

EC STARTS LEGAL ACTION AGAINST UK GOVERNMENT OVER DAMAGING PEMBROKE POWER STATION

Following a complaint by Friends of the Earth Cymru, the European Commission has launched formal infringement proceedings [1] against the UK Government's approval of a controversial new power station which opened in Pembroke last month.

The power station's cooling system will waste energy by dumping heat into the highly protected Milford Haven waterway, killing millions of fish and other marine species every year. The energy wasted is equivalent to 40 per cent of Wales' electricity demand.

Friends of the Earth Cymru submitted a complaint to the European Commission over the handling of the case by the UK Government and the Environment Agency [2] in June 2010.

The environmental organisation has welcomed the start of legal action, which means the UK Government is one step nearer being referred to the European Court of Justice [3].

Gareth Clubb, Director of Friends of the Earth Cymru, said:

"Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth warned from the outset that the new power station at Pembroke would cause unacceptable harm to this important marine environment at the same time as wasting colossal amounts of energy.

"Time and time again we have pointed out that the UK Government acted unlawfully in allowing this technology to be used in Wales, which isn't considered good enough in the USA or in England. Now our complaint to the European Commission means legal action – if the Government had listened to us at the start, we wouldn't now be dealing with the consequences of its own incompetence.

"Industry can exist alongside Pembrokeshire's magnificent wildlife and the tourism it supports, and jobs can be created without this devastating cost to our environment. But we must use the best technology and the highest standards to make sure this coastline is given the protection it deserves."

Environmental lawyer Peter Roderick said:

"The UK Government must abide by the same rule of law that applies to all of us. And companies should not be allowed to push ahead damaging projects and expect to get permission once it's too late to stop. With the ever-increasing threats to the environment, it's more important than ever to make sure we protect the high quality habitats we still have in Wales."

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NOTES

1. Letter from the European Commission to Friends of the Earth

Cymru: http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/submissions/ec_letter_25_oct_2012.pdf

2. http://www.foe.co.uk/cymru/english/press_releases/pembroke_power_station_complaint_180610.html

3. A letter of formal notice has been sent to the UK Government (stage 2.2 of the infringement procedure). Stage 2.3 is referral to the European Court of Justice http://ec.europa.eu/eu_law/your_rights/your_rights_en.htm

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