



Another seven Just Stop Oil supporters acquitted after Waterloo Bridge slow march

## Description

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Just Stop Oil activists following acquittal for bridge slow walk

Seven [Just Stop Oil supporters](#) were found not guilty at Southwark Crown Court on 3 June, two and a half years after slow marching on Waterloo Bridge to demand an end to new oil and gas licensing.

On 8 November 2023, Rev Sue Parfitt, Mollie Somerville, Catherine Nisbet, Greta Dargie, Hannah Schafer, Sally Davidson and Sam Mead were among [approximately 50 supporters who joined a slow march around the IMAX roundabout before heading north over Waterloo Bridge](#)

They were [arrested and charged](#) with Section 7 of the Public Order Act 2023, interference with key national infrastructure. This offence was used for the first time only two days beforehand. It carries a maximum penalty of 12 months imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both.

The seven, who represented themselves in court, appeared before Judge Tomlinson at Southwark Crown Court. The jury delivered its majority not guilty verdict after approximately seven hours deliberation. This was the [second acquittal of Just Stop Oil supporters who participated in the Waterloo Bridge action](#)

## Just Stop Oil activists speak out

Following the verdict, Hannah Schafer, 62, a sailing instructor from Cardigan, said:

I'm very grateful to our jury for this verdict today. The jury system is an important part of the checks and balances built into our legal system. As well as dismantling the jury system, this government is recklessly allowing fossil fuel companies to destroy our world unhindered.

It's time to stop messing about and go all out to slow down the climate catastrophe!

Rev Sue Parfitt, 84, a retired Anglican priest, said:

I come from the generation that has benefitted most from fossil fuels. So mine is the generation who must call out the fossil fuel industry, and the banks and insurance companies that support it.

An industry that has deliberately lied to us for over 50 years, concealing the truth – which now is becoming apparent to everyone – that emissions from fossil fuels are going to kill us, and much sooner than we expected.

Sally Davidson, 38, a hairdresser from Dorset, said:

The laws used to prosecute us were written by a fossil-fuel funded think tank and fundamentally characterise our rights. I am encouraged that the jury could see that prosecuting peaceful people who are asking the government to act in the interest of the public is insanity. Some justice has been done.

Cate Nisbet, 62, a scientist and music journalist from Leeds

What utter madness given what we know about the climate crisis to prosecute peaceful climate activists for a minimally disruptive slow march. Thankfully sanity has prevailed.

Greta Dargie, 40, a scientific researcher from Edinburgh, said:

I'm really pleased the jury found us not guilty, and I hope it means they could see how absurd it is that people are being taken to crown court for peacefully marching, when we are already feeling the disastrous effects of unchecked fossil fuel burning.

A Just Stop Oil spokesperson said:

Are you feeling the heat yet? Have you joined the dots? Fossil fuels in – heat out. Pretty simple really. You can carry on trying to shoot the messenger but physics doesn't care.

Last week we saw transport chaos, schools closed, hospitals at breaking point and this is just a foretaste of what is to come.

At some point when the very fabric of society is breaking down and bodies are piling up in the street, we will look back and long for times like these.

## The weather made the point

The trial took place during a week in which parts of the UK were under a rare red warning for heat. Trains were delayed, schools closed and hospitals were in crisis as temperature records for June were smashed on three consecutive days.

The UK saw its hottest June day of 36.1C in Hampshire on Wednesday, a record which was beaten on Thursday, with a temperature of 36.7C recorded in Somerset and [again on Friday with a temperature of 37.3C recorded in Suffolk](#)

As in previous trials for the section 7 offence, the Judge denied the defendants all legal defences including reasonable excuse and necessity. The prosecution agreed to the inclusion of some key climate facts in evidence, but the Judge told the jurors that whatever their views on global warming they should take no part in their deliberations. The defendants were, however, given around 20 minutes each to talk about their motivations for taking action.

The jury was asked to consider whether the defendants had caused a significant delay to other road users and if so whether that was their intention or they were reckless as to whether that would have been the result.

The prosecution produced a complete set of evidence showing the march which demonstrated some traffic build up, but no evidence of a normal flow at that location. DI Pender, the senior police officer present on the day, said that he saw several vehicles with traffic almost at a standstill.

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## Just Stop Oil just slowed the traffic â?? the cops blocked it

In cross examination, several defendants suggested to him that the traffic delays would have been much less if the Police had let the march continue to the other end of the bridge, which would have taken around 20 minutes, instead of arresting people in the middle of the bridge.

DI Pender responded that the police could not be sure what the marchers were planning to do and that his past experience was that Just Stop Oil aims to cause as much disruption as possible.

In presenting their evidence, the defendants each emphasised their desire to draw attention to the climate crisis and the care and careful planning that was involved in undertaking a march. All denied that there was any intention to cause anything more than minor slowing of traffic.

Hannah Shafer questioned the significance of a 20 minute delay, asking what was normal for that time of day. She said:

I read about an accident on the M25 that caused severe delays on Wednesday â?? ten people in the tailback had to be taken to hospital by ambulance because of heat stress [â?;!]  
I do invite you to consider what significant delay means bearing in mind the disruptive form of extreme weather that is becoming commonplace.

In her evidence, Greta Dargie, a scientist employed by the University of Leeds, said that at the time she took action she felt:

the government was actively trying to aggravate the climate crisis.

She continued:

When a dam burst in Libya killing thousands and wildfires swept through Hawaii I felt I could no longer sit back and stay silent. I felt I couldn't tell governments in Africa that they shouldn't license oil in their countries while our own government was licensing new oil and gas here.

Rev Sue Parfitt said:

This is one of the hottest weeks in June ever. Many climate scientists are terrified as the crisis is taking hold much more quickly than predicted. I took action, having exhausted all other democratic means to urge the government to avoid exacerbating the crisis we are in by allowing new fossil fuels to be produced.

Sam Mead said:

Two months before the march the prime minister Rishi Sunak said that the UK should extract 'every last drop' of oil from the North Sea. To me this showed an intention to decimate organised human life on earth.

Sally Davidson said:

Our government was failing in their most basic duty to protect the citizens of this country. But I could understand why they weren't acting. It is not enough to know the facts, they must also emotionally connect with those facts.

What we are looking at is the total collapse of the economy, healthcare system, risking no food and water in the UK, billions of people displaced, leading to conflict and war and the total collapse of law and order.

The 2023 Public Order Act was introduced specifically to target climate protest and named groups such as Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil, and Insulate Britain as the reason for its introduction.

Although hundreds of Just Stop Oil supporters have been charged with the Section 7 offence and are awaiting trial, as a result of the backlog in the courts this was only the third case to be heard since May 2024.

The first person to be convicted of the offence was [Stephen Gingell who was jailed for 6 months](#) after pleading guilty in December 2023.

*Featured image via Just Stop Oil*

By [The Canary](#)

[Source link](#)

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