

Oil in the wheels of justice?

Abstract: *Fossil fuel corporations can sue governments that take action on climate breakdown in secret courts potentially costing taxpayers billions of pounds. Woodhouse Investment Pte, an investment firm based in Singapore, is now suing the British government through the investor state dispute settlement process because of the high court ruling which blocked a new coal mine at Whitehaven in Cumbria over potential damage to the environment, including carbon emissions. Indeed, any international company can use the shadowy tribunal system to prevent regulation, or force elected governments to pay for hypothetical lost profits. This Kafkaesque nightmare was constructed through a series of trade agreements made behind closed doors, with no democratic scrutiny. We find ourselves in a place where ordinary citizens, and their elected governments, are fined if they prevent coal, oil and gas companies from fuelling future cataclysmic climate breakdown. But the hard reality is that the major fossil fuel majors have always had significantly more power over the governments who are supposed to protect their populations. Adam Ramsay, the veteran investigative journalist and editor of the Abolish Westminster newsletter, attempts to draw back the curtain. This is the first in his series of essays on big oil and the British state, to be published in the Ecologist and Abolish Westminster over the coming months.*

Published:	1 January 2026	Editor:	Brendan Montague
Author:	Adam Ramsay	Production:	Nicole Channon
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Affiliations:	Adam is a director of Make Hope Possible, and a member of the Green Party		
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Much of the local community in Cumbria was horrified when Michael Gove, the then secretary of state for communities, approved the first new coal mine in Britain for three decades. They protested, and they organised, and, along with Friends of the Earth, they took their objections all the way to the high court. There, they argued that the mine was incompatible with the country's climate targets. And they won. The mine was stopped. But then, this summer, the investors in the mine - a Singapore registered company, owned by a company registered in the Cayman Islands - sued the government over the decision. They are demanding compensation through a secretive tribunal system, based on a clause in a 1975 investment treaty between the UK and Singapore. And they are

being represented by the lawyer Geoffrey Cox, a sitting Tory MP and former British attorney general. For Britain, being sued under a clause in an investment treaty because of our climate commitments is a new experience. But internationally, it's increasingly common.

And often, in other countries, the treaties being used to wage war on carbon reduction efforts are those signed with the government. The place pushing these treaties is on the corner of The Mall and Whitehall in central London - in a vast building with red brick walls, white stone detailing and green copper domes. The Old Admiralty, built in the Queen Anne style, was completed in 1905, and for years, it was just that: the home of the Admiralty - arguably the HQ of the British empire. A statue of James Cook stands outside with a

tricorn hat and a telescope, marking this fact. Now, it houses the Department of Business and Trade, meaning that - in a sense, it is once again the home of a crucial remnant of British imperialism.

Over the coming months, I'm going to write a series of essays looking at the relationships between the fossil fuel industry and the British state. And this building is perhaps the best place to start. Because while the Royal Navy once ruled the waves, one of its main legacies today lies in a global web of trade deals that was largely knitted by Britain in order to protect its assets in its former colonies as they won independence. Or rather, to protect the assets of corporations that could pretend to have a degree of Britishness. And the most important of those are the oil giants.

The result of these treaties is that Britain's Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and its predecessors are responsible for a surprising portion of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. The tangle that these trade deals have strewn across the planet - and the precedents they created across international law - makes taking the action we need to avert climate disaster much, much harder. And what's worse is that they are continuing to lay these legal nets, which mean that when governments around the world want to reduce emissions, they can be - and often are - sued for billions of pounds, often under treaties pushed by British trade negotiators, who seem to have confused 'the national interest' with 'the interests of Shell and BP'.

To understand why they keep doing this, I've been studying the DBT as an institution. I've sent freedom of information (FOI) requests and dug through databases of meetings held by its ministers and senior officials; I've looked at its history, its governance structure and its place in Britain's archaic constitutional system; and I've spoken to people who've worked there, and MPs and campaigners who have tried - and often struggled - to hold it to account. What I've found is a government department that's more accountable to the big businesses driving the climate crisis than it is to the MPs we elect.

The clauses that form these legal nets ensnaring climate action are often called 'investor state dispute settlements' (ISDSs), though they sometimes travel under other names. They are lines inserted into trade deals between governments, which generally say that, if a company from one country invests in the other, and then that country's government changes its rules or regulations in a way that damages that investment, then the company is entitled to take the government to a private tribunal, outside either government's jurisdiction - often called a 'corporate court'. Often, they can sue not just over the loss of their initial investment, but also over the loss of projected future profits from it. While these clauses apply to all businesses investing abroad, fossil fuel firms use them more than any other industry, says Cleodie Rickard, an expert in ISDSs with the campaign group Global Justice Now. If a company bought rights to an oil field years ago, but a newly elected government in that country wants to stop all the oil from being burned in line with the world's climate treaties - or even just wants to make sure it's extracted cleanly - then the oil company can take the government to a tribunal, using the ISDS clauses of historic trade deals, and demand billions in compensation for lost potential profits. And they do. Often. Often enough, that many countries water down their climate action because they can't afford to be sued, leading the Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz to call ISDSs "legal terrorism".

Because big oil companies have multiple offices, there are often multiple treaties that they could use to protect an investment. Researchers at the think tank E3G calculated in 2024 that there are 2,463 treaties protecting fossil fuel assets. But there is one country's treaties that they choose to use more than any other's: Britain. The

result is, E3G's researchers calculated, that UK trade deals protect potential annual greenhouse gas emissions of 255 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent - more than any other country on earth. The UK's domestic emissions were 371 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent in 2024. So the climate-changing impact of these trade deals, still being designed in that red brick building on Whitehall with its green copper domes, is nearly as much as the emissions rising up from the British landmass.

In total, since 1998, 'UK' investors have claimed over US\$40 billion in ISDS cases. Of this, almost \$19 billion came in fossil-fuel-related cases. Usually, these claims run in one direction: the treaties were designed to protect the assets of British companies in former colonies. Global Justice Now has calculated that 68 per cent of the countries being sued by UK investors are in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Many are countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate breakdown, including Chad, Bolivia, Cameroon and Bangladesh. As Global Justice Now highlights, the amount these countries have been sued for through British ISDS deals dwarfs the international climate finance paid by Britain between 2011 and 2021, supposedly to even out the injustice that climate change is felt most in the poorest countries despite being driven by the richest - which was just under \$10 billion.

For years, Indigenous communities in northern Colombia have struggled against the endless expansion of Latin America's biggest open pit coal mine. The companies that owned it, including the London-listed Anglo-American, wanted to divert a stream that supplied water to 40,000 people so they could dig 35 million tonnes of coal from the river bed. In 2017, with support from groups around the world, the local community won a case in Colombia's constitutional court, suspending the development. But then, the coal companies were able to sue the Colombian government using provisions in the UK-Colombia investment deal, and extract millions in compensation from the Colombian government. Anglo-American sold its 33 per cent stake in the mine in 2022. For many less wealthy governments, the implication is really simple: if they take action on climate change that curbs the profits of the fossil fuel giants, they will be forced under trade deals - most often with Britain - to shell out millions to those companies. Reducing carbon emissions becomes unaffordable.

Not all of these cases trace former colonial lines. In 2020 the Slovenian government responded to a local petition by demanding that the UK energy company Ascent Resources conduct an environmental impact assessment of a proposed fracking project. The company responded by suing them for €120 million in an ISDS case. Ultimately, the Slovenian government backed down, and passed a law allowing fracking. This phenomenon has been getting worse. The year 2025 was record-breaking for ISDS cases filed by oil, gas and mining firms against governments over policies designed to curb emissions.

There are three reasons, Rickard tells me, that Britain is at the centre of this spiderweb of global treaties trapping the world into a fossil-fuelled future. The first is empire. Britain originally developed investment treaties from the 1700s as a way of imposing English property law at gunpoint. Since the 1970s, the British government, English law firms and English legal academics have played a central role in spinning this global web, which protects the assets of Western corporations from governments of - and democracy in - formerly colonised countries. When Britain was in the EU, 'trade' policy was the purview of Brussels, whose deals often included ISDSs. But 'investment' policy could be reserved to national capitals, and Whitehall negotiated dozens of

these treaties, often with almost no scrutiny. Between 1975 and 2010, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) listed 110 UK bilateral investment treaties, about 80 of which are still in force. It's not surprising that Britain is at the centre - because of what takes place in that red brick building between Whitehall and the Mall and also at its many law firms.

The second reason is that the Department for Business and Trade just inserts these clauses "routinely". Joshua Reynolds, the MP for Maidenhead, Liberal Democrat spokesperson on investment and trade, and member of the Business and Trade select committee, adds: "There is nothing to stop us from stopping doing this." The department has what Rickard describes as an "unreconstructed" view of ISDSs. In other countries, these clauses have become less fashionable, she says, for the relatively conservative reason that they amount to an attack on sovereignty - governments of all political stripes don't like being overruled by international tribunals. The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) is, along with the World Bank and UNCTAD's tribunal systems, one of the main places that run ISDS arbitration systems. Alexis Mourre, a former president of the ICC ISDS system, said in 2024 that it had been "defeated" by civil society movements and "lost the battle of public opinion," and, "to a large extent, the battle of legitimacy" internationally.

But Britain, Rickard says, remains an exception. Civil servants, she says, just won't listen to arguments she and other civil society experts make against the system. When I asked a former civil servant who had been relatively senior in the department why this might be, their answer surprised me. "Trade," they said, euphemistically, is "a less intellectually confident part of government" than many others. "It's easier work. Much of it is about sales." On ISDSs, they said, "they may not have thought very deeply about it." Abandoning their previous euphemisms, they added that this takes you "back to the point about being thick". Many people in the department are "clever and excellent", they said. But there are also "big pockets of underwhelm", particularly in the trade team. Some of this is a Brexit legacy: the EU used to deal with Britain's more complex trade negotiations. Now Whitehall has taken back control, but doesn't really know how to do it, meaning it just copies and pastes what was done before. Whether my interviewee's claims are fair, Britain certainly doesn't put much collective thought into trade policy. The third reason is that Britain is probably the least democratic of the world's democracies. Elected MPs have almost no say over our trade deals.

BRITISH UNDEMOCRACY AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Caroline Lucas worked for Oxfam on trade policy around the same time that she was a local councillor with the Green party, and before she was elected to the European Parliament. As an MEP, she sat on the parliamentary trade committee. So when she became an MP in 2010, she retained her deep interest in trade policy. She was, alas, one of the few MPs with any real knowledge of the subject. She told The Ecologist: "UK trade policy remains cloaked in secrecy. Ironically, as a member of the European Parliament's International Trade committee, I had far greater opportunities to scrutinise European trade policy, and to hold decision makers to account, than I ever had as an MP over UK trade policy at Westminster."

The case of the Colombian coal mine was brought under an investment treaty signed in March 1994. Digging through Hansard for the year before the treaty came into force, I can only find one reference to it - a nod to its existence in an aside in the House of Lords that year. I couldn't find any reference to the 1975 deal

with Singapore under which the UK government is being sued for the blocking of the Cumbrian coal mine. The reason for this lack of scrutiny lies in the way the British political system is organised. The British constitution has never been codified, but it does have a structure. Power comes from two sources - parliament, half of which gains its legitimacy through elections; and the so-called "Royal prerogative", which comes from the King - and, in theory, God. The latter is exercised through the ancient body of the King's advisers - the privy council. And, day to day, through its executive committee, the cabinet.

Some things the state does - passing laws and budgets and picking prime ministers - it does through parliament. Other things - like the prime minister appointing other government ministers, waging wars, and signing international treaties - are done under the royal prerogative, in theory under the authority of the prime minister, the cabinet, the privy council, the king and, ultimately, God. Trade policy - because it largely revolves around international treaties - sits in the second category. The power the DBT exercises when it signs trade deals officially comes from the cabinet - via the secretary of state, currently Peter Kyle - and so the king. In reality, it's not Kyle who's negotiating the legalese of these documents. It's civil servants in the Department for International Trade (DIT). These treaties can have significant impacts at home and globally. They can lead to our government being sued for the laws passed by our MPs. Yet MPs don't have any right to oversee or contribute to the development of the government's negotiating objectives. There is no guaranteed vote on any trade agreements - either to set a mandate before negotiations, or on the final agreement. There is not even a right to see texts or otherwise be meaningfully engaged during negotiations. The House of Commons International Trade Committee concluded in 2022: "Parliament has not been 'consulted' before or during Free Trade Agreement negotiations - rather, Parliament has merely been informed of decisions and outcomes after the fact." Similarly, the House of Lords European Union committee has described Parliament as having "no effective veto power to prevent the government from ratifying agreements that it does not feel are in the national interest."

Holding trade policy to account is "almost impossible", Joshua Reynolds told The Ecologist. In theory, he said, "there are two processes - if you have a degree in politics and trade, you might just be able to understand them. They are incredibly complicated and challenging." In practice, even counting those processes, "there is very little ability for parliament to challenge them." He added: "There is no mechanism for a parliamentary debate on [Free Trade Agreements]. There is nothing to say whether a [Free Trade Agreement] has been successful or not." The 2010 Constitutional Reform and Governance Act - passed in the dying days of Gordon Brown's premiership - requires that treaties be laid before parliament for 21 days before being ratified. This is "nowhere near enough time" for committees to properly scrutinise them, says Rickard. "It's not even enough time for them to read these hugely long texts, never mind to consult with civil society, to really deal with them. There is no requirement for MPs to have a debate, or a vote on it. We can get a few MPs to stand up and say 'this is bad'. But the lack of transparency and lack of scrutiny in the UK's trade democracy is very bad."

This isn't normal. In other democracies, parliamentarians get a direct say in the treaties their governments sign - treaties which, after all, are legally binding, and so, in effect, create law in the country. In Denmark, for example, the government needs to get a mandate from the appropriate parliamentary committee at the outset. In the US, the executive has to publish its mandate before negotiations,

and congress is guaranteed a vote on whether to ratify any deals. While the lack of scrutiny in Britain has always been a problem, it has only become worse since Brexit. When Britain was in the EU, it still negotiated its own investment treaties, but at least bigger trade deals went through Brussels, where they faced much more serious democratic scrutiny from MEPs. Now that all of these deals go through the Westminster system, much of that democracy has been stripped away - both because it's constitutionally less democratic, and because MPs are busy focusing on other things, whereas this work is core to MEP business. "Our ability to scrutinise trade deals has been reduced since Brexit," said Joshua Reynolds.

The one place where MPs have a little scope to interrogate trade policy is the Department for Business and Trade select committee - which Reynolds is generally positive about, though he says it doesn't have nearly enough time to do the job fully. Looking at the committee's makeup, it's hard not to see how first past the post stifles British democratic debate. Labour currently has a majority of MPs on the committee, who are joined by two Tories, and two Lib Dems, including Reynolds. While the committee works diligently, and across party lines, to hold the department to account, its ideological diversity doesn't come close to reflecting that of the country. Whereas, say, committees in the proportionally elected Scottish Parliament generally have MSPs from five parties making arguments from radically different ideological positions, Westminster's tend to huddle in a mainstream centre ground in a way that's democratically unhealthy. And in any case, unlike in proper parliaments, Westminster's select committees have no real power. They are, as another MP has said to me, "performative".

WHO ARE CIVIL SERVANTS ACCOUNTABLE TO?

While the civil servants negotiating our trade deals aren't accountable to MPs, they are, in theory at least, accountable to ministers. But, in her dealings with the department, Rickard has found that the handful of ministers appointed to oversee it rarely understand the complexities of things like ISDSs. "Some of the correspondence we got back showed that Jonathan Reynolds just didn't understand the process," she said, referring to the Business Secretary and President of the Board of Trade from Labour's election until September 2025. He seemed, she said, to confuse ISDSs for judicial reviews - an entirely different sort of legal process. This is not surprising: eight different cabinet ministers have had the trade brief in the last decade, often alongside other remits, usually 'business'. This isn't enough time to learn about a complex area that few politicians know much about before getting the brief. And, having just a handful of ministers to oversee such a vast department, with very little parliamentary scrutiny, leaves very little space to develop democratic conversation about how we do trade. It leaves both ministers and civil servants vulnerable to the multiple tricks of the influence industry - because, ultimately - everyone is accountable to someone. And if it's not parliament, and so voters, then special interests will rapidly ensure it's them.

Some of the methods used by lobbyists should raise eyebrows. When Jonathan Reynolds started out as shadow business secretary, before the 2024 election, he regularly pledged to increase the digital service tax - a tax on profits of companies like Facebook and Google - from two per cent to 10 per cent. But then - as I revealed at the time - YouTube, owned by Google, took him and his wife to Glastonbury on luxury tickets. The day after the festival, only three weeks after he gave a speech in favour of raising the tax, The Times newspaper reported that he no longer supported doing so. While there is no

suggestion of wrongdoing, we can see that the giving of freebies is an important part of the industry lobbyists' toolkit for working with politicians. In Labour's first year in power, data published by the government shows that ministers in the Department for Business and Trade had official meetings with Shell or BP fourteen times - more than once a month. This is a level of access that civil society could only dream of. These meetings were more frequent than the business secretary's Question Time in the House of Commons.

Shell, BP and the world's other oil giants own the rights to oil and gas fields across the planet. Scientists are clear that there is enough carbon in these reserves to cause a catastrophic breakdown of the relatively stable climate system which has allowed human civilisation to flourish over the past 5,000 years. But these companies have already taken out loans against those reserves, promising to repay them out of the income they'll make when the oil is drilled and burned. If these reserves are to go untapped - as they must if planetary heating is to remain below 2C - then Shell and BP can't repay these loans, and the companies are already insolvent. When I put this to Shell's head of climate change during the 2015 Paris climate talks, he personally admitted to me that the only way out of this conundrum was to say that a cap of 2C of planetary heating wasn't "a given". Shell's head of climate change had effectively admitted to me that their claims to support the 2C target were a lie. He then begged me not to repeat his admission. At the time, Shell's press office said to me that the comments were "a general chat about the nature of the stranded asset debate, not Shell's response to the issue". Shell and BP are companies that - by their own admission - rely for their existence on the assumption that we are going to smash through the world's agreed climate targets and unleash a degree of climatic chaos that will destroy millions of lives. The response to this predicament from these companies has been to obfuscate, lie and delay - to pretend to be transitioning to a zero carbon economy, while in fact doing nothing of the sort. Shell continues to spin the same lies. Only fools and the British government believe them. BP, meanwhile, abandoned its pretence of having climate commitments last year.

Twenty-eight years after the Kyoto Protocol, Shell and BP continue to explore for new hydrocarbons with which to eviscerate the climatic underpinnings of the ecosystem on which we all depend. Twenty years ago, their senior executives were people who could well not have known about climate science at the start of their careers - though it has in fact been established for longer than that. Today, their senior figures have built their whole careers choosing to drive the world off a cliff in full knowledge of the science. And they have more access to ministers in the Department for Business and Trade than our MPs do. The general lack of actual practical accountability of government departments is so bad that, over the last few decades, governments started to look for other ways to make them accountable.

Each Whitehall department now has a board of directors which sets its strategy and holds it to account. The boards are made up of the ministers, top civil servants, and a group of 'non-executive directors' officially appointed by ministers, in practice usually after some process run by civil servants. The DBT's lead non-executive director is Paul Drechsler, who was the UK president of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) - a vast network that lobbies for the interests of big business, including multiple oil firms. The ICC is one of the bodies that host many Investor State Dispute Settlement tribunals. Drechsler is also a previous UK president of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) - which also represents multiple fossil fuel

giants. He is a non-executive director of the investment house Schroders, which has hundreds of millions of dollars invested in the fossil fuel industry. The department's other non-executive directors include Iain Anderson - founder of the PR firm H/Advisers Cicero and perhaps Britain's most prominent lobbyist for the financial services industry; and the former vice-chair of the endlessly scandal drenched professional services network KPMG, whose oil and gas wing brags that it helps the fossil fuel companies killing off any chance of averting climate disaster to "thrive". The DBT told The Ecologist: "Non-Executive directors provide independent advice on the work of the Department. They do not decide government policy which is the work of Ministers." The spokesperson emphasised that Anderson has stood down from his role at H/Advisers Cicero.

It's not the only committee of big business representatives steering the department. When the secretary of state for Business and Trade is given the title 'president of the board of trade', it's an anachronism. Officially, the Board of Trade is a sub-committee of the privy council, which was a vital body of the empire, protecting and extending the slave trade, helping oversee colonies across the world, and adjudicating between the various royal chartered corporations - like the East India Company - which actually delivered much of Britain's imperialism. It hasn't met as such in a century, and, in 1970, its department was merged with the Ministry of Technology to produce the Department of Trade and Industry - now the Department for Business and Trade. But the titular president remained. And arguably, the culture, too, whereby the department saw itself as responsible for supporting a collection of supposedly British corporations in their global endeavours. Even if, in reality, many of them became less and less British. After Brexit, when the Tories tried to sell themselves as old-style colonial adventurers embracing this new opportunity, they set up a new body, which they gave the title "the Board of Trade" to make it sound empire-y. As the government website puts it, the Board of Trade is "one of the government's flagship advisory bodies on trade and the economy".

The current members of the Board of Trade were appointed by Labour in April 2025. They include Charles Woodburn, the CEO of the arms manufacturer BAE Systems; Mike Hawes, the president of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders - i.e. the chief lobbyist for the UK car industry - who has previously spoken out against climate legislation, "warning" that it will force manufacturers to stop producing gas guzzlers. SMMT told me he sits on the committee in a personal capacity, and pointed me to their environment policy. There are also senior figures from the professional services firms EY (formerly Ernst & Young) and McKinsey. EY works closely with the oil and gas industry in multiple ways, and is Shell's auditor. McKinsey also works hard to help oil and gas giants burn the planet. There are two members from the City of London Corporation, which lobbies for the financial services sector, steeped in fossil fuels as it is.

The corporate capture of the department goes deeper than advisory committees. Data I got through FOI requests show that, since Labour came into office, it has had staff seconded to it from three major arms companies each of which has been criticised for its role in arming Israel while it commits a genocide in Gaza, and also into the Confederation of British Industry - the main lobbying organisation for big business. It also seconded people out to the office of the Lord Mayor of the City of London and TheCityUK - the two main lobbying organisations for Britain's financial services industry - one of the world's main investors in the fossil fuel industry. Where once the civil service was a lifelong career, increasingly

people flit back and forth between government work and the big professional services companies. My former civil servant contact puts it thus: "Very good civil servants often end up in Shell and BP [where they're] paid double or triple" what they were getting before - "for a reason".

Similarly, it's very common for people to go back and forth between the civil service and major consultancies. The permanent secretary at the Department for Business and Trade started his career at PricewaterhouseCooper. Sir Crawford Falconer, the former UK chief trade negotiation adviser and second permanent secretary at the department, took up a job at Bradshaw Advisory, a company that "helps clients navigate, influence and solve policy challenges by bringing together a team of senior experts in economics, data, policy and public affairs." Its clients in the last few years have included the nuclear industry, Manchester and Heathrow airports and Virgin Atlantic.

According to Sir Crawford's correspondence with the now replaced Advisory Committee on Business Appointments - which all senior government officials had to seek opinion from when applying for new jobs - he committed not to lobby the UK government for two years, hadn't done any favours for the firm while a civil servant, and didn't know any particular secrets that he could bring into the firm. I'm sure that's all true. And there is no suggestion that he or anyone else has broken any of the rules about conflict of interest. In a narrow sense, the civil service is very careful about such things. But civil servants are meant to provide neutral advice to ministers. Someone working as a civil servant on loan from - say - an arms company clearly comes with a particular ideological perspective. They obviously take special knowledge back from government into their long-term employer when they return - that, after all, is why they were sent in the first place. The department clearly doesn't consider "being on the side of big business" to be a bias - they simply think that's the same thing as "being on the side of Britain".

OPEN TO DEMOCRATIC SCRUTINY

Academics from Queen Mary, University of London, and the NGO the Trade Justice Movement selected 59 members of the public who were demographically representative of the British population and held a citizens' assembly on climate change and trade. After listening to experts and deliberating, these ordinary citizens demanded a review of ISDSs, and a list of measures to ensure that British trade policy helps lead us to a zero carbon future. We should, they said, be setting tariffs based on a product's environmental impact, banning some high-carbon imports and eliminating tariffs for goods needed for the green transition. Unfortunately, the DBT - in their magnificent red brick building - spend more time listening to Shell and BP than they do conversing with the ordinary people of the country - or, indeed, their elected representatives. The government, as Lucas said, "should urgently increase transparency and accountability, ensuring the right of parliament to set a thorough mandate to govern each trade negotiation, opening up the process so the public get a chance to be consulted as part of setting that mandate, and giving parliament the right to amend and reject trade deals. As trade agreements are increasingly less about tariffs and more about domestic laws and regulations, it's more important than ever that they are open to democratic scrutiny".

This Author

Adam Ramsay is an investigative journalist and the editor of the Abolish Westminster newsletter.

DISCLOSURE

Adam Ramsay is a Scottish journalist and a member of the National Union of Journalists. His book *Abolish Westminster* is due out with Faber and Faber in 2026 and he publishes a Substack newsletter of the same name. His children's book *My Dad Brought Beavers Back* is due out with Scotland Street Press. Adam is a member of the Green Party of England and Wales and the Scottish Green Party, he is on the board of Europe for Scotland, a director of Make Hope Possible, and on the editorial advisory board of the journal *Soundings*.

THE ECOLOGIST WRITERS' FUND

The Ecologist Writers' Fund was launched to support contributors who are from, or who write about, communities and identities that remain marginalised within the environment movement and the journalism industry. This includes, but is not limited to, BAME, LGBTQI+ and disabled people. The fund is supported by readers of *The Ecologist* online and subscribers to our newsletter. *The Ecologist* Special Series is funded by trusts and foundations and not through the EWF. However, we hope those who have read and benefited from the series will consider donating to the writers' fund online.

THE ECOLOGIST

The Ecologist is a news and analysis platform with a focus on environmental, social and economic justice. Our strategic aim for the coming years is to focus on the fossil fuel industry and its impact on people, society and the natural environment. *The Ecologist* is published online. Editorial Team: Brendan Montague and Eleanor Penny. The Ecologist online is a member of the newspaper regulator IMPRESS.

THE RESURGENCE TRUST

The Resurgence Trust is an educational charity (Charity Number: 1120414) that aims to improve our connection to each other and to nature. The charity examines how we can reconnect with the living planet from the perspectives of society, economics, community and individual wellbeing. The trust publishes the *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine, *The Ecologist* online and Resurgence.org, as well as organising events at its centre in Hartland, Devon and in London. The trust is funded through its members and with some donations from a number of trusts and foundations which support environmental and social change. The work of the trust is overseen by its board of trustees.
