



Liz Truss Cites Economist Linked to Climate Deniers in Defence of Her Tax Cut Plan

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The current favourite to replace UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has defended her plans to slash taxes by citing an economist from a think-tank with ties to the country's main climate science denial group.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss referenced a *Daily Express* article earlier today by Patrick Minford, a free-market economist who is best known for his dubious 2017 claim that a no-deal Brexit would boost the UK economy by £135 billion per year.

Minford is a fellow at the Centre for Brexit Policy (CBP), a think-tank in which several figures also hold key roles in the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF).

He also led the now defunct pressure group Economists for Free Trade (EFT), which was convened by US shale gas millionaire Edgar Miller, one of the few known funders of the GWPF.

This reference by Truss is the latest example of the Foundation's influence in the Tory leadership contest, which comes amid a record-breaking heatwave that has pushed climate change up the political agenda.

Truss – who is currently polling ahead of former chancellor Rishi Sunak in the premiership race – has claimed she supports the UK's 2050 net zero target.

However, she has a record of working with free-market think-tanks that are opposed to government action on climate change, and has vowed to overturn the UK's ban on fracking for shale gas. Steve Baker, an influential backbench MP and GWPF trustee who leads an anti-green faction in parliament, is backing Truss's bid for leader.

“Any Conservative leadership candidate engaging in climate denial must explain to the British people why they oppose action that will cut energy bills and deliver energy security for our country,” Ed Miliband MP, Labour's shadow climate change secretary, told DeSmog.

“All the evidence says that delaying action on climate will cost us more and is the imprudent, reckless choice.”

Climate Denial Links

The CBP is chaired by Owen Paterson, the former MP who resigned from parliament last year over a lobbying scandal, and who has a long-standing relationship with the GWPF.

Alongside Minford, CBP fellows who overlap with GWPF include: the Foundation’s energy editor, John Constable, who in March called for a complete phaseout of wind and solar energy; former GWPF trustee Ruth Lea, an aide to Craig Mackinlay who chairs Baker’s Net Zero Scrutiny Group; and Matt Ridley, a GWPF advisor and *Telegraph* columnist.

Ridley wrote a *Telegraph* article this week endorsing Truss and claiming that she consulted with him “a few times” during the 2010s as she “reinvented herself as a passionate champion of free enterprise”. In the piece, he dismissed renewable energy as “thermodynamically inadequate”, echoing language from a recent GWPF report written by Constable.

Another CBP fellow, former Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith, has supported the GWPF’s campaign to overturn the UK’s fracking ban.

CBP fellow Catherine McBride, who advises on trade deals as a member of the government’s Trade and Agriculture Commission set up while Truss was trade secretary, claimed earlier this month on GB News that the Russian government had financed anti-fracking groups, despite this not being supported by evidence.

Political Influence

Truss has been linked to a string of libertarian think-tanks opposed to government climate targets. She set up the “parliamentary wing” of the Institute of Economic Affairs – which has long been funded by oil giant BP – and has given speeches to the Cato Institute, the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation.

DeSmog has reported on numerous links between Tory leadership candidates and the GWPF. Penny Mordaunt – who was eliminated on Wednesday – has received thousands in donations from GWPF funders Terence Mordaunt and Michael Hintze.

Attorney General Suella Braverman’s anti-net zero bid for leader was run by GWPF trustee Steve Baker. Another anti-net zero candidate, Kemi Badenoch, received a £1,000 gift in 2019 from Hintze.