

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Royal Bank Found Guilty of Environmental Crimes**

[Edinburgh] At a mock trial preceding the Royal Bank of Scotland's AGM today, the bank was found guilty of environmental and climate crimes by students and given a suspended sentence to clean up its investments by 2009 or face a boycott. Andrew Cave, Head of Corporate Responsibility for RBS received the verdict and sentence on behalf of RBS.

Students from campaign group People & Planet put RBS on trial as part of a protest against its lending to environmentally destructive fossil fuel projects, such as its loan to E.ON, the company hoping to build the first new coal power station in the UK for over 30 years, at Kingsnorth in Kent. Over 50 students from across the country gathered with props outside RBS' flagship branch in St Andrew Square for the mock trial. Grey whales, boreal forest, oil pipelines and coal plant cooling towers were witnesses testifying to RBS' complicity in driving forward climate chaos.

After hearing from the witnesses, the gathered jury overwhelmingly concluded that RBS is guilty of environmental crimes and gave the bank a suspended sentence to clean up its investments by 2009 or face a boycott.

*"RBS is driving forward new and more destructive fossil fuels. The Tar Sands projects in Canada have destroyed an area larger than the whole of England. We're here to tell RBS that they must cut their embedded emissions and stop financial support for fossil fuels" said Steve Halpin of Leeds University.*

After hearing from Mark Ballard, Rector of Edinburgh University, the protest then marched on RBS' AGM at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre to deliver the verdict. Along the way the group stopped to deliver the verdict to branches of RBS and NatWest (part of the RBS Group). At the AGM, Andrew Cave, Head of Corporate Responsibility for RBS accepted the verdict on behalf of the RBS Board of Directors and Chairman Tom McKillop.

*"The emissions from RBS' investments in 2007 were greater than the whole of Scotland. As a key investor this is unacceptable to us and we will be using our investment to raise this issue with RBS in future meetings" said Mark Ballard, Rector of Edinburgh University.*

The protest was part of People & Planet's Ditch Dirty Development campaign which targets both private and public financial support for fossil fuel projects, aiming to increase spending on renewable and decentralised forms of energy. It was also part of an international day of action on financing climate change. Activists in the USA will today demonstrate at Bank of America's AGM against their investments in fossil fuels.

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## Notes for editors

1. Ditch Dirty Development is a campaign of the national student organisation, People & Planet and research NGO PLATFORM. For more information see: [peopleandplanet.org/ditchdirtydevelopment](http://peopleandplanet.org/ditchdirtydevelopment), phone 01865 245678 or email [ddd@peopleandplanet.org](mailto:ddd@peopleandplanet.org)
2. The focus of the campaign is to force RBS to recognise the environmental impacts of its loans to fossil fuel projects. We are not calling for a boycott of RBS but rather building public support for the campaign and trying to engage constructively with RBS. If by 2009 RBS has not made significant progress towards the demands of the campaign then we will call for a total boycott of RBS and NatWest banks. More info can be found on [peopleandplanet.org/ditchdirtydevelopment](http://peopleandplanet.org/ditchdirtydevelopment)
3. The campaign on RBS is based on the report "The Oil & Gas Bank: RBS & the financing of climate change" published in 2007 by PLATFORM, People & Planet, Friends of the Earth, Bank Track and New Economics Foundation. A full copy of the report can be downloaded from the People & Planet website. [peopleandplanet.org/dl/ddd/rbs\\_report.pdf](http://peopleandplanet.org/dl/ddd/rbs_report.pdf)
4. In 2004 and 2006 RBS was lead arranger on a US\$800 million loan to oil company OptiCanada to develop their Long Lake project as part of the Athabasca Tar Sands development in Alberta, Canada. [peopleandplanet.org/ditchdirtydevelopment/tarsands](http://peopleandplanet.org/ditchdirtydevelopment/tarsands)
5. In 2007 RBS co-arranged a US\$4.9 billion loan to E.ON who are building Kingsnorth coal fired power station in Kent.
6. People & Planet are also campaigning to transform the environmental performance of the UK's universities, and are part of the national Stop Climate Chaos coalition campaign for both personal and political action on climate change. [peopleandplanet.org/stopclimatechaos](http://peopleandplanet.org/stopclimatechaos)