

Why I rebelled against Extinction Rebellion... and went nuclear: In an astonishing and brave volte-face, the eco-group's ex-spokesperson ZION LIGHTS reveals why she has changed tack over the future of energy

By [ZION LIGHTS FOR THE DAILY MAIL](#)

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Like many people, I'm planning a small gathering this weekend while government rules still allow, heading to a stretch of beach for a picnic.

My choice of venue is arguably a little less orthodox, however: I'll be camping out on the precise stretch of shingle in Suffolk over which the Sizewell nuclear plant looms.

It's not an obvious spot, especially for someone who has long prided herself on being a passionate and committed environmentalist and who until earlier this year was spokesperson for the direct action group Extinction Rebellion, or XR.

Certainly there are several people in that organisation who will be horrified by the very notion of going anywhere near Sizewell — but unlike me, many of them refuse to confront what I believe is an undeniable truth: that a pivot to nuclear power is the only thing that can truly rescue us from our burgeoning energy and climate crisis.

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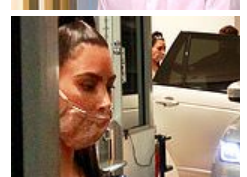
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Former Extinction Rebellion spokesperson Zion Lights appears on Good Morning Britain in October last year

Doomsday

Yet like so many lobby groups, my old colleagues peddle messages of doomsday gloom that alienate as much as they motivate, offering little in the way of positive solutions. It is scaremongering rather than inspiring, and while for a time I aligned myself with their world view — and their tactics — in recent months I have come to see things differently.

In fact, after years as a member of one campaigning group or another, I now believe passionately that environmentalism — that umbrella term for the loose collection of organisations that have existed for decades trying to bring about an end to climate change — has failed.

By that I mean that for all the picketing, and the direct action, and the exhortations to use less fuel, fly less and conserve water, nothing has really made a difference to how we choose to live. Day after day, we still hear of energy crises around the world, increasing drought and wildfires, and species facing extinction.

Turn the clock back 30 years, and I was hearing much the same messages in the classroom at my Birmingham comprehensive school. Some of the words and the numbers may have changed, but not much else.

It certainly lit a fire in me: growing up in a working-class, inner-city area, the daughter of immigrants from the Punjab who worked punishing hours in factories to make ends meet, I was an unlikely budding environmental campaigner.

But by the time I went to university I helped found a green organisation and later joined the Green Party.

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From there I joined another small climate action group, but when it died out I stayed out of activism for a while to concentrate on my own freelance writing, taking a Masters in science communication because, unlike the slightly ‘crazy hippy’ connotations my unusual name may conjure, I’ve always been a firm believer in following the science.



I was fully briefed and confident, my mind whirling with rubber-stamped facts and figures — until he confronted me with one figure I couldn’t defend. It was co-founder Roger Hallam’s claim that unless climate change was halted, six billion people would die this century (Pictured: Co-founder of Extinction Rebellion Roger Hallam)

Disorder

It’s one reason I was first attracted to XR. Their mantra — initially anyway — was ‘listen to the scientists’. So when they gave me the role of a spokesperson, it felt like I had a platform to talk about what I truly felt mattered.

That is, until in early October last year, when I appeared on current affairs programme the Andrew Neil Show on behalf of the organisation.

I was fully briefed and confident, my mind whirling with rubber-stamped facts and figures — until he confronted me with one figure I couldn’t defend. It was co-founder Roger Hallam’s claim that unless climate change was halted, six billion people would die this century.

It’s a headline-grabbing assertion — but unfortunately, it’s also not true, or certainly not backed up by any evidence. As was obvious to anyone who knows me — and even to the casual viewer — I was plunged into a PR nightmare.

I could not defend the number, but as the official spokesperson nor could I be seen to condemn it.

All I could do, instead, was flounder under the hot glare of the studio lights for what felt like an eternity.

Even now, the memory of it makes me shiver.

It proved to be the beginning of the end of my relationship with XR: whether it was hate mail from XR supporters accusing me of letting the organisation down, or more measured messages from colleagues saying we could ‘get’ scientists to back up Hallam’s claim, it was clear that my world view and theirs were parting ways.

Then, less than two weeks later, XR members caused sizeable disorder at an East London Tube station, preventing commuters from getting to work.

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The ploy made me deeply uneasy — while XR's entire strategy is based on disruption, targeting London's public transport network at rush hour felt beyond the pale.

I made it plain that it shouldn't have been done, a sentiment that, in fairness, many other members came to acknowledge.



Then, less than two weeks later, XR members caused sizeable disorder at an East London Tube station, preventing commuters from getting to work. The ploy made me deeply uneasy — while XR's entire strategy is based on disruption, targeting London's public transport network at rush hour felt beyond the pale. (Pictured: XR conduct a protest at East London's Shadwell tube station in October last year)

Running parallel to this was my sense that like so many other environmental lobby groups before them, XR seem to have fallen into the trap of telling people what not to do, while also peddling the notion that the solution to the climate crisis was to 'turn back the clock' to a simpler time.

It's something that has long infuriated me: try telling that to the people living in poverty in the Punjab. They want clean water, but they also want laptops. In short, they want what we here in the West have had for a long time — and it is rank hypocrisy for those of us who have benefited from the comfortable advances in technology in recent years to suggest they can't have it.

For that, of course, you need energy. But while renewable energy can and should be part of the mix in supplying energy to the UK and the rest of the world, the reality is that there is only one reliable, low-carbon energy source that we can invest in now.

Barricade

It's why, in June, I resigned from XR and took a new role overseeing British campaign group Environmental Progress UK, which is campaigning in particular for the creation of the mooted Sizewell C nuclear power station in Suffolk.

It's a decision that led to some abusive messages from a small cohort of my old colleagues, wedded to the ancient image of atom bombs and weapons instead of life-changing electricity and a dramatic reduction in carbon emissions. Yet the reality remains, if we are going to service our ever-burgeoning energy needs, then the only way forward is nuclear.

It's one reason that instead of trying to barricade the gates of a newspaper plants or chaining myself to a barrier outside the Houses of Parliament I will be proudly holding a banner at my picnic this weekend, proclaiming something I believe to be true: Nuclear Saves Lives.

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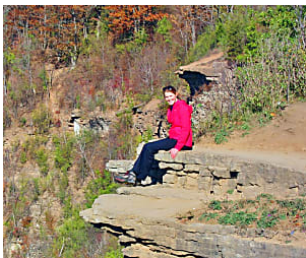
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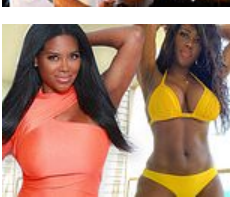
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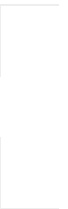
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The actress, 34, stocked up

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▶ Corrie's Katie McGlynn begins work on her first role since leaving the soap as she heads to a dog kennel to film *The Syndicate* in Yorkshire

▶ 'They've missed my entire pregnancy!' Ashley James is emotional after plans to visit family are scuppered by north-east lockdown

Lady Gaga reveals she used to 'get depressed'

▶ urinating on a Grammy)

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▶ 'It was an odd time to have a kid': Dermot O'Leary reveals he's taken more paternity leave than he planned after birth of son Kasper in lockdown

▶ Hollyoaks' Alex Fletcher looks dramatically different as she unveils cherry red hair which she reveals is part of 'big' Christmas storyline

▶ Denise Welch enjoys a happy reunion with Jane Danson as former Coronation Street co-stars catch up during al fresco coffee date
Fun in the sun

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Jennifer Lawrence stands out in monochrome pinstripe trousers as she enjoys a dinner date with

▶ husband Cooke Maroney

▶ Katie Waissel displays her washboard abs in a white crop top and mint green gym leggings as she enjoys energetic run in London

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► his restaurant

► Michael Bolton transforms When a Man Loves a Woman into jingle for new Panera Bread menu item

► Bella Hadid looks incredible wearing a series of sexy bikinis as she poses up a storm for a Versace campaign in Italy

► Love Island's Jess Shears showcases her sensational figure in a black bikini during a paddleboarding date with husband Dom Lever

► Selling Sunset's Christine Quinn shows off her ample cleavage in a PVC swimsuit and animal print bikini as she poses for a very racy Maxim shoot

► Jenni Falconer cuts a stylish figure in a scarlet floral dress while wearing a fracture boot as she leaves Smooth FM

EXCLUSIVE Made In Chelsea's Andy Jordan reveals he's planning a wedding abroad after proposing to Alexandra Suter

► John Simm puts on a dapper display in a black suit and a blue shirt as he steps out on set in Brighton to film new ITV police drama Grace

► 'You win this time Weasley': Tom Felton enjoys a reunion with Harry Potter co-star James Phelps as they go head-to-head in golf match

► Kimi Raikkonen mocks Lewis Hamilton with 'evolution of an F1 driver' meme as he suggests six-time world champion is killing F1's rock'n'roll spirit

► 'How are YOU feeling, girls?' Nadia Sawalha strips down to her underwear as she mimics Kim Kardashian yet again for playful SKIMS parody

Olivia Wilde looks sensational in a scalloped swimsuit as

▶ she frolics on the beach with fiancé Jason Sudekis

▶ Newly-single Laura Anderson dishes out relationship advice for fans after shock split from boyfriend Tom Brazier

▶ Amanda Holden is a vision in white as she struts her stuff in an elegant blouse and chic trousers while heading to work at Global Studios

▶ Alexandra Burke doesn't look happy after her personalised Range Rover is hit with a parking ticket while she takes her dog for a walk

▶ Vogue Williams displays her toned abs in a crop top as she enjoys a run with Spencer Matthews after hitting back at trolls

▶ David Tennant goes for a loving stroll with his wife Georgia... after gripping the nation with his chilling portrayal of serial killer Dennis Nilsen

▶ Daniel Craig looks suave as he transforms into James Bond and goes after enemies in action-packed new poster for No Time To Die

▶ Gigi Hadid's father sends fans into a spin after appearing to announce arrival of her baby with poem... but then insists model HASN'T yet given birth

EXCLUSIVE Mummy Diaries: Nelly leaves mother Billie Faiers very impressed as she performs an EPIC rap on the spot ahead of her birthday

▶ Jolly Prince Charlie! Duke of Rothesay beams as he opens the Highland Games for a behind-closed-doors competition

The Pursuit Of Love
FIRST LOOK: Lily James looks stylish in a pink floral shirt and a pencil skirt as she joins dapper Andrew Scott in the romantic comedy



► 'I sobbed every night':
Ulrika Jonsson admits
she 'mourned' when her
eldest son Cameron
first went to university
and says she is 'not
good at letting go'

► Holly Candy cuts a
casual figure in a black
ruffle jumper and jeans
as she fuels up on
coffee

► Black comedian
Sophie Duker's 'killing
white people' joke
sparks 42 Ofcom
complaints

► Ashley Roberts looks
effortlessly chic in a
polka dot top and skirt
as she makes a
glamorous exit from
her Heart Radio duties
in London

► Bruce Willis swaps out
a pair of worn-in Vans
for classic loafers as he
enjoys a solo shopping
trip in Beverly Hills

► Max George says
goodbye to girlfriend
Stacey Giggs with
sweet holding hands in
bed post as he prepares
to quarantine ahead of
Strictly debut

► Gary Lineker's brother
Wayne, 58, claims he
gets more attention
from women because of
his 'lean physique' but it
'doesn't make him a bad
boyfriend'

► Alesha Dixon reveals
she was in 'floods of
tears' as she watched
Diversity's powerful
BLM dance on Britain's
Got Talent... as Ofcom
complaints reach 24,041

► Paris and Nicky
Hilton's mom Kathy is
'in talks to join Real
Housewives Of Beverly
Hills as a friend of the
show'

► 'The shadeeee': Gwen
Stefani leaves fans in
hysterics as she
photoshops Blake
Shelton's face on an old
picture with ex Gavin
Rossdale

► [Louise Redknapp reunites with 9 to 5 co-star Amber Davies for a boozy night out after the musical was forced to close early due to COVID-19 outbreak](#)

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