

US Gulf Coast activist warns Pembrokeshire community of risks associated with Valero's plans to import tar sands-derived fuel

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Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth welcomed Bryan Parras [1] from the US Gulf Coast at a meeting in Narberth on Friday.

In Texas, Bryan has been on the front line of opposing US refining company Valero's operations in the Gulf Coast. He alerted the Pembrokeshire community, where Valero's only European refinery is located, of Valero's impact on his community and warned of the dangers of letting Valero import tar sands-derived fuel into Europe.

The tar sands industry in Alberta, Canada, has received a barrage of criticism from environmentalists and human rights campaigners for its devastating effects on nearby Indigenous communities, decimation of local ecosystems and potential to accelerate climate change. [2] The industry is now seeking new markets for the highly polluting oil, such as Europe, to ensure the future viability of the industry. New pipelines to transport the oil out of Alberta, such as the Keystone XL pipeline from Texas, have received widespread opposition.

Bryan Parras said, "I have been working with the community of Manchester in Houston, Texas, which has been suffering disproportionately from its proximity to a Valero refinery. The community is set to face further pollution if the Keystone XL pipeline is built, as Valero's refinery will start receiving tar sands oil, which has a higher content of toxic chemicals. That oil would then end up in places like Pembrokeshire. It is essential that communities link together to take a proactive stance against Big Oil and specifically to stop the spread of the climate-destroying tar sands industry."

Eleanor Clegg, coordinator of Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth, said, 'We are delighted that Bryan is taking time to visit Pembrokeshire and were shocked to hear how Valero's refinery has destroyed his community. We have known for some time that Valero's Pembrokeshire refinery could be used to import diesel derived from tar sands and so are keen to see how we can work with Bryan's community to stop one of the world's most polluting industries expanding into Europe.' [3]

The EU is currently in the process of implementing legislation which would discourage the import of tar sands into Europe, but this has faced severe delays following intense lobbying by the Canadian government and oil industry. Pembrokeshire Friends of the Earth has been working with partner organisations to encourage the UK to support it.

ENDS

For interviews, photographs, video footage and further information, please contact

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NOTES

[1] Bryan Parras is one of the Gulf Coast's most dynamic activists fighting for social and environmental justice issues up and down the I-10 corridor, which spans the continental United States. He is one three people who travelled to London from the Gulf Coast to attend the BP AGM to hold the board to account for the impact of its Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster. The activists also attended a protest against the Keystone XL pipeline aimed at US Secretary of State, John Kerry, who was in London for G8 meetings.

[2] Tar sands has been described as the 'world's most destructive industrial project'. If all planned tar sands projects go ahead, it will be in line with a six-degree global temperature rise. Former NASA climatologist James Hansen has described tar sands as 'game over for the climate'. See <http://priceofoil.org/2012/11/01/tar-sands-planned-growth-is-3x-climate-limit/> See also <http://no-tar-sands.org/what-are-tar-sands>

[3] Valero's plans to import tar sands derived-fuel is available here:
http://www.foepembrokeshire.co.uk/resources/valero_report_4web.pdf