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Emma Thompson joins giant polar bear at Greenpeace protest outside Shell HQ

Adam Vaughan, *The Guardian*, 2nd September, 2015

A bus-sized polar bear and Emma Thompson have joined a week-long protest against Arctic drilling at Shell's headquarters in London.

The British actor visited the Arctic last year and said that she had got out of bed at 4am on Wednesday to take part in the protest because of the risk of climate change to her grandchildren and the threat posed to the polar region's fragile environment by drilling.

"Shell haven't been listening. Shell have ignored the science. They want to drill in the Arctic up to the year 2030. It seems to me a monumental act of selfishness and greed. We cannot go on extracting oil in the way that we have," she said.

Shell was forced to briefly halt exploratory drilling off the coast of Alaska last week due to high winds but the poor weather has now passed and it is undertaking systems checks before resuming full operations.

Greenpeace has been staging a protest for several weeks outside the oil and gas company's offices on Southbank, attracting top classical musicians to play 'requiems to the Arctic' and the support of celebrities including Charlotte Church.

Thompson was critical of president Obama who is in Alaska this week warning of the risks from global warming in the region, but has faced criticism from environmentalists for approving Shell's drilling in the Chukchi sea. "I'm afraid he's done what we and politicians have been doing for the last few decades. To pay lip service to dangers of climate change and make little alterations, but not accepting that the big picture is that we'll have to transition into a whole different way of living." She added that to ensure the world was liveable and to avoid dangerous warming, people needed to "get involved" and take part in protests such as the one today.

The migration crisis that Europe is currently facing would be seen as relatively minor, she said, compared to the movement of people if some of the worst climate change scenarios came to pass. "You think we've got problems with that now, with what's going on in Syria and Calais? Wait until climate change really takes hold. It will make this look like a cakewalk."

Greenpeace said that six of its activists were locked to the three tonne puppet polar bear, dubbed Aurora after the northern lights, and they would be staying outside Shell's HQ until the end of September when the Arctic drilling window closes.

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