

Witness Statement of Emma Louise Ireland

*For Final Hearing of Shell Injunction - Petrol stations - due to be heard on 21st October 2024*

I, Emma Louise Ireland, of 20 Hanover Street, Bristol, BS5 9QW, say as follows:

1. I make this statement in relation to the injunction order that is due a final hearing of the Claimants claim on 21st October 2024.

**BACKGROUND**

2. I was born on 19 June 1984. I started working in social care when I was 18 and trained as a social worker from 2009-2011. Since 2012 I have worked in mental health, some times as a support worker and other times at more senior levels, as a care co-ordinator. I am currently job free. I have recently been volunteering with food cycle, cooking 3 course community meals with waste food. I have a work contract starting on 1st November working in a mental health setting, with people who have been street homeless for a long time.

3. I care deeply for others and look for ways to support fellow human beings and the earth, be it in my paid work, with family and friends, neighbours, or volunteering. For 3 months of this year I have volunteered on organic farms in the UK. I have been learning how to tend to the land, learning what it is to live more sustainably. I have felt what it is like to exchange my time working on the land, for food and accommodation. On one site I learned what it feels like to use only the energy that can be made on the land via wind or solar.

4. I have never owned a car, always taking public transport and I no longer fly. Since 2nd June 2024 I have been travelling solely by foot or bicycle, where ever I have gone. For example I cycled over the course of 2 days from Bristol to London to take part in this trial. For me I value feeling in my body that connection to the use of fewer fossil fuels.

5. During the pandemic, I worked on the front line within an NHS funded mental service. It was during the first few months of lock down that I had a spiritual awakening. My heart was cracked open - opening me up to massive feelings of both love and suffering. The spiritual journey that I have been on ever since, has deepened my connection to everything. I feel how connected we all are to every one and every thing. I now lead more from a heart space than a head space. I can feel the suffering of others, and the suffering of his beautiful earth more strongly. I have done a lot of personal work on my internal landscape since 2020, as I feel that the more peaceful I am inside, the more peace I have to share with the world. It is from this peaceful loving space that I act, to try to relieve suffering.

**MY VIEWS ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

6. I have changed many of my individual behaviours and practices to limit my impact on the climate. I am human, so I will continue to have to reflect on what more I can do as an individual and make changes accordingly.

7. In 2021 the IPCC report stated that no new fossil fuel sources can be opened, if the world is serious about living up to its commitments and avoiding a significantly worsening climate crisis.

8. The scientific consensus on the climate emergency could not be clearer. We are in a climate crisis, driven by rising temperatures and extreme weather. An average of over 1.5'C warming would be catastrophic for humanity. The International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) reports state that we are already overshooting the targets of liveability. We cannot keep burning fossil fuels if we are to have any chance of a liveable future.

9. The global south are far more deeply affected by climate change than we are in the global north.

10. I feel that it is my calling to do all I can to reduce the negative impact of climate change at this time. I feel that part of this is to invite others to question what they can do, within their sphere of influence. I understand that for each of us this may be different. In 2022 I became a supporter of Just Stop Oil in order to demand that the government stop issuing licences for the exploration, discovery and development of new oil and gas projects in the UK. For me, this demand felt necessary, clear and reasonable.

11. In 2024 Labour announced that they will no longer be issuing licenses for new oil and gas in the UK.

### **EVENTS OF AUGUST 24<sup>th</sup> 2022**

12. On that day, I attended Cobham Service Station with other supporters of the Just Stop Oil campaign. Upon arrival at the petrol station a number of police officers were already in attendance. I walked towards the entrance of the forecourt and sat down on the ground. There were 5 others who sat down too. There was a banner that read Just Stop Oil. The entrance to the forecourt was blocked. Cars continued to leave the petrol station via the exit road. When asked to move I continued to stay seated on the ground. I had my back to the petrol pumps. I am aware that there was damage caused to 2 petrol pump screens by one or two other people.

13. I sat in the entrance of the Shell Petrol station, as an act of protest, to demand that the government stop issuing new licences for the discovery, development and production of new oil and gas in the UK.

14. I also took this action to get this message out to Shell and to the public, who were there on the day, and others members of the public and the government via the media. To raise the alarm that we are in a climate emergency and we have to act like it. I put my body on the line and 2 petrol pump screens were decommissioned, to temporarily pause the flow of new petrol into some cars for a limited time. By jolting the status quo, I hoped that this more embodied message, would get through to some more people. Because we all need to be doing more, every day, at all times, to reduce our harmful impact on the climate and to encourage others to do so as well.

15. I was arrested for causing a public nuisance, and was taken to Staines police station. I pleaded not guilty at the first appearance at Guildford Crown Court. I have been released on unconditional bail for this matter and the trial is currently listed for 11 August 2025.

16. I feel so privileged to be saying this from a place where I have a home, enough food and I am well. The reality for many today, especially in the global south, is that their lives are being ripped apart due to fires, floods, famine caused by climate change. It is us in the global north who have played the biggest part in climate change. I feel it is our responsibility to do all we can as individuals, and to ask those, with different spheres of influence, to do what they can too.

17. This is why I protested on that day, and why I am defending myself at this trial.

18. I am defending my actions regarding this civil injunction, and I will also be defending myself in a criminal court in August 2025. This injunction existing means that the same act of protest amounts to 2 trials, which could lead to 2 punishments - I understand the punishment for being named on this injunction could be to pay Shell's legal costs for bringing about this injunction.

19. Since that day I have been arrested a further five times, each time for participating in protests as a supporter of Just Stop Oil. The demand to the government, on each of these occasions was to stop issuing new oil and gas licences:

a) On August 26 2022 I was arrested for blocking the entrance to a petrol station forecourt in London.

b) On 8 the October 2022 I was arrested for sitting in a road in London , causing a disruption to traffic. For this I was charged, pleaded not guilty to wilful obstruction of the highway, and later the case was dropped.

c) On 21 October 2022, I was arrested for sitting in a road in London, causing a disruption to traffic. For this I was found guilty of Wilful Obstruction of the Highway. I was sentenced to £200 court costs £26 surcharge and conditional discharge of 12 months.

d) On 10 July 2023, I was arrested for continuing to walk slowly down a road in London, causing traffic to move more slowly. I was arrested for breaching s.12. I was later found guilty for breaching s.12. I was sentenced to £120 court costs and £120 fine. I was also given £120 fine for the above action, due to the conditional discharge.

e) On 10 November 2023 I was arrested for walking slowly down a London road. I was later found guilty of Wilful Obstruction of the Highway and sentenced to £348 costs, £200 fine, £80 surcharge.

20. I have completed non-violent direct action training. I practice non-violence. I am a calm and peaceful person. I have taken these above actions as they have felt like the right thing to do at the time.

**MY OBJECTIONS TO THE INJUNCTION:**

21.

- a) The injunction prohibits my right to protest under articles 9,10 and 11 the Human Rights Act.
- b) This case means I am being tried twice for the same act of protest. The Aarhus Convention Protects Environmental Defenders from excessive use of the law.
- c) Since the injunction was made the law relating to protest has changed significantly, offering greater protection to the fossil fuel industry. For instance, s.7 Public Order Act 2023 means that people can be arrested almost immediately after the protest begins.
- d) The actual loss and disruption caused is entirely proportional to the loss and damage being committed every hour of every day by the claimant, in pursuit of their business. This is within the setting of the current climate emergency that we are in.

22. I find the increased use of civil injunctions for prohibiting peaceful protest very worrying.

23. I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt 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.



Emma Ireland 17.10.24