
Witness statement of Charles Philip Laurie

I, Charles Philip Laurie, of 56 Edward Vinson Drive, Faversham, Kent ME13 8FD, say as follows:

Background

2. I was born on 7 January 1963. I have three adult children; a daughter and two sons. I am a retired Civil Engineer.
3. I am a Quaker. I integrate my faith in everything I do in my life but particularly through my activism. We live by four testimonies: truth, peace, equality and justice. The aim is to live within those testimonies. This is central to why I feel called to be an activist and why my faith is core to my commitment to the abolition of arms in particular.
4. Quakerism calls for Quakers to live by our values and actively participate in the upholding of these values where we see it is necessary. Activism is the practical side of my faith. It is interconnected. Quakerism is not about heaven or an afterlife, it is about the world we are in now. That's why so many Quakers are involved in activism about climate change.
5. I have a HND in Civil Engineering from Hampfield Polytechnic (now Hertfordshire University) and a BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science from the Open University. I graduated from the HND in 1987 and the BSc in 2015.
6. It was at the Open University that I became interested in climate change. I was doing an initial access course between 2008-2009 and then decided to do the Environmental Science course. My degree became focused on climate change. I know and understand the science and that's why I'm deeply concerned.
7. Prior to retirement, I was a Senior Engineering Leader at Transport for London. I retired on 13 April 2023.

My views on climate change

8. Human induced climate change is real. It is happening now. My Environmental Science degree tells me that there is cause and effect in the laws of physics. If you increase CO₂ in the atmosphere the temperature has to increase. Actions have consequences, it is scientific fact and can't be otherwise. CO₂ levels have doubled and the results are inevitable.

9. There is a limit to the amount of carbon that we can use without tipping into irreversible catastrophe. It is clear that we have almost reached this limit, yet more and more carbon reserves are being tapped into. This can only end in disaster.
10. We are already in a position where 1.5 degrees of climate change is now irreversible and probably 2 degrees as well. This is a complete disaster for the global South, who are the primary victims, without being the primary beneficiaries of the fossil fuel economies. There is a very good peer reviewed paper called 'the future of the human climate niche'¹ which predicts that there will be about a billion refugees and 100 million deaths by the 2040s. Of course, those in the global North will also suffer, particularly vulnerable people and those unable to afford to protect themselves.
11. We are almost certainly in a position where hundreds of millions of people are dying, or will be killed by climate change, the battle is here and now about saving lives. It is a life and death situation.
12. The products sold by fossil fuel companies such as Shell are one of the major causes of climate change. These companies know the risks their products pose. Their role is totally malign. They deny the impact, delay action, destroy lives and environments. They take no responsibility for the output of their products, at all times seeking to maximise their sales which is a death sentence to many people and the planet.
13. In general, business is unable to see past profit. Generally, if they think taking action to reduce their impact on climate change will undermine their profits they prefer to continue with business as usual and where necessary green wash past any issues.
14. Fossil Fuel businesses are deflecting responsibility by promoting Individual Carbon Footprints, which means that they can continue with business as usual and concentrate on any minor gain rather than systemic change.
15. The Government and big business try to convince us that it's the demand side of carbon usage, the Individual Carbon Footprints, that is important. Obviously demand is important but the supply side is more important. The oil companies produce cheap subsidised fossil fuels and refuse to cooperate with the renewable sector. That is why I take action to point up the role of fossil Fuel Companies such as Shell in the ongoing disaster which is climate change.
16. There is information available to the public about climate change but it is just not being reported in a way that conveys the necessary urgency of the situation. The Government makes bold statements that the situation is urgent, but its actions do not match its promises. Very few businesses act in a positive way to help people understand the gravity of the situation. Greenwashing is normal and is intended, as far as possible, to allow a business as usual approach without any real change.
17. This is why it is important to me to protest; my faith requires me to take action to alert people to the dangers of climate change and put pressure on the Government and fossil fuel companies to change their ways, while the Government and big business are failing to do so.

¹ "*Future of the human climate niche*" by Timothy A Kohler, Timothy M Lenton and Martin Scheffer dated 4 May 2020, published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNA): <https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1910114117>

Events of 24 Aug 2022

1. On 24th August 2022 – Cobham Service Station – I was arrested for public nuisance and possession of articles with the intent to cause or damage property. On that day, I attended Cobham Service Station with other protestors from JSO group. Initially my plan was to cause damage to the petrol pumps of the service station with two other protestors, whilst other five protestors blocked the entrance to the station forecourt and glued themselves to the ground. Upon arrival at the petrol station however, a number of police officers were already in attendance. I started walking towards the petrol pumps, however, I was intercepted by police officers who walked with me. The officers asked me what I was doing and told me that they would arrest him if he took anything out of my rucksack. Whilst I was walking towards the petrol pumps, I changed my mind about causing damage to the petrol points and I changed course to join the other protestors at the entrance to the forecourt. I sat down with them and glued myself to the ground. I was arrested and I pleaded not guilty at the First Appearance Hearing at Guildford Crown Court. I have been released on unconditional bail for this matter and the trial is currently listed for 12 August 2024.

18. Since that day I have been arrested a further six times, each time for offences related to participating in protests, I have no convictions.
 - a) On 10 April 2022 I was arrested for blocking the entrance to a fuel depot; no charges resulted
 - b) On 26 August 2022 I was arrested for protesting at BP Petrol Station in Acton, no charges resulted.
 - c) On 14 September 2022 I was arrested for protesting at Kingsbury fuel depot in North Warwickshire
 - d) On 15 May 2023 I was arrested for holding up a placard outside court with words that were innocuous and ridiculous; and the charges have since been dropped
 - e) On 14th sept I was arrested for breach of a section 14 Order at the DSEI Arms fair in London. I was found not guilty of the offence at Stratford Magistrates in May 2024.
 - f) On 12 Nov 2023 arrested for slow marching. I am awaiting trial for that offence in Aug 2025.

19. I have never used or threatened violence against any person and would never do so, in view of my faith. Nor have I ever been arrested or charged for violence against a person.

My objections to the injunction

The following aspects of the injunction are in my view a disproportionate interference with my right to protest:

- (a) There are about 8400 petrol stations in the UK, 1000 are owned by Shell. The majority of these are not enjoined, somewhat less than 1200 are enjoined in total. Why should Shell need or deserve more protection from proportionate protest than any other organisation.
- (b) My actions undertaken on 24th August did not break the law, until I am found guilty the presumption should be that I am innocent, many people have been found not guilty of such offences. By facing this hearing I am being punished twice for the same offence.

(c) all protests that gave rise to this injunction where at locations directly connected with the harm being caused by the ongoing operations of Shell.

(d) the fact that the operations were disrupted but for a limited duration

(e) The action was of a very limited duration which meant that the property was returned to its owner as soon as practical, after its use for protest

(f) the fact that the our actions were carefully targeted to cause disruption to the operation of Shell premises but that this was limited by the nature of the action

(g) the fact that the protest related to a 'matter of general concern' i.e. climate change

(h) the absence of any complaint about the defendants' conduct;

(i) the defendants' longstanding commitment to opposing the role of companies such as Shell in Climate Change and the human suffering they cause through refusal to act positively.

(j) There is no justification why protestors ought not be permitted to protest in such a way as to disrupt users entering petrol stations, so long as they don't endanger anyone in the process. Such disruption in the form of blocking or slowing down vehicular traffic is a legitimate means of drawing attention to the consequences of people using vehicles powered by fossil-fuels, and is not linked to any serious interference with critical infrastructure.

(k) Causing damage to any part of a Shell Petrol Station or to any equipment or infrastructure (including but not limited to fuel pumps) upon it. Again Shell are seeking protection from a form of protest which has through history been used within society by those such as the

(l) There is no evidence that I or others will act in a way that will seriously threaten the operations of such a large organisation as Shell. Further isf Shell continue to act in a way that threatens the future of our planet they must be subject to the right of protest that all citizens of this country have, they are only special in that they are part of the root cause of the problems we face.

These all curtail my right to peacefully protest, including outside facilities which are directly implicated in the harm that is caused by the petrochemical industry. My interest is in peaceful and proportionate protest.

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed... 

Date... 16/10/2024.....