

Both the police and the government appear to be taking their instructions from a multinational energy company.

This isn't the first time that the Department for Business and the energy company E.ON have been caught conspiring against the public interest. In 2008, Greenpeace obtained an exchange of emails between the power company and Gary Mohammed, a civil servant at the Department for Business, concerning the department's policy on carbon capture and storage (CCS).

The government had told the public that any new coal-burning power station at E.ON's Kingsnorth plant in Kent should be CCS-ready: in other words that it could be retro-fitted with CCS equipment. In private, the Department for Business took a different line.

"Drafting the conditions for Kingsnorth. If possible I would like to cover CCS," Mohammed wrote to E.ON. "I admit this suggested condition could be without justification and premature but no harm in trying to gauge your opinion."

E.ON replied by claiming that the secretary of state "has no right to withhold approval for conventional plant". All it would allow the government to specify was that the potential for CCS "will be investigated."

Mohammed replied after just six minutes: "Thanks. I won't include. Hope to get the set of draft conditions out today or tomorrow."

Nor is it the first time that the police have danced to E.ON's tune. Their treatment of the climate camp protesters at Kingsnorth last year was wildly disproportionate and repressive. They also appear to have misled the press on the power company's behalf. The police claimed that if the protesters reached the power station, "there would have been a possible loss of power to over 300,000 homes".

In fact E.ON had already shut down the power station, with no consequences for local people: hardly surprising in view of the fact that its electricity is sold on to the grid rather than supplied locally.

Now we learn that the police, the Department for Business and E.ON have been working together to thwart a peaceful protest, and sharing information obtained by bugging or informants. This is partisan policing: siding with one social sector against another. (I'll examine the implications in my column tomorrow). Worse, both the police and the government appear to be taking their instructions from a multinational company.

Allies against democracy

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Just who is running this country? And at what point do we decide that corporate power is making a mockery of democracy?

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