

BEATING THE PROTEST MOB

Picture: TIM NEWELL

How Yorkshire Boudica was targeted by the eco-warriors determined to stop fracking



By Tim Newark

LORRAINE ALLANSON was a successful farmer and holiday home owner when a group of eco-warriors arrived in her picturesque part of North Yorkshire protesting at fracking plans.

Lorraine had grown up in the area and was in favour of fracking and the jobs it would bring to the region of Ryedale.

She quickly clashed with the protesters, launching a group supporting the fracking and earning the name Yorkshire Boudica.

Lorraine hadn't expected that she would be subjected to abuse in the street and on social media, and her business sabotaged.

"I'm a passionate conservationist and want to look after our lovely part of the world, but there was something not quite right about these intruders," she says.

"In 2014, I stuck my head above the parapet and stood up for a controversial energy project.

"The scandal is that if anyone dares to challenge the protesters they suffer harassment and abuse. Everyone seems to turn their back on the locals, too afraid."

"When protesters get to court they get a slapped wrist. We, the community, are left vulnerable to bullying tactics of professional activists. Who is protecting us? Who is listening to communities who want jobs and investment?"

Third Energy's KM8 site was near the village of Kirby Misperton. Drilling to 9,000ft, it was exploring the Bowland Shale running under the North of England. It was believed it could help kick-start a shale gas revolution creating thousands of jobs and providing cheap energy.

"The industry could bring jobs, business opportunities and hope



in areas desperately in need of rejuvenation," says Lorraine, 58. "Ryedale appears affluent but is one of the worst areas in the country for earning the living wage. Young people move away to where there are more amenities, affordable houses and better prospects. The shale gas industry, properly managed, could offer training then local jobs with prospects."

The Frack Off campaigners argued the work would pollute the air and water, threatening tourism and agriculture. They provided resources: posters, flyers, advice on starting a community group, and access to a national network and activists.

Micro-earthquakes have been

ANGER: Police remove site protesters and, right, a protest poster

linked with fracking and environmentalists say it can pollute the land. The Government halted fracking in England last year.

"National activists who protest as a profession descend into communities and take over the narrative," says Lorraine. "They used scaremongering propaganda to intimidate and silence my community. I was targeted and had to fight hard to save my business."

Lorraine's internet was cut off, having an impact on her B&B. "In two months of no broadband I lost a lot of business. There were lots of outsiders. If they knew the media was going to be there, they



what you are doing, you will all be killed". "They were using gangster tactics. And this is Britain. More to the point, this is Yorkshire," says Lorraine.

Four thousand letters flooded North Yorkshire County Council. "Sixty per cent were a template supplied by environmental companies, only 1,000 mentioned the planning application, large numbers were from outside the area.

"The average income for a paid environmental campaigner is £40,000, the average in nearby Pickering is £18,000."

Lorraine was determined because, 30 years earlier, a gas

'The protests caused anguish'

turbine power station was proposed nearby and environmentalists said the countryside would be devastated and an explosion would engulf her farm.

"The protests caused more anguish than the things they were warning against," says Lorraine.

"The authorities seem to think there should be only two points of view, the industry and the protesters. What about the locals who want our economies to prosper?"

"All we're doing is closing industry and manufacturing on the whim of activists who are really political. They want to de-industrialise our country so we end up importing everything. That leads to higher carbon emissions abroad. It doesn't make sense."

● *My Story is out shortly (£4.99 plus p&p from as-books.com)*

