

COP, Look, Listen

Your daily review of information attacks and anti-climate trends on the (dis)information highway

Vol. 1 (25-31 October)

Headlines.



An overview of top opposition content across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, YouTube, Telegram and mainstream media – includes active disinformation, malign influence campaigns and broader adversarial messaging around climate, which may require an immediate response from the sector.

Climate sceptics and broader ‘culture wars’ pundits such as Michael Shellenberger, Peter Sweden, Jordan Peterson and Paul Joseph Watson are successfully spreading disinformation on social media with high individual post engagement.

In Focus.



A deeper look at anti-climate actors or phenomena impacting the public debate, who reveal something important about the disinformation playbook.

CAR26, a new front group created by a well-connected PR firm, are trying to instigate a UK referendum on Net Zero and have managed to land headlines across mainstream media based on one survey of 1,600 adults.

On Our Radar.



Emerging trends that have not yet reached a critical mass, but may prove a bellwether for anti-climate campaigns and messaging.

Arguments intended to discredit or undermine net zero targets are prevalent online, largely relying on polarising language around energy sovereignty, economic dominance, traditional livelihoods and government overreach.

The intel in this bulletin was generated using Climate Dashboards developed over the past year by ISD and CASM Technology - a bespoke system pulling data from over 3000 actors across climate denial, political, media, industry, influencer and conspiracy ecosystems online, as well as over 250 traditional media outlets worldwide.

The system also collects millions of posts across platforms to capture content broadly related to COP26, as well as specific discussions around policy areas such as Article 6, Loss and Damage, Climate Finance and Cost of Living.



Headlines

Pundits Ascending

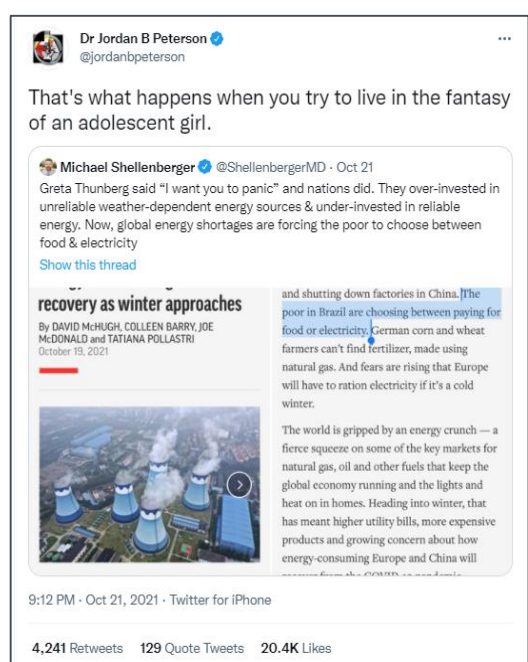
By far the most prominent anti-climate content stems from a handful of 'rationalist' climate delayers and right-wing pundits, many with verified accounts on social media. Some of these key players were previously involved in the green movement and have cultivated an image of academic sobriety or fiscal pragmatism, distancing them from so-called 'climate cranks'. This gives them significant appeal online and the potential to galvanise a far broader audience, as well as launder the more extreme positions of bodies like the Heartland Institute into mainstream 'polite' debate.

Our Verdict: At present, these are the figures to worry about. Beyond attacking specific articles of negotiation, they are setting the 'mood music' for COP26 and successfully planting doubt around proposed agendas. We have not detected signals of coordinated inauthenticity, but the organic reach of these accounts is extensive and crosses multiple groups (e.g. political conservatives, libertarians, 'free market' think tanks and economists, conspiracy theorists, extreme right-wing groups and conspiracy movements).

1. JORDAN PETERSON



A relatively unexpected player in this space, YouTube celebrity intellectual Peterson has started amplifying the voices and views of key climate delayers (e.g. quote retweets of [Bjorn Lomborg](#) and [Michael Shellenberger](#)). He has also hosted YouTube segments with both [Lomborg](#) (600k+ views since April) and [Shellenberger](#) (470,000 views in 2 weeks).



Main Narratives:

- The climate emergency is over-exaggerated (examples [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#) – highest post engagement ~1.7k likes, see left).
- The green transition will prove too costly, especially for the Global South. This includes attacks on Biden's climate plan and activists such as Greta Thunberg (examples [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#) – highest post engagement 20.4k likes and over 4k retweets, see left)

Most Active On: Twitter (2m followers) and YouTube (4.19m subscribers). His climate outputs on Facebook and Instagram have, thus far, tended to be promos for articles and commentary elsewhere. Combined, Peterson boasts an organic audience of around 10m.

2. MICHAEL SHELLENBERGER



A long-standing figure in the climate delayer space, regularly cited as an 'expert witness' for mainstream media.

Main Narratives:

- Energy shortages are due to over-reliance on renewable energies and under-investment in nuclear or gas.
- Solar and wind are unreliable, weather-dependent sources - to avoid blackouts the electricity grid must centre nuclear power.

Most Active On: Twitter (136.7k followers). His most popular tweet was shared over 20k times and his top 5 posts in the past fortnight were all climate-related. He has posted over 400 times (original content) in the past 14 days, and on 27 October generated more than 5k likes / 1.3k shares in a single hour. On Instagram (10.7k followers) his recent climate posts have received between 700 and 1800 likes each. On Facebook (5.8k followers), [his top post](#) has more than 600 likes. Shellenberger was also mentioned in public Facebook groups including "[Conservatives for Canada, 2021](#)" (3.5k members) and [Renewable vs. Nuclear DEBATE](#) (2.7k members), and the page "[The Future is Nuclear](#)" (over 32k followers).



3. PETER SWEDEN

According to his website, Peter Peter Imanuelsen (aka [Peter Sweden](#)) is a "classical right-winger that believes in traditionalism, faith and nationalism". He has [previously tweeted Holocaust denial](#) and pushed conspiracies like the New World Order. More recently he has moved into the climate space, espousing both active denial and delayer stances. He boasts over 230k Twitter followers, and his most viral post of late (see below) gained over 34k likes and 8k+ retweets.

Main Narratives:



- The climate agenda is 'green tyranny' and will be used to monitor every aspect of citizens' lives (example [1](#)).
- Climate change is a front for global communism, which he links to anti-semitic conspiracies like The Great Reset (examples [1](#) and [2](#)).
- Climate policies have caused an energy crisis globally, thanks to unreliable wind power and CO₂ quotas (example [1](#)).

(DIS)HONOURABLE MENTIONS



Greenpeace **“Co-Founder”** Patrick Moore, who now oversees the [CO₂ Coalition](#) and describes himself as a ‘sensible environmentalist’, is achieving continually high engagement on Twitter. This includes [one post with nearly 45k likes and 16k retweets](#), sharing a Sky News Australia segment in which the host condemns youth climate activists as “selfish, badly educated virtue-signalling little turds”. His most popular posts tend to push back against ‘woke media’ who dismiss those sceptical of the climate crisis/emergency as ‘eco-traitors’.



‘Shock jock’ and conspiracy theorist Glenn Beck (3.1m followers) posted a video to Facebook entitled [“How Biden’s Climate Agenda will ENRICH the Elite & BANKRUPT you”](#) (50k views, 2.2k likes). Note the reference to “Build Back Bankrupt”, vocabulary also used by Republicans in the Congressional hearings on Big Oil.



Right-wing YouTuber, Alex Jones associate and climate denier Paul Joseph Watson continues to gain traction on Twitter, where his account boasts 1.1m followers. High-velocity posts have reached upwards of 40k likes and 12k retweets (see left), but his content regularly sees engagement in the thousands – in recent days he has [doubled down](#) on the ‘private jet hypocrisy’ argument, and often links climate action to conspiracies around Covid-19.



On Our Radar



PUSHBACK ON NET ZERO

Gaining traction across all monitored geographies, although the exact framing may vary. Engagement has not yet crossed the threshold for major concern, but we should anticipate a rise in the following lines of attack and develop strong counter-messaging:

1. **A Win for China:** prevalent in the response to Australian PM Scott Morrison's Net Zero Strategy, but also [liberally cited in the US hearings](#) and common across climate-sceptic coverage. Not to be confused with 'absolutionism' (the notion that climate action is futile unless China/[India](#) steps up) - this centres more on the loss of key industries to the East if major economies abandon fossil fuel production. The claim is that green agendas are a form of "self-inflicted harm", causing the downfall of [e.g. the US's] economic dominance and solidifying China as an unmatched trade and geopolitical power – one particular high-engagement post (see left) already boasts 6,301 likes and 1,842 retweets. This argument is also used in relation to other 'unjust regimes' like Russia or Saudi Arabia, including [this post](#) from Canadian politician Jason Kenny.



2. **Utopian Tech:** a key argument surrounding Australia's planned strategy for net zero, and a popular tactic used by 'rationalist' commentators in the think tank/pseudo-scientific space. Different variations exist, but the central premise is that national approaches do not need to rely on net zero and/or phase out of fossil fuel technology, but instead can base their targets on (as-yet-hypothetical) technologies such as carbon capture and storage (CCS).



WARNING Some credible scientific content, like this [Instagram post](#) from National Geographic with over 145k likes (see left), can easily be conflated with arguments intended to discredit or weaken net zero targets – expect sceptics to weaponise outputs from 'neutral' or pro-climate actors to legitimise their position and defend continued use of fossil fuels.

BREITBART

FIRE KEASTONE PIPELINE WORKER: MY CRISIS IS NOT CLIMATE BUT PUTTING FOOD ON THE TABLE

200 EMAIL PAIRLER TWEET

Video Source: Oversight Committee / YouTube



Source: Oversight Committee / YouTube

by PENNY STARR | 28 Oct 2021 | 130

LISTEN TO STORY 3:41

Democrats on the House Oversight and Reform Committee and its subcommittee on the environment held a hearing on Thursday to grill the CEOs of top U.S. fossil fuel companies, calling it a historic event, to call out the businesses for lying to the American people about the existential threat of climate change.

But the one Republican witness on the panel perhaps best summed up what is at stake when it comes to the left's efforts to make climate change more important than American workers and the nation's economy.

3. Loss of Livelihoods: impossible to miss in the US Congressional hearings on Big Oil, but also found among Australian and UK pundits – pushes the idea that targets to phase out fossil fuel industries are elitist and will strip average people of jobs. Pauline Hanson from Australia's far-right One Nation Party has achieved relatively high engagement (5.7k likes, 1.4k shares) with [a Facebook post](#) criticising PM Morrison for 'sacrificing the jobs and livelihoods of farmers, miners and manufactures just win a few extra green city votes', while Queensland Senator Matthew Canavan [has garnered 4.5k likes and 374 shares](#) for another Facebook post that links net zero to government tyranny, higher taxes and red tape and promises to 'keep up the fight for Australian workers'. Both Hansen and Canavan post frequently on this issue and achieve similar levels of engagement each time.

4. Consumer Hardship: evident in [this piece](#) from David Holt in the Koch-affiliated outlet Real Clear Energy, which cites the 'economic agony' voters will feel at the gas pump or supermarket if current plans are enacted. Holt is acting President of the US [Consumer Energy Alliance](#), a front group for the energy industry the opposes efforts to regulate carbon standards. This is **often coupled with a 'climate champion' narrative** that claims x country (e.g. US, UK) is already a world leader in mitigation/adaptation or developing clean alternatives to carbon, and as such should not punish itself with overly-hasty phase out targets – as Holt calls it, 'economic and environmental self-sabotage'.

Canada Proud
28 October at 19:06

While it is well known that Trudeau wants to raise his carbon tax to \$170 per tonne, what is less known is that he wants to double tax carbon through new regulations.
Thanks to Trudeau, Canadians will experience the highest gas prices in our nation's history.

With Trudeau's two carbon taxes, how much will you be paying for a litre of gas?

Winnipeg:	\$1.85
Vancouver:	\$1.91
Toronto:	\$1.91
Halifax:	\$2.01
St. John's:	\$2.10

SOURCE: Canadian Taxpayers Federation, October 2021

2.9K 1.6K comments 5K shares

WARNING This narrative is gaining momentum due to fuel shortages/gas crises in various countries worldwide, including the UK, and will likely be used to launder delayism into the mainstream during COP.



Under the Microscope... CAR26

In Brief

Do not be fooled by CAR26 or any affiliated figures, even to challenge their stance – engaging will provide more oxygen to a group that can and should be irrelevant in the public debate around COP26, UK government agendas and the broader politics of climate action.

This is a prime example of where organisations or individuals with no real credentials are given a platform in the media and, in doing so, legitimise fringe positions. In just a few weeks their research has been cited across high-profile outlets and reached a broad UK audience, despite the fact that CAR26 are a brand new body and the study in question contained a paltry sample size with no clear methodology. There will be similar PR plays throughout the summit and beyond, often with links back to ‘hub’ entities like GWPF (now Net Zero Watch) - those affiliations should be probed before giving any would-be pundit airtime. To note: CAR26 have also shared Covid-19 denial content, which is beyond the pale even for many climate sceptics.

Who are CAR26?

- CAR26.ORG LTD was [registered](#) with Companies House on the 13 Sept 2021, and the sole director and named shareholder is Lois Perry.
- The associated website, car26.org, only went live on 26 October 2021, but its affiliated Twitter account “Ambassador Seeotu” has been active since a month prior.
- The CAR26 website is “powered by BLUE SKY” and links to a marketing consultancy run by Rebecca Ryan – Ryan is the [sole director](#) of Blue Sky Strategy and another entity called Defund the BBC Ltd. She was [also the founder of StandUp4Brexit](#), a pressure group opposed to any deal with the European Union. Defund the BBC lists infamous climate-sceptic Darren Grimes as a ‘climate champion’ on its website.

Who is Lois Perry?

- Perry’s LinkedIn page states she worked as an Assistant at *The Telegraph* “in the early noughties” and that she **co-founded 6 Hillgrove PR** in 2004. The business was run by her former husband Richard Hillgrove who was [investigated and convicted](#) of **tax fraud** in 2014, with expensive gifts brandished by Perry playing [a key role in the investigation](#).
- Hillgrove continues to court publicity, most recently [inserting himself into news coverage](#) around the murder of MP David Amess. While he and Perry are no longer married, they do appear to be closely collaborating, with [Hillgrove’s Vimeo account](#) hosting showreels of her TV appearances dating from just last year.
- In 2021 Perry became the **representative of the ‘free speech’ Reclaim Party** for South East England, and has called for the expansion of police stop and search powers.

For further coverage on CAR26 and its affiliated network, we recommend these pieces in [DeSmog](#) and [Open Democracy](#).

What Is Their Agenda?

- The website clearly states CAR26 will oppose efforts to mitigate climate change, verging on **full-fledged denialism**. Their splash page argues that CO₂ is “essential to all life and its welcome growth has greened our planet” and that **leaders should see the “positives” of “gentle warming”**.
- Other claims include that:
 - **The last decade has seen “paused warming”**, allowing us to “safely freeze all carbon-related measures while they are reviewed by calm...scientists”;
 - The **BBC has manipulated the public debate** around climate;
 - Minors participating in movements like **Fridays for Future** are ‘**hysterical**’ and brainwashed in a manner that is ‘borderline child abuse’;
 - “free speech and debate are being replaced by a **woke humourless consensus controlled by a remote elite** abetted by a cowed media”.

Why Does It Matter?

Despite existing for barely a month, **CAR26 have managed to achieve incredible coverage for their work and policy positions**, largely based on a poll of only 1,648 people they commissioned via YouGov. A full timeline of how and where their agenda has penetrated public debate is detailed below.

In the process they have been granted legitimacy across mainstream British outlets and laundered some extreme anti-climate stances into ‘polite society’, **creating the false impression that a referendum on net zero is both a key wedge issue** and will undermine Boris’ position at COP26.

In addition,

- CAR26 has **announced the theme of a campaign due to launch in 2022** - “Smarter Green, Brighter Futures” - which will actively promote CO₂.
- They are **hosting a “challenge” activity for COP26, encouraging supporters to photobomb members of the UK Cabinet** while holding a sunflower plush toy. This represents their mascot “Ambassador Seeotu” and supposedly refers to the fact plants need CO₂ to respire. (Side note: the actual toy used on their website is merchandise from a computer game called *Plants vs Zombies*, with an accompanying stock image). Participants are promised a fairly meagre incentive to participate, in the form of vouchers worth £26 for buying CAR26 products.
- CAR26 also state they will be **using the “Seeotu” mascot during “flashmobs”** - it is unclear whether these are planned for Glasgow itself or elsewhere in the country, and whether they will find actual activists to participate or need to hire actors, given that they are a brand new organization without an existing membership
- CAR26 and their net zero agenda have also appeared on:
 - A Facebook group called ‘[Priti Patel MP – UK Supporters Group](#)’ (2.3k members)
 - A far-right Facebook page called ‘[UK Politics uncovered](#)’ (over 74k followers – the post has 344 likes and 47 shares, which appears relatively high for the page)

CAR26: A Timeline

October 20-22

- **Allister Heath pens an [op-ed in The Telegraph](#)** referring to net zero as the ‘groupthink du jour’. His piece raises the spectre of ‘extreme restrictions, rationing on homes...or even mini eco-lockdowns’, alluding to a [growing conspiracy](#) in the anti-climate space, and ultimately calls for a referendum on net zero for the UK public.
- **Net Zero Watch** (GWPF’s newly-rebranded entity) [retweets the article](#) within 2 hours of publication, albeit with minimal traction (171 likes). Their account went on to tweet 7 further times on this specific issue – one [on October 26](#) gained 860 likes and nearly 350 retweets.
- **Watts Up With That** – a central hub of climate denial - [reposts Heath’s article](#) in full with a coda endorsing his stance.

October 25

- **Iain Duncan-Smith, former leader of the UK Conservative Party, pens an [op-ed in The Telegraph](#)** calling the commitment to net zero ‘quasi-religious’. The piece concludes with a warning that net zero policies will ‘push power to the East, into the hands of Beijing’, an argument which was also prevalent among US Republicans in the Big Oil Congressional hearings on Thursday.
- **CAR26 emerge on the scene**, posting [their first tweet](#) from the ‘Ambassador Seeotu account’, linked to the above *Telegraph* article, and announcing the launch of their site the following day.

October 26

- **Deputy Political Editor of *The Telegraph*, Lucy Fisher, [reports](#)** that ‘the British public are in favour of a referendum’ on net zero, citing a poll of 1,648 adults commissioned by Car26.org via YouGov and quoting Lois Perry fearmongering about ‘carbon poverty’. MP Steve Baker from the Net Zero Security Group (another long-standing affiliate of GWPF) is also quoted warning that the policy could make people ‘poorer and colder’.
- **GB News [host a panel discussion](#)** on whether the UK needs a net zero referendum, featuring Lois Perry from CAR26, Conservative MP Michael Fabricant and Joseph Lewis from the Institute of Environmental Sciences.

October 27

- [Politics.co.uk](#) and [The Week](#) both cover the CAR26 poll, the former with a headline claiming “42% of British adults want a referendum on net zero”.
- Nigel Farage [appears on GB News](#) to condemn ‘the rush to net zero’, citing the Car26 poll, followed by a [later, equally critical segment](#) with MP Philip Davies, [another](#) with filmmaker Ceri Dingle and author James Bloodworth and a [fourth segment](#) in which GWPF’s Deputy Director, Andrew Montford argues net zero is a ‘constitutional issue’.
- Radio Presenter Maajid Nawaz [endorses the campaign](#) for a net zero referendum on Twitter, tying it to an “absolutionist” narrative around China which we have seen gaining traction across all monitored geographies.
- Official petition created on [parliament.uk](#) calling for a referendum (currently at 4,355 of the 10,000 signatures needed to warrant an official response).

October 28-31

- Breitbart [jump on the bandwagon](#), citing the CAR26 poll as evidence that ‘a plurality of Britons want a public referendum on Boris Johnson’s plans’ and highlighting particular support amongst ‘Brexiters, blue-collar workers, and English Northerners’.
- Spiked writer Brendan O’Neill [appears on talkRADIO](#) (1,271 likes, 400+ retweets) with presenter Julia Hartley-Brewer to endorse a referendum, again citing the CAR26 poll and headline stats. The talk RADIO account has since posted multiple times on the issue ([1](#), [2](#)), including a segment with the Reform UK leader, Richard Tice.
- ConservativeHome, a site founded in 2005 to ‘champion the interests of grassroots Tory members’ [posts an article](#) discussing the likelihood of a net zero referendum, once again with reference to the CAR26 poll. The piece concludes that ‘it’s unlikely the Government would risk public consultation on the matter’ but that they should ‘check in with the public more’.
- Twitter poll by Martin Daubney, Deputy Leader of the Reclaim Party (94k+ followers) asking his followers whether they would [‘back or sack’ net zero targets](#). 3,347 votes with over 90% saying they would ‘sack’.
- The Sun newspaper [endorses](#) a net zero referendum, leaning heavily on the ‘absolutionist’ and elitism narratives and repeating claims of a ‘democratic deficit’ on the issue. Refers to related targets as a ‘unilateral act of self-harm’ and cites ‘a growing disconnect between ordinary working men and women and eco-preening politicians’.

For further details on the COP26 War Room or any of the insight contained in this briefing, please contact Jennie King jk@isdglobal.org

