

June 2026

# Lack of power

**The role of climate in Britain's local and devolved elections 2026**



**More in  
Common**

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## Contents

<b>About More in Common</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Seven Segments</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1   Britons and climate: the context</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 2   The local and devolved elections 2026</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter 3   Voters' views on climate and energy policies</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Chapter 4   Where do each party's voters stand on climate and energy policies?</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Chapter 5   The politics of climate: where next for climate advocates?</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Chapter 6   What's next for the parties?</b>	<b>47</b>

## About More in Common

More in Common is a think tank and research agency working to bridge the gap between policy makers and the public and helping people in Westminster to understand those voters who feel ignored or overlooked by those in power. Our British Seven segmentation provides a unique lens at understanding what the public think and why. We've published ground-breaking reports on a range of issues from climate and refugees to culture wars to crime. We are a full-service research agency offering polling and focus group research and are members of the British Polling Council.

## Methodology

Much of the data used in this report stems from extensive polling of the British public in the buildup to the 2026 local elections in England and devolved elections in Scotland and Wales. The Scotland and Wales research consisted of separate polls (1,050 participants in Scotland; 873 participants in Wales) made up of a nationally representative sample of the Scottish and Welsh public.

The polling in England focused exclusively on areas due to hold local elections in 2026. As such, the sample (1,441 participants) is not nationally representative. When making assertions about this group, this report refers to them as exclusively as 'voters'. Any reference to 'Britons', 'the public', or any other, similar phrasing does not refer to this group but to findings acquired through separate, nationally representative polling conducted previously by More in Common. As the Scotland and Wales polling is nationally representative, however, the report may refer to them as 'voters' or any variation on 'the Scottish/Welsh public' etc.

### Qualitative Research

Over forty focus groups were conducted by More in Common specifically to understand the dynamics and opinions of those across Scotland, Wales and the areas of England with elections in 2026. This research uses the insights from those focus groups, held both in person and online.

## Executive Summary

The 2026 elections saw local council votes in England along with devolved elections in Scotland and Wales. It represented the biggest test in public opinion since the government came to office. In the run up to and subsequent weeks following those elections, More in Common conducted over 40 focus groups across the country and polled over 20,000 people to understand the issues and frames shaping their decisions. The picture on climate is a mixed one.

Over the past two years, there has been a shift in the consensus on climate action that previously existed at the political level. Entering the 2020s, the Government and principal opposition parties all backed the plan to reach Net Zero by 2050. In 2021, a Conservative UK Government hosted COP 26 in Glasgow, while in 2022 both Government and opposition embraced clean energy not only as a means to tackle climate change, but also as a way to bolster energy security following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Since then, elite level positioning has changed significantly. The Conservative Party, under both Rishi Sunak and then Kemi Badenoch, have moved away from an embrace of Net Zero targets and towards more market-led positions. Meanwhile, Reform UK, which has led in national opinion polling for well over a year, takes a full-throated, anti-Net Zero position. Even within the governing Labour party there are a steady stream of briefings and counter briefings about the affordability and efficacy of the Net Zero target.

To what extent, then, does that shift at the elite level reflect, or perhaps influence, a shift in wider public attitudes? And what impact, if any, is the climate having as the public express their preferences at the ballot box?

**The British public is in favour of climate action, but it is not what is driving their vote.**

**The cost of living dwarfs all else.** Support for Net Zero is high (60 per cent) and people feel broadly optimistic about the transition to cleaner energy, but only seven per cent of voters in England cited it as one of the most important issues that would influence their vote heading into the local elections. The cost of living is the priority across the board, followed by the NHS and immigration.

**Energy bills are the most important cost of living issue for voters.** It is significant, then, that voters are still more likely to think the shift away from fossil fuels will increase their energy bills than decrease them – at almost a two to one ratio (39 per cent to 22 per cent). Despite widespread belief in the long-term economic benefits of the transition, only Labour and Green voters are more likely to believe the transition will bring bills down in the short-term, and even they are divided.

**Even groups that support climate initiatives currently see the issue as less of a priority.** Green voters, Progressive Activists and young people (18-34) are the most supportive of energy transition measures. However, only ten per cent or fewer of all these groups cited tackling climate change as a priority that would influence their vote. While this may reflect an understanding as to the limitations of local politics in dealing with global issues, it also indicates the limited influence of the issue as an electoral motivator.

**The war in Iran has once again highlighted the issue of energy security.** Voters are worried about the impact of the conflict on their energy bills (71 per cent). The proposed solutions (a pivot to renewable energy or reintroduction of North Sea oil and gas drilling) divide. When presented as a binary choice between renewables and oil and gas, voters favour renewables. This is true for all age brackets other than over-75s. However, when also given the option of both, nearly a third of voters (30 per cent) prefer this option.

Support for climate action and its salience varies among voters of each party.

- **Reform supporters are more likely to be worried about climate change than not, but roughly two-thirds of Reform UK voters oppose climate initiatives.** They don't support Net Zero or believe the UK can transition to clean energy in a way that benefits them. That said, there is a notable minority (roughly a third) of Reform supporters who back climate action.
- **Labour has held onto climate devotees but shed voters for whom the climate is less of a priority.** More than a quarter (26 per cent) of those who voted for Labour in 2024 and again in 2026 say protecting the environment and tackling climate change is the most important issue for them. Only 14 per cent of those who voted Labour in 2024 but not in 2026 say the same.
- **Newer Green voters are more pro-climate action than the cohort that made up their 2024 base; however, the climate does not feature in Green voters' current top priorities.** Just ten per cent of Green voters said tackling climate change was a priority affecting their vote, though this rose to 17 per cent who prioritised protecting nature and wildlife.
- **Conservative voters are the most divided on the issue of renewables vs oil and gas.** When presented with a binary between increasing domestic renewable energy generation or focusing more on increasing oil and gas supply, they are split (48 per cent to 46 per cent). Given the option, they favour both (37 per cent), but there are significant factions on both sides of the debate.
- **Liberal Democrat supporters expect price rises from the renewable transition but are still willing to swallow the cost.** They are simultaneously twice as likely to say it is possible for the UK to transition to clean energy in a way that benefits people like them than to say that it isn't (61 per cent vs 28 per cent) and that bills will increase rather than decrease as a result of the transition (44 per cent vs 21 per cent).
- **Plaid Cymru and Labour voters in Wales are largely indistinguishable from one another in their climate attitude.** Both parties' voters are equally pro-climate action and broadly optimistic on the energy transition, with little to draw apart the progressive flank of Welsh politics.
- **SNP voters are less likely than unionist parties to want to maximise output from oil and gas reserves.** Just 23 per cent of SNP voters favour this option, while two-thirds (65 per cent) back the transition to renewable energy.
  - However, in areas where oil and gas shape the local economy, the position of the SNP's voter coalition may be very different from Scotland as a whole.

**By a five to one margin, voters expect long term economic benefits as opposed to harm from the clean energy transition.** Only 12 per cent of voters think Britain will never see any

benefits from shifting to cleaner energy, compared to 59 per cent who think we will see them within twenty years. Reform voters are outliers in their pessimism here.

**Much climate hesitation and ambivalence is rooted in short term concerns about the cost of transition.** This is especially relevant in the context of a cost of living crisis that six in ten worry will never end.

# The Seven Segments

Using extensive research into Britons' core beliefs, their values and behaviours, More in Common has developed a unique segmentation of the British public. This segmentation allows us to look upstream not just at what different groups think, but why they think it, reflecting fundamental differences between groups in how they relate to authority, change, community and the future.

More in Common's analysis produces seven segments within the British population, which are referred to throughout this report:

## Progressive Activists - 12 per cent of the population; 2 per cent of Reform UK's current support base

A highly engaged and globally-minded group driven by concerns about social justice. Politically active, but feeling increasingly alienated from mainstream party politics, they prioritise issues such as climate change and international affairs. Occasionally outliers on social issues, they maintain a strongly held and sometimes uncompromising approach to their beliefs.

## Incrementalist Left - 21 per cent of the population; 7 per cent of Reform UK's current support base

A civic-minded, community-oriented group holding views which are generally left-of-centre but with an aversion to the extreme; they prefer gradual reform over revolutionary change. They trust experts and institutions yet are largely tuned out of day-to-day politics and can be conflict-averse, stepping away from issues they see as particularly fraught or Complex.

## Established Liberals - 9 per cent of the population; 4 per cent of Reform UK's current support base

A prosperous, confident segment who believe the system broadly works as it is and who trust experts to deliver continued progress. They have a strong belief in individual agency which can make them less empathetic to those who are struggling. Institutionally trusting, they maintain faith in democratic processes and have a strong information-centric way of engaging with issues.

## Sceptical Scrollers - 10 per cent of the population; 6 per cent of Reform UK's current support base

A digitally-native group whose unhappiness with the social contract means they have lost faith in traditional institutions and seek alternative sources of truth online. Often shaped by their experience of the Covid pandemic, they prefer individual influencers over mainstream media and are increasingly drawn to conspiratorial thinking.

## Rooted Patriots - 20 per cent of the population; 25 per cent of Reform UK's current support base

A patriotic but politically untethered group which feels abandoned and overlooked by political elites and yearns for leaders with common sense, but does not want to overthrow the system as a whole. They are particularly concerned about community decline and the pressures of migration. Interventionist on economics but conservative on social issues, they have shaped much of Britain's politics over the past decade.

**Traditional Conservatives - 8 per cent of the population; 17 per cent of Reform UK's current support base**

Respectful of authority and tradition, this group believes in individual responsibility and established norms that have served them well. Nostalgic for the past but optimistic about the future, they are deeply sceptical of many forces of change such as immigration or the path to net-zero.

**Dissenting Disruptors - 20 per cent of the population; 39 per cent of Reform UK's current support base**

Frustrated with their circumstances and with an appetite for radical solutions, this group craves dramatic change and strong leadership. Highly distrustful of institutions, opposed to multiculturalism and feeling disconnected from society, they are drawn to political movements that promise to overhaul the status quo and put people like them first.

# 1: Britons and climate: the context

Heading into this set of elections, British voters were somewhat less concerned about climate change than they were just a few years ago. In 2023, around a third of voters selected it as one of their three most important issues facing the country, while by May 2026 this had fallen to around one in seven.

This is not necessarily because people no longer care about climate change, but because the issue has fallen in priority relative to more immediate and visible issues in people’s daily lives – notably the cost of living, which ranks top of people’s concerns, but also immigration and the NHS. Having been the biggest issue in British politics for quite some time, the salience of the cost of living rose even further in the buildup to the local and devolved elections, with more than seven in ten selecting it as a top issue, the highest since the start of this Parliament.

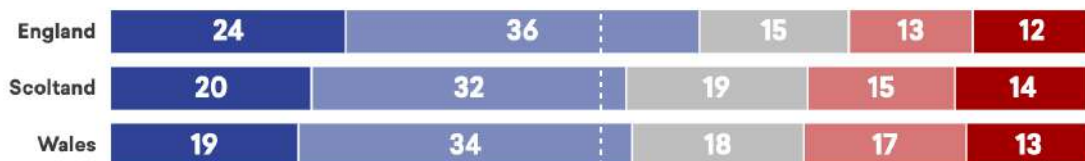
*We're in an era right now where mental health awareness has improved in recent years, which is great. The resources like pre-published resources like blogs, you can read articles, you can read videos, you can watch published resources or more readily available and there's more info out there if you think you're going into depression because of x and y reason, you can start looking into okay, what are the symptoms, what are the causes, what are ways to manage it, what are ways to try recovering from it? But yeah, the unfortunate part here is that I feel like for companies at least large organisation, it's become like a checklist.*

*Abdul, IT sales manager, Established Liberal*

## Voters in Britain's local and parliamentary elections support Net Zero

To what extent do you support or oppose the UK government's current Net Zero policy?

● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Don't know ● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose



More in Common, May 2026

Despite this, British voters are still broadly supportive of Net Zero, which the UK Government has legally committed itself to meeting by 2050. However, the issue has been politicised in a way that was not the case just a few years ago. Two years ago, concern for climate change closely tracked support for Net Zero, with around two-thirds of people saying they were concerned about climate change and a similar proportion supporting Net Zero. That alignment in support has since shifted. Today, while six in ten voters in England (60 per cent) say they support Net Zero, fewer than half (44 per cent) think it is essential, with similar numbers in Scotland (39 per cent) and Wales (40 per cent).

## Voters divide on whether Net Zero is essential

In order to stop climate change, Net Zero is...

● Essential ● Don't know ● Not essential



More in Common • May 2026

This is not to say that people are now *anti*-Net Zero; only a quarter of voters in England oppose it (25 per cent), while 15 per cent are unsure. People do, however, appear to be worried about the cost or pace of change in order to meet the 2050 target. For example, voters are much more likely to say they expect the shift to clean energy to increase their bills than decrease them, a fear that will resonate given the salience of the cost of living for voters and the fact that energy bills are a particular area of concern. It is possible that in such times of economic hardship, some voters have simply come to consider Net Zero a luxury that they cannot afford.

Meanwhile, even among those who are passionate detractors of Net Zero, opposition generally tends to not stem from an ideological opposition to renewable energy – in fact, many are still concerned about the impact a changing climate may have. Rather, their scepticism is principally based on the cost of the policy and its impact on bills, an impact they argue is outsized given Britain's comparatively small contribution to global emissions.

*I would rather we don't go to Net Zero, really. And why's that? I think it's a waste of money...as a country, a pretty small island really compared to like of China, Russia and all that. And I think you've got Germany as well selling coal to countries.*

*Chris, Reform Voter, Dundee*

*I don't know, the whole idea that the counter argument to people saying we've got to really climate change as an existential emergency. But then people say, yeah, but look at China, look at India. What difference does it make in Scotland? Does this when you have these huge countries?*

*Robert, Glasgow*

Among participants on the left, those who strongly supported Net Zero spoke about the lack of agency and power that individuals have and described a similar lack of agency to make change. However, rather than comparing Britain with larger industrial polluting countries, they spoke of the relative impact of individuals compared to large corporations.

*It's also like you feel like things are put on you as an individual to do, when the bulk of climate change is on huge groups that make loads of money or use the most fossil fuels.*

*Becca, Edinburgh Central*

Then there are other polarising proposals such as the opening of new oil fields in the North Sea, something Reform UK is pushing for but divides other voters. Of all the specific energy policies tested in this report, it was the only one that did not command majority support. Other policies, such as investing in public transport and opposing restrictions on solar and wind farms, are fairly popular across different demographic groups.

*I think renewable energy is definitely the way – oil is going to run out at the end of the day. It's not a resource that's going to be there forever, whereas there's always going to be weather, always going to be renewable resources.*

*Laura, North Berwick*

Ahead of this year's Holyrood elections, Scottish voters were broadly supportive of investment in renewables like offshore wind, with two thirds (74 per cent) supporting power being generated this way and just 11 per cent opposed, with support crossing generational lines. Solar followed a similar pattern, but so too did the use of North Sea oil. The picture was more mixed, however, when it came to nuclear power, with around half of voters supporting it and nearly one in three (29 per cent) opposing.

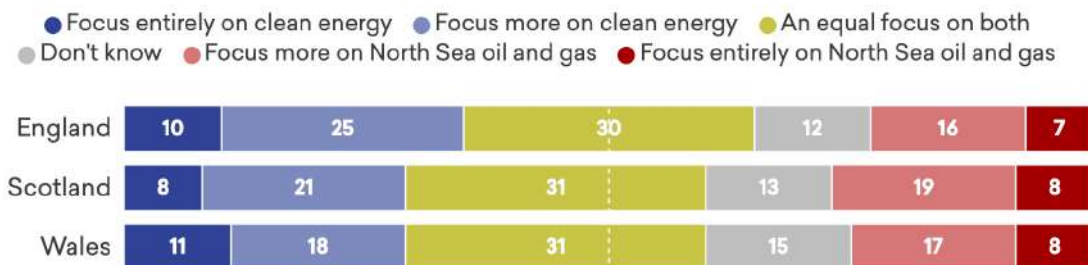
Despite fears around the immediate impact on bills, voters in Scotland tend to think transitioning to clean technology and investing in helping industry decarbonise will benefit

the Scottish economy in the long-term (43 per cent). This sentiment is true for all age groups between 16 and 75. Meanwhile, more than half of Scottish voters (51 per cent) think Britain will see the benefits of shifting to cleaner energy within the next twenty years, if we're not already seeing them.

In Scotland, debates on the future of energy, whether oil and gas or renewables, feel close to home, particularly for coastal communities whose local economies are being shaped by the future of fossil fuel industries and the energy transition. In focus groups, this certainly led to a stronger tone on beliefs. In the polling, Scottish voters, compared to those in England with elections or Wales, were slightly more likely to favour a focus on oil and gas, but overall in each nation the electorate was more likely to favour a focus on clean energy.

## Voters in Scotland are marginally more likely to want a focus on oil and gas than in England and Wales

Some people say Britain should focus on tapping remaining oil and gas reserves in the North Sea. Others say Britain should focus on building up clean energy industries. Which is closer to your view?



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It's a similar story in Wales, where more than a third (35 per cent) of voters agree on the long-term economic benefits and say they feel positive about the shift to clean energy (39 per cent), also believing that the transition will make life better for people like them (37 per cent). A majority of Welsh voters (57 per cent) say it's important to them that the party they vote for has a policy to tackle climate change, including nine per cent who say this is the most important issue for them. The only demographic that did not offer majority support for this was Welsh voters aged 35–44, though even among this cohort 47 per cent were in favour.

## 2: The local and devolved elections 2026

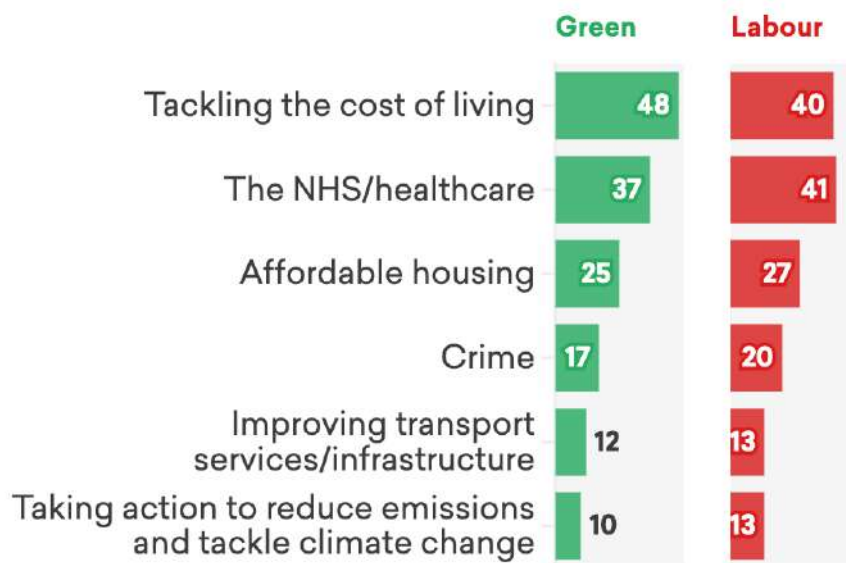
Future historians are unlikely to brand May's vote as 'The Climate Elections'. When polled, voters in England placed it a lowly 14th amongst the policy issues that would determine their vote, only one per cent higher than supporting British farmers (seven versus six per cent). Ultimately, an existential issue like the climate crisis can appear abstract and far-off to voters, easily dwarfed by more immediate concerns like the cost of living, which was cited as a priority by more than five times as many respondents (39 per cent).

It is worth clarifying, too, that the fact that there are significant limits as to what local councils can achieve in the battle against climate change may have factored into people's voting given these were local elections. Not naming 'tackling climate change' as a core priority may simply reflect an awareness as to the limits of local politics rather than signalling that voters no longer care about the issue.

Climate did remain a priority for some voters, however. In England, for instance, Labour voters named it their joint 5th priority, level with improving transport services and infrastructure (13 per cent) and above a number of other major issues. One in ten Green voters (10 per cent) also said it would be a priority for them – somewhat less than one might expect from a party as traditionally climate-focused as the Greens, but still a significant number.

## Top concerns for Labour and Green voters in England's local elections

Which of the following policy issues will be most important for determining which party you will vote for in the upcoming Local elections on May 7th?



Source: More in Common, May 2026

It is striking that tackling climate change proved more of a priority to Labour voters than Green voters heading into these elections. This may be influenced by a few factors. The first is that, of Labour's 2024 contingent, it is the more affluent ones who stuck with them this time around, while the more economically disenfranchised, who have more urgent cost of living priorities, moved either left to the Greens or right to Reform. In other words, they felt priced out of prioritising the climate in a way that Labour loyalists may not have been. Nearly six in ten Labour loyalists (those who voted for them in 2024 and said they would vote for them again in 2026) report feeling financially comfortable (58 per cent). This is a striking 13 per cent more than the number of Labour switchers (those who voted Labour in 2024 but were not planning on voting for them in 2026) who say the same (45 per cent). Heading into the elections, tackling climate change was cited as a priority by 11 per cent of Labour loyalists and just 7 per cent of Labour switchers, perhaps indicating the effect the cost of living is having on both climate priorities and voting intentions.

This might also explain why among Progressive Activists (the most pro-climate contingent of More in Common's seven segments but also a younger, less economically comfortable segment than the also climate-friendly Incrementalist Left or Established Liberals), it emerged as just the thirteenth priority with 8 per cent of the vote. This segment was more than five times as likely to say the cost of living was a priority (50 per cent) and more than three times as likely to say affordable housing (30 per cent) or the NHS were a priority (26 per cent) than tackling climate change. The implication is that among economically struggling voters, even those of a pro-climate disposition, the economic backdrop is too bleak for climate to make their leaderboard of priorities.

In focus groups, voters expressed a range of views as to whether the Green party still stood for climate issues. Participants made the case for everything from the Greens being the only party that still champions climate policy to others saying it no longer featured in the party's agenda. Many more took the position in between: that it was still an issue that the party valued, even if it had got somewhat lost amid competing priorities.

*When you look at the manifesto for the Greens, the environment and the agriculture side is something that not really many of the other parties mention.*

*Becky, Hebden Bridge*

*The Greens used to be known for the environment, but that was almost because it was just the Greens – that's all they went on for. Now that they're almost at the bigger table, they have to talk about all the other things. So the environment has to just be... dropped down.*

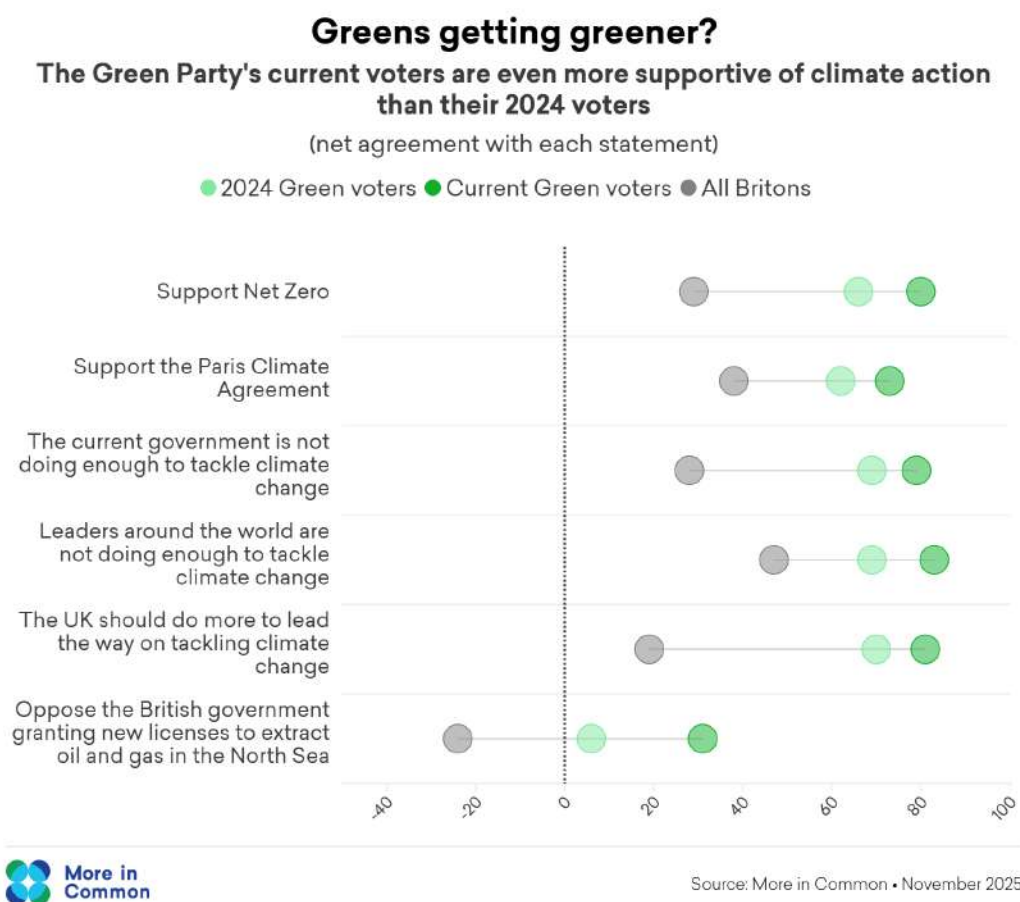
*Chris, Hebden Bridge*

*It's kind of disappeared altogether – now they're talking about Palestine.*

*Elise, Hebden Bridge*

Another reason may be the Green Party's sizable growth from the 2024 General Election to May's local and devolved elections, where it received its highest share of the vote in history. A bigger party naturally represents a more diverse section of the electorate than before, with the possibility that devoted climate activists make up a smaller share of the party's voters than they did two years ago. As such, one might think that tackling climate change was Green voters' eighth priority (behind not only immediate issues like the cost of living and the NHS but also more traditional issues like affordable housing, crime, levels of taxation and improving transport services) precisely because these are not the concerns of

climate radicals but of ordinary Britons today. However, More in Common research actually suggests the opposite: that newer Green voters are even more pro-climate action than the cohort that made up their 2024 base. Compared to the party's 2024 General Election voters, a greater proportion of current Green voters believe that the UK government is not doing enough to tackle climate change (76 per cent of current Green voters vs 64 per cent of 2024 Green voters) and want the UK to lead the way globally on international climate efforts (83 per cent of current Green voters vs 75 per cent of 2024 Green voters).



The decline in support for tackling climate change amongst young people should be of particular concern to those pushing for further climate measures. In 2024, three-quarters of 18-34 year olds reported being worried about climate change (73 per cent) and more than a third said they would vote for a party that pledged to speed up efforts to reach Net Zero (36 per cent), rising to two-thirds who said they would vote for a party who pledged to speed up or maintain current efforts to meet Net Zero (63 per cent). Two years on, only 9 per cent cited it as a priority, fewer than those concerned about asylum seekers crossing the channel (10 per cent). This younger cohort is now twice as likely to be worried about

crime (20 per cent) and more than three times more likely to be anxious about the cost of living (32 per cent) as they are about climate change, with the issue only just scraping into their top ten concerns heading into May's elections.

What is striking is the variance in climate importance depending on education amongst young people. Among university educated 18-34 year-olds in England, tackling climate change jumps up to the sixth priority with 14 per cent considering it important. Among those who aren't university educated, it drops to just 5 per cent. The impact of a university education is nowhere near as strong – 9 points – in any other age bracket; it is only amongst this youngest cohort that education proves such a crucial indicator of climate prioritisation.

Rather than climate, these elections were driven by anxieties around the cost-of-living and disaffection with the status quo, as reflected by the surge in support for the insurgent Reform and Green parties. Across the campaigns in England, Scotland, and Wales, the climate issue hardly featured. Instead, voters described how other, more immediate worries, especially around the cost of living, had eclipsed longer-term concerns.

*It feels probably further away than the other issues. It's not. You go out and drive and the roads are bumpy, you go to Sainsburys and you buy a meal deal for something like four pounds. It is something that to me feels like I can't really affect. It feels like a world away from me, but it's definitely something that I think everyone considers but probably not to the same extent of things.*

*Christopher, Student*

However, while the results themselves may have been distinct from broader climate debate, the issue is still likely to have had some influence on voting intention. On both sides of the argument, the climate discussion's formerly environmental, existential framing has taken on a more economic focus, with those who support further climate action framing renewables as a future-proofing economic necessity and those opposed deriding the green transition's prohibitive costs.

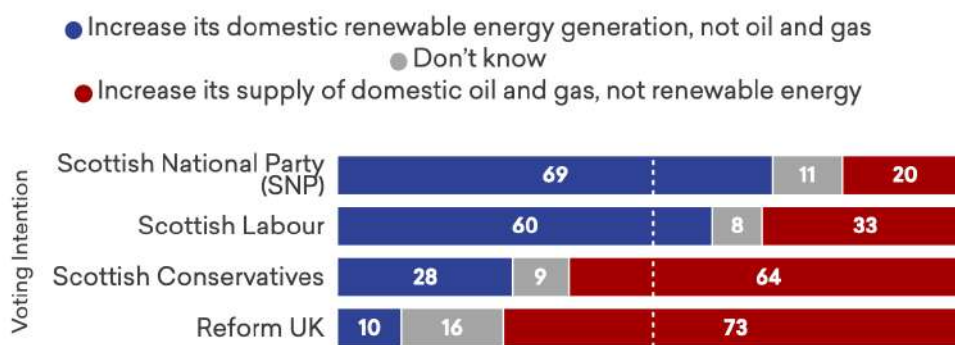
These debates were only exacerbated in these elections by the war in Iran, once again reminding voters that their energy bills (and consequently the amount they have left over for other necessities) are at the mercy of external events. Indeed, going into the elections, seven in ten voters said they were worried about the impact of the conflict on their energy bills (71 per cent). Given energy bills were already the number one cost of living concern among voters in England (62 per cent) and Wales (61 per cent), and number two concern in Scotland (62 per cent), any rise in the energy price cap is set to have a crushing impact.

*You take it back to Ukraine as well and how quickly energy prices soared – how reliant as a country we are on imported fossil fuels, and how quickly that changes the*

*markets. And the scary bit is just how out of control we all are of that. It's driving up deliveries, so all your goods are going up too. That spiral effect – that's the worrying part.*

*Joby, Braintree*

## Which of the following do you think Scotland should do to increase its level of energy security?



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The war has also revived debate over how the UK should respond: whether to expand North Sea drilling, which would boost domestic supply and tax revenues but wouldn't lower energy prices (since those are set internationally), or to shift decisively toward renewables, which the UK could control directly. Again, both options have been presented as practical economic measures that will benefit regular people's day-to-day cost and spend rather than primarily climate-related issues. So far, the Energy Secretary Ed Miliband is holding firm to the renewable transition argument, but is under heavy political pressure to change course from a variety of sources. The eventual winner of this debate is likely to set the direction of British climate policy going forward.

In focus groups in Scotland, whether discussing oil and gas in the North East of the country or renewables more broadly, the sense of injustice over who was harvesting the rewards of Scotland's energy generation came through strongly. SNP messaging aimed to highlight this point, and in some groups this had cut through.

*And I think the way they're positioning it, they talked in one of these ads about oil and how that was squandered, and now they're looking at the future, which is renewables and you've got huge renewables and we're no benefit from it. And he's then using Norway as an example. And what he's saying is, and this is Mr. Vanilla, no one really knows that we've got this future of renewables, it's green, and as long as we're tied to*

*the UK, we're not going to benefit from that. You should have really cheap power. And that cheap power could then make business more economical and more competitive, and that's what they're telling us that.*

*Robert, Union case worker, Edinburgh north and Neath*

The feeling that the benefits and reward of generation being exported did not just apply to Scotland's growing renewables industry, but also the remaining oil and gas. Ultimately, Scots in Edinburgh and North Leath were not convinced that local energy production led to benefits for local people .

*Well, from what I heard, even if we get out of the Northeast, it goes into a port. So are we going to benefit from that? I think that there's more to it than just let's get it and benefit from it.*

*Jeanette, Edinburgh North*

*I'm on the fence. The reason why I'm on the fence is if you go for it, of course, it's going to create more jobs...So it's going to create more jobs in Scotland and surrounding areas. But at the same time, like you said, it's not going to stay there.*

*Robert, Union case worker*

### **3: Voters' views on climate and energy policies**

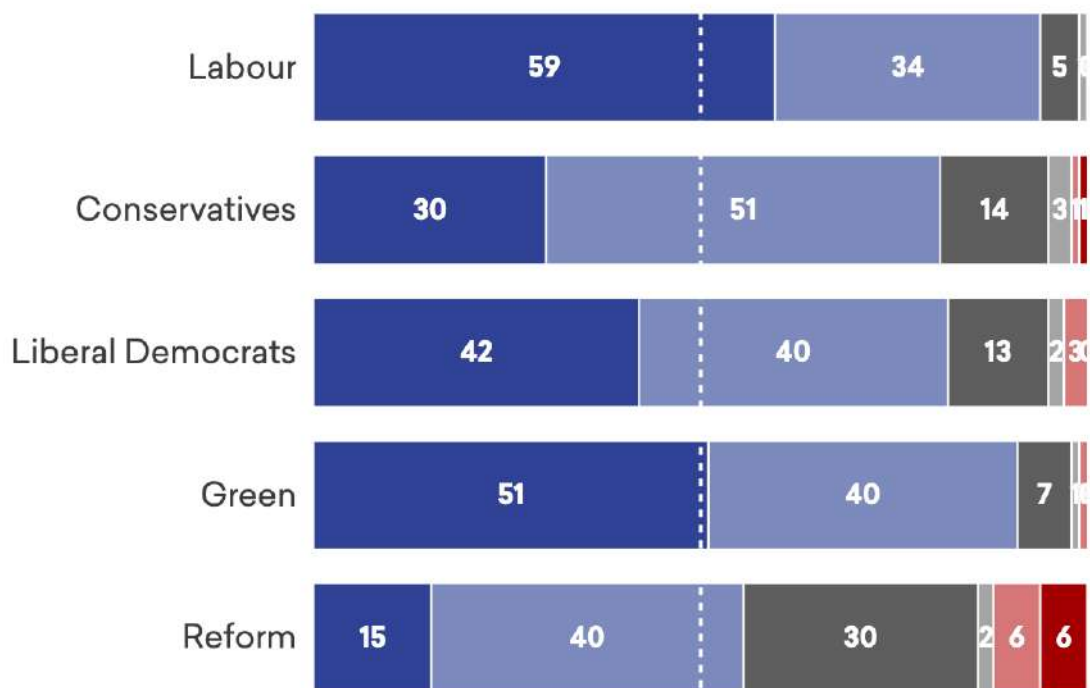
Despite a lack of salience at the ballot box, there is still plenty of cross-party support for a number of specific policies around the clean energy transition. For example, investing in upgrading Britain's electricity grid to connect clean power to homes and businesses receives support among more than nine in ten Labour (93 per cent) and Green (91 per cent) voters, and more than eight in ten Conservative (81 per cent) and Liberal Democrat voters (83 per cent). However, what is really striking is that it is also supported by a majority of Reform voters (55 per cent).

# There is cross-party support among voters in England for investing in upgrading Britain's electricity grid

To what extent would you support or oppose the government...

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Don't know
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

Investing in upgrading Britain's electricity grid to connect clean power to homes and business

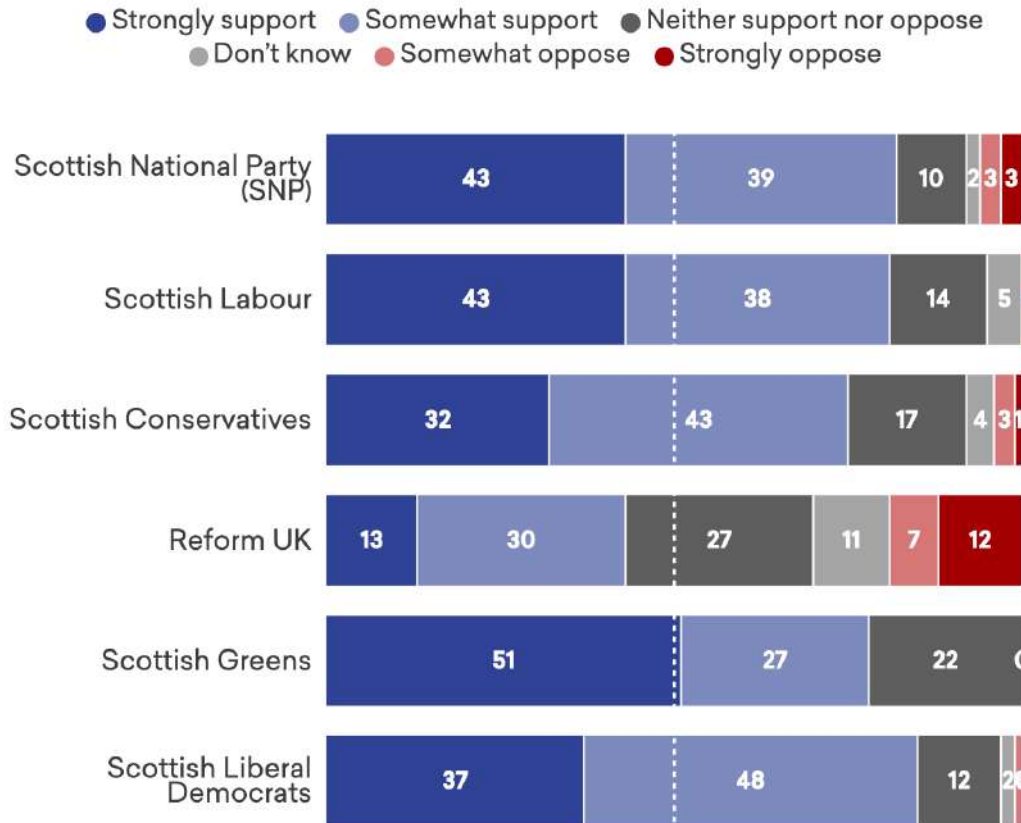


Based on voters in England in areas due to hold local elections in 2026. | More in Common • April 2026

Across England and Scotland, there is positive sentiment across all parties around the idea of supporting factories and other businesses to switch to clean electricity, supporting British manufacturing of electric cars, batteries and clean technology, and expanding the number of electric vehicle (EV) charging points across the country. However, support for these policies may lessen (or remain popular in theory but be seen as a low priority in practice) when weighed against potential costs and means of funding down the line.

## No party in Scotland opposes investing in the grid to deliver clean power

To what extent would you support or oppose the government investing in upgrading Britain's electricity grid to connect clean power to homes and businesses



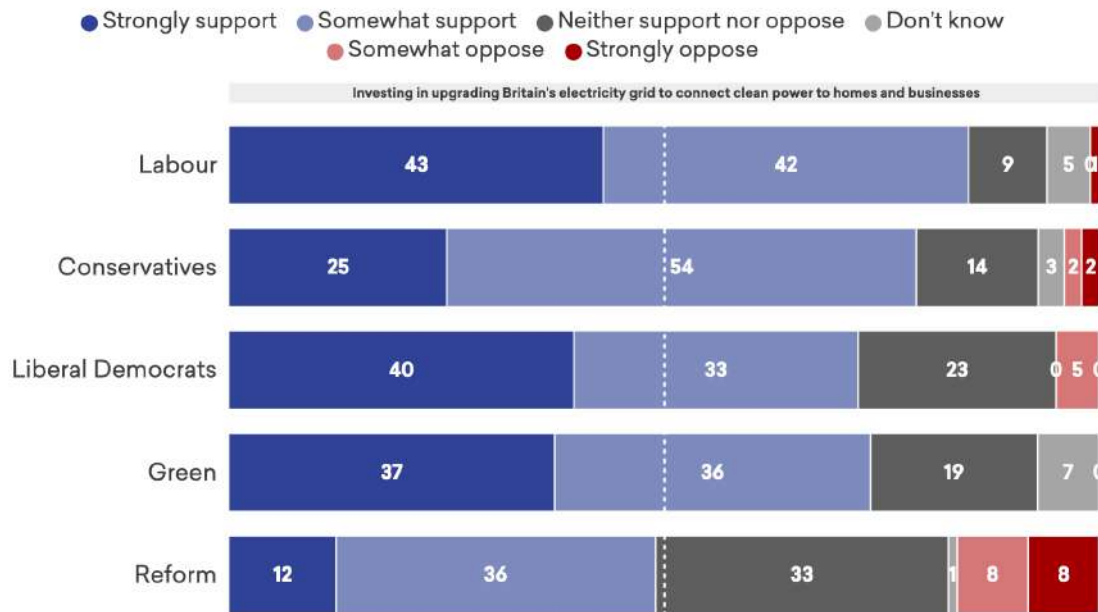
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That said, it is worth noting that even among respondents who felt that the shift to cleaner energy would increase bills, respondents were twice as likely (at a minimum) to support the policies than oppose them. The same is true for voters who don't think that Net Zero is essential. This would seem to suggest that the policies are crossing some kind of dividing line, even with voters who may oppose broader climate action.

## Voters in England who oppose net zero still support upgrading the grid to connect clean power to homes and businesses

To what extent would you support or oppose the government...

Only those who said Net Zero is not essential

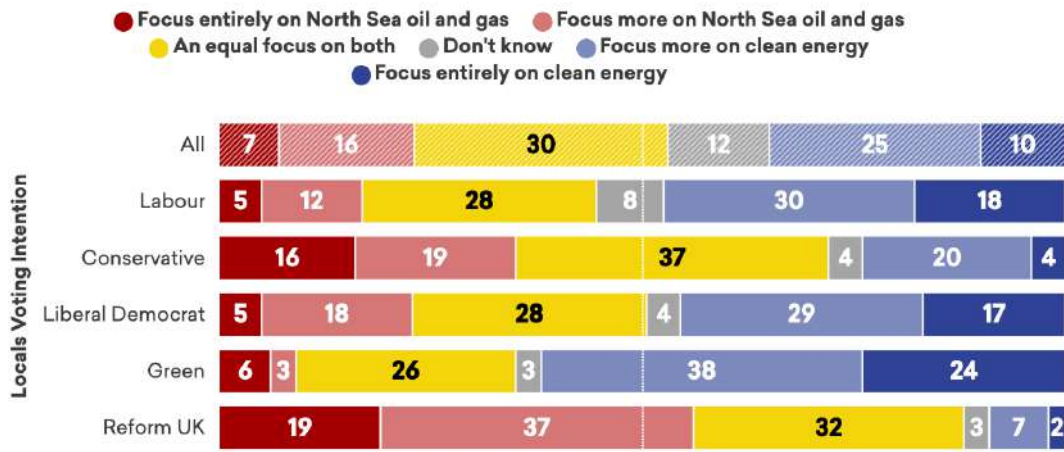


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There is a particular appetite for increased energy security right now in the wake of external shocks like the wars in Iran and Ukraine. It is natural that those pushing for climate action wish to use this urgency as a springboard for the renewable transition, especially given voters are demonstrably more in favour of increasing Britain's domestic renewable energy generation than increasing its supply of oil and gas (47 per cent vs 34 per cent). However, it's worth bearing in mind that most voters don't have a binary view on the debate. Indeed, many, even those in favour of broader climate action, are in no hurry to move completely away from the latter. When given the option, nearly a third of voters say they would prefer an equal focus on both renewable energy and oil and gas moving forward, with just seven percent of voters in England wanting a total focus on oil and gas, and ten per cent wanting a total focus on clean energy.

## In England, voters are more likely to want a focus on clean energy than oil and gas

Some people say Britain should focus on tapping remaining oil and gas reserves in the North Sea. Others say Britain should focus on building up clean energy industries. Which is closer to your view?



Source: More in Common • April 2026

Oil and gas were ultimately seen as finite, and to that end the desire for Britons to transition was seen by many as both inevitable, and a moral issue. The issue of climate more broadly, but also specific debates were described as perennial and repetitive.

*It's a moral issue, right? It'd be easy to kick the can down the road because the bulk of the impact might not be in our lifetimes, but at some point somebody needs to take ownership and be like, it's our planet, we're responsible to look after it.*

*Finlay, Edinburgh Central*

Scots spoke of the debate on the future of Rosebank oil lasting twenty years, with no discernable sense of progress, with a sense of frustration at the sense of stasis, regardless of position on the debate. What united Scots with regards to oil and gas in the North Sea was a sense of direction and clarity.

*We probably talk about Rosebank for 15 years, still rightly or wrongly still the major position whether we should drill into these oil fields, which is sitting on a doorstep. So I know it's renewable times....*

*Steven, Edinburgh*

Voters' desire for energy security has led many to a more maximalist position on the subject, as came through in focus groups. Even among those for whom oil and gas was not seen as a feasible long-term solution, some saw Britain's energy insecurity as a sufficient

cause for embracing all forms of energy generation. For others, we have reached a fork in the road, with renewable energy the only clear path forward.

In England, as in Scotland, there was a sense that energy, in this case windfarms, were not owned by local people, not delivering for local people, but instead servicing others. No matter where you are in Britain, or what energy source you're talking about, communities share the concern that they are not receiving the benefits of energy production taking place on their doorstep.

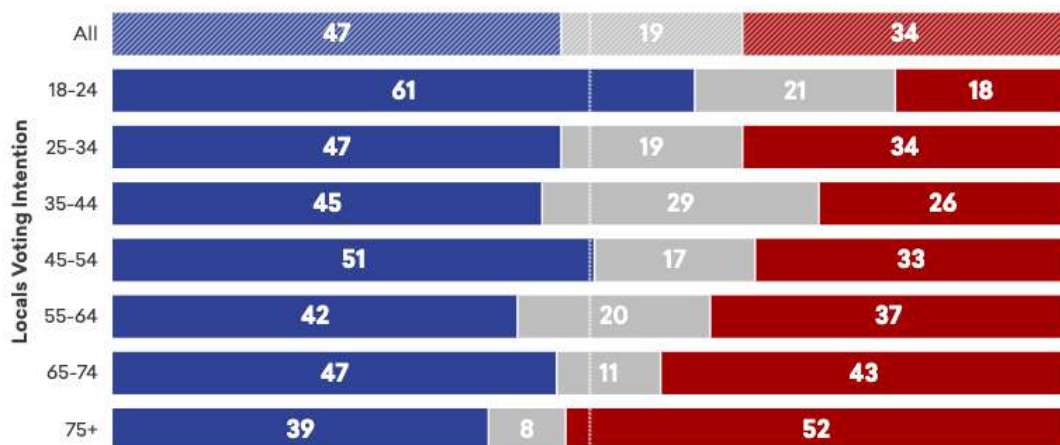
*That's what the Saudi-backed energy companies say [about the benefits of Calderdale Energy Park]. I won't go into it all, but it's a real strong local issue.*

*Helen, Hebden Bridge*

## In England, the support for focusing on renewable energy production is driven by the young

Energy security means a country's ability to meet its own energy needs reliably and affordably – for example without being overly dependent on any single supplier. Which of the following do you think the UK should do to increase its level of energy security?

- Focus more on increasing its domestic renewable energy generation, rather than increasing its supply of oil and gas.
- Don't know
- Focus more on increasing its supply of domestic oil and gas, rather than increasing its generation of domestic renewable energy



Source: More in Common • April 2026

Still, when presented with a specific question on the North Sea (rather than oil and gas in general), and given a binary choice between an increase in domestic oil and gas production or renewable energy generation, voters are emphatically on the side of renewables. A majority (51 per cent) believe we should prioritise transitioning to renewable energy rather than maximising the output from North Sea oil and gas reserves (27 per cent), with Reform the only major party voter-set that disagrees. However, what emerged from further analysis

is that even Reform voters are not as universally opposed to climate action as generally thought.

In Berwick, with Torness within commuting distance, nuclear power was a closely felt reality and a more active part of the debate, with a sense that nuclear power has been deprioritised at the expense of local people and local jobs.

*Nuclear power has been closed down for no logical reason – it's a massive employer and just been shut down apparently just to prove a point that we don't need it, when we do, because we're importing it.*

*David, North Berwick*

## 4: Where do each party's voters stand on climate and energy policies?

### Reform UK

Reform voters are the least likely to back climate action on every measure tested. They are the only group of voters to think the UK should prioritise increasing its oil and gas supply over transitioning to renewables (66 per cent). A similar proportion believe that we should maximise output from North Sea oil and gas reserves rather than prioritising the transition to renewable energy (67 per cent). However, while only 9 per cent of Reform voters believe we should focus more on clean energy than North Sea oil and gas, a third believe we should give equal focus to both (32 per cent), showing there is more appetite for a mixed approach. Meanwhile, a fifth of Reform voters (21 per cent) think the UK would be better off prioritising renewables over increasing its domestic oil and gas supply.

This sizable minority of Reform voters are often overlooked but they are consistently there in the data. Nearly a third express support for Net Zero (29 per cent) and believe we should at least be trying to meet our 2050 Net Zero targets (29 per cent), if not outright doing everything to definitely meet the target (8 per cent). A similar sized cohort of Reform voters believe that it is possible for the UK to transition to clean energy in a way that benefits people like them (29 per cent). Indeed, a third of Reform voters say it is important to them that the political party they vote for has a position to protect the environment and tackle climate change (32 per cent).

Despite the perception of Reform voters being vehemently opposed to all climate action, this group demonstrates the requisite diversity of opinion that can be found in any party with a significant national vote share. This is especially true as the party continues to grow and take voters from more climate-friendly parties. Indeed, a fifth of Reform voters who believe we should be trying to meet Net Zero targets (20 per cent) voted Labour in 2024. A further quarter of them (26 per cent) voted Conservative. A party with around 30 per cent of the national vote share (that Reform holds at the time of writing and has for the past year) is always going to harbour a more diverse ideological grouping than solely the anti-climate contingent that tends to dominate the headlines.

# Majority of Reform UK voters in England and Wales back investment in upgrading Britain's electricity grid

To what extent would you support or oppose the government...

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Don't know
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

Investing in upgrading Britain's electricity grid to connect clean power to homes and businesses



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Reform's pro-climate minority even extends to a majority on certain issues, such as investing in upgrading Britain's electricity grid to connect clean power to homes and businesses. This clean energy policy receives majority support among Reform voters in England and Wales, and plurality of support among Reform voters in Scotland.

## Reform UK voters in Scotland are less supportive of British EV and clean tech manufacturing than Reform voters in England and Wales

To what extent would you support or oppose the government...

● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Neither support nor oppose  
● Don't know ● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose

### Supporting British manufacturing of electric cars, batteries and clean technology



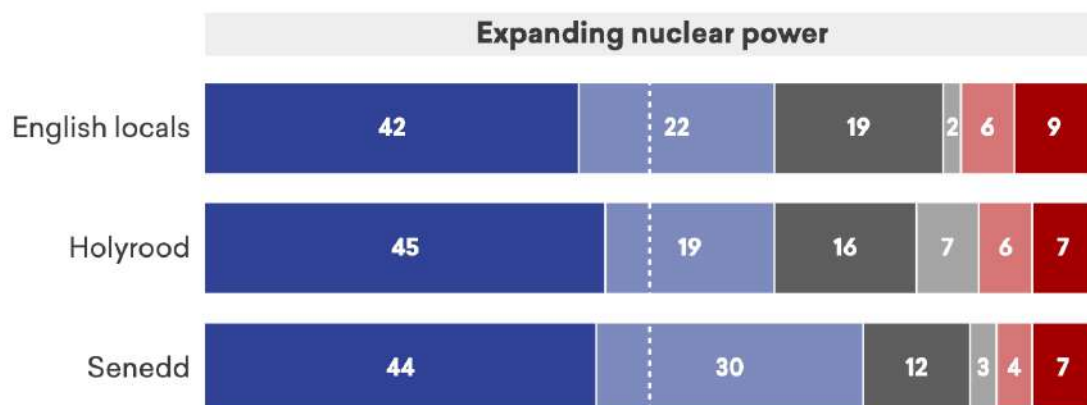
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This more oppositional attitude to clean energy in Scotland is something that will be touched on in further detail below, but it is demonstrated again on the notion of supporting British manufacturing of electric cars, batteries and clean technology, where again support is notably higher in England and Wales.

## Across nations, Reform UK voters support expanding nuclear power

To what extent would you support or oppose the government...

● Strongly support ● Somewhat support ● Neither support nor oppose  
● Don't know ● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly oppose



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Where Reform voters across both borders agree is on the subject of nuclear power, with significant majority support across England, Scotland and Wales. Reform voters are not outliers on this, however. In fact, it is a rare issue in which all parties in England are within six percent of each other in their support; Green voters are the least supportive with 60 per cent and Conservative voters the most supportive with 66 per cent. Reform voters tie with Labour on 64 per cent support apiece. In Scotland and Wales, the situation is markedly different. Though support among Reform voters is unchanged in Scotland (64 per cent) and higher in Wales (74 per cent), the left-wing voters in both countries are more likely to oppose nuclear power (SNP and Scottish Greens in Scotland, Labour and Greens in Wales, though notably not Plaid Cymru).

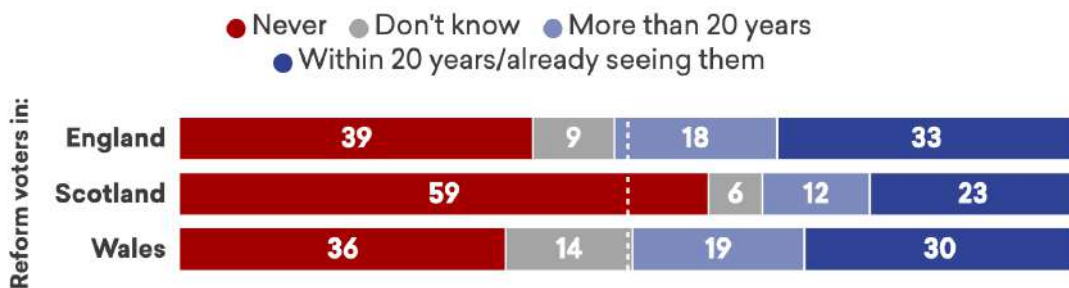
Still, it's also worth emphasising that a strong anti-climate contingent does exist within Reform. It is the only party whose voters are more likely to say that climate change is either not caused by human action (48 per cent) or not happening outright (14 per cent) than to agree that it is real and man-made (33 per cent). That said, perhaps nothing better reflects the shift the climate debate has undergone in recent years than the fact that Reform voters are now twice as likely to say that climate change is happening - but not man-made - than to deny its existence outright. Denialist arguments are an increasingly fringe position, while economic arguments offer greater legitimacy to the anti-renewable cause.

In Scotland, the picture is different. Reform had never won Holyrood seats in an election before; they now have 17. While the party did not win any first past the post constituency MSPs, they had more success in the proportional representation based regional ballot, where they picked up their new representatives.

Reform voters north of the border are far more radically opposed to climate policies than their Welsh or English counterparts. For example, nearly two-thirds (59 per cent) of Reform voters in Scotland say the UK will never see benefits of the clean energy transition, compared with just over one third of Reform voters in England (39 per cent) and Wales (36 per cent). Meanwhile, four out of five Reform voters in Scotland (78 per cent) say it is not possible for the UK to transition to clean energy in a way that benefits people like them (amongst Reform voters in England, this is 62 per cent).

## Reform voters in Scotland doubt the clean energy transition more than in England or Wales

When, if ever, do you think Britain will see the benefits of shifting to cleaner energy?



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There are a few potential reasons for this increased opposition north of the border. Firstly, the prominence of the oil and gas industry in Scotland. Communities in Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, parts of Fife and the east coast have deep ties to North Sea oil and gas. The energy transition has a direct impact on the livelihoods of these communities in a way it simply does not for Reform voters in Essex. Secondly, the dominant party in Scottish politics for the past two decades has been the SNP, who are themselves demonstrably pro-climate action and Net Zero. As a radical opposition party that goes against the status quo, it makes sense that Reform would lean into the other side of the debate. Additionally, many existing renewable projects are located in Scotland, more so than in the UK as a whole. It may be that, having seen these projects up close, Scottish Reform voters have decided they are not seeing the promised benefits and thus are intrinsically opposed to more of the same.

### Labour

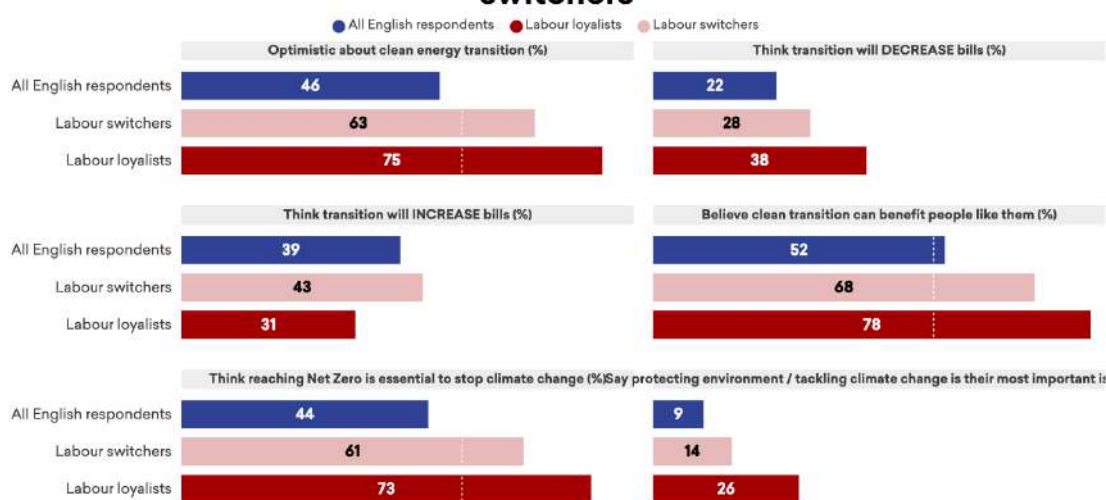
These elections were a hammer blow to Labour. If the party is to rebuild its 2024 base, it cannot simply shift left to reclaim its Green-voting left-switchers or pivot right to win back its Reform-voting right-switchers. It needs to consider its strategy for both, while somehow also holding onto its current voters – no mean feat. One policy area where it could feasibly make positive steps with all sets of voters is on the climate, though it will have to thread the needle carefully, as there is a notable difference in the level of importance climate holds for the voters Labour has held onto compared with those who have left it behind.

Labour loyalists are extremely optimistic about the transition to clean energy (75 per cent to 8 per cent), far more so than Labour switchers, among whom a solid but distinctly smaller contingent (63 per cent) feel optimistic. Loyalists are also more likely to think that the

transition will decrease bills (38 per cent) than increase them (31 per cent), a clear demarcation point between themselves and switchers, 43 per cent of whom believe the transition will increase bills (28 per cent decrease).

The gap between the groups widens again on questions such as Net Zero and who benefits from the clean energy transition. While nearly eight in ten (78 per cent) Labour loyalists believe it is possible for the clean transition to take place in a way that benefits people like them, this drops by ten per cent among Labour switchers (68 per cent). Similarly, while three-quarters of Labour loyalists think it is essential to reach Net Zero to stop climate change (73 per cent), this falls significantly to 61 per cent among Labour switchers.

### Labour Loyalists are more positive about the energy transition than switchers



Perhaps most revealing is that a quarter (26 per cent) of Labour loyalists say protecting the environment and tackling climate change is the most important issue for them (26 per cent), with only 14 per cent of Labour switchers saying the same. Not only is it not switchers' main priority, but more than twice as many switchers as loyalists say that they don't think it's that important that the party they vote for has a position to tackle climate change (20 per cent vs 10 per cent). It is clear that climate issues are more important to those who have stuck with Labour than those who have deserted them.

### The Green Party of England and Wales

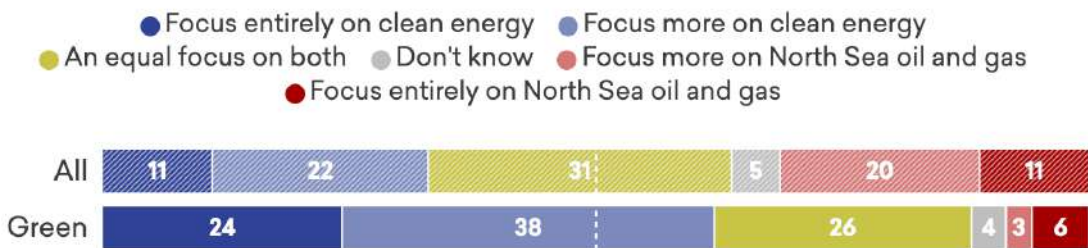
It is striking that the party with green in the name, led by a self-proclaimed 'eco-populist', actually trails Labour in its voters' support for a number of climate issues. That said, Green voters remain the second most in favour of climate action. A majority (56 per cent) feel optimistic about the transition to clean energy, with the same number confident that the shift will make life better for people like them. Alongside Labour voters, Green supporters are the only voters that are more likely to believe the shift to clean energy will reduce their energy bills (34 per cent) than increase them (27 per cent) or make no difference (22 per cent), though of course combined these other options have a plurality. In spite of that, Green voters overwhelmingly support Net Zero, with 70 per cent describing it as essential and 84 per cent supporting current Net Zero targets. Despite trailing Labour on many measures, they are notably the party whose voters are most likely to say climate stances are

the most important issue for them (26 per cent), with just 9 per cent saying it was not important or would put them off.

They show broad support for the government’s current approach to climate change (64 per cent) and offer overwhelming support for the implementation of further policies to reduce carbon emissions (79 per cent).

## Green voters in England back renewable energy over North Sea oil and gas – but a quarter want a combination of both

Some people say Britain should focus on tapping remaining oil and gas reserves in the North Sea. Others say Britain should focus on building up clean energy industries. Which is closer to your view?



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While Labour voters remain the most optimistic on broader climate questions, it is Green voters who are most committed to the clean transition when the question is framed around renewables versus oil and gas. Nearly two-thirds say we should focus more or entirely on clean energy than on North Sea oil and gas (62 per cent), rising to 73 per cent once respondents learn that roughly 90% of North Sea oil and gas has already been extracted. That said, much as Reform has a detectable pro-climate minority in its base, those who voted Green in the local and devolved elections also show some variation in approach to climate. The Greens have an anti-climate minority, with 22 per cent saying we should prioritise maximising output from North Sea oil and gas over transitioning to renewables. This could reflect the 15 per cent of Green voters who believe that climate change is either a natural part of Earth’s cycle (9 per cent) or not happening at all (6 per cent).

Green voters were notably more likely than the general public to name protecting nature and wildlife as a priority that would affect their vote in England’s local elections (17 per cent vs 10 per cent) but still only one in ten said taking action to tackle climate change was a priority that would influence their vote (10 per cent). While this may simply reflect an understanding among voters that the grander aims of countering climate change are beyond the scope of local government, it still indicates there may have been a pivot in the priorities of the party’s voters.

The sample of Scottish Greens in this research was not sufficient to be able to compare the party’s stances on climate issues. However, across focus groups, a clear sense of those who intended to vote for the Scottish Greens came through. For some, there was

a clear intention to maximise the pro-independence vote where there was broad agreement with pro-climate positions. Meanwhile for others, there was a more similar pattern of disillusioned progressives looking for an alternative, that would take a bolder stand on a range of issues, principally climate, than the incumbent government.

### The Conservative Party

Apart from Reform, Conservative voters are the most sceptical of the climate agenda. A fifth feel pessimistic about clean energy (20 per cent), though what sets them apart from Reform is that the climate pessimists represent a minority of the party rather than the majority – 43 per cent of Conservative voters feel optimistic about the clean energy transition and a third (31 per cent) think it will make life better for people like them.

While a notable third of Conservative voters believe climate change is either naturally occurring (31 per cent) or not happening at all (5 per cent), it is on the economics that Conservative voters' skepticism most clearly emerges. They are nearly three times as likely to say that the shift away from fossil fuels will increase energy bills rather than decrease them (52 per cent vs 18 per cent). That said, on a national level, only 11 per cent of Conservative voters believe that decarbonisation will harm the UK economy in the long term, with a further 22 per cent saying it will make no difference and a solid majority (55 per cent) expecting economic benefits in the long-term.

It would be a mistake to characterise Conservative voters as anti Net Zero, for they are relatively split here. They are more likely to say it is not essential than essential (49 per cent vs 37 per cent), though are also more likely to support existing Net Zero policies than oppose them (54 per cent vs 38 per cent). Additionally, they are more likely to back the government's current approach to climate change (37 per cent) or neither support nor oppose it (33 per cent) than oppose it (26 per cent).

## Conservative voters are polarised on renewables versus oil and gas when it comes to energy security

Energy security means a country's ability to meet its own energy needs reliably, affordably and without interruption – for example, by using energy generated within the UK, or by importing energy from other countries. Which of the following do you think the UK should focus more on?



This demonstrates a split that recurs in Conservative stances on climate policies. They are the only party whose voters are divided on whether the UK should focus more on increasing its domestic renewable energy generation (48 per cent) or focus more on increasing its supply of oil and gas (46 per cent), with the other parties all feeling emphatically one way or the other. When speaking specifically about North Sea oil and gas, the split remains, with exactly the same number (44 per cent) saying we should prioritise transitioning to renewable energy as say we should prioritise maximising North Sea oil and gas outputs when presented with a binary choice between the two. However, when also given the option of an equal focus on both, this option received the most support amongst Conservative voters (37 per cent).

This perhaps represents the fact that, generally speaking, Conservative voters are not particularly stirred by climate policy in comparison to other parties. While six in ten (59 per cent) Conservative voters say tackling climate change and protecting the environment is an important issue for them, only 6 per cent say it is the most important issue, while a quarter are totally indifferent (25 per cent). A third (33 per cent) say that a political candidate questioning the science of climate change wouldn't affect their vote one way or the other.

### **Liberal Democrats**

On the issue of climate change, the Liberal Democrats' voter base stands out for being socially liberal, older, and more financially comfortable than voters of the other progressive parties. They are simultaneously twice as likely to say that it is possible for the UK to transition to clean energy in a way that benefits people like them (61 per cent vs 28 per cent) and to say bills will increase rather than decrease as a result of the transition (44 per cent vs 21 per cent). This reflects both the affluence of Lib Dem voters (who are the second most financially comfortable voter segment, trailing Conservative voters by 3 percentage points) and their support for climate related policies. Based on the evidence it would appear that Lib Dems are either willing to pay for their values and make sacrifices for a perceived 'greater good', or are simply able to swallow the costs in a way that other voter segments cannot.

## In England, Liberal Democrat voters are similar to other progressive parties in saying climate change is a priority, but less likely to say it's the most important priority

How important, if at all, is it to you that the political party you vote for has a position to protect the environment and tackle climate change?

- It's the most important issue for me
- It's an important issue for me but not the most
- Don't know
- I don't think it's that important / indifferent
- I would be put off by a party which had this as part of their priorities



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They emerge as the voters most likely to say that tackling climate change is an important issue for them but not the most important issue (76 per cent). This may signal that the issue is slightly abstract for them – something they engage with and support without necessarily putting front-of-mind. As such, they overwhelmingly back climate policies such as existing Net Zero targets (81 per cent vs 15 per cent), with 61 per cent saying Net Zero is essential, and in some respects they go further than traditional left-wing parties. For example, they are more likely than Labour voters to say that the UK should focus more on increasing its domestic renewable energy generation rather than increasing its supply of oil and gas (65 per cent to Labour's 60 per cent) and as likely as Green voters to believe that decarbonising will benefit the UK economy in the long term (63 per cent). However, when push comes to shove, these are not the issues driving their vote.

On the issue of the North Sea, they are more than twice as likely to say that the UK should prioritise transitioning to renewable energy over maximising the output from North Sea oil and gas reserves (63 per cent vs 28 per cent). Nearly half (46 per cent) endorse focusing more or entirely on clean energy than North Sea oil and gas, with a further 28 per cent endorsing an equal focus on both.

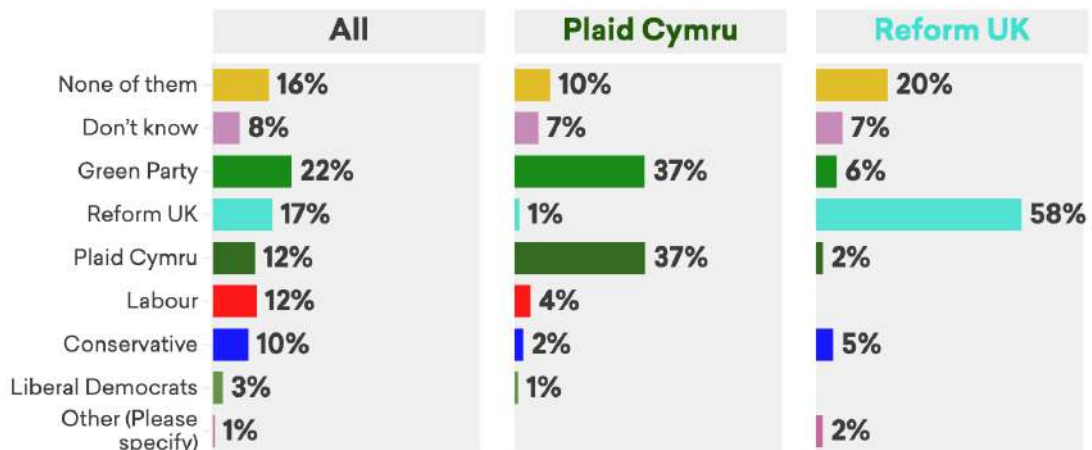
### Plaid Cymru

Climate change was all-but non-existent as an electoral issue in the Senedd elections. Zero per cent of Reform voters and 5 per cent of Plaid voters selected taking action to reduce emissions and tackle climate change as one of their top three priorities heading into the election. Similarly, protecting nature and wildlife was selected by 1 per cent of Reform voters and 6 per cent of Plaid voters. Essentially, it would appear that these were elections in which even progressive parties like Plaid and the Greens parked their climate policies to make tailwinds on the cost of living.

In Wales, Plaid Cymru appealed to many disaffected progressives, disappointed with both the performance of the Labour Government in Westminster and the Welsh Labour Government in the Senedd. Plaid Cymru were well positioned to pick up many of the young, more left-leaning voters that in England looked toward the Greens. The overlap between these kinds of voters is stark. For most parties in the Welsh elections, voters trusted their own party most on climate and energy. The exception was Plaid supporters: they were just as likely to trust the Green Party on these issues as they were to trust Plaid. But this is not true for those who were backing Plaid, who were just as likely to say that they trusted the Green Party on climate and energy as they did for the party of Wales.

## Three in ten Plaid Cymru voters trust the Green Party the most on climate

Which party do you trust most on climate and energy issues?



Source: More in Common • April 2026

The progressive flank of Plaid and Labour voters in Wales are largely indistinguishable from one another in their pro-climate attitude and broadly optimistic framing of the energy transition. Across a range of pro climate policies and investments, those who voted for Plaid in 2026 are supportive. In fact, in the polling not a single Plaid voter said they opposed investing in upgrading Britain's electricity grid to connect clean power to homes and businesses (compared to 13 per cent of Reform UK voters in Wales). While many groups of voters across Britain in the May elections took a maximalist approach to energy - being heavily in favour of investment in clean energy, and (to a lesser extent) oil and gas in the North sea - this is not true for Plaid Cymru supporters. Four in ten Plaid Cymru supporters oppose granting new licenses for oil and gas in the North Sea, while three in ten would support it. This deepens the parallels between those who backed the Greens in England in 2026 and many of Plaid Cymru's new supporters - both represent the voter group in each respective election that takes a stance against the granting of new extraction licenses.

### SNP

In Scotland, debates around oil and gas can be closer to home, leading to pressure on the SNP to soften their stand on new drill in the North Sea. Despite these shifts, the coalition of

those who backed the SNP are pro-climate and the clean energy transition. SNP voters are more likely to be optimistic than pessimistic about the shift to cleaner energy in driving down bills, and by a ratio of almost five-to-one they say the shift will make life better for people like me - 51 per cent say better while only 11 per cent say worse.

This optimism in the transition away from oil and gas carries through into enthusiasm for the uptake of new technologies. Two thirds (65 per cent) of SNP voters think the UK should prioritise transitioning to renewable energy (e.g., solar, heat pumps, electric vehicles), while just 23 percent want to maximise output from oil and gas reserves - less than any of the unionists parties.

For SNP voters, the local delivery of the transition and climate policy matters even more than for the average Scot. They are most likely to say that making new housing developments greener and more energy efficient should be the priority for the Scottish government (while this is only the third most popular option for the country). They are also more likely than the average Scot to prioritise improving local rivers and wildlife, improving local transport and supporting local clean energy projects like community solar.

## **5: The politics of climate: where next for climate advocates?**

The biggest opportunity for those advocating further climate measures right now lies in the fact that the appetite for energy security is at an all-time high. Voters are tired of circumstances outside of their (or even their government's) control having a direct impact on their bills, affecting their ability to afford even life's basic necessities, let alone the little treats that make life worth living. The answer to Britain's energy security crisis lies in one of three options: a return to gas and oil, a pivot to renewables, or a combination of the two. Currently, voters are split between the three, though leaning towards clean energy (35 per cent), with just under a third (30 per cent) favouring an equal focus on both, and under a quarter (23 per cent) favouring a focus on oil and gas.

What should hearten climate campaigners is that even among voter segments who broadly oppose Net Zero and other climate measures, the floor of support is high, with a solid minority that support climate measures even if it is not what ultimately decides their vote. Following the local and devolved elections, former Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote an excoriating essay (26/05/26) in which he emphasised the need for the Labour government to drop arbitrary environmental targets given the country's economic strain and the fact that cheaper energy is available. His intervention brought yet more attention to the issue and again proved that there are plenty on both sides of the aisle who believe it is reckless to negate oil and gas at a time of economic crisis.

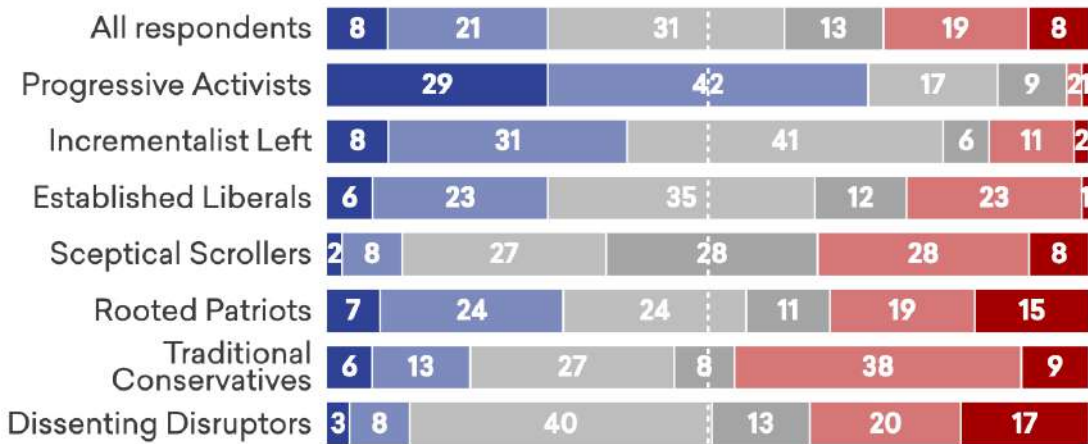
Four of the seven segments (Progressive Activists, Incrementalist Left, Established Liberals, Rooted Patriots) would prefer the UK to focus on increasing domestic renewable generation to increasing domestic oil and gas production. A further segment is evenly split between the two (Sceptical Scrollers), leaving just two segments more likely to be in favour of oil and gas production (Traditional Conservatives and Dissenting Disruptors). A fifth (20 per cent) of Traditional Conservatives and three in ten (30 per cent) Dissenting Disruptors say they would prefer a renewable focus - that is a significant portion of climate supporters hidden amongst the agenda's most vehement detractors. As shown earlier, these climate-

friendly minorities exist within Reform too and reflect an often ignored segment of Britain's political right.

## Progressive Activists are strongly in favour of clean energy in Scotland

Some people say Scotland should focus on tapping remaining oil and gas reserves in the North Sea. Others say Britain should focus on building up clean energy industries. Which is closer to your view?

- Focus entirely on clean energy
- Focus more on clean energy
- An equal focus on both
- Don't know
- Focus more on North Sea oil and gas
- Focus entirely on North Sea oil and gas



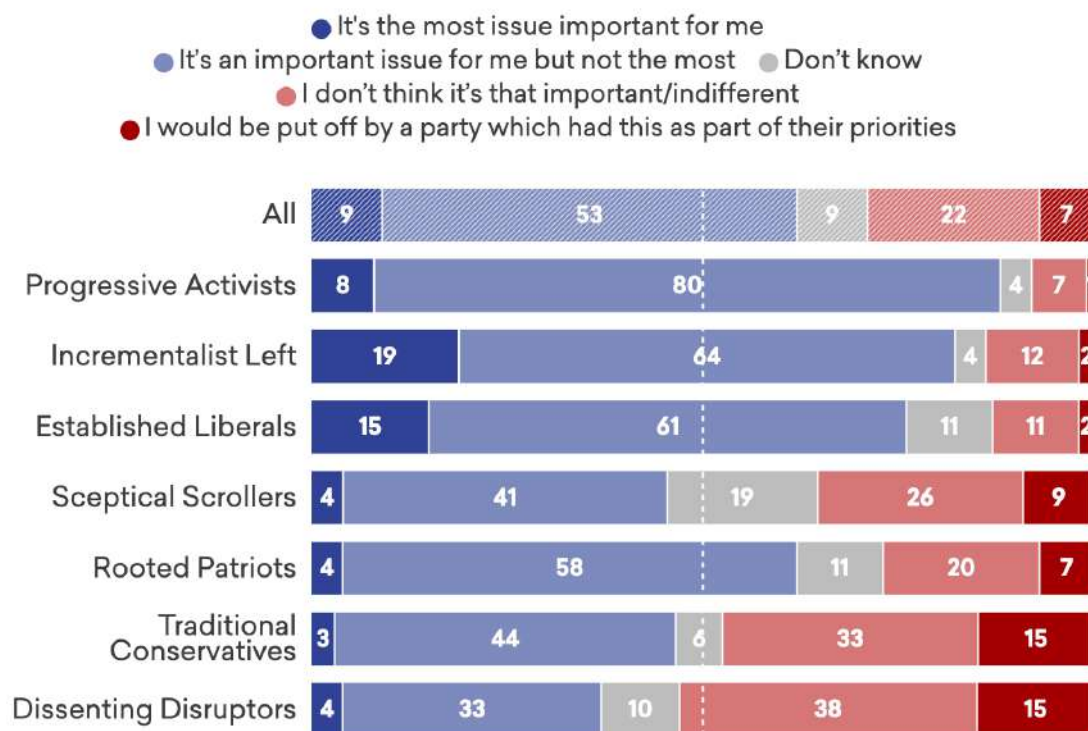
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It's important to point out that this support is more than just an abstract stance on one political question among many. Rather, it is reflective of the genuine importance the climate holds to voters generally, even if that was not reflected at the ballot box this time around. Nearly four in ten Dissenting Disruptors (37 per cent) said that it is important to them that the party they vote for has a position to protect the environment and tackle climate change. That is by a distance the segment least likely to say so, with the importance rising to 88 per cent among Progressive Activists and approaching a full on majority amongst all other segments (just falling short of this majority amongst Traditional Conservatives (47 per cent) and Sceptical Scrollers (45 per cent), and well above it amongst all other segments).

However, those on the other side of the debate would no doubt point out that, in fact, according to their own responses, the climate *didn't* influence their votes during this set of elections - that while voters may claim that the climate influences their vote, when push comes to shove in times of economic hardship, this simply isn't the case.

## Political parties having a position to tackle climate change is important to English Voters

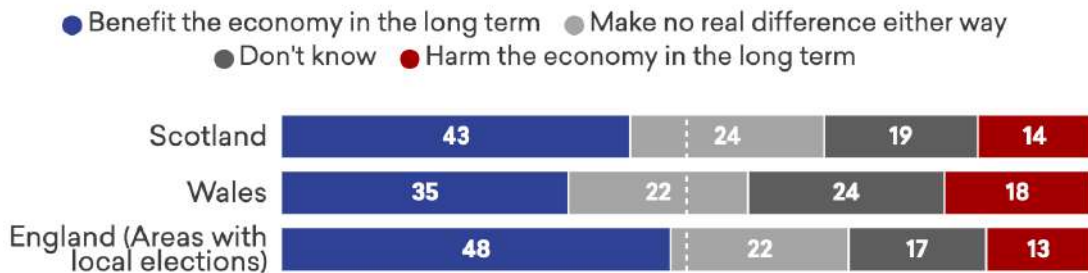
How important, if at all, is it to you that the political party you vote for has a position to protect the environment and tackle climate change?



Meanwhile, the fact that the debate has moved from climate denialism to economics should be a positive for climate advocates - though it represents a challenge too. Liberal Democrat voters are rarities in being both willing and able to swallow higher energy costs. Nonetheless, given the debate is principally economic, the fact that 48 per cent of voters in England believe that transitioning to clean energy will benefit the UK economy in the long-term (versus just 13 per cent who think it will harm it) suggests that the long-term economic argument has been won, though the more crucial short-term one is still all to play for. It is worth mentioning that all seven segments are more likely to think that the transition will benefit the economy than harm it, even if Traditional Conservatives and Dissenting Disruptors are more likely to think it will make no real difference either way.

## Across Scotland, Wales and England, Britons are more likely to think that the energy transition will benefit the economy

In the long term, transitioning to clean technology and investing in helping industry decarbonise will...



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However, as noted, it is the short-term economic argument that is the current and most important battleground, in which the North Sea is the centre of debate. There are challenges inherent to this debate. Support for North Sea drilling is significant. Even if less than a quarter of voters (23 per cent) want to focus entirely on North Sea gas or more on North Sea gas than on clean energy, a further 30 per cent want an equal focus on both. Traditional Conservatives and Dissenting Disruptors are most likely to want to focus on North Sea oil (49 per cent and 33 per cent respectively) and are unlikely to be won over to the renewable cause. However, the segments most likely to want an equal focus are the Rooted Patriots (36 per cent), Established Liberals (35 per cent) and Incrementalist Left (34 per cent). These segments make up half the public between them and are thus likely to set the stall for public opinion moving forward. If they can be convinced to turn their backs on oil and gas entirely, the renewable transition will likely be accelerated. However, until such a time as perception shifts around the immediate impact on energy bills, a preference for balancing renewables with oil and gas seems most likely.

The fact that the cost of living is the primary concern of British voters and energy prices the biggest cost of living concern (62 per cent) is a double-edged sword. If the argument can be made and won that the renewable transition can bring down energy bills then climate support is likely to skyrocket. However, as long as there remains a perception that the transition will increase bills (39 per cent), support is likely to remain static, if not fall. The key point is that, to most voters, this is not a moral debate but an economic one. For climate advocates, it is in this lane that the argument should be fought.

Ultimately, across a sense of insecurity and stagnant debate, voters spoke of the value of bold politicians, prepared to make an argument and deliver on bold action. It was notable that in Glasgow, even despite the two different Green Parties, progressive Scottish voters still pointed to Zack Polanski as someone who was making a bold and clear case.

*Brave politicians? I think politicians are brave enough to say that cliché. There are some tough decisions ahead of you that if we're going to do anything real about this, we have to take those tough decisions. And I think somebody mentioned Zach Polanski, he's the kind of guy who would t*

*Robert, Glasgow*

## 6: What's next for the parties?

### Labour

**Voters who have stuck with Labour are more in favour of climate action than those who have left.**

Those voters will not be won back on climate alone. As was shown during these local and devolved elections, the climate is not a priority for these voters when compared with more immediate concerns like the cost of living, affordable housing and the NHS.

**Labour switchers support renewable energy, but also back a balance between renewables and oil and gas.**

Four in ten (43 per cent) Labour switchers in England want to focus mostly or entirely on renewable energy. However, a further third (31 per cent) want an equal focus on both. Labour is fine to emphasise the push for a renewable future, but it must do so in a way that brings that crucial third with them rather than leaving them behind.

**Labour switchers oppose the government's current approach to climate change as much as all voters.**

It is not on climate policy that the government is losing its voters – only a fifth (19 per cent) of English voters oppose the government's approach to the issue. However, it is noticeable that a similar proportion of Labour switchers (17 per cent) also oppose the government's policies to date.

### Reform UK

**A majority of Reform voters oppose climate policies.**

They are the most likely voter block to think the renewable transition will raise energy bills and the only ones who think we should be prioritising oil and gas. Tapping into that economic fear, as Reform already does, is likely to prove fruitful.

**A notable minority of Reform voters support climate action.**

Despite general opposition, it is noteworthy that between a fifth and a third of Reform voters consistently back climate action, with even more showing support for specific clean energy policies. As Reform's coalition broadens, one expects the diversity of opinion within the party may continue to grow and maybe even challenge its conventional hard-line stances on issues like climate.

**Reform voters in Scotland are more extreme on climate than their Welsh or English counterparts.**

The salience of North Sea oil and gas industries – and the subsequent impact on jobs and local communities they bring – make the climate question more acutely felt north of the border. It is not an abstract concern as it can be to those down south, and Scottish Reform voters have shown fervent opposition to the renewable push.

### **The Conservative Party**

**Conservative voters are sceptical of the climate agenda on economic grounds.**

They are the second most likely voters to expect an increase in energy bills as a result of the renewable transition, though even this sceptical voter base expect to see economic benefits in the long-term.

**They are split on renewables vs oil and gas in a way other parties are not.**

Where voters of all the other parties display strong feelings one way or the other on whether Britain's energy future lies in a pivot to renewables or a return to oil and gas, Conservatives are divided. In theory, this should make it harder for the party to adopt a stance that satisfies its voters. Except...

**Climate policy matters less to Conservatives than it does to other voters.**

A potential reason for the aforementioned divide on climate issues may be that Conservative voters are less stirred by climate debate than other voters. They are four times more likely to say they feel indifferent to the issue than to cite it as their main priority (25 per cent to 6 per cent).

### **The Green Party of England and Wales**

**Green Party voters are the most likely to say that climate stances are the most important issue for them.**

However, among Green voters generally, the cost of living, the NHS, affordable housing, crime and other mainstream issues are more of a priority right now. A positive for the Greens may be that they can afford to focus on these issues knowing that most voters already associate them with a pro-climate stance.

**The Greens have an anti-climate minority.**

Much like Reform has a surprising pro-climate minority, so too do a notable fifth of Green Party voters (22 per cent) think we should prioritise maximising output from North Sea oil and gas over transitioning to renewables.

**Green voters in the capital think the Mayor of London does a better job tackling climate change than the national government.**

They are even more likely to say he does a better job protecting nature and the environment. This suggests that Green voters are not averse to showing support for Labour ministers who enact climate policies. In other words, their loyalty may be to the cause rather than tribal.

### **Liberal Democrats**

**Liberal Democrat voters back the renewable transition even though they think it will be costly.**

Their willingness to swallow the cost of what they expect to be a rise in bills as a result of the clean energy transition shows either a true belief in the cause or an acknowledgement that they can afford a possible rise in costs in a way other voter segments cannot.

**They are the most likely voters to say they support climate action but that it is not their priority.**

This perhaps hints at the distance these voters – often concentrated in affluent pockets of England – have from the direct reality of the impact on industry that policy changes will bring about. It suggests that the party can afford to maintain a solidly pro-climate stance without needing to make it a focus.

**In some instances, they are more in favour of climate action than the parties to their left.**

A higher percentage of Lib Dem voters believe the UK should focus on renewable energy generation than Labour voters and as many Lib Dem voters as Green voters see a positive long-term economic impact in decarbonising. However, as noted, it is not what is motivating their vote.

### **Scottish National Party (SNP)**

**SNP voters are convinced of the benefit of the climate transition.**

Scotland's politics are more polarised in terms of sentiment toward the impact of the transition toward clean energy – those who are pessimistic about the energy transition are more likely to back Reform UK and the Conservatives. At a country wide level, the SNP's voters are positive about the impact the energy transition will have on their lives

**Energy production feels even closer to home in Scotland than England and Wales.**

That's true whether discussing nuclear, renewable energy or oil gas. While the proceeds of oil and gas in the 20th century and renewables today were featured by the SNP during the 2026 campaign, the sense of the importance of local benefits goes further.

**The SNP's voter coalition may be broadly pro-transition, but there are geographic pockets of concern.**

Looking at the data of those who intended to back the SNP in Holyrood, it paints a picture of a voter block that is optimistic about the energy transition, and less in favour of the extraction of oil and gas than the rest of Scotland. This may be true, but what this hides is the local, and geographic variation within the SNP coalition. Across groups in Aberdeen, the stance of those who intended to back the SNP were removed from the larger group of urban and suburban voters who back the SNP from elsewhere in Scotland. While this group of more pro-fossil fuel SNP voters may be small, their geographic concentration could make them more relevant, particularly in the constituency seats of Holyrood or Westminster elections.

The impact of energy policy on determining local politics will be put to the test in Arbroath and Broughty Ferry and Aberdeen South, these are areas where in focus groups, the impact of the transition was personal, and SNP supporters stood apart from those elsewhere in the country. With the Conservatives already attempting to frame the Aberdeen South By-election as a referendum on oil and gas, the election will put to the test just how much this part of the SNP coalition stands apart.

### **Plaid Cymru**

**Plaid must hold together a progressive and rural coalition on climate.**

Plaid Cymru's 2026 coalition of voters is pro-climate action, but not a monolith. The party now faces the challenge of navigating the delivery of a climate agenda supported by its voters - but this delivery will be seen very differently by the rural voters within Plaid's traditional heartlands of Welsh speaking areas and the growing urban support in places like Cardiff. Community Energy, championed by Plaid during the campaign, appears to be a policy well designed in capturing the different wings of the party.

**Plaid must get to grips with being behind the wheel in Welsh government.**

With many new members entering the Sennedd, Plaid Cymru must adjust to being a party of power, not of opposition. Plaid's representatives can rest assured that the voters that took them into power are in support of their pro-climate and transition agenda.

**There will be a potential battle among pro-climate progressives in future elections.**

The challenge for Plaid is demonstrating action and delivery in climate. They are the only party in Wales whose own voters do not trust them the most on climate (they instead look to the Greens). With Plaid Cymru able to use the pulpit of the Welsh government, the challenge is to demonstrate to their progressive voter base that they have a plan for transitioning Wales to clean energy, without alienating their rural base, where cars and roads are the backbone of transportation.