# Growing backlash against Labour’s Net Zero policies fuels rise of reformist party



The political landscape in the UK has been significantly shaken, with growing discontent over the new government's proposed Net Zero policies grabbing headlines and spotlighting rising tensions within the Labour party. While the administration champions an agenda focused on renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions, critics argue that this approach is detrimental to the very people it claims to advocate for. The economic fallout from these policies, particularly in light of soaring energy prices and inflation, has led to an increasing appetite for alternatives among voters.

The situation is stark: Ofgem’s recent announcement has seen the price cap rise by 6% in 2025, pushing the average annual household energy bill to an eye-watering £1,849. This hike, a staggering 9% increase from the previous year, is compounded by projected inflation rates of up to 3.7%, according to the Office for Budget Responsibility. For larger families, bills can soar as high as £2,628, making the cost-of-living crisis a pressing concern for many Britons.

In this context, a reformist political movement aimed at countering the government's "green dogma" is gaining traction. Critics argue that the insistence on transitioning to renewables through wind technologies and ambitious carbon capture initiatives—such as the newly established Great British Energy with an £8.1 billion budget earmarked for carbon capture and storage (CCUS)—is misguided. They contend that despite hefty investments, these strategies are unlikely to lower energy bills for consumers. Even the chief executive of British Gas has voiced skepticism, stating that the current renewables policy “will definitely not reduce the price” for consumers.

Simultaneously, regional election results underscore the shifting political currents. A reformist party has made significant inroads, seizing control of Lincolnshire County Council and winning mayoral elections in both East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Their message, centred on dismantling ambitious Net Zero targets and promoting affordable energy solutions, resonates with voters who feel abandoned by the traditional parties. Polling indicates that, while a notable portion of the population may support the principles of Net Zero in theory, when faced with the reality of rising living costs, their priorities shift decisively towards economic relief.

The recent proposal to expedite CCUS deployment in the UK has met with resistance. The current legislative framework not only mandates this technology's incorporation into energy planning but does so with significant financial backing and taxpayer support. Critics argue that this reliance on a largely unproven technology, with real-world capture rates often falling short of promises, is unwarranted and burdensome. The notion that billions could be spent on a technology still facing substantial technical and environmental uncertainties raises questions about the prudence of such an investment.

Furthermore, the CCUS initiative raises critical concerns about long-term sustainability, with risks associated with the deployment of transport pipelines and the potential for carbon leakage overshadowing the proposed benefits. The project's reliance on proven capacity for CO2 storage adds another layer of complexity, as evidenced by Norway’s Sleipner project, where seepage rates have undermined claims of environmental safety.

In light of these challenges, the rise of a transformative political movement can be interpreted as a warning to Labour. The emerging narrative positions the government's policies as disconnected from the realities facing many families and at odds with pressing economic needs.

Unlike Labour's proposed plans, which are viewed by some as an embrace of costly and complex technological fixes, this reformist party is promoting a straightforward approach: eliminating what they call “green subsidies” in favour of investing in reliable, domestic energy sources. Following their local election successes, they have positioned themselves as a voice of pragmatism, advocating for measures that resonate with working-class Britons who are increasingly prioritising economic stability over environmental concerns.

The political dialogue around energy is evolving, with looming questions about the viability of ambitious climate commitments in the face of voter backlash. If Labour fails to address the practical and economic realities of transitioning to Net Zero, the growing trend of opposition could solidify itself not merely as a fringe movement but as a mainstream alternative.

As ordinary families grapple with rising energy costs, the pressing need for alternative solutions grows ever clearer. Without major shifts in policy and a reconsideration of supposedly progressive strategies, the chorus calling for change is likely to intensify. The future of British democratic and economic stability hinges on a political reckoning with these challenges, and the path forward will require bold, real solutions rather than mere ideological fervour.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2056285/ed-miliband-political-earthquake> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/2e740b5a-8b52-480b-9071-329e3eb4d8b8> - This article discusses the challenges faced by UK Energy Secretary Ed Miliband's ambitious plan to transition Britain's energy infrastructure to clean power by 2030. Initially promising £40 billion annually to overhaul the grid and expand wind and solar energy, the project now appears increasingly unfeasible. Industry setbacks, such as Ørsted halting work on the Hornsea 4 project and delays in a vital undersea cable connecting Scotland and England due to global equipment shortages, are highlighted. Political resistance, notably from the Reform Party, and technical issues underscore the risks of the transition. The article suggests that Miliband faces a difficult decision: maintain the current timeline or delay targets to avoid financially burdensome long-term contracts and rushed grid fixes. Missing the 2030 deadline may be politically awkward, but a pragmatic approach might better serve the UK's clean energy transition goals.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/d7858718-91a9-4881-baa6-10dc7c05a260> - This article reports on Reform UK's breakthrough in the May 2025 UK local elections, granting the populist party significant influence over more than £100 billion of local government pension assets via control of key pensions committees. Traditionally considered low-profile, these committees wield substantial power over fund strategies, asset allocations, and manager appointments. Reform UK, led by figures such as Richard Tice, is campaigning against 'woke' ESG and net-zero-focused investments, criticizing their perceived underperformance. Their critique echoes moves in the U.S., where conservative political backlash has influenced public pension investment strategies, particularly around ESG. Despite criticism, some of these 'woke' investments, like the BlackRock Low Carbon Fund, have actually outperformed benchmarks. However, Tice remains skeptical and is pushing for vigilance in reviewing investment performance. With UK government plans to pool investments further and potentially reduce local committee authority, the current Reform influence could be short-lived. Yet, given that pooling firms remain accountable to their local authority clients, Reform councillors' influence may persist. This development could significantly impact the UK asset management industry's approach to ESG and net-zero investing, mirroring the politicization seen in the U.S. and potentially causing a chilling effect across the sector.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/c3b25079-f394-4a40-84af-2c11fa0f6338> - This article outlines Reform UK's main policies following their success in the May 2025 UK local elections. The right-wing populist party, led by Nigel Farage, gained control of ten English councils and two metro mayor positions, prompting increased scrutiny of its policy platform. Nationally, Reform promotes anti-immigration, anti-net zero, and anti-'woke' stances. The party advocates for leaving the European Court of Human Rights, offshoring the processing of illegal immigrants, stricter immigration rules, and revoking citizenship for foreign-born criminals. Economically, it supports a small-state model—cutting corporation taxes for SMEs, scrapping inheritance tax, and opposing expanded workers' rights. While it traditionally backed free-market policies, recent local election campaigns saw Reform endorse nationalizing failing utilities and supporting striking workers. It remains staunchly opposed to net zero, calling for the end of green subsidies and promoting fossil fuel extraction. Locally, Reform promises aggressive cost-cutting, audits to reduce wasteful spending, elimination of DEI initiatives, and opposition to housing asylum seekers in hotels. However, experts warn these promises may face practical and legal limitations, as much local funding is tied to statutory social services and national mandates. Reform plans to challenge such constraints in court if necessary, but historical precedents suggest mixed outcomes.
5. <https://time.com/6995276/nigel-farage-reform-uk-election/> - This article examines how Nigel Farage's Reform UK party impacted the British election. In the U.K. snap election, Reform UK, a rebranded version of UKIP, made a significant impact by securing over 4 million votes and winning five parliamentary seats. This historic win marked an impressive performance for the right-wing populist party and provided a new political home for disillusioned Conservative voters. Despite Labour's landslide victory, Farage expressed his intent to target Labour voters to build a substantial national movement. Reform UK's campaign emphasized anti-immigration policies, tax cuts, and leaving the European Convention on Human Rights. The party's success came amid controversies and with the backdrop of rising right-wing populism across Europe. Experts suggest that while Reform UK attracted votes from former Conservative supporters, its extreme policies may be too radical for Labour's core base. Farage, who played a pivotal role in Brexit, is seen as having influenced Conservative policies, pushing the party further right. The challenge for Reform UK is to demonstrate organizational effectiveness and appeal to a broader voter base.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/boards-policy-regulation/comment-labours-green-growth-agenda-has-made-it-uks-party-business-2024-07-29/> - This article discusses how Labour's green growth agenda is positioning it as the UK’s new party of business, a role previously held by the Conservatives. Historically, the Conservatives had strong climate action policies under leaders such as David Cameron, Theresa May, and Boris Johnson. However, recent conservative administrations have shifted away from these commitments, resulting in policy inconsistencies and increased energy costs. Keir Starmer’s Labour party is gaining business trust through its ambitious climate agenda, which includes over 35 announced bills. Key initiatives involve planning reforms to support onshore wind farms, the creation of Great British Energy, and efforts towards energy independence and sustainable aviation fuels. The Climate Change Committee’s latest report emphasizes the critical need for accelerated climate action, as only a third of the required emissions reductions by 2030 are on track. Aligning with Labour's green policies offers businesses long-term economic benefits, such as cost savings, new revenue opportunities, and enhanced brand reputation. Despite potential challenges, Labour’s government is poised to continue the UK's legacy of leading climate action, aiming for significant breakthroughs by COP29 and beyond.