



The Conservative case for net zero is the only one that makes sense to cut our bills

By Cameron Smith

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A comment for City AM by Cameron Smith of the Conservative Environment Network (CEN) says: “Our reliance on fossil fuels is to blame for the energy crunch...The next prime minister will need to Britain’s energy policies on a war footing.” Smith continues by pointing to measures such as insulating homes and expanding heat pump grants.

He adds: “When the problem is rocketing wholesale gas prices, doubling down on net-zero is the answer. Despite claims from a minority of sceptics, net-zero isn’t at odds with conservatism; it’s a conservative mission we must continue.” Analysis from [BusinessGreen](#) says leadership contenders Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak have “step[ped] up their net-zero and nature rhetoric – but will the next PM deliver?” ([Truss](#) and [Sunak](#) have each provided information on their environment plans to CEN.) For the [Guardian](#), associate editor Martin Kettle writes: “Truss talks about axing the so-called green levies, while Sunak wants VAT to be cut from energy bills for a year. Both are hostile to solar panels and onshore windfarms. Several key Truss backers are net-zero delayers and some are full-on climate sceptics.”

A [Guardian](#) editorial on news that UK inflation has reached a 40-year high says: “Unless the government acts on energy bills, when the cap rises by a predicted 80% on 1 October, inflation will soar again.

Analysts expect prices for gas and electricity to keep on increasing well into the new year. And where energy prices go, so go the costs for everything else, from food to clothes to transport.”

Meanwhile, for the [Times](#), columnist Iain Martin writes on the gas crisis under the headline: “‘Net-zero’ groupthink got us into this mess.” He argues that “successive governments...bet the house on getting to net-zero quicker than anyone else...[a]nd look where it has landed us”. (Of 128 countries with [net-zero targets](#) covering 83% of global emissions, 117 are aiming for 2050 or earlier.) Martin continues that the “too-fast race to net-zero was a mistake” and adds: “What was needed was an urgent national effort to build more gas storage, to source more of every scrap of energy, and to tell us, the public, all year to get used to conserving energy to keep bills, and the expensive bailout, down.” Another [Times](#) comment from Ryan Bourne, of the libertarian thinktank the Cato Institute, is titled: “Carbon pricing will bring salvation from the energy disaster.” (He does not explain how this would happen.) Bourne writes: “Carbon taxes get near-universal approval from economists in polls and are backed by 28 economics Nobel laureates...In politics, though, economists are being routed.”