

SP2026 Manifesto Analysis

# Energy

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## Purpose, scope and method

### Scope

This analysis examines what the six main parties contesting the 2026 Scottish Parliament election say about energy. It covers the 2045 net zero target, renewables build-out, nuclear, oil and gas, grid and consenting, community benefit and ScotWind, heat decarbonisation, and the route by which household and business bills might actually fall.

### Purpose

Rather than look at individual manifestos or the differences between them, I have taken what might be an unconventional approach and looked at commonalities: **where might the parties set aside ideological and tribal politics to work together in the interests of Scotland?**

After all, even if the SNP get a majority it may be a fragile one. The probability remains that throughout or at some point in the parliament, two or more parties will have to work together. That is exactly how the parliament was intended to work. It does on many occasions, but not nearly enough.

There are also a skint public sector and a stagnant economy. We aren't going to solve those issues without more collegiate working.

### Method - please read these important notes

I have not done this as paid or even unpaid work for any client. It has been for my own interest and as a contribution to reframing the conversation between the worlds of politics, business and society.

It would not have been humanly possible - for your author at least - to read, digest and cross-reference all of the manifesto content and produce a timely report. Therefore I have used a sophisticated AI tool to help before doing a light-touch review and edit of the most important points. **Both AI and human may have made mistakes. Please do not rely on it as definitive.**

Talking points represent my view and are designed to support further discussion and enquiry.

All page references cite the published PDF page number. Page references are not definitive of a party's whole position - they are signposts to one or more places where policy points are mentioned, not a comprehensive index.

**Parties covered:** Scottish Conservatives, Scottish Labour, SNP, Scottish Liberal Democrats, Scottish Greens and Reform UK Scotland. They are listed in no particular order.

### Links to manifestos

- [Scottish Conservatives manifesto \(PDF\)](#)
- [Scottish Labour manifesto \(PDF\)](#)
- [SNP manifesto \(PDF\)](#)
- [Scottish Liberal Democrats manifesto \(PDF\)](#)
- [Reform UK Scotland manifesto \(PDF\)](#)
- [Scottish Greens manifesto \(PDF\)](#)

## Cross-party consensus

Energy is the manifesto theme with the widest split and the most specific claims. The parties agree on a narrow set of diagnoses and divide on almost every mechanism. Every party accepts bills are too high, renewables will grow and the grid must be modernised. Beyond that, the fault lines are deep: on the 2045 target, on nuclear, on new oil and gas, and on who carries the transition cost.

### Broad agreement (four or more parties)

- **Scottish household and business energy bills are too high.** All six parties frame affordability as the primary consumer problem. The remedies differ fundamentally: bill discount, social tariff, community dividend, subsidy abolition or independence. (Conservatives p.20; Labour p.9-10; SNP p.49, 64; Lib Dems p.71; Reform p.9; Greens p.11)
- **Renewables will grow and Scotland has an economic opportunity.** Even Reform, which would scrap Net Zero targets, recognises the workforce opportunity. Conservatives, Labour, SNP, Lib Dems and Greens name offshore wind, solar and hydrogen as growth sectors. (Conservatives p.45; Labour p.34; SNP p.23; Lib Dems p.72; Reform p.9; Greens p.11)
- **Grid infrastructure must be expanded.** Five parties flag grid build as the binding constraint. Labour would make it a national planning priority; the SNP would reform the consents process; the Greens would invest in the planning system itself; the Lib Dems would give community councils a louder voice; Reform would fast-track consenting around business clusters. (Labour p.34; SNP p.63; Greens p.11; Lib Dems p.72; Reform p.14)
- **Community benefit from large renewable projects should increase.** Different mechanisms - SNP's ScotWind Wealth Fund and 20% community ownership right; Labour's £100m Community Energy Fund; Lib Dems redirecting ScotWind rental to councils; Greens requiring developer percentage contributions; Conservatives redirecting Crown Estate revenue to a household discount. (SNP p.23, 64; Labour p.51, 95; Lib Dems p.59, 72; Greens p.11; Conservatives p.20)
- **The oil and gas workforce must not be lost.** Labour's Energy Skills Passport, the Conservatives' Affordable Transition Fund, the SNP's Just Transition framing, the Lib Dems' valuing of the workforce and the Greens' publicly-funded retraining all seek the same endpoint via different routes. Reform would keep oil and gas operational rather than transition. (Labour p.34; Conservatives p.48; SNP p.23; Lib Dems p.73; Greens p.24; Reform p.9)

### Narrower agreement (two to three parties)

- **Energy Profits Levy needs reform.** Conservatives and Reform would abolish; SNP and Lib Dems would reform or replace with a predictable mechanism; Labour accepts the current settlement; Greens retain. (Conservatives p.47; Reform p.9; SNP p.23; Lib Dems p.73; Labour p.34)
- **Hydrogen has a role.** Conservatives propose 13 hubs and review tax reliefs; Lib Dems back green hydrogen leadership; Labour references it within industrial strategy. Sectoral demand and capital considerations are not quantified by any of them. (Conservatives p.45; Lib Dems p.72; Labour p.34)
- **Heat decarbonisation is stuck.** Greens would bring back the Heat in Buildings Bill; Lib Dems would pass a Fairer Heating Bill and cap heating oil prices; SNP commits to a fair and affordable transition. Conservatives would scrap heat pump grants for off-grid oil users; Reform would stop the oil boiler phase-out. Five parties, five directions. (Greens p.11; Lib Dems p.71; SNP p.49; Conservatives p.45; Reform p.13)

## Talking points

### The 2045 target

Conservatives and Reform would scrap the 2045 net zero target. Labour, SNP, Lib Dems and Greens retain it. Every independent assessment since the Climate Change Committee's 2022 progress report has flagged the target as increasingly out of reach without step-change investment in heat, transport and land use.

### Nuclear

Four parties want the SNP's nuclear block lifted: Conservatives, Labour, Lib Dems and Reform. Two oppose: SNP and Greens. Torness closes around 2030. Unless new capacity is commissioned immediately, the replacement question becomes a question about imports from the rest of the UK.

## **Oil and gas - managed decline or revival?**

Conservatives and Reform back active new licensing. The SNP layers a climate compatibility test onto energy security. Labour accepts continued production during transition. Lib Dems back the industry in transition while opposing fracking. The Greens would end new extraction immediately and join the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance.

The workforce - around 90,000 jobs - is the political constraint. Every party knows it. Only the Greens have committed publicly-funded retraining on a named timescale and a named funding figure (although without knowing where the funding will come from). The Conservatives' Affordable Transition Fund is targeted but uncoded. Labour's Energy Skills Passport is the elegant bureaucratic solution but does not, on its own, create jobs to move into. The Scottish supply chain has already diversified into offshore renewables; the questions are about other sectors and whether the pace of change can ever match the rate of job losses.

## **Bills - what actually reduces them for households?**

The Conservatives' £100 bill discount funded from Crown Estate Scotland revenue is the clearest pound-in-the-pocket commitment. The Lib Dems' social tariff, electricity-gas decoupling and elimination of regional price differences are mostly reserved powers. The SNP's claim that electricity bills could fall by over a third is conditioned on independence.

The Greens' community-ownership route to lower bills is the slowest to scale but the most durable in design. Reform's Energy Price Impact Statement is a transparency device with no enforcement mechanism. Labour's £150 off bills for eligible households via widened energy efficiency support is specific but applies only to a subset.

## **Grid and consenting**

Five parties flag grid as the binding constraint. The proposed fixes pull in opposite directions. Labour and Reform would speed up consenting. The Conservatives would pause major projects pending a National Energy Policy. The SNP would reform energy consents. The Greens would invest in the planning system. The Lib Dems would strengthen community councils' voice. Again, there seems to be insufficient recognition of the tensions and dilemmas, let alone means to fix them.

## **Community benefit and ScotWind**

Five different mechanisms exist for turning ScotWind into community or household benefit. The SNP's Wealth Fund governance and early-year draw are not specified. Labour's £100m Community Energy Fund is a single figure without a parliamentary time-frame. Lib Dems would transfer rental income to nearby councils without clarifying the split with Scottish Government. Greens would mandate a revenue percentage from developers; the percentage is not stated. The Conservatives would channel it to a household bill discount, which is the only proposal that does not create a community-level institution.

## **Heat decarbonisation**

The Heat in Buildings Bill was withdrawn in 2024 over household cost concerns. The Greens would bring it back. The Lib Dems would pass a Fairer Heating Bill instead. Conservatives would scrap heat pump grants in favour of cash for off-grid oil users. Reform would stop the oil boiler phase-out. The SNP commits to a fair and affordable transition without naming the vehicle.

None of the five active positions addresses the fundamental: at current heat pump prices and current grid constraints, the domestic retrofit programme needs a different financing model.

## **What is missing from most manifestos**

Hydrogen demand roadmap with sectoral targets. Storage volume targets for pumped hydro and batteries. Demand-side flexibility and smart tariffs beyond a brief Lib Dem reference. Carbon capture and storage - Acorn is named only in passing. Workforce numbers for transition - only the Greens quantify it at 40,000 new green energy jobs.

## At a glance

The table below summarises each party's headline approach to energy policy.

Theme	Conservatives	Labour	SNP	Lib Dems	Reform	Greens
2045 net zero	Scrap; drop related regulations	Retain; align with GB Energy	Retain; action plan to recover	Retain	Scrap targets, subsidies and quangos	Retain; action plan to recover
Nuclear	Back new nuclear; replace Torness	Remove ideological block	Oppose new nuclear	Remove opposition; apply same tests	End SNP ban	Oppose, including SMRs
New oil and gas	Support new North Sea development	Accept production during transition	Climate compatibility plus security test	Back transition; value workforce	License North Sea; rehabilitate gas	End new extraction; Beyond Oil and Gas
Energy Profits Levy	Abolish	Accept	Reform to protect jobs	Replace with stable mechanism	Abolish	Retain
Renewables and community	£100 household discount from Crown Estate	£100m Community Energy Fund; 40GW offshore by 2040	ScotWind Wealth Fund; CARES £15m; 20% ownership right	ScotWind rental to councils; quadruple solar	Scottish Energy Workforce Plan	£600m programme; 1GW community-owned by 2030; developer levy
Heat decarbonisation	Scrap heat pump grants; cash for off-grid oil	Widen energy efficiency eligibility	Fair and affordable transition	Fairer Heating Bill; heating oil price cap	Stop oil boiler phase-out	Heat in Buildings Bill back; 2035 most households
Bills - claimed effect	£100 discount; £75 from RO abolition	£150 off bills for eligible	Independence: over a third off bills	Social tariff; decouple from gas	Energy Price Impact Statement	De-link from gas; community dividends
Key differentiator	Bill discount plus pause on major projects	Industrial strategy plus nuclear unlock	ScotWind Wealth Fund plus consents reform	Affordability first; strongest heat package	Scrap net zero; rehabilitate gas	Universal ownership; deepest investment

## Scottish Conservatives

### General thrust

The Conservatives lead with affordability and reject the binding 2045 target. The manifesto backs nuclear, new oil and gas, and a pause on major renewables where local objection is strong. The transition narrative is framed against household cost. (p.45-48, 78-79)

### Key proposals

- **Scrap the 2045 target:** drop related regulations. (p.45)
- **Abolish renewables subsidies:** back abolition of Renewable Obligation and similar schemes, £75/year household saving cited. (p.45)
- **£100 bill discount:** funded from Crown Estate Scotland revenues. (p.20)
- **Nuclear:** bring new generation plants back into Scotland's mix. (p.48)
- **Oil and gas:** abolish Energy Profits Levy; back new developments. (p.46-47)
- **Pause on major projects:** hold all major energy infrastructure where local objection threshold is met, pending a standalone National Energy Policy. (p.79)
- **Hydrogen:** 13 hubs across Scotland; review tax reliefs. (p.45)
- **Affordable Transition Fund:** replaces Just Transition Fund; targeted at oil and gas workers. (p.48)

### How they propose to fund it

The £100 discount is paid from Crown Estate revenue that would otherwise fund community benefit or grid investment; the trade-off is not priced. Subsidy abolition delivers saving only if retail prices track wholesale, which is the opposite of the current market structure. The pause on major projects has a cost in deferred investment that is not modelled. Scrapping the 2045 target removes a statutory driver; no replacement indicative target is offered.

## Scottish Labour

### General thrust

Labour treats energy as industrial strategy. Build out renewables, keep oil and gas through transition, lift the nuclear block, and align with GB Energy and the National Wealth Fund. Delivery of grid and consents is elevated to a national planning priority. (p.34, 95)

### Key proposals

- **End the nuclear block:** remove the ideological block on new nuclear energy. (p.34)
- **Offshore wind:** deliver 40GW offshore wind by 2040. (p.34)
- **Grid:** classify grid build as a national planning priority. (p.34)
- **Energy Skills Passport:** movement between oil and gas and renewables. (p.34)
- **Community Energy Fund:** £100m from ringfenced ScotWind revenue. (p.51, 53, 95)
- **Bill relief:** widen energy-efficiency support so all eligible households get £150 off bills. (p.9-10)
- **Energy Transition Zone:** Aberdeen-focused industrial strategy pillar. (p.34)

## How they propose to fund it

The Community Energy Fund has a number; the 40GW target does not have a capital envelope. Grid as a national planning priority is a policy change, not a funding commitment; the Scottish Government's consenting role is retained. £150 off bills sits inside a widened eligibility for energy efficiency, whose baseline cost envelope is not broken out for energy. The wider alignment with GB Energy assumes UK fiscal support continues through the Parliament.

## SNP

### General thrust

The SNP retains the 2045 target and casts energy as the principal economic opportunity. Devices include the ScotWind Wealth Fund, reformed consents and expanded CARES. The lower-bills pitch is conditional on independence. (p.23, 49, 63-65)

### Key proposals

- **Accelerate build-out:** offshore wind, solar, pumped storage and emerging technologies. (p.23)
- **ScotWind Wealth Fund:** for energy and financial security. (p.23)
- **EPL reform:** continue calling for Labour's Energy Profits Levy to be reformed to protect jobs and investment. (p.23)
- **Consents reform:** reform the energy consents process. (p.63)
- **CARES expansion:** Community and Renewable Energy Scheme to £15m. (p.23)
- **Community ownership right:** up to 20% of onshore wind projects. (p.64)
- **No new nuclear:** continue to oppose new nuclear power stations. (p.64)
- **Independence offer:** cut household electricity bills by over a third, business savings of at least one-third. (p.64)
- **Home Energy for Health:** bill support for users of life-saving equipment. (p.49)

## How they propose to fund it

The bills claim rests on independence, which is outside the current settlement. Within devolved competence, CARES has a figure and ScotWind investment decisions remain to be taken. The Wealth Fund is named but its early-year draw, governance and mandate are not. Consents reform is an administrative change with capacity implications that are not costed.

## Scottish Liberal Democrats

### General thrust

The Lib Dems prioritise bill reduction for vulnerable households, acceleration of clean heating and lifting the nuclear block while valuing the oil and gas workforce. The platform is the most household-facing of the six. (ch.12, p.70-73)

### Key proposals

- **Fairer Heating Bill:** accelerate smart heating and district heating rollout. (p.71)
- **Price decoupling:** separate electricity prices from wholesale gas; social tariff for vulnerable households; eliminate regional differences in bills. (p.71)
- **Heating oil price cap.** (p.71)
- **ScotWind rental to councils:** nearby-council model. (p.59, 72)

- **Solar:** quadruple generation in this Parliament. (p.72)
- **Nuclear opposition removed:** apply same tests as other sources, including SMRs. (p.73)
- **EPL replaced:** with a predictable, consistent mechanism. (p.73)
- **Oppose fracking and any new shale gas front.** (p.73)
- **Green hydrogen:** leadership for hard-to-decarbonise sectors. (p.72)
- **Energy Insight:** community-council voice vehicle. (p.72)

### How they propose to fund it

Decoupling electricity from gas is reserved; the Scottish Government cannot deliver it unilaterally. The heating oil price cap interacts with UK energy market regulation; legal vehicle is not named. Quadrupling solar needs grid capacity and is not costed. The ScotWind-to-councils transfer redistributes within the existing envelope rather than adding capital.

## Reform UK Scotland

### General thrust

Reform's energy policy scraps net zero, re-licences North Sea oil and gas, lifts the nuclear ban and puts an Energy Price Impact Statement on every related decision. The policy frame is that energy cost has become the binding constraint on Scottish competitiveness. (p.9, 13)

### Key proposals

- **Scrap net zero:** all SNP Net Zero related targets, subsidies and quangos. (p.9)
- **End nuclear ban:** reserved-powers route. (p.9)
- **Rehabilitate North Sea gas:** as primary energy system. (p.9)
- **License North Sea oil and gas:** via reserved powers. (p.9)
- **Scottish Energy Workforce Plan:** linked to colleges and apprenticeships. (p.9)
- **Energy Price Impact Statement:** on every related policy decision. (p.9)
- **Stop oil boiler phase-out:** in rural households. (p.13)
- **Restrict offshore wind:** stop future farms that harm fishing grounds and migratory birds. (p.13)

### How they propose to fund it

Scrapping subsidies and quangos is framed as savings. Rehabilitating gas as primary energy runs counter to the UK statutory framework; the legislative path is not described. The Energy Price Impact Statement is a transparency device without an enforcement mechanism. Restricting offshore wind on fisheries grounds implies a lost revenue stream that would otherwise fund community benefit and Wealth Fund contributions; the trade-off is not scored.

## Scottish Greens

### General thrust

The Greens treat energy as the heart of the climate response. The manifesto rejects nuclear and new fossil fuels, commits to the largest single investment programme, and seeks to break the link between electricity bills and gas prices. (p.7, 10-11, 24)

### Key proposals

- **End new oil and gas extraction:** continue to oppose Rosebank and new Peterhead gas. (p.7, 11)
- **Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance:** join. (p.7)
- **£600m renewables programme:** onshore and offshore wind, tidal, solar. (p.11)
- **Heat in Buildings Bill:** bring back with 2035 phase-out target for most households. (p.11)
- **Retrofit support:** pay for heat pumps, solar plus battery, other green heating. (p.11)
- **Community-owned energy:** at least 1GW by 2030. (p.11)
- **Developer levy:** require large renewables developers to contribute a percentage to community ownership. (p.11)
- **Planning system investment:** to accelerate grid rollout. (p.11)
- **Oppose nuclear including SMRs.** (p.11)
- **40,000 green jobs:** net increase, with retraining for oil and gas workers. (p.24)
- **Offshore wind test site:** world-leading, Scotland-based. (p.11)

### How they propose to fund it

The Greens are the most explicit of the six on new revenue: non-domestic rates surcharges, reformed LBTT, a mansion tax and wealth-tax proposals across the wider manifesto. The £600m renewables programme has a figure but not a delivery vehicle. The 1GW community target is large compared with current community-owned capacity; the collection mechanism for the developer levy is not set out. Bringing back Heat in Buildings Bill implies the cost model that caused its 2024 withdrawal has been resolved; the manifesto does not explain how.