

Labour challenge Tory climate change denial at PMQs

Rebecca Long Bailey MP, Labour's Shadow Business Secretary, standing in today for Jeremy Corbyn at Prime Ministers Questions (PMQs), has highlighted climate change denial at the top of the Tory party and fears that the next Prime Minister will be unwilling to tackle the climate emergency

New research from Labour reveals that 15 of Theresa May's current and former cabinet ministers are implicated in climate change denial, including Tory leadership favourites Boris Johnson and Environment Secretary Michael Gove.

On Tory leadership candidates, analysis found that:

- Boris Johnson, Andrea Leadsom and Michael Gove have previously denied climate science.
- Dominic Raab, Matt Hancock and Esther McVey were linked to individuals or organisations promoting climate change denial.

Boris Johnson has referred to global warming as a "primitive fear" that is "without foundation". As Education Secretary, Michael Gove opposed teaching climate science in school, with his spokesperson dismissing climate science as "a particular political or ideological point of view".

On serving and former cabinet members, analysis also found:

- Three current cabinet ministers have previously denied the scientific consensus on climate change: Environment Secretary Michael Gove; International Trade Secretary Liam Fox; and Transport Secretary Chris Grayling.
- Three other cabinet ministers have close financial or professional links with organisations and individuals promoting climate change denial: Health Secretary Matt Hancock; Chief Secretary to the Treasury Liz Truss; and May herself.
- Four of May's former cabinet ministers have denied climate science:

former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson; former Brexit Secretary David Davis; Leader of the Commons Andrea Leadsom; and former Defence Secretary Chris Grayling.

- Five other former cabinet ministers were linked to individuals or organisations promoting climate change denial: former International Development Secretary Priti Patel; former Conservative chairman Patrick McLoughlin; former Work and Pensions Secretary Esther McVey; and former Brexit secretaries David Davis and Dominic Raab.

In recent months the government has been subject to mounting criticism for ignoring the science on climate change. Last year leading climate scientist James Hansen accused government energy policy of “aping Trump”, while this March the High Court ruled government fracking policies unlawful for failing to take into account scientific evidence.

Rising public pressure forced the government into a humiliating U-turn last month when it belatedly accepted a Labour motion to declare a climate and environment emergency. But this analysis will raise fresh fears about the scale of climate change denial in the Conservative Party and whether it is capable of taking the necessary action to tackle the climate crisis.

Rebecca Long Bailey MP, Labour’s Shadow Business Secretary, speaking at PMQs, said:

“How much authority does the government really have on climate change?

“Three current ministers ‘have denied’ the scientific consensus on climate change.

“And several of those standing in the Tory leadership contest, have close links with organisations and individuals ‘promoting’ climate change.”