

Submission to the UK Government. Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.

Regarding the Open consultation: “Coal generation in Great Britain: The pathway to a low-carbon future”.

Submitted by

Myski local civic organization “Revival of Kazas and the Shor people”

Address: ul. Olimpiiskaya 4-33, 652840, Myski, Kemerovskaya oblast, Russian Federation, e-Mail: tanntol@mail.ru

Arctic Consult

Address: Orneveien 32, 9015, Tromsø, Norway, e-mail: Arctic.Consult@yahoo.com

On 9th November 2016, the UK Government released its consultation about the possible phase-out of coal in 2025, called “Coal Generation in Great Britain: The pathway to a low-carbon future”. The underlying idea of the document is the urgent need to cut carbon emissions and to reduce power sector emissions to replace coal power stations with lower-carbon alternatives.

We, the representatives of small numbered, indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation welcome the ambition of the UK to phasing out of the coal consumption for producing power. The coal mining and consumption influence negatively on indigenous peoples’ communities around the world in two ways. Through destroying indigenous peoples’ lands, contamination of the environment, poisoning waters, depriving of sources of income etc. The second indirect, adverse impact comes out through climate change.

From this perspective, the efforts of the United Kingdom to stop using the coal as a source of energy are very promising and helpful for indigenous peoples whose rights are being violated by coal extractive companies. At the same time, we strongly believe that the timetable should be accelerated significantly as the UK is one of the biggest consumer of the Russian coal in Europe.



The biggest amount of coal which Russian Federation exports to Europe is produced at Kemerovskaya oblast, South Siberia, which is a homeland for indigenous Shor people. The Shor people is one of the 40 small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, which the Russian Federation has officially recognized and whose protection is guaranteed by Russian Constitution¹. Like many indigenous peoples of Russia, Shor people traditionally espouse Shamanism, and

¹ See <http://constitution.ru/en/10003000-04.htm>

their deep spiritual connection with their ancestral territories is expressed in ceremonies and sacrifices to the spirits of their forests and mountains. Traditional economic activities include cattle breeding, hunting, fishing gardening and gathering as the main providers of food. Today, the Shor are the most urbanized of Russia's indigenous minority peoples, with three-quarters living in urban settlements and only around 25 per cent in rural places.² By implication, they are particularly affected by cultural and linguistic assimilation. As a vernacular, the Shor language is used exclusively in small settlements. These settlements are those most endangered by coal mining nowadays.

Two Shor villages which are mostly affected by coal mining are located in Myski municipality nearby one of the biggest industrial centers in Siberia Novokuznetsk which state statistics have identified as one of the three most polluted places in the Russian Federation³. Kemerovo oblast is Russia's number one coal mining region: raw materials account for almost 90 percent of its production, and more than 100 coal mining enterprises operate within the region, producing about 200 million metric tons of coal per annum, and accounting for 60 per cent of Russia's total production.⁴ In 2013, Russian exported about 140 million tons or 45 per cent of its production. Most of the exports (106 million tons) originated from Kemerovo region. Russia exports coal to Great Britain, South Korea, Japan, Netherlands, Poland, Germany etc.⁵ Coal mining in Kemerovo region is mostly open cast mining, with two-thirds of Kemerovo's coal being extracted on the surface.⁶



Kazas is located on the confluence of the Kazas and Mras-su rivers. In the early 1970s, Kazas was a vibrant village of 50 farmyards, where every family had at least three children. They learned how to hunt and fish from an early age. Locals kept cattle and poultry and grew vegetables on their land.

² See 2010 census results, table "19. Razmeshchenie naseleniia korennykh malochislennykh narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii",

http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/Documents/Vol4/pub-04-19.pdf

³ See: Rosstat nazval samye gryaznye goroda Rossii, undated,

http://www.primgidromet.ru/news/rosstat_nazval_samye_gryaznye_goroda_rossii/

⁴ Fond «Centr strategicheskikh razrobotok «Severo-Zapad»: Strategija social'no-jekonomicheskogo razvitija Kemerovskoj oblasti na dolgosrochnuju perspektivu, Sankt-Peterburg 2007,

<http://www.ako.ru/Ekonomik/strateg-2025.pdf>

⁵ See L.S. Plakitkina: Razvitie dobychi i eksporta uglja v osnovnykh stranakh mira i Rossii v period 2000-2013 (2012) gg. Vyzovy i ugrozy razvitiju dobychi i jeksporta uglja v Rossii v perspektivnom periodee, in Gornaya Promyshlennost, Vol 2 (114) / 2014, pp. 6-12

http://www.eriras.ru/files/Plakitkina_april_-1-.pdf

⁶ See «Оценка воздействия на окружающую среду намечаемого строительства

угледобывающего предприятия «Разрез Кийзасский», книга 1 - <http://bit.ly/2gbC9gD>

The river was an important source of food, where villagers would catch grayling, lenok, taimen, the fish species which depend on the cold and clean water of the pristine and shallow mountain streams.

However, the local river was seriously polluted since the arrival of the coal mining industry on that territory in 1970s. The formerly pristine stream turned into a dead sewage course whose muddy water became poisonous to fish, cattle and humans. The cattle had died after drinking untreated water from the Mras-su. The villagers' gardens and crops were constantly covered in yellow dust, carried over by the explosions to which they attribute increased levels of disease. Step by step the mining operations had virtually emptied Shor's hunting grounds, depriving them of an important source of income. In the 1980s, a checkpoint was erected on the road leading to the mine, which was also the only road leading to the Kazas village. In order to access their own village, the residents had to get monthly permits from the coal company to which the checkpoint belongs. Armed security men prevented anyone from passing unless they subjected to inspections of their cars and/or other quasi-police measures. The authorities have been indulging to coal companies through closing social assets in Kazas and transferring them to nearby settlements step by step.⁷



But the biggest problems of the local Shor community had started in 2011 when the Yuzhnaya company⁸ started mining at "Beregovoi" coal deposit less than 1,000 meters from the Kazas village. After a while the "Bare Mountain" (Shor: Karagay-Lyash) which was the most significant sacred site and place of worship for the Shor community of Kazas has been entirely destroyed and after that the mining operations had started in close vicinity to the village.

The inhabitants were kept completely unaware of the license conditions and learned about it only retroactively in 2014 from the official response to a complaint submitted by them to the public prosecutor of Kemerovo oblast. As per this license and further agreement of socio-economic cooperation secretly signed by Myski municipality and Yuzhnaya company, the village, where still leaved about 60 persons that time, should be resettled. Villagers had known about that post-factum when the company started to buy the land plots and the houses on the cheap. Most of

⁷ Submission of IWGIA, INFOE and "Revival of Kazas and the Shor people" to CERD, May 2015 https://www.urgewald.org/sites/default/files/early_warning_submission_russia_indigenous_peoples_kazas.pdf

⁸ The company Yuzhnaya operated by EVRAZ-Mezhdurechensk administration company, which a subsidiary company of the Luxemburg located EVRAZ GROUP SA. See the Unified State Register of Legal Entities <https://egrul.nalog.ru/>

villagers relocated to the nearby village Chuvashka or to the cities. Five families refused to sell their houses and leave Kazas. And during winter 2013-2014 all their houses were burned one by one by unknown perpetrators. After short investigation law enforcement agencies, have failed to identify any of the penetrators behind the five arson attacks, even though they arrived by car and must have passed through the armed checkpoint which ruled by the coal company to reach the village.⁹ Today all the villagers have been forced to leave Kazas, the village is totally destroyed.



The story repeats itself in Chuvaska village nowadays which is located across the Mrass-river from Kazas and where in 2013 started another huge mining coal project Razrez Kiizasskii.¹⁰

As you can see the coal mining not only destroying our lands, waters, plants, animals, economies and cultures but also threaten to the lives of indigenous people directly. Equally importantly is the destruction of indigenous peoples' livelihood in the Russian Arctic through climate change when reindeer herders lose dozen of thousands of reindeers as they can't reach the reindeer moss because the ice is too thick or because unexpected thaws open the old reindeer burial places in the tundra which are infected by dangerous diseases such as Siberian anthrax¹¹.



In the light of the above we would like to repeat that UK is one of the biggest consumer of the coal from Russia in Europe. At the same time the UK is one of the World's leaders in Climate Change strategies and any of its activities in this sphere gives the clear signal to the European energy market, which is one of the biggest in the world. It was really frustrating to read in the coal phase out plan that you propose such an extended and vague timetable. We are really afraid that the last Shor village in

⁹ See Угольные компании уничтожают шорские поселки в Кемеровской области - <http://bit.ly/1Sbzbpg>

¹⁰ Территория черного снега или второй Донбас - <http://o-gorod.net/news/352359/>

¹¹ The Guardian "Anthrax outbreak triggered by climate change kills boy in Arctic Circle" - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/01/anthrax-outbreak-climate-change-arctic-circle-russia>

lower reaches of the Mrassy river Chuvashka will not be able to survive through this period. The other sad thing, even if it is a legally corrected point, was to find out that among “main affected groups” you considering some interstate economic components and air quality but never mentioned the “most affected group” - the communities which live nearby coal mining outside of Great Britain.

To better your understanding of the tragedy of the Kazas Shor community you can see the film “The Price” here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3WXcXB4c1w>

With best regards,

Vladislav Tannagashev, Chair of Myski local civic organization “Revival of Kazas and the Shor people”, Kemerovskaya oblast, Russia

Dmitry Berezhkov, Director of Arctic Consult, Tromsø, Norway.