

News release

GREENPEACE

Emma Thompson and Musqueam First Nation activist Audrey Siegl join gigantic polar bear in mass protest at Shell's UK HQ

2 September 2015 (London, UK) – A colossal polar bear puppet the size of a double decker bus has descended on Shell's UK South Bank headquarters overnight. Acclaimed British actor and screenwriter Emma Thompson joined 64 activists and puppeteers who manoeuvred the towering creature to rest just metres away from Shell's front entrance.

It's intended the polar bear titan will remain fixed there until Shell's Arctic drilling window ends later this month. Six protesters are inside the bear, locked to her so she can't be removed.

At 10am this morning, standing with the giant bear in front of Shell's UK HQ, Emma will perform an original poem to Shell bosses that she has penned for the occasion. Emma is joining the protest today, as one of more than seven million people who joined the Save the Arctic movement by signing up at savethearctic.org.

Emma Thompson, acclaimed actor and screenwriter, said: "I've been to the Arctic, I've seen the beauty, I've seen the wildlife, and my heart breaks to think that Shell is up there right now, drilling for the oil that threatens not only their habitat but ours. Make no mistake about it, we're next. That's why I've come to their HQ. I'm here to say no. I'm here to say this has to end. I'm one of millions of people demanding that this company pulls out of the Arctic, and this huge polar bear is roaring with our voices."

The three-tonne polar bear, named Aurora after the northern lights above the Arctic, will thunder a polar bear roar through Shell's front door at intervals throughout her stay – demanding Shell turn off its drilling rigs and get out of her Arctic home. Audrey Siegl, a First Nations activist, will be performing a traditional song with the same drum she used to confront Shell's Arctic-bound rig at sea in June.

Audrey Siegl, a Musqueam First Nation artist and activist from Canada, said: "I am here to remind you, the people, that we have an immense amount of power. When we unite, we are unstoppable. I am here to remind Shell that all life is sacred. I share the words of my ancestors. I carry on their work of caring for the land and all life that exists on it. Nə́camət ct! We are one."

Just over two weeks ago Shell got the final permits it needs to start drilling for oil in the melting Arctic Ocean. Shell is there right now, hastily boring holes to look for new oil reserves. It's got [a window of mere weeks to strike oil](#) and [billions of dollars are on the line](#). But every second it drills it's risking an oil spill in icy waters that would be almost impossible to clean up and potentially disastrous for the people and unique wildlife that call the Arctic home.

Last week Charlotte Church performed the song 'This Bitter Earth' outside the Shell HQ in protest at the Arctic drilling programme. Her performance was part of a month-long series of orchestral protests held outside the building by musicians.

Climate change is melting the Arctic sea ice at an alarming rate, and this March the Arctic experienced the [lowest sea ice maximum ever recorded](#). As the ice recedes, it becomes easier for oil companies to push their drilling rigs further north.

Researchers concluded Arctic drilling is [incompatible with limiting global warming to 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels](#), a target agreed by most governments. An analysis of [Shell's own data](#) has

shown the company is betting on a four-degree temperature rise by the middle of the century – twice the increase described as “dangerous” by scientists.

Two weeks ago, the Obama Administration gave Shell the [final permissions](#) to begin drilling into the Arctic seabed. It now has until 28 September to strike oil, at which time it must close up its operation for the winter.

The extreme Arctic conditions, including giant floating icebergs and stormy seas, make offshore drilling extremely risky. The US administration acknowledged a [75% chance of a large oil spill](#) over the lifetime of the wells. And [experts say](#) that an oil spill in the Arctic would be impossible to clean up adequately, endangering the Arctic’s unique wildlife.

Greenpeace UK Arctic campaigner Elena Polisano said: “Arctic drilling is a threat to the Arctic and a threat to millions of people living on the frontline of climate change, yet Shell is ignoring all this in blind pursuit of profit. Shell says we don’t want to have a debate with them about the world’s energy needs, but we’ve asked them several times to meet and they’ve refused. We’d be very interested to hear how they think putting the world on track for a four-degree temperature rise by the middle of the century is going to benefit the people of this planet.”

Shell’s past attempt to drill in the Arctic in 2012 was plagued with multiple operational failings culminating in the [running aground of its drilling rig, the Kulluk](#). Shell has returned to the remote Chukchi Sea with the same contractor, Noble Drilling, which pled guilty to [eight felonies](#) following its last Arctic venture. Shell’s second rig contractor, Transocean, was [implicated](#) in the Deepwater Horizon disaster. This season, Shell has already suffered set-backs, including a [one-metre tear in the hull of one of its support vessels](#).

This year Shell has faced increasing public pressure over Arctic drilling. Shell’s Arctic rig the Polar Pioneer faced multiple protests as it travelled to the Arctic, including activists boarding it in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, a several thousand strong [‘Kayaktivist’](#) protest movement in Seattle, and an Indigenous activist protest at sea as it sailed through Canadian waters. Shell’s icebreaker ship the Fennica, part of its Arctic fleet, was delayed in Oregon by a 40-hour [‘hanging blockade’](#) from the St John’s Bridge, Portland.

In recent weeks, other figures from the arts and entertainment world such as [Peter Capaldi, John Hurt and Maisie Williams](#) spoke out against Arctic drilling. And public figures such as [Al Gore, Hillary Clinton](#) and the [Archbishop of Canterbury](#) expressed concerns about Arctic oil drilling.

–30–

For more information:

Diego Creimer, Communications, Greenpeace Canada 514-999-6743 dcreimer@greenpeace.org

Notes to editors:

For photos and video contact photo.uk@greenpeace.org or call +44 (0)207 865 8294. Photos and video will be available shortly at

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/58gerw7zxuvlu62/AACI3TGCvT2HrRPzVjtatzgHa?dl=0>