

Tory leadership candidates turn their back on climate change as the world burns

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Climate change is here. Just walking outside today shows that everything scientists have been saying since the late 1980s is true.

Humankind's addiction to burning fossil fuels is causing the planet to heat. This is well on the way to causing a catastrophe beyond anything humanity has ever seen. You can read about nine ways global heating is going to make life in Wales worse here.

The good news is we know exactly what we need to do to fix it. The bad news is that the people running to lead the government of our four nations don't seem to give a damn. The candidates currently jockeying for the leadership of the Conservative Party, and therefore the role of PM, have been at best apathetic to the tackling the issue, or at worst have campaigned on the back of rolling back measures to tackle the problem.

Using analysis from DeSmog, an organisation which exposes climate change misinformation, we have listed where the remaining Tory candidates stand on global heating.

Kemi Badenoch

Brexit supporting Badenoch has now come out vehemently against the UK's net zero target, describing the policy as "unilateral economic disarmament" and the 2050 target as "arbitrary". She told the *Telegraph* she "believe[s] in climate change" but said "there is a better way of going about these things". Badenoch later told the *Times* that the UK must "increase the capacity of the electricity grid" to power electric vehicles, adding that her "issue isn't that 2050 is the right or wrong target" but that "we need to change how we talk about it".

At a 1922 Committee hustings event this week, Badenoch reportedly said she would "change [the] concept of [the] target to be more accountable" and have a "delivery plan".

A DeSmog revealed that Badenoch received a £1,000 donation from one of the few known funders of climate science denial in the UK Michael Hintze, for a ticket to a Conservative party

fundraiser last November. Michael Hintze, an Australian hedge fund manager has provided financial support to the anti-climate change action group the Global Warming Policy Foundation and is set to be appointed to the House of Lords.

Liz Truss

A former environment secretary and vocal supporter of free market economics, and has said little about the climate or net zero in her campaign. When asked at a 1922 Committee hustings event this week, Truss said she would keep the UK's 2050 net zero target.

Truss has close ties to the so-called Tufton Street network of libertarian, pro-Brexit think tanks and lobby groups, based on and around the Westminster road. She has spoken at multiple events organised by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and the Adam Smith Institute.

The IEA, whose "parliamentary wing" of MPs supportive of deregulation Truss set up soon after becoming an MP, has a long history of opposing government environmental policy and has taken funding from oil giant BP since the 1960s. Following her appointment as international trade secretary, Truss tapped three employees of Tufton Street groups as advisors.

As environment secretary between 2014-2016 she cut subsidies for solar farms, calling them "a blight on the landscape", and claimed they were harming food production. Truss is one of the authors of an influential 2012 book by members of the Conservative Free Enterprise Group, *Britannia Unchained*, which argued for a low-tax, deregulated economy and took a swipe at "government-subsidised green technology".

Her ties to free market groups also extend across the Atlantic. During a trip to the United States in 2018 while she was chief secretary to the Treasury, Truss met with several Koch-funded libertarian think tanks and lobby groups with a history of climate science denial, including the Cato Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Heritage Foundation.

Penny Mordaunt

Writing in the *Telegraph* earlier this week, Mordaunt signalled her support for net zero, saying her Party's plans for decarbonisation could help create three million green jobs by 2030 – though it was unclear how this would be achieved. At a 1922 Committee hustings event this week, Mordaunt confirmed that she would keep the UK's 2050 net zero target. Despite signs she backs the UK's emissions reduction plans, Mordaunt has also received funding from a number of donors with links to the UK's most prominent climate science denial group, the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF).

Between 2019 and 2021, she received £20,000 from First Corporate Consultants, a management consultancy founded by Terence Mordaunt, GWPF's then chair. It is unclear whether the two are related.

Ahead of the 2019 general election, Mordaunt received a £3,000 donation from hedge fund manager Michael Hintze, who has also funded the GWPF.

Mordaunt has welcomed the endorsement of motoring lobbyist Howard Cox of the FairFuelUK campaign, which is funded by the Road Haulage Association, and pledged to cut fuel duty by 50 percent. Cox runs an All-Party Parliamentary Group with Conservative MP Craig Mackinlay, chair of the Net Zero Scrutiny Group, which has extensive ties to the GWPF.

In her role as trade minister, Mordaunt was involved in a controversial trade deal with Australia which saw the UK government eliminate key language about climate policy, the environment, and concerns about deforestation and pesticide use.

Rishi Sunak

The ex-Chancellor was the first MP to launch a leadership campaign, and is currently a frontrunner in the race. Despite some overtures to decarbonisation, Sunak did not materialise as a champion of the UK's net zero targets while he was in charge of the budget.

Last year, Sunak faced criticism for blocking green policies required for decarbonisation, with campaigners accusing the Treasury of “fuelling the climate emergency” by watering down policies on infrastructure spending and home insulation, including scrapping the green homes grant.

Sunak was also criticised for making no mention of climate change in his address to the 2021 Conservative Party conference. He also came under fire for decisions in the 2021 autumn budget – including freezing fuel duty for a 12th year and planning to expand the road network.

At the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow late last year, Sunak said he would make the UK the “world's first net zero financial centre” by making businesses publish “a clear, deliverable plan setting out how they will decarbonise and transition to net zero with an independent task force”.

In May, Sunak announced a £5 billion windfall tax on oil and gas companies. Analysts and campaigners criticised the move however, calling it a “missed opportunity” for climate and warning generous tax breaks would further incentivise oil and gas development. At a 1922 Committee hustings event last week, Sunak said he would keep the UK's 2050 net zero target.

Tom Tugendhat

Tugendhat is one of the few leadership candidates to defend the UK's net zero target, and has acknowledged that climate change is “one of the greatest challenges we face”. However, at a 1922 Committee hustings event on Wednesday, Tugendhat reportedly said he would push the 2050 net zero target back (but told reporters the next day that he sees net zero as a “benefit”, not just a “cost”).

Tugendhat has also announced he will slash fuel duty – widely seen as a regressive measure when nearly a quarter of all the UK's emissions come from transport. Tugendhat said that if elected he would cut fuel duty “by 10p a litre” and “introduce an energy resilience plan to ensure that the UK has dependable power produced at home or sourced from trusted allies”.

The former British Army officer told the *Telegraph* that a government led by him would keep the net zero target on the grounds of energy security – in contrast to other candidates, who have used “energy security” as an argument to reject or water down climate action.

“Net zero isn't just about climate change anymore, but shielding ourselves from Russia's weaponisation of its position in energy markets,” he said, adding that a “sluggish” approach to decarbonising would “hand the economic and technological advances of the future to our competitors, and compromise growth industries in the UK's industrial heartlands”.

Tugendhat is a member of the Conservative Environment Network (CEN) and is also on the advisory board of Onward, a Tory think tank which supports net zero and decarbonising the

economy, and in April published research that found ditching net zero would cost the Tories 1.3 million votes.