

Donovan Campaign Against Shell

ISSUE CONTEXT

Alfred Donovan and his son John, long-time critics of Shell because of a dispute over a marketing promotion in the UK many years ago, run a website <http://royaldutchshellplc.com> critical of the Shell Group. They also are the main drivers of a Wikipedia site 'Controversies surrounding Royal Dutch Shell'. In the past they have promoted allegations from eg-Shell safety auditor ' ' over North Sea safety and from a ' ' over alleged nuclear activity at a former Shell terminal at Earley outside Reading in the UK, issues over a number of Shell Malaysia pensioners and articles and comments from Shell pensioner ' '. Recently various posts on their "Shell Blog" have discussed the reorganization and some of the Shell people involved.

KEY MESSAGES

- We are familiar with the activities of Messrs Alfred and John Donovan, who are longstanding critics of Shell.
- We do not comment on specific issues raised by the Donovans. Although we disagree fundamentally with the factual basis and interpretation of much of the information on which they base their various allegations, our attempts to have a constructive debate have been unproductive.

SUPPORTING FACTS

- Shell took pains to ensure that Mr Donovan's claims were fully investigated and more than fully settled many years ago. Notwithstanding the impression he likes to give, he failed in the only case of his against Shell that went to court. It is therefore disappointing that the Donovans continue their long-running and acrimonious campaign against Shell on a wide range of subjects.
- Our position, as conveyed to the RDSplc website, is: "The lack of a rebuttal from, or comment by, Shell does not in any way constitute an acceptance on Shell's part of the accuracy of any of the points made by you whether now or in the future, and whether on this or on any other matter, and we continue to reserve our position accordingly in respect of those matters."

BRIDGING

Did you avoid disclosing certain information in response to the Donovans' Data Protection Act requests?

- We complied fully with the Data Protection Act request while making legitimate use of the ability under the Act to withhold information in certain limited circumstances, for example where it is legally privileged or to protect the identities of third parties.

Why do you not sue the Donovans for libel?

- The experience of corporate defamation plaintiffs is that, even when successful, such cases draw far more attention to the untrue allegations that they would receive without the case having been brought. Accordingly, while we do not exclude this as a possibility, this is an approach to be adopted only after the most careful consideration.

Why do you not edit the Wikipedia site 'Controversies surrounding Royal Dutch Shell'?

- Other companies have been strongly criticised for editing entries about themselves, and doing so would only serve to draw attention to the site. We prefer to focus on making our own Shell sites as good as possible.