still a lot to do. Read on to find out more...

Politicians: Burying their Heads in the Sand over Health

No MSPs have yet responded to the Douglasdale Edition of the Coal Health Study despite the persistent efforts of dedicated members of the community. Such a lack of response, especially from Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Nicola Sturgeon, shows that politicians allow corruption and greed to win out over community health. The camp and the community will continue to expose the truth about the detrimental health impacts of opencasting and push this issue by shaming MSPs who refuse to pull their heads out of the sand.



Coal Action Hat Trick

Three major coal actions occurred in the UK in the week of Mainshill Solidarity Camp's first gathering. 20 activists from Earth First! stopped work at UK Coal's opencast coal mine near Shipley, Derbyshire. The protesters entered the site and climbed on top of machinery, occupying 6 vehicles and stopping work for 5 hours. The protesters stated that their actions were part of a campaign to stop new coal mines and coal power stations across the UK.

In the same week 25 people cycled into Didcot coal fired power station in Oxfordshire, shutting down conveyor belts which feed the boilers and scaling 200 metres to set up camp on top of the chimney.

As if that wasn't enough for one week, after a hugely successful gathering, a camper at Mainshill managed to climb up the arm of one of the tree harvesting machines used in the clear-felling undertaken by Scottish Woodlands in preparation for the mining work. She then attached her neck to the machine and stopped work for over 5 hours before being arrested and later released on bail.

Creative and ingenious actions against new coal across the UK are gathering pace - let's keep it up!

Taking Things Into Their Own Hands

While the politicians continue to make disastrous decisions for our future, stamping their seal of approval on polluting projects, a drilling rig which has been taking bore samples on site was sabotaged and put out of action for three days. The action was taken by an autonomous group acting in solidarity with all those who oppose the opencasting of Mainshill.

In a communique released by the group the pixies said, 'Actions such as these are not mindless acts of vandalism, but valid responses to corporations like Scottish Coal and their blatant disregard for life and communities of people everywhere. Such acts damage the rich and wealthy in the only place that matters to them – their wallets. As life on earth is threatened by the blind pursuit of profit, we look not to politicians in Copenhagen for indecision, but take matters into our own hands.'



Hunterston Resistance

Communities Opposed to New Coal at Hunterston (CONCH) are resisting plans by Peel Energy to build a new 1.6GW coal-fired power station at Hunterston in North Ayrshire. Having held a successful fundraiser they are going ahead with a legal challenge to Peel's plans to develop a new coal fired power station and fuel storage yard and biomass/gas fired power station as well as multiple other bits of infrastructure.

All of this has been included in the National Planning Framework (NPF) without any local consultation but CONCH are mounting a legal challenge to the inclusion of Hunterston within the NPF and plan to circulate a more detailed briefing paper on the legal challenge soon. Keep an eye on www.conchcampaign.org to stay up to date. With solidarity between different campaigns across Scotland against new coal developments including Mainshill, Cousland and Hunterston, we can work together towards environmental justice, community health and self-determination. Together we will put an end to the destruction caused by corporate and fat-cat greed as well as corrupt governance.

Festive Cheer

Mainshill Solidarity Camp celebrated the International Day of Anti-Corporate Action called by protesters in Copenhagen in style. The camp is still going strong in the run up to Christmas and to celebrate, free christmas trees which have been felled onsite by Scottish Woodlands sub contractors are being given away to enthusiastic locals.

This action displays our own personal attempts to subvert the debt and greed-based economy we are forced to live in, and to replace it with more localized economies based on gifts and exchanges rather than money. The camp will not be going away for Christmas or the New Year and we would love to take in any waifs and strays who are stuck for somewhere to avoid the festive season so please come and join us!

Midlothian Council Postpone Decision on Scottish Coal's Cousland Mine

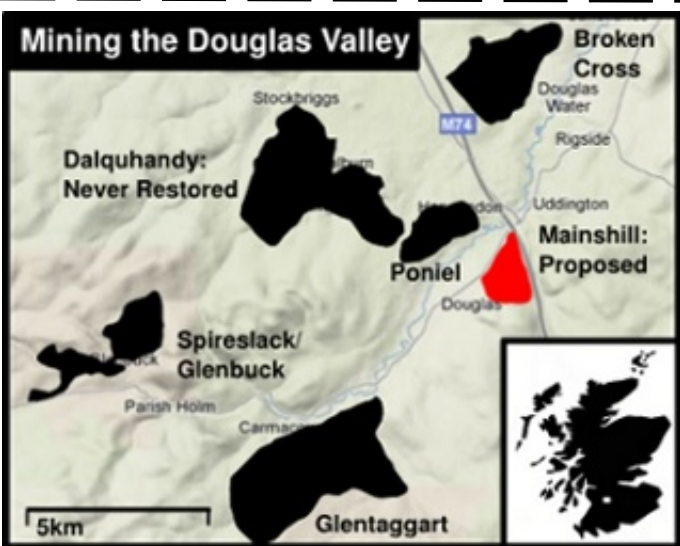
The decision about Scottish Coal's latest proposed opencast coal mine at Airfield, near Cousland, has been postponed until at least 10th March 2010. The four month determination date is being extended, owing to additional information required by Midlothian Council from Scottish Coal. It is also suspected that this is partly the result of tireless campaigning by Cousland residents and the huge number of objections that have been submitted to the application. To find out more about Communities Against Airfield Open Cast (CAAOC) and the campaign so far see <http://cousland.net/airfieldopencast.asp>.



Scottish Coal: Illegal Felling to Prevent Occupation - Could Glentaggart be next?

An anonymous source has provided evidence that 2 hectares of Scots Pine woodland in an area known as the "Roundel" at Broken Cross Muir, near Rigside, South Lanarkshire, was illegally felled in 2000. This was after the 1998 application for two extensions to the existing Broken Cross opencast coal mine had been lodged, but before these extensions were granted permission in 2001. As part of the evidence presented, Roger Dick, Minerals Enforcement Officer for South Lanarkshire Council, confirms that though Scottish Coal owned the land, the felling was not a condition of subsequent planning approval and no felling licence had been granted for the woodland. Further, David Galloway, Woodland Officer for the Forestry Commission Scotland confirms that no felling licence was ever issued for the "Roundel", but would have been legally required given the size of the area. Neither South Lanarkshire Council, the Forestry Commission nor Scottish Natural Heritage were consulted in the illegal felling of the Roundel to stop it being occupied by protesters such as has happened at Mainshill Wood. The Mainshill Solidarity Camp would like to know: a) What enforcement action has been taken against Scottish Coal by Roger Dick, the Minerals Enforcement Officer? If no action has been taken, why not? b) There is no information regarding the company that felled the Roundel, however, Scottish Woodlands are the most likely candidates. Were Scottish Woodlands aware that the felling was carried out illegally without a felling licence?

This is yet another example of how Scottish Coal conducts itself throughout the Douglas Valley – flaunting regulations and laws, tearing up ecologically sensitive areas and doing it with total impunity. With the application for an extension to the Glentaggart open cast going through the consultation period, could the trees there be next? South Lanarkshire Council must start serving the interests of the people, and hold this company to account for its actions.



Get in touch and come visit us!

Email us at: mainshill@riseup.net Call us on: 07806926040

The camp is just off the A70 about a mile and a half from Douglas, near junction 12 of the M74. Go to our website mainshill.noflag.org.uk for detailed travel directions. Visitors are welcome any time! If you can support us further, there is an extensive wish-list on the website and any financial donations are very appreciated. We also need people to come and stay to keep momentum going. Even if it's just for a day, we'd love to have you stay.

