Despite this burning house

How do we build safe places amidst the chaos?

Howling fire. Smoke that obscures all the features of the known. Fire that rages through the house, bursting from room to room, roaring through stairwells and onto the upper floor. We are stunned by fire. Then comes the flood.

This essay began with a return to a piece written just over a decade ago by Platform titled 'Energy beyond neoliberalism'.[1] That article, which was written for *The Kilburn Manifesto*, set out the idea that a great transition was under way in the UK from oil & gas to a renewable energy system. It proposed that this technological shift could, and should, be accompanied by a social and political shift, and that the coming energy world would be community owned and democratically run. It would be a realisation of Energy Democracy.

In that piece, the island of Eigg in the Inner Hebrides, on which the community had established a wind and solar fuelled system, was taken as an exemplar. Just as the pioneering health care scheme in the Welsh town of Tredegar was a model for Aneurin Bevan's NHS, we proposed Eigg's process as a model for a national project. The core of the article lay in the hope that the century-old 'Carbon Web' of oil & gas corporations would finally be unravelled and, as Doreen Massey taught us, this would be part a new economic and social 'settlement'.

Eleven years on, I re-read the piece and was struck both by what it foresaw and by what we authors were blind to.

On a level of technological, economic and political systems, the transition that it described has been coming about.

In 2015 the continuity of oil & gas production in the UK North Sea was

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'common sense' in mainstream politics. The cross-party consensus which had existed around the offshore industry since the 1960s remained in place, despite actual oil production falling steadily after 2000. Britain's oil province was a mature basin, and yet it was still perceived as a golden goose. This was the same goose that had once enabled Thatcher's neoliberal economic revolution.[2]

In that year of 2015, the Cameron government passed into law the principle to Maximise Economic Recovery in the North Sea, asserting the intent that the state would pressure and assist the private oil companies to extract as much oil & gas from the UK sector as was economically viable. Perhaps, in retrospect, this determined assertion by the Conservative government reflected a growing nervousness about the prospects of UK oil. For a decade later, in 2026, the 'common sense' has shifted. For the first time in sixty years the future of 'Britain's oil' has become a central political debate. The North Sea oil & gas industry is winding down - though the speed of its decline, and how its impacts are to be distributed, are hotly debated. The major oil corporations have sold out, or are selling out, leaving the remaining 283 oil & gas fields in the hands of private equity companies and the national corporations of foreign states such as China and Iran.[3]

The 'common sense' that oil & gas is the bedrock of national energy security has been eroded.[4] Whilst some political factions continue to argue that fossil fuel extraction within the UK is a source of security, an equally powerful force argues that this is now a source of insecurity. The previous consensus has gone. It has been eroded by two oil & gas price shocks in the last four years, resulting from Russia's war on Ukraine, and the US attacks on Iran. Both of these are conflicts waged by petrostates.

Meanwhile UK civil society has become passionately engaged in the fate of the North Sea. For sixty years, many hundreds of fields were developed and moved into production, and yet they were largely unmentioned in mainstream British conversation. Now, in these twilight years, nearly every new field proposed for development has become a name in public discourse, such as Cambo, Rosebank and Jackdaw. A powerful frenzy of activism has been driven forward by groups including #Stop Rosebank, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Greenpeace UK and Uplift.

The year of 2015 was also pivotal for the climate movement, with the passing of the Paris COP Agreement. Flawed as the UN Climate Conference might be, that summit was a high-point in activist pressure on the delegate nations, urging them to

make a powerful statement of commitment. And this was achieved. A red line was drawn, against which all other changes could be measured. No increase above 1.5c of warming, or 2.0c at the very maximum, became the totemic target. Since then, in Britain, the climate movement has continued to drive change.

In 2015 Tate's headline sponsor was BP, as it had been for a quarter of a century. The role of oil & gas corporations as donors to the UK's major cultural institutions - Tate, National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Royal Opera House, Science Museum, British Museum and others - was still a given. Shell and BP were eager to use these state institutions to help manufacture their 'social license to operate', and the museums and galleries were proud of the status that this corporate beneficence, however modest in real financial terms, bestowed upon them. Today, after 25 years of campaigning by Art Not Oil, No Tar Sands, Liberate Tate, BP or not BP?, Platform, Shell Out Sounds and Culture Unstained, almost all of the cultural institutions have ended their contracts with the oil corporations. These institutions would now be embarrassed to be linked to an industry that is perceived as part of the past and not the future.

The major oil companies, who for long battled against their critics, eventually tactically withdrew from British cultural and, to a lesser degree, political life. Shell has relocated its core operations to the Netherlands. BP has become ever more an American corporation, with its shareholders largely domiciled in the US, and its American CEO and Board focused on how to navigate the politics of Washington to BP's benefit.[5]

In 2015 the matter of the shareholdings of the pension funds of the UK's local authorities was an obscure topic, far from the mainstream media. However, over subsequent years, the pioneering work of Carbon Tracker, ShareAction, UK Divest and Platform have spread public understanding of how these pensions' equities in oil & gas corporations were building the retirement security of council employees on the ongoing profitability of fossil fuel extraction. Borne up on the rising climate movement, manifested in XR, School Strikes and the Climate Emergency declarations, UK Divest went from strength to strength.[6] By 2025, several billions of pounds worth of oil & gas equities had been sold out of the pension schemes of UK local authorities, universities, faith groups and other bodies. That some part of British capital - however small a percentage of the whole - was turning its back on fossil fuels was a source of considerable irritation to the corporations. After all, the

City of London had long been a comfortable home.

Since the mid-sixteenth century, the extraction of fossil fuels in Britain, as elsewhere, has not been driven purely by the need for heat or light, but by the capacity of coal, and then oil & gas, to be a highly effective means to generate return on capital. BP, for example, is not interested in oil & gas *per se*; it is interested in return on capital, in profit. But the profitability of fossil fuels can shift, as is demonstrated by the history of coal.

The first phase of Britain's transition out of fossil fuels was the shift out of 'black diamonds'. For 250 years until the 1950s, coal was fundamental to the British economy. It had been a key part of the financial architecture of capitalism for a further 150 years prior to that. Yet in the last seventy years it has almost entirely vanished from the UK's economy and polity. There were key moments in this transition - the Clean Air Act in 1956, passed in response to the 4,000 deaths directly attributed to London's Great Smog of 1952; the draconian closure of National Coal Board mines in the 1980s and 1990s; and the end of the last coal-fired electricity power station in 2024.[7]

All of these steps have taken place within a context of significant social struggle - particularly over the large-scale pit closures that led to the 1984/85 Miners' Strike. Whilst it is important to recognise and remember the bitter experience of the communities and individuals that were forced to bear the burdens of this transition under the blows of excessive state and corporate power, the rapidity and comprehensiveness of the transition remain remarkable. The disappearance of coal from daily life shows us the unfolding fate of oil & gas. They too will have passed out of our lives in possibly as little as a decade. They too will have melted into air. For piece by piece the 'Carbon Web' in Britain is unravelling, just as has long been hoped for by those who've campaigned against it.[8] Slowly but surely, we will cease to be a nation underpinned by oil. We will not produce oil, we will not use it, we will not finance it, we will not be employed by its industry, we will not go to war for it, and we will rarely hear about it in the media.

If the unravelling of the presence of oil & gas in the UK polity, on the heels of the coal industry, is steadily taking place, then a parallel process described in the Platform essay of 2015 has also been unfolding at astounding speed - the rise of the renewable energy industry.

Soundings

Since 2015, the technology and infrastructure of the UK's energy system has been transformed. The east coast seascape from the Moray Firth to The Channel and the northwest coast from Liverpool Bay to the Solway Firth, have become home to a massive number of windfarms. The scale of the endeavour is astounding. One set of farms still under construction on the North Sea's Dogger Bank will cover a seabed area equivalent in size to half of the county of Kent. And yet, like the invisibility of the oil & gas fields until recently, and unlike onshore wind and solar, these offshore arrays remain beyond the UK's public imagination, despite our increasing dependency on renewable power. In the first quarter of 2026, wind and solar energy provided 36 per cent of Britain's electricity demand, and on 26 March 2026 a record 67 per cent of the UK's electricity was provided by wind and solar.[9]

The construction and maintenance of the offshore farms is bringing some employment and revenues to many small harbour towns - such as Brightlingsea in England, Mostyn in Wales, and Wick in Scotland - and income to other larger ports that have been in decline - such as Montrose in Scotland, and Ramsgate and Grimsby in England. The electricity from offshore, combined with that from onshore wind and solar farms, is requiring the construction, or upgrading, of the National Grid from Sutherland to Lincolnshire, and from Conway to Kent. The leap in electricity generation is being driven by, and is itself driving, new forms of energy consumption. Electric vehicles, a relative rarity on British roads in 2015, are now commonplace. Sales in EVs rose an astounding 16-fold between 2015 and 2025. At the same time, the wave of proposed AI datacentres in all regions of Britain represents a potentially massive new electricity demand.[10] The UK is being transformed from a petrostate to an electrostate.

This industrial transformation of the UK is effecting a change in the polity of the country. Shifts in energy systems shift economic geography. From the early 1970s, Aberdeen and the North East of Scotland grew in political importance in the UK, whilst from the 1990s the towns and cities of the coalfields of England, Wales and Scotland suffered economically and faded in national political significance. With the decline of North Sea oil & gas the sun is setting on Aberdeen and Lowestoft, but it is rising on that ring of smaller ports such as Brightlingsea, Mostyn and Wick that are key to the maintenance of the offshore turbines surrounding Britain's coast. And it may well yet bring new life to the likes of Aberdeen and Lowestoft.

The new energy system is affecting the interplay between the nations of the

UK. Wales has woken to the reality that its northern coast from Anglesey to the Dee is becoming an almost continuous line of windfarms. The town of Port Talbot is reeling under the blow of the closure of its last steel furnace; however, there is a possibility that its future will be pegged to 'green steel' production, and, in part, to the manufacture of floating wind turbines that will be towed out into the Severn and Celtic Seas.[11]

Northern Ireland is to become a renewables hub, with Belfast the key port for wind farms installed in the Irish Sea and off Western Scotland up to The Minch. Meanwhile, within Scotland a political battle is raging against the pylons of the National Grid, partly driven by the perception that they are exporting the nation's energy away to England. In Shetland, the campaigners against Viking Energy protest not only on the grounds that this onshore windfarm despoils the environment, but also because the energy it produces is for the benefit of mainland Scotland.

Finally, electricity is changing the political relationship between the UK and Ireland, as interconnector cables tie these two nations into one continuous grid. If the wind blows off Norfolk but is gentle in County Cork, the electricity will flow in one direction, and vice versa. This is an interdependence of a fundamental part of each nation's energy supply that is unnoticed by the general public.[12]

Similarly, the position of the Britain's new energy system within the structures of international finance has been rapidly evolving. UK North Sea oil development from the mid-1960s onwards was dominated by US capital in the form of the oil & gas corporations such as Exxon, Texaco and Mobil; the service companies that undertook the construction such as Halliburton and Brown & Root; and the US banks that provided key capital. Unfortunately, we can see the same pattern in the unfolding renewables system. The windfarms in UK waters are owned and developed by multinationals such as Vattenfall (Sweden), EDF (France), Orsted (Denmark) and RWE (Germany). They are constructed by SDIC Power (China), Vestas (Denmark) and Aker Solutions (Norway). And they are financed by state capital, including that from Sweden, France, Denmark, Germany and China. Or by US private capital, such as through the asset management giant Blackrock.

It is astounding how puny is the role of the UK in ownership, manufacturing and financing, despite the establishment of new state actors such as GB Energy. It is astounding how much profit therefore goes elsewhere and not into the UK Treasury.

Furthermore, there has been no concerted effort by UK governments to create a national wealth fund drawing in the income from multinational wind companies generating profit in the UK. Norway famously created, in the early 1970s, such a fund to husband the income from their oil & gas sector. This sovereign wealth fund is now the largest of its kind in the world and underpins Norway's welfare state.

In the aftermath of the wildfire, we are left with ashes. After the flood, flotsam and jetsam and stinking mud.

As was hoped-for in our essay of 2015, the decade since has seen the decline of oil & gas, and the rise of renewables, but not yet with the attendant political formations that were hoped for: community-owned or nationalised renewables. More disturbingly, however, re-reading the essay today reveals that we did not foresee two developments that have come to dominate the present - the rise of the far right and the speed of the climate's collapse.[13]

'Energy beyond neoliberalism' was completed over eighteen months before the Brexit Referendum of June 2016. From the perspective of a decade on, the political shock that that event delivered was a catalyst for the ever-growing strength of far-right populism and the absorption of far-right narratives into the political mainstream. Fuelled by the impact of the USA's first Trump Administration (2017-2020), the authoritarianism of Boris Johnson's flailing Conservative government (in particular the action to prorogue Parliament), and his successor Rishi Sunak's stark commitment to the Rwanda Plan and to 'Stop the Boats', the far right continues to build momentum. Perhaps its visibility was stalled for a while by the Covid pandemic (2020-2022) and the Black Lives Matter uprisings in response to the murder of George Floyd (2020) and the spotlight it threw on the murder of so many others. But it has continued to grow.

The intensity of the race riots in Liverpool (2024), Southampton (2026), Belfast (2026) and Thetford (2026), plus the scale of the 'Unite the Kingdom' march (2025), the geographical spread of the 'Raise the Colours' movement (2025-2026) and the menace of the Patriot Platform protests in Dover and Portsmouth (2026), have created shock after shock, bringing a daily fear of abuse to the lives of anyone not 'white' or deemed to be 'foreign'. Alongside this has come the rise of Reform UK in the polls; its success in 2025 in winning an outright majority in 24 councils;

the rise of the more extreme Restore UK; and the endless press amplification of figures such as Nigel Farage, Rupert Lowe and the populist white nationalist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson). The rise of the far right in the UK is bolstered by equivalent movements across Europe in Germany, Hungary, Italy, France, Spain, Netherlands, Austria, Sweden, Slovakia and Greece. Extreme ethno-nationalist political ideas that had become so alien in mainstream political conversation after the end of the Second World War have become bewilderingly and terrifyingly normalised.

We had not foreseen this in the 2015 essay, and neither had we imagined how such a shift might interact with the cause of Energy Democracy itself. Partly on account of the oil & gas price shock following the Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022), and partly due to Donald Trump being belligerently supportive of 'Big Oil' in his second presidency (2025-2028), the oil & gas corporations have pushed back hard in the UK, as they have elsewhere in the world. They have worked to build political support, especially on the right. In 2023 Rishi Sunak promised to 'Max out North Sea oil';[14] whilst since 2025 the Conservatives' leader Kemi Badenoch has been determined to heed Trump's call to open up the UK for new drilling, and wage war on 'Net Zero'. Meanwhile Reform UK has made oil and climate change denial a totem in their culture war against the 'metropolitan left'.

Yet in real terms oil & gas as an industrial sector is now insignificant in the wider UK economy: the remaining 283 oil & gas fields - which are projected to be reduced to a mere 103 by 2030 - employ directly and indirectly, at the highest estimate, 120,000 people. This is 0.35 per cent of the UK workforce. As mentioned, these remaining fields are almost entirely owned by non-UK domiciled companies, and thus they contribute ever less to the UK; but despite this the issue of North Sea oil is still ascribed great political traction.

Parallel to the shock of the far right in Britain has come the shock of climate impacts in these islands on a scale that in 2015 we had not foreseen. I write this essay while across much of England, fields lie baked and brown. Wildfires have broken out in Suffolk and Hampshire, and homes have been burnt in Stourbridge. The sense that winter floods are now mirrored by summer fires accelerates a change in thinking.

The essay of a decade ago was written in the context of deep concern about what we called the 'climate crisis'. This crisis had been the impetus for all of Platform's -

and a myriad of other organisations' - work for the previous twenty-five years. But something has shifted since 2015.

Over these decades, the dramatic impacts of the increasingly unstable climate had, for most people in the UK, been viewed at a distance: the floods in Bangladesh, the desertification of Sub-Saharan Africa, the hurricanes in the Caribbean. Although many had relatives or friends in these places that were being destroyed, in the main, people in Britain experienced the emergencies through the TV or phone screen, and could put them into the category of 'expected disasters in troubled places' - and describe them with paternalistic and racist overtones. However, from the early 2020s, the impacts of the climate radically changing have been felt much closer to home. There have been wildfires in Greece (2023), Spain (2025 & 2026) and France (2026). There have been devastating floods in Ahrtal, Germany (2021), and Valencia, Spain (2024). There have been intense droughts in Italy (2022), Spain (2022 & 2024) and Britain (2022, 2025 & 2026). Meanwhile there have been empty reservoirs, dry rivers and water shortages in many parts of Europe. All of this, and the prospect that things are going to get worse. And worse.

It seems clear that a shift in perception has taken place since 2015. For perhaps the three decades before then, activist narratives declaimed that 'we are in the climate crisis', and there was a demand for climate justice - this latter being a crucial shift to embed an awareness of environmental racism into the climate movement. The etymology of the word 'crisis' implied that we'd arrived at a 'turning point', a moment of 'decision'. 'Justice' recognised the catastrophically racialised impacts of fossil fuel consumption. We operated in the belief that if enough people took enough actions - actions ranging from more cycling to shutting down fossil fuel capitalism - then the worst of the impacts of climate change and injustice could be averted.

But now, despite so much activism and some key policies, as well as the behavioural and technological shifts taking place, we have arrived at the very place that we feared we would. The climate is collapsing around us. We live in dread of the droughts and fires of summer. We live in dread of the storms and floods of winter. And those who can are fleeing parts of the world made unliveable by climate disaster. This migration, which any citizen would undertake in similar circumstances, is seized upon by the far right and turned to their own ends.[15]

Despite this burning house

Yet a few objects are unscathed - a door frame here, a table there, a set of foundations. A scavenged tent, a bucket, some pallets. What is it that we build from these remains?

If the fire of political chaos has raged through the structures in which we live, if the fires of the collapsing climate turn our houses into ashes, where is the hope and what are the strategies that feel commensurate with the nature of these times?

Platform began its work in the early 1980s. At that time, we were acutely aware that the institutions of the left were breaking down. So many political groups, publications and arts organisations were closing. The pillars of a building, that we were too young to have been politically active within, were falling all around us. It seems clear that we live in similar times today. Everywhere we see organisations fold, community spaces close and publications cease.

But the collapse of much of the left was only part of the situation in the 1980s, for the wider green movement and anti-nuclear movement was flourishing. We took our inspiration from the Greenham Women, eco-feminism, CND and END, Die Grünen and the ideas of Joseph Beuys and Rudolf Bahro, among others. In the UK the Green Party surged to 15 per cent of the vote in the 1989 European Parliament elections. 'Green consumerism' and 'green finance' were finding their feet. We soon collaborated with institutions of the environmental movement that had been born in the 1960s and 1970s and were steadily growing in the 1980s and 1990s, such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and SERA. A new house was being built all around us, a new shelter, a home.

The collapse of left institutions that we witnessed - in particular the defeat of the National Union of Mineworkers in 1985 - was part of a deeper shift from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, from the social-democratic settlement to the neoliberal settlement. It was clear in 2015 that the neoliberal settlement had closed, or was closing. Hence the phrase *After Neoliberalism?* that provided the title of *The Kilburn Manifesto.* However, the nature of the new - as yet unnamed - settlement was less clear. A decade on the contours of this settlement have become clearer.[16]

New Labour and President Clinton's 'Third Way' were as much neoliberal projects as the Thatcherism and Reaganism that had preceded them. Blair and Brown's strategy was to fund a liberal social and welfare policy - including Sure Start, NHS finance and increased arts funding - on the back of a booming UK financial

sector and a globalisation that was undergoing steady growth. The Financial Crisis of 2008 drew a line under that era, and since then the UK has experienced near-zero growth. Both the left and the greens have been slow to adapt to this radical shift, whilst the far right and the Trump Administration has effectively exploited and driven these new economic realities. Zero growth has spawned a politics that feasts off xenophobia and racism. [17]

If the shift from the neoliberal settlement has produced a dramatic decline in living standards and a rise in poverty in the UK, the far right has been able to mobilise around this. Arguing that their politics is the voice of 'the left behind', or the victims of a 'two-tier system', UKIP, Reform UK, and now Restore UK, have utilised the economic realities of this settlement to their political gain. Similarly, the atmosphere of anxiety around climate impacts has spread to most parts of UK society. But the far right has been able to strengthen its position by arguing that the intensifying climate impacts should be answered by a strong defence of our carbon-intensive economy, in the face of those who call for rapid shift to a post-oil world.

The new settlement has also produced a sense of constant political chaos. The new order is marked by an apparent disorder. We see it in governmental structures such as the repeated changes of the UK's prime minister and cabinet, or in the impossibility of trying to predict the actions of the President and Administration of the USA. We see it in wars that were sold as lightning strikes but became seemingly endless - the War of Israel on Gaza and Palestine, the War of Russia on Ukraine, the War of the USA on Iran.[18] We see it in the processes of capital in turbulence - since 2008 there's been a decisive shift from capital investing in corporate equity to capital investing in private equity. And, indeed, we see private equity acting to undermine the stability of corporate equity, as illustrated by the aggressive force of Elliot Investment Management against BP in 2025.

The essay of 2015 speculated on an energy system beyond neoliberalism. Ten years on, neoliberalism has receded into the distant past and we are clearly living within a new settlement.

How do you fight a fire if you know you have already lost?

How to live within the collapsing climate? If the deeper narrative of the climate crisis was that there was always the possibility of halting climate change if sufficient

actions were taken, the narrative of climate collapse calls for the ability to live within the breakdown of weather systems while continuing to act. The climate is collapsing, how then to build more resilient structures to enable living within that reality, structures from which we can continue to push for the fastest closure of the global fossil fuels industry?

The character of climate impacts is their unpredictability. None of us knows exactly when the torrential rain will come, nor how powerful the winds will be. None of us knows how long the drought will last, nor when the wildfires will break out. Our task is to build structures together, to take precautions, and to learn how to live together in constant vigilance.

It seems the character of an increasingly racist society is its unpredictability. None of us knows when or where a racist riot will be planned, raging through the town and the media. None of us knows when or where physical or verbal aggression will take place on the street or online. But it is clear that these things will keep coming, until sufficient social pressure forces them to cease. Our task is to build that social pressure together and to build the structures that can provide shelter while we undertake the long struggle against racism. Our task is to take wise precautions, and to be on the lookout night and day.

New houses, safe houses, can both protect us and be a source of strength. Both to ourselves and to others. They can be part of the culture of determination that we want in this world.

From safe houses we can continue to undertake the work for Energy Democracy, just as was aspired to in the essay of 2015. For there remains plenty to be done and plenty of opportunity for action, despite the circumstances being very different from those foreseen a decade ago.

The movement for Community Energy is vastly stronger than it was in 2015. From Shetland to Bristol, from Stornoway to Grimsby, there are examples of renewable energy systems owned by the community in which they stand, controlled by that community, and generating not only power but significant streams of income as the electricity is sold into the National Grid. These systems are descendants of the model of Eigg flourishing in places across Britain. Alongside this movement there are growing plans for renewable systems to be established at a municipal level, for

local authorities to develop, manage and draw solid income from wind and solar schemes. (Indeed, Prime Minister Burnham declared in September 2026 that this work, building on GB Energy, would be a key mission for his government.[19]) We can see that these energy systems are not only about providing watts and supply; they are also about building resilient communities. Building houses that can stand firm and provide shelter midst the growing climate and political storms.

The more complex level within which to establish democratic systems of ownership and control is the national level. How is the National Grid to be operated across the UK? What of the balancing of power and control between the nations of the UK and Ireland? And similarly, between the UK and the electricity systems of other European states into which we are connected from Norway to Greece?

Equally challenging is the question of offshore and onshore windfarms currently owned and operated by non-UK domiciled multinational corporations. I repeat: approximately 82 per cent of the farms existing or under construction in the UK are owned by non-UK companies. The history of oil & gas and coal in the twentieth century is the history of states nationalising productive fields and mines owned and operated by private individuals or foreign corporations. The same nationalisation is necessary in the unfolding future of Britain's renewables system.

'Energy Beyond Neoliberalism' warned against the corporate control of wind & solar, and this process of corporate control is not inevitable. It could be reversed: the British state, or the states of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland, could nationalise the existing wind & solar farms. As was the case in the twentieth century, a national struggle to 'take control' of resources can reinforce a sense of convivial national identity as well as build a culture of community ownership. This can create a sense that this is *our* energy system. A new common sense that this is *our* power.

Piece by piece it seems that within the present settlement a new common sense around energy is being built in the UK. Despite being vilified in the right-wing media, Ed Miliband's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero made remarkable strides in two short years, with the support of much of the climate movement and large sections of the trade unions.[20] The Clean Energy Jobs Plan and the establishment of GB Energy, although faltering at times, are powerful steps, especially with the statutory mission to promote community energy. These are the significant concrete outcomes from a decade of pressure on the political structures.

Despite this burning house

In 2017 Platform began its seminal *Our Power* campaign by directly surveying and engaging with workers in the offshore oil & gas industry. From this alliance came a list of ten demands to Whitehall, Parliament and Holyrood that have helped shape the movement for Just Transition in the UK. Nine years on, a powerful alliance of civil society groups, including Uplift, Friends of the Earth Scotland and Platform is working to persuade MSPs to realise a publicly owned energy system in Scotland. The campaign is, once again, titled *Our Power.*

An echo of this process can be seen in the metropolis. In London, and other cities across the UK, one of the forms that anti-racist action is taking is the defence of community assets - of market places, of community centres, of community gardens - against closure and against privatisation through corporate land acquisitions. This is the rightful assertion that these places of 'common life', of conviviality, are *our* spaces. That they should be, and can be, collectively owned and communally possessed.[21]

The present and future impacts of the collapsing climate upon our cities has become increasingly clear - long seasons of intense heat, followed by long seasons of torrential rain. Seasons of fire and flood. In this unfolding reality, communal places, spaces held in common, will become ever more necessary. Places that are cool in the summer, and dry in the winter. Places of gathering and shelter. Places of joy and song. Safe houses.

The development of community energy systems and the securing of urban community spaces may seem slight in the face of the wildfires and chaos, but they are concrete actions that we can take. Forms that we can build. They do not deny the value of other such forms, but they can ground us in the bewildering chaos. When the smoke obscures all the features of what has been our home, they provide us with shapes. They are shelters and part of a way of living, a better way of living, within the chaos.

'Energy Beyond Neoliberalism' was not written with a concrete idea of the next decade in mind. It pointed to an open-ended future. We can read it now and survey the eleven years that have passed since, and this provokes the question of how things will lie a decade hence, in 2036.

Some aspects are almost certain - the disappearance of oil & gas from everyday life in the UK and the ever-increasing intensity of rain and drought, floods and

fires, across Britain. Within these givens we have the opportunity to build a new energy system, resilient, community owned, and reinforcing democracy. We have the opportunity to build communal spaces in our cities, resilient, community owned and reinforcing democracy. This work is indivisible from building a society that is just and anti-racist, a society that celebrates diversity and conviviality and addresses humanely the reality of ever more turbulent patterns of migration.

In identifying the opportunities and necessities we should recognise the strength of the movement of which we are part. The strength of those who currently face and experience the realities of climate collapse. The strength of those determined to push against racism.

James Marriott is an artist, activist, writer and naturalist. He works as part of the internationally acclaimed Platform that brings together campaigners, educators, researchers and artists to tackle climate breakdown and assist the struggle against racism. This essay is not the product of a solo author but arises from extensive conversation between a set of collaborators within, and closely associated with, Platform.

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Notes

1. 'Energy beyond neoliberalism', *Soundings* 59, Lawrence & Wishart, London 2015; republished in Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey and Mike Rustin (eds), *After Neoliberalism? The Kilburn Manifesto*, Lawrence & Wishart, London 2015. Free to view at: https://journals.lwbooks.co.uk/soundings/vol-2015-issue-59/abstract-7467/.

2. Within the global oil & gas industry oil provinces are deemed mature when the resource that remains to be exploited from the fields within the province are more difficult and require more capital to extract than in other, younger, provinces. North Sea oil & gas production ramped up rapidly in the 1980s and the revenues to the Exchequer are widely understood to have helped to finance Thatcher's neoliberal experiment and its costs such as unemployment. See James Marriott and Terry Macalister, *Crude Britannia - how oil built a nation,* Pluto, London 2021.

3. See UKOE, 23 July 2025: https://oeuk.org.uk/policy-versus-geology-new-report-reveals-165bn-choice-facing-north-sea-future/. ExxonMobil, Shell and BP have all sold

on the vast majority of their UK North Sea oil & gas assets. Some of these have been purchased by the national oil corporations of sovereign states such as Iran or Malaysia.

4. Oil and gas are different commodities, especially in the end use to which they are put. However, they are invariably linked, not only in ownership but also in geology. Oil fields almost always produce gas as bi-product. But they are very different commodities in terms of labour. A standard oil platform in the UK North Sea might have 200 staff at work upon it, whereas a gas field employs far less. The much discussed Jackdaw field would have only 37 staff, whilst the gas platforms in southern North Sea are unstaffed.

5. The current CEO of BP, Meg O'Neill was US born, trained in ExxonMobil, and currently lives in Perth, Australia. From 1909 to 2010 every CEO of BP was British.

6. School Strikes is also known as Fridays for Future.

7. The last coal fired power station, at Ratcliffe on Soar, closed on 30 September 2024.

8. Much of this unravelling is documented in Marriott & Macalister, *Crude Britannia*, op cit.

9. See: https://ember-energy.org/countries-and-regions/united-kingdom/; and https://www.renews.biz/other-news/britain-sets-new-wind-generation-record/.

10. The rise of EV ownership in the UK, and the spike in homes installing PV systems, illustrates the power of 'Green Consumerism' that first began to be trumpeted in the 1980s.

11. Plaid Cymru is proposing a national energy company counterpoint to GB Energy.

12. The UK also has interconnectors running to France, Germany, Netherlands and Norway, which makes UK's electricity supply just one part of a pan-EU - and indeed wider - Grid system. Britain has become part of a continent-wide wind & solar energy system. It seems that at this scale the energy system is most capable of generating the kinds of return on capital that multinational corporations, such as RWE, Vattenfall and EDF, desire. But will this continent-wide system be resilient? And will it generate intra-continental political friction, of the kind we see already between Scotland and England?

13. A third development in parallel to these is the rise of AI and its attendant impacts and infrastructure. This is not addressed in this piece for reasons of length, but it bears scrutiny.

14. *The Guardian*, 31 July 2023: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jul/31/dismay-as-rishi-sunak-vows-to-max-out-uk-fossil-fuel-reserves.

15. See: Climate refugee statistics: understanding the numbers (climatemigration.org.uk).

16. Note that Labour prime minister, Andy Burnham, in his first statements, pronounced that the failings of the country lie in its adherence to neoliberalism since the 1980s and thus effectively declared that the neoliberal era is over, or at the least needs to end in his government's eyes.

17. The Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn pursued a strategy that addressed the realities of the new settlement, with many of the policies of the Labour manifesto of 2017, *For the Many Not the Few*, drawing from thinking such as that delineated in *The Kilburn Manifesto*. The Green Party under Zack Polanski also seems to draw from a

similar set of understandings. See also note 17 above.

18. It should be noted that there are other, long unresolved, conflicts taking place in parallel with these wars that gain so much traction in the UK media, such as in Sudan and Kashmir.

19. See: 'People's Power' projects to give more control over local energy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

20. It is to be hoped that this strategy within the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero will be carried forward by the new Secretary of State, Miatta Fahnbulleh.

21. See for example, Tottenham Family Fight Back, Buy Back Brixton and Save Ridley Road market campaigns.