

MSP CALLS FOR CROSS-PARTY SUMMIT TO DISCUSS WAYS TO SAFEGUARD UNDER-THREAT INVERURIE PLANT

Union bosses to meet shop stewards in bid to save mill jobs

BY GILLIAN BELL

Shop stewards at a stricken north-east paper mill are to meet Scottish trade union chiefs this weekend to try to save hundreds of jobs.

The US-based owners of the International Paper plant at Inverurie announced earlier

this week that the business - which is losing more than £1million a month - is no longer sustainable.

Tony Burke, the assistant general secretary of Unite, which represents around 250 mill workers, said officials from the union's Scottish headquarters would meet local union representatives this weekend.

He said bosses wanted to

talk to shop stewards at the mill to get fully briefed on developments. A meeting involving all 250 mill workers who belong to the union is likely to follow eventually, he said. He added: "We are going to do everything we can to save the mill and its jobs."

The 150-year-old mill, which employs nearly 370 people, has an annual turnover of more than

£100million. It is one of the biggest contributors to the north-east economy outwith the oil and gas industry and the largest single provider of haulage work in the area.

Crisis talks involving First Minister Alex Salmond, mill managers and trade unions were held on Thursday to discuss various options for the site's future.

The company assured Mr

Salmond, acting in his capacity as local MSP, that the mill would stay open as "long as possible", and for at least the duration of the three-month consultation period, due to start next month.

North-east Conservative MSP Nanette Milne commended Mr Salmond on his efforts to try to mitigate the crisis and called for a cross-party summit to discuss the

verurie paper mill.

She added: "The impact of such a large number of job losses would be a hammer blow for the north-east and my thoughts are with all who are potentially affected."

"I am calling for emergency cross-party talks at the earliest possible opportunity, in order to make the most effective representations possible. We need to save In-

Courts seize £750,000 from Scots gangster

'ICEMAN' AT CENTRE OF £1m MONEY-LAUNDERING SCHEME

BY LUCY CHRISTIE

One of Scotland's most notorious criminals had almost £750,000 seized by the courts yesterday.

Gangster James "Iceman" Stevenson, 43, was ordered to hand over the sum at the High Court in Edinburgh after being convicted of money-laundering offences last year.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill welcomed the seizure - one of the biggest confiscations of crime profits made in Scotland.

Stevenson and his henchman, Gerry Carbin, 27, were at the centre of a £1million money-laundering operation smashed by the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency in 2006.

Mr MacAskill said: "The criminal godfathers, their lieutenants and foot soldiers who prey on our citizens should be under no illusion that this government is determined to take their ill-gotten gains off them and put them out of business."

"Those who seek to make money at the expense of hard-working, law-abiding people threaten the framework of our society."

Stevenson, from Rutherglen, outside Glasgow, and Carbin, from East Kilbride, pleaded guilty to a series of charges relating to concealing and receiving criminal property at the High Court in Glasgow in March 2007.

Using listening devices and hidden microphones planted in their homes, police heard details of a deal to set up a

dodgy taxi firm and to buy 55 luxury watches bought for £307,000.

They admitted hiding £204,510 in cash as well as using criminal proceeds to buy the watches.

Stevenson admitted receiving criminal property worth £98,605 and using it to buy 10 Skoda Octavia cars, receiving £389,035 in cash and having a further £5,000 of criminal proceeds.

He was jailed for 12 years and nine months.

Carbin got five years and six months.

They were both described by prosecutors as significant players in the money-laundering business, using funds arising from drug trafficking.

Detective Chief Superintendent Gavin Robertson said: "Today's decision should send a clear message to organised criminals across Scotland and beyond that law enforcement agencies are committed to working together to dismantle their operations and ensure they pay the price for their criminal activity."

Solicitor General Frank Mulholland said: "We will continue to pursue assets and profits from crime to inflict long-term damage on serious criminal organisations and on anyone who hopes to fund their lifestyle from crime."



SPACE ODDITY: the Enchanted Forest 'A Journey Through Space' sound and light show is missing some aliens

Scores of little green men being abducted

TOURIST ATTRACTION DISRUPTED AFTER SOUND AND LIGHT SHOW PROPS GO MISSING

BY ALISON MIDDLETON

ALIEN abductions have caused disruption at a Perthshire tourist attraction.

Scores of little green men are supposed to greet visitors to the Enchanted Forest sound and light show near Pitlochry.

But event organisers have

been left mystified by the disappearance of more than a third of the inflatable extraterrestrials from the popular show at Paskally Wood.

This year's event, which has a Journey Through Space theme, has also resulted in numerous UFO sightings.

Spokeswoman Tricia Fox

said: "We started with 100 inflatables but over the past few days their number has been depleted. Either people are swiping them as souvenirs or it's a case of ET goes home."

She said the blow-up dolls, which stand about a foot tall, were integral to the show.

"They are part of ET Wood in the kids' area," she said. "A lot of them are backlit with green to look like aliens."

"People have been abducting them as they go along. I think we've got about 30 left."

The show runs until November 2.

For more information visit

www.enchantedforest.org.uk

Perth man caught with 4m cigarettes jailed

JURY CONVICTS 55-YEAR-OLD OF ATTEMPTING TO SMUGGLE TOBACCO INTO UK

A MAN was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison yesterday after being found guilty of attempting to smuggle more than 4million cigarettes into the country, hidden in boxes of biscuits.

Alexander Kindred, 55, of Glenturret Terrace, Perth, was arrested after HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

officers intercepted him at Dover docks in Kent on April 26 last year. They discovered 4,229,200 cigarettes among the crates of biscuits, which he claimed had been loaded into the vehicle in Germany, to be transported to the UK.

A jury at Maidstone Crown Court heard the revenue evaded on the tobacco

amounted to £580,000, HMRC spokesman Bob Gaiger said: "We will not hesitate to take action against those dealing in smuggled goods and evading duty."

"This sentence will serve as a deterrent to others."

"Selling smuggled tobacco products is not a harmless tax fiddle - it cheats the gov-

ernment of revenue, which can be used to fund vital public services and jeopardises the trading of law-abiding tobaccoists."

He added that anyone with knowledge of others importing or dealing in smuggled cigarettes should contact the Customs hotline on 0800

595000.