

# Think Tank Censured by Charity Commission for Hard Brexit Lobbying

By [True Publica](#)

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*Ever since the EU referendum debate kicked off in 2016 after David Cameron's announcement to hold one, we at TruePublica have had very grave concerns about the undue influence of a prominent and highly influential think tank – the Insitute for Economic Affairs. It is notorious for being [one of the least transparent think tanks in the EU](#), let alone Britain, when it comes to funding and it's hard-right, ultra-free-market position makes a mockery of its so-called charitable status.*

There's a lot we don't know about the funding of the IEA because they refuse to disclose it. What we do know is that the IEA has [big money from big tobacco firms](#), oil and gambling firms and has issued [position statements](#) against public health measures such as ... tobacco packaging and taxation, climate change denial, promoting gambling with a drastic increase in casinos. The IEA also [accepts funding from the US](#) through the 'American Friends of the IEA', which exists solely to funnel money to the IEA in London. It [reportedly](#) has many other anonymous US donors.

The IEA has been also, amongst other things, been campaigning hard for the NHS to be dismantled in favour of the disastrous American model of insurance backed health care, which has been [calculated to cost the taxpayer](#) another £40 billion.

The National Health Action Party [reported](#) last year that –

“They (IEA) want to see local health boards turned into competing national franchises. They want hospitals to be paid exclusively by these franchises for work done, and for hospitals to be forced into bankruptcy rather than receive financial support from central government. They want to see tax refunds in return for co-payments.”

The IEA has direct influence with Tory big-guns pushing for a hard Brexit. As [reported](#) last July –

“A group of establishment figures, funded to the tune of millions, are covertly pursuing a political campaign in favour of extreme free trade, acting in effect as lobbyists for secretive corporate interests.”

Let's also not forget that the IEA were caught [red-handed](#) brokering access to senior politicians for foreign donors seeking to influence the course of Brexit. As we at TruePublica have consistently warned, these foreign donors are American and they want a new market

to exploit. They want deregulation, deregulation and more deregulation.

And as if any more evidence was required about the activities of the IEA, it comes as the Charity Commission finally takes action, even if it's just a mild slap on the wrists – it exposes further the deep rot permeating through politics at Westminster and Downing Street.

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By Mat Hope – [DeSmogUK](#):

A prominent London think tank has been censured by the Charity Commission for explicitly lobbying for a hard Brexit. The commission said the [Institute for Economic Affairs \(IEA\)](#) had breached rules regarding political activity, which are meant to prevent charities campaigning on issues outside of their charitable remit.

The IEA is officially registered as an educational charity. The commission ruled that the IEA's '[Plan A+](#)' report was “calling for a change in government policy and for a particular approach to the UK's exit from the European Union”, which “does not further educational purposes, and so constitutes a breach”.

The 147-page report aimed to offer an alternative plan to Theresa May's Chequers deal, which was resoundingly rejected by parliament in January 2019. The plan called on the government to cut EU environmental regulations to secure free-trade deals with the US, China and India after Brexit.

In its [ruling](#), the Charity Commission criticised the IEA for the tone of the Plan A+ report, saying it “did not invite the reader to make up his or her own mind, and instead presented one proposal for the way that Brexit should be achieved”.

The Plan A+ report was authored by [Shanker Singham](#), Director of the International Trade and Competition Unit at the IEA and a former Washington lobbyist with [ties to organisations known for promoting climate science denial](#).

In July 2018, Singham was caught alongside IEA Director Mark Littlewood in an [undercover sting](#) by Greenpeace's investigative unit, Unearthed, talking about how the organisation's reports [could be written to suit donors' agendas](#).

#### Providing a Platform

The Charity Commission also censured the IEA for an event it held promoting the report on 24 September 2018, which included providing “a platform for parliamentarians known to publicly and vocally support a particular outcome from the UK's exit from the European Union”.

The launch was attended by Tory MPs David Davis and [Boris Johnson](#), who both resigned their cabinet posts over objections to the Prime Minister's Brexit strategy. The Plan A+ report was also backed by [Jacob Rees-Mogg](#), a high-profile figure in [European Research Group](#), which is lobbying within parliament for a hard Brexit.

“By holding such an event in the public spotlight, the charity was engaging in campaigning and lobbying activity that is not sufficiently connected to its educational purposes”, the commission concluded.

The IEA removed the Plan A+ report from its website in November 2018,

following a warning from the Charity Commission.

The commission has now asked the IEA to implement a new peer-review process to ensure all future reports meet regulatory guidelines, and provide it with assurances it will not engage in inappropriate campaigning activities again.

The IEA said it was “disappointed” by the ruling. Responding to the judgement, IEA chair [Neil Record](#) said:

“The IEA is considering a range of options, as we believe this warning has extremely widespread and worrying implications for the whole of the thinktank and educational charity sector.”

“A precedent is being set: research papers – and their launches – which put forward policy proposals may now fall outside the parameters of what the Charity Commission considers acceptable activity.”

Record is a major Conservative party donor, and has [given funds](#) to climate science denying campaign group the [Global Warming Policy Foundation](#).

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