

Truss can't take on nature and win

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This is on the front page of the Sunday Times:

Eco flashpoint pits Trust v Truss

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The boss of the National Trust has threatened to mobilise her 5.7 million members in a mass campaign to defend the environment.

Hilary McGrady, who has been director-general of the charity since 2018, accused Liz Truss of "demonising" conservationists and said her members were "outraged and worried" about the threat posed by the new government's policies.

The lifting of the fracking moratorium, proposed easing of planning rules in "investment zones", review of hundreds of environ-

mental regulations inherited from the EU and backtracking on farming reforms were all of concern, McGrady said.

In a radical move, by what is usually seen as an apolitical organisation, the National Trust has set out seven "red lines" the government "must not cross" in its pursuit of growth.

"We are facing one of the biggest threats to nature in my lifetime," said McGrady, 56. "It potentially means that we will be turning some of our most precious green spaces grey."

The row demonstrates the challenge that Truss faces in getting her growth agenda out of the blocks. A

coalition of charities – few of them known for regularly taking on the government, and with many Conservative voters among their members – has mobilised in recent days to defend what it perceives to be "an attack on nature".

The RSPB, Woodland Trust, Wildlife Trusts and CPRE have

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Not long ago the fight at the National Trust was over whether it was right for it to point out that some of the properties it owned were built with the proceeds of slavery. "Wokeness" was the big concern of the right-wing dogmatists who fought it on that issue.

In the circumstances, the willingness of the Trust (of which I am not a member) to take on the government might have seemed low. In that case, I am delighted to see it joining with the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the Wetlands and Wildfowl Trust (of all of which I am a member) and others in tackling the gross irresponsibility of the government in promoting policies that treat the natural world as an expendable commodity to be consumed and then discarded in the course of fuelling unnecessary excess consumption of goods that serve little need and only meet artificially manufactured wants.

Truss is already on the back foot. Her so-called 'growth coalition' is very obviously tiny, as it takes a person of very little intelligence to think that growth matters more than all else in life. Thankfully a great deal has been done to demonstrate to most people that this is not the case. But now she has the bastion of small c conservatism lined up

against her.

I believe the time to be rid of neoliberalism has arrived. I very much doubt that most of the members of the National Trust would express their opinion in that way. What I do think is that they will not tolerate abuse of the natural world and all that is good in it on which we depend in so many ways in pursuit of the greed and exploitation of a few. And when it comes down to it, that is a rejection of neoliberalism.

It is going to be an interesting fight, and one from which it seems very likely that there will be only one winner.