

# Top Ten Tory Eco-Cons

A report by **Siân Berry**, Green  
Party Principal Speaker

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# 1 Tory support for nuclear power

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Tory rhetoric might seem to suggest they are concerned about nuclear power. In fact they are committed to 'competitive' nuclear power. The Tories own energy review states:

On nuclear power, a level playing field means amending planning procedures to allow for type and site approval for nuclear investment – just as planning procedures should be improved for renewable and decentralised energy sources.

But there must be total transparency over the full lifetime costs of nuclear power, clarity over nuclear waste, and no subsidies or special favours.

So where the Government see nuclear power as the first choice, under our framework it would become a last resort; where the Liberal Democrats rule out nuclear power, we rule out subsidies and special favours for nuclear power.

They wish to amend planning procedures – in order to fast track new build – just like the current Labour government.(1)

Experience has shown that the nuclear lobby, ranging as far up the old guard Tory oligarchy as Bernard Ingham, are powerful figures who will wield great influence under a Tory government.

The current 'last resort' rhetoric should be interpreted as the precursor to greater support, rhetorically justified by the threat of climate change. The Green party has argued elsewhere that nuclear is not a cost effective means of tackling climate change, aside from its other dangers.(2)

## 2 Tory support for new roads

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Tories do not wish to face the fact that traffic reduction and a shift onto rail and bus is necessary to tackle climate change. Instead, they are playing to their car-lobby roots, insisting that techno fixes will get us out of the hole we're in, and advocating a massive programme of road building.

Cameron himself stated to the CBI in 2005:

Britain now needs a concerted programme of road building, accompanied by the introduction of advanced traffic management methods, including new solutions for road charging based on usage and the time of day.(3)

Yet in practice, the Tories are extremely sceptical about road charging schemes, choosing to attack Labour for the taxation they might raise, rather than arguing for schemes which would better deliver environmental objectives - again giving a clear indication of the future balance of priorities for a Tory government.

Conservatives have urged motorists to treat Mr Blair's response to trouble with his road pricing plans with "extreme scepticism". Shadow Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said that he does not believe the government's claim that road pricing is not a stealth tax.

Mr Grayling claimed:

I know from extremely good sources that Gordon Brown and his team have had discussions about the possibility of using the revenue from road pricing to fill future black holes in public finance. (4)

Chris Grayling backed Cameron's double standards on road traffic in 2006:

Tackling the environmental impact of road transport doesn't mean trying to drive cars off our roads. It's the technology that needs to change. Cars have to become greener and greener. [...]

But getting greener cars onto our roads is just one of the transport challenges we all face. We know that if we're going to tackle congestion we have to improve our road network.(5)

They have supported the current £30bn road building plan. Conservatives would be even more keen on road building than the present Labour government.

## 3 Tory support for aviation growth

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Some Tory rhetoric has given the impression that Tories might wish to curb aviation growth. But any such thought is far from the thoughts of their MEPs.

A European Parliamentary debate on air quality took place in mid September, 2006. The debate centred on a potential redefinition of the levels of air quality allowed, and to bind polluters under legal obligations to keep their contribution to a minimum. During the debate, airport expansion was exempted from the range of pollution emitters. Conservative MEPs voted for this measure. (6)

Global problems demand global policies. For Britain, that overwhelmingly means cooperation in the European Union, which - without exaggeration - could be as important to the environment in the first half of the 21st century as it was to peace in the second half of the 20th.

EU agreements have already brought major environmental benefits, from dramatically improving water quality and waste disposal to achieving higher product standards and protecting endangered species and habitats. With this in mind, David Cameron's hostility to Europe makes a mockery of his claimed green credentials. (7)

At local level, too, Tory Councillors have been in the vanguard of lobbying to build new runways and airports.

## 4 Tory opposition to EU green schemes

In Europe, a study showed that Tory MEPs had the worst environmental record of any party.

Green Party	85,0%	SDLP	40,0%
Plaid Cymru	85,0%	Conserv&Union	10,6%
LDP	77,3%	DUP	10,0%
SNP	70,0%	UUP	10,0%
Labour	0,2%	UKIP	00,0%

Calculation: (all eco-friendly votes / total amount of possible votes) x 100.(8)

A leading anti-EPP (European Peoples Party) Conservative voice is Roger Helmer, who dismisses global warming as “media hype”. Martin Callanan MEP says his ambition is to “have a free trade area and scrap the rest of it”. This means throwing EU social and environmental standards out of the window.

### Last term: 1999-2004

In a study by FOE/Greenpeace/CAN Europe/T&E and other NGOs, 11 of the 12 worst (in term of the environment) voting MEPS were UK Conservatives (the study included all MEPs from the EU-15)

Mainly thanks to the Conservatives, the UK was at the bottom of the EU-15 league table for “eco-friendly” votes cast. (9)

UK political parties were ranked for environmental improvement- Greens were in 1st place (100% eco-friendly voting), Lib Dems 2nd, Labour 3rd, DUP 4th and Conservatives 5th (13% eco-friendly voting).(10)

### Current term: 2004-2009

7 of the 11 Conservatives mentioned above as the least eco-friendly voting MEPs in the whole EP are still in office!

## Key votes on the EU REACH Directive (Nov 2005)

During the debate on this key directive on chemicals, UK Conservatives voted against the following (nb- any who did not vote against did not vote at all):

- (am357+19) Requiring producers and importers to be responsible for substances released from articles they import/produce- including obtaining authorisation if required
- (am232) Mandatory substitution of substances where safer alternatives exist
- (am364) Duty of care on manufacturers, importers and downstream users (to make every effort to prevent, limit or remedy adverse effects on human health or the environment)
- (am365-366) Making more information on substances contained within an article available to consumers (and workers)

Also in the key votes on REACH, UK Conservatives voted in favour of the following (nb any not voting in favour did not vote at all)

- (367-413) Nassauer-Sacconi compromise on registration
- with the result that for only around 10% of substances produced in quantities of 1-10mt full minimum data must be provided (90% require only the 'available' minimum data - so if you don't have any 'available' you don't need to provide any)
- massive loopholes in key tests for middle and higher volume chemicals
- significant advantages gained for big manufacturers, making things harder for small and medium size enterprises
- saving costs for industry at the expense of the quality of the data, at expense of the environment and at the expense of animals
- general public can be used as guinea pig for research and development of chemicals

(11)

## Car taxes

UK conservatives voted against Green amendments which sought to delete the abolishment of registration taxes, and amendments strengthening the link to environmental performance, as well as an amendment requiring Member States to change the tax regime to favour fuel efficient vehicles. (12)

## 5 Tory wishes to axe environmental regulations as “red tape”

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George Osborne, Shadow Chancellor, stated that:

The Chancellor should listen to the Prime Minister’s former Chief Economic Adviser. He says: “Britain’s economic arteries are slowly being furred up by a higher and more complicated tax system, excessive regulation and endless micro-management. (13)

The Tories have consistently called for a reduction in EU influence and bureaucracy, saying it stifles business. ‘Regulation is stifling potential and enterprise across our nation at a time when the world beyond is becoming more competitive.’

But this is where 60 per cent of our legislation comes from and is a body that has proved itself to be consistently more radical on the environmental front than individual member states. The Greens want to see the EU reformed and made more streamlined, but we don’t want to take away its teeth in favour of big business profits.

Governments must work to achieve sustainable development. This means integrating three things: environmental, social and economic priorities. Unlike the Tories, Greens place people and planet before profit.

We should not promote free trade for the gain of private interests, over and above our health and the environment. It is fatally flawed approach and moves the world in the wrong direction - away from peace, security and sustainability.

## 6 Tory opposition to congestion charging

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Congestion Charging is one of the most successful policy measures introduced in the UK in terms of reducing carbon emissions. Yet Tories have opposed this in Edinburgh and London: Cameron himself has admitted that Britain has the most congested roads in Europe. (23)

But Tories have consistently opposed congestion charging in London and elsewhere. Instead, back to True Blue form, they prefer to characterise the charge as a war on motorists.

Conservative MEP Philip Bradbourn, Conservative Spokesman on Transport, said:

“Congestion charging schemes on the whole either fail to reduce traffic flows significantly, affect local businesses, or both simultaneously, as we have seen in London. The only reason Labour seeks to introduce these measures is to raise more cash from already hard-pressed motorists.” (24)

This week, Green London Assembly Member Darren Johnson welcomed a reduction of 13% in the amount of traffic in the Western extension of the Congestion Charge area.

## 7 Tory support for incineration of waste

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This month, the Tory-dominated East Sussex County Council voted by a massive majority in favour of building a new waste incinerator at Newhaven in the face of massive opposition.

AT EU level, too, Tories have seen incineration as a 'good thing'.

Caroline Jackson MEP, a member of the Parliament's Environment committee and the Conservative Party's Environment Spokesman in the EU has said:

Britain's national politicians... have allowed Green fundamentalists to demonise incineration and spread misinformation about it. (14)

The Tories also support the idea that "energy from waste" plants which satisfy certain energy efficiency criteria should be able to qualify as waste recovery plants rather than as disposal plants. This is in effect an attempt to re-brand incineration as a means of recovery rather than waste disposal - which could create the impression that burning our rubbish is environmentally-friendly, which it clearly is not.

Incineration is a dirty fix in an attempt solve our waste problems. Incinerators are incredibly wasteful, usually dangerously polluting, and create a toxic final product for landfill. Even with the most modern technology available it's impossible to produce it without emitting dangerous pollutants such as dioxins. But the Tories are concerned with re-packaging this concept, in much the same way they are trying to repackage themselves:

Ms Jackson said of labeling incineration centres as waste recovery plants:

This gives them certain advantages from the point of view of public utility and acceptability (15)

Greens have consistently opposed incineration, preferring instead that we focus on reducing the amount of waste we create, re-use and recycle what we can, rather than going down the dirty and dangerous route of incineration, no matter how 'spun' it is.

## 8 Tory personal taxation: creating ‘super consumers’

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Reductions in personal taxation has always been the Tories favoured means of growing the economy through consumer driven growth. By pushing for tax cuts that benefit the well off, Tories would risk increasing unnecessary consumer-driven carbon emissions by placing more spending power in the hands of “super consumers” who least need it.

Shadow Chancellor George Osborne sounds no different to his predecessors:

I believe lower and simpler taxes encourage aspiration and opportunity, and help people take more responsibility for their own lives. That is why I want to share the proceeds of growth between spending on public services and lower taxes. So I will give serious consideration to the proposals to reduce and simplify personal and capital taxes. (16)

In welcoming the Tory Tax Commission’s report above, Osborne expressed interest in ideas such as:

Reducing personal taxation. The personal allowance should be increased to £7,185 and the 10 per cent rate should be abolished.

This policy would benefit high earners, not just low earners. Without a shift to higher top rates to compensate, this would in fact be a tax cut for super consumers who do not need such a cut.

The Tory Tax Commission’s report also states:

A short-term capital gains tax which tapers to zero over ten years should replace the current complex system of taper relief and indexation. Inheritance tax should be abolished and replaced with a short-term capital gains tax on death (the family home would remain exempt from capital gains tax.) Stamp duty on UK shares should be abolished. (17)

These tax cuts would benefit the wealthy alone. By introducing tax cuts on share sales, and removing much of inheritance tax, Tories would be increasing the power of the very rich to super-consume, fuelling unsustainable growth in luxury, carbon-intensive activities.

## 9 Business taxation: low taxes for the most polluting multinational businesses

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Tory analysis is based on providing a low tax regime for business to invest from abroad in Britain. In other words, the most polluting industries, like oil companies. Shadow Chancellor George Osborne has made a succession of statements of support for big multinational businesses.

### **George Osborne wants to reduce taxes on North Sea oil companies**

Osborne argues that taxation should be reduced from its current levels. Although he argues this is to encourage investment, British oil companies are in fact making record profits.(18)

### **George Osborne opposes Air Passenger Duty**

Tories claim “Air Passenger Duty increase isn’t legal”. This miniscule tax is the only labour measure to tackle aviation growth - but the Tories oppose it. (19)

### **Osborne argues for lower business rates for all companies**

Mr Osborne promised to embark on a major simplification of business taxes, designed to pay for a significant reduction in business tax rates. (20)

Business rates, if reduced by the Tories, will most benefit larger companies, who import and export more, require more transportation and emit more carbon. The Tories under Osborne have a clear stated aim of benefiting globalised industry - the most polluting companies that are driving international trade growth and massive increases in shipping and aviation carbon emissions.

### **George Osborne: Lower taxes can help British businesses take on the world**

The United States, as usual, is already ahead of the game and two years ago cut taxes on dividends and business investment. Ireland long ago cut its corporate tax and reaped the benefits in foreign investment and increased revenues.

Eastern European flat-tax regimes have become yet another incentive on the rest of us to try to reduce and to simplify greatly our corporate taxes.

The focus of our attention should be on finding ways to lower taxes on employers and wealth creation. (21)

Welcoming the tax Commission’s report, Osborne expressed interest in flatter taxes, such as:

Reducing business taxation. The main rate of corporation tax should be reduced to 25 per cent. Over time, there should be one rate of corporation tax of 20 per cent. (17)

Such a tax would disproportionately benefit larger, multinational corporations, who in truth can afford such rates very easily, at the expense of smaller, local businesses.

# 10 Trident replacement: a missed opportunity to tackle the greatest global security threat

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Blair is 'increasingly likely' to need Tory votes to secure support for Trident renewal. Cameron has pledged his full support:

Mr Cameron said the case for maintaining and updating Britain's nuclear deterrent was "very powerful". He said the Prime Minister could ignore Labour rebels because he could count on the Tories "full support". (22)

But if we can afford to spend £76 billion on making our lives more secure, is replacing Trident the best way of doing it?

The reality is that the answer is clearly no. Trident replacement would not only be illegal and hypocritical, it would make the world a more, not less, dangerous place: from accidents, and from the mounting risks of proliferation. Even in military terms, there is a growing consensus that nuclear weapons serve no strategic purpose any more.

The far greater threat to our security is climate change. The recent Stern report asks us to spend serious cash now to try to prevent its worst impacts. The government currently allocates less than £1bn a year to directly tackle climate change, despite saying it is the most urgent challenge in the world.

Though little work has been done on exactly how much would need to be spent to achieve the levels of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> that are considered relatively "safe", analysts have observed that the cash saved if the Government were to scrap Trident would probably be about right. Many scientists believe that £76 billion could almost guarantee emission reductions from 150m tonnes of carbon a year today to around 60m tonnes by 2030. Scottish research group Wade, for example, has calculated that £69 billion invested in decentralized energy and microgeneration would be enough to supply 70 per cent of Britain's energy needs – and cut emissions by as much as 60 per cent. The British Wind Energy Association has argued that £10-20 billion invested in wind farms could cut emissions by as much as 50 per cent.

If the Government's likely decision to replace Trident is really based on a genuine desire to improve global security, it's wrongheaded rather than evil: but it would still be a poor decision that is bound to fail – and, at best, represents a missed opportunity to save millions of lives.

The reality is that replacing Trident would cost the taxpayer dear and make the world a more dangerous place in which to live. If the Tories were really interested in making Britain – and the world – safer, they should ask itself whether its political will, and taxpayer resources, could be better spent on tackling the greatest threat to global security we face.

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Green Party Press Office

020 7561 0282 [press@greenparty.org.uk](mailto:press@greenparty.org.uk)

<http://www.greenparty.org.uk>

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