

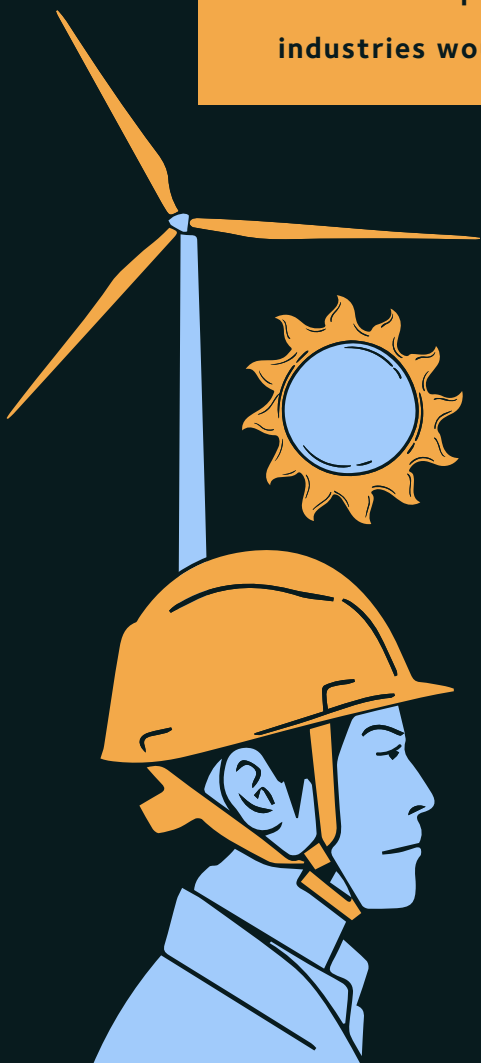
RIP UP CLIMATE POLICY, RIP UP JOBS

THE REAL ECONOMIC RISK OF DISMANTLING UK CLIMATE POLICY

Reform UK's plan to scrap support for renewable energy and net zero industries would wipe out almost 500,000 UK jobs within three years

KEY FINDINGS

- Reversing decades of climate policy support would destroy almost **500,000 existing UK jobs** within three years.
- By 2040, the UK could forgo up to **1.4 million jobs** that the current policies would create or sustain into the 2030s.
- Scotland would bear a disproportionate share of the impact, accounting for 13% of short-term job destruction despite only making up 8% of the UK population.
- Job losses would hit hardest in industrial heritage regions with few alternative opportunities, including North East England, East Anglia, the West Midlands, and Inverness and the North East Highlands.
- **The short-term devastation is comparable to almost every teacher in the UK losing their job within three years.¹**



CLIMATE POLICIES AS A DIVIDING LINE

In 2019, the UK made history. Under a Conservative government backed by cross-party support, it became the first national parliament to declare a Climate Emergency and enshrined net zero emissions targets into law.²

Today, the consensus has fractured. Since 2022, climate action and support for net zero has shifted from a shared national goal to a political battlefield of the increasingly hostile Conservative Party and Reform UK versus all the other major parties.

Despite continued public support for climate action, the shifts amongst the political elite and the media have led to an increasingly polarised debate in which anti net zero claims go unchallenged and scrutiny is in short supply.³

Oil Change UK and Friends of the Earth Scotland commissioned Transition Economics to model how a complete rollback of climate policy would impact existing and future jobs in green energy and related supply chains.⁴ The research focuses on Reform UK policies, as they are now the clearest and most developed force pushing to dismantle climate policy in British politics.

REFORM UK'S PLANS TO DISMANTLE THE GREEN ECONOMY

- Cut GBP 30 billion per year in net zero public spending
- Raise taxes on renewable energy
- Cancel government contracts for renewable electricity
- Scrap energy efficiency rules for landlords
- Reverse the phase-out of petrol and diesel cars
- Cancel major rail projects
- Block new grid infrastructure

In short, it would reverse the UK's climate strategy and pull the plug on the energy transition.

WHERE THE DAMAGE WILL HIT

For two decades, climate targets have shaped investment decisions across the UK economy. Reversing them would lead to a sudden loss of funding, regulatory certainty, and investor confidence with real world impacts:

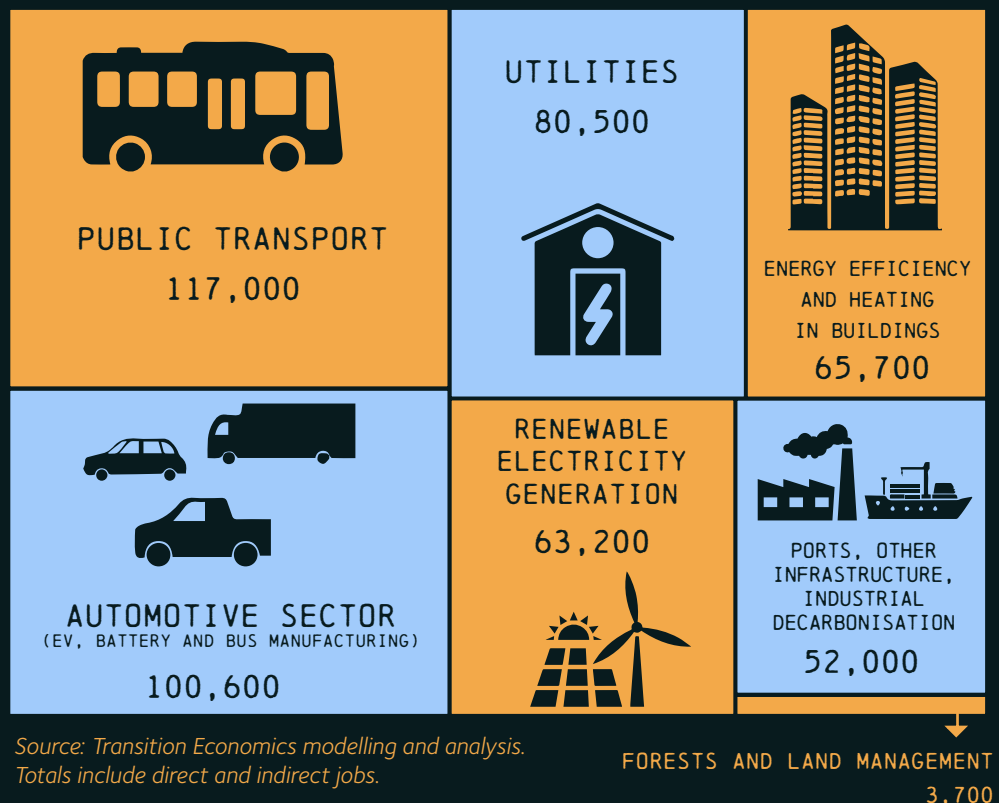
- New renewable projects, energy efficiency retrofits, and public transport upgrades would stall
- Grid investment would collapse
- The UK would become a high-risk destination for clean energy investment
- The automotive sector would be gutted

Crucially, the impacts would not stop at renewable energy or net zero industries; they would ripple across manufacturing, construction, transport, and local infrastructure.

THE TRUE COST TO WORKING PEOPLE: ALMOST HALF A MILLION JOBS DESTROYED

Removing all government funding to achieve net zero and reversing the supportive policy framework would lead to job destruction in the UK for almost 500,000 people directly and indirectly employed in the green economy within the first three years. This would decimate towns and cities across the UK, hitting communities with rapid and widespread economic shock. This devastation is comparable to almost every teacher in the UK losing their job.

Figure 1:
Short-term job destruction by sector from pulling the plug on UK climate policy

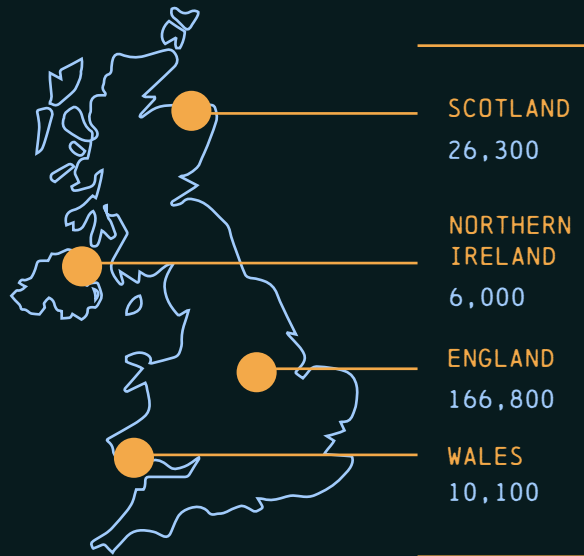


By 2040, the total would rise to 1.4 million jobs lost or forgone because in addition to current jobs disappearing, new ones would not be created. This includes 535,700 direct and indirect jobs linked to retrofit and heat pump installation, 331,500 in the automotive sector⁵, and 245,600 linked to renewable electricity generation.

Figure 2:
Direct short-term job destruction by UK nation

**REGIONAL
IMPACTS:**

**PLACES WITH
INDUSTRIAL
HERITAGE AND
ENERGY HUBS
WILL BE HIT
HARDEST**



UK TOTAL
209,200

**DIRECT SHORT-TERM
JOB DESTRUCTION**

*Source: Transition Economics
modelling and analysis.*

The impacts of Reform's policies would not be evenly spread:

- Scotland would account for 13% of job losses despite representing just 8% of the population, due to its concentration of wind sector jobs.
- Towns with industrial heritage and energy hubs would be hit hardest, especially those with limited alternative job options. Many are still struggling from losing jobs in North Sea oil and gas, coal and fishing. Pulling the plug now on attempts to rebuild around the green economy would be devastating. These regions are not just vulnerable; they are the backbone of the UK's industrial comeback, and they would be first in line to feel the damage:
 - **North East England:** 27,000 jobs are at risk, mostly in the short term. EV manufacturing, battery production, and wind could shut down or move overseas, taking with them their associated supply chains.
 - **West Midlands:** 74,000 direct jobs are at risk in the short to medium term, making this region among the hardest hit. Core industries would be decimated, including EV manufacturing, engineering firms supporting renewables, and the operational heart of high speed rail expansion (HS2).
 - **East Anglia:** Over 25,000 direct jobs are at risk, mostly in the short term. Since the collapse of the oil and gas and fishing industries in the North Sea, places like Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft have been rebuilding around offshore wind — those decades of work would go to waste.
 - **Inverness and North East Highlands:** Short-term losses threaten over 3,000 existing green jobs, while more than 10,000 potential future roles would also disappear. Over the past decade, technologies like offshore wind, wave energy, and low carbon heating have reinvented the region, drawing in investment and creating paths for the oil and gas industry to diversify. Reform's plans would put all this progress at risk.

THE NORTH SEA MYTH

The Conservatives and Reform UK insist that net zero policies are causing job losses in the North Sea, but those jobs were disappearing long before net zero was enshrined in law. Between 2013 and 2023, jobs supported by offshore oil and gas more than halved — despite a supportive Conservative government⁶ and hundreds of new licences awarded in that time.

The truth is that the UK has already burned through more than 85% of its economically viable gas reserves.⁷ Fossil fuel companies are now at the point of either abandoning ship or squeezing out the last drops of profit with increasingly insecure work and poorer terms and conditions for workers.⁸

Reversing net zero policies would not bring back lost jobs, but it would destroy existing jobs. It would also collapse the creation of new jobs in sectors that oil and gas workers have high potential to transition into.

ENDNOTES:

1. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england/2024>
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-first-major-economy-to-pass-net-zero-emissions-law>
3. <https://www.ippr.org/articles/apathy-and-opposition>; <https://persuasionuk.org/research/apathy-and-opposition>
4. Transition Economics' full briefing including methodology, sources, and a detailed breakdown of direct and indirect jobs impacted by sector is available by contacting Rosemary Harris at rosemary@oilchangeuk.org.
5. Includes wider effects from lost EV and battery manufacturing, and bus manufacturing.
6. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/23954780.north-sea-supported-jobs-halved-last-decade-despite-tory-support/>
7. <https://www.upliftuk.org/post/the-declining-economics-of-the-north-sea>
8. <https://platformlondon.org/app/uploads/2025/09/Transition-on-our-Terms-Survey-Briefing.pdf>
9. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2026/03/11/cost-of-net-zero-by-2050-less-than-a-single-fossil-fuel-price-shock-ccc/>

CONCLUSION

Net zero policies create jobs and reduce costs driven by fossil fuel volatility and climate damage.⁹ Scrapping these policies would do the opposite, triggering job destruction, industrial decline, and economic instability, all of which would hit the most vulnerable regions hardest.

There is still more to do: the UK needs increased funding and support to ensure a fast and just energy transition that helps oil and gas workers and communities benefit from new industries. Despite claims by those using the climate crisis to deepen political divides, climate action alongside a robust industrial strategy is the only energy future for the UK that avoids further large-scale job losses and sharpened industrial decline.

This briefing was co-authored by Rosemary Harris (Oil Change UK) and Rosie Hampton (Friends of the Earth Scotland). Research was conducted by Transition Economics.

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APRIL 2026

