



# Scotland AGAINST SPIN

*Dear Supporters,*

*May 2015 – Election Special*

*Welcome to the SAS election special! We've decided to limit this Newsletter to the parties' manifestos on energy and wind power. We've trawled through them all and extracted the main points, while also sharing our reflections as anti-windfarm campaigners.*

*SAS is as ever politically neutral. We can't tell you where to put your cross, but we can tell you what you would be voting for as far as turbines go.*

*We'll be back next month with a bumper Newsletter, so don't forget to let us have any news or other contributions. Deadline day for sending copy and photos to us is 18<sup>th</sup> May.*

*Our vote for the best response to the manifestos goes to Iain Green's magnificent cartoon. It's no less than our spinning politicians deserve!*

*Happy voting on May 7!*



***Another day, another manifesto or sub-manifesto! We've never seen so many. Although no party has launched a separate manifesto for energy, energy and wind is covered in all their main manifestos.***

There are few surprises. What the parties have to say is pretty consistent with their attitudes to energy and wind over the last few years.

All (except UKIP) affirm their support for the Climate Change Act. Labour, the SNP, the Greens and the Lib Dems all include targets for carbon reduction. Of course lots of pertinent detail is left out, not least cost. By contrast, the Conservative Party explicitly refuses to support *“additional distorting and expensive power sector targets”*.

There are similar divisions over wind turbines. UKIP will cut all subsidies for all turbines, on and offshore; the Conservatives don't mention offshore turbines because they mean to continue those subsidies.

For onshore wind, the Conservatives take the view that *‘we now have enough billpayer-funded (capacity) in the pipeline to meet our renewables target so we would end any additional public subsidy and give local councils the decisive say on new windfarms. New onshore wind should be able to stand on its own two feet’*.

The Scottish Conservative and Unionist party has additionally proposed scrapping rate exemptions for larger wind developments and to introduce a Danish-style compensation scheme for those whose properties have been devalued by nearby



### **UK Conservative Party Manifesto 2015**

#### ***On energy efficiency and energy markets....***

- promote competition to keep bills as low as possible*
- help insulate homes*

#### ***On energy technologies....***

- secure energy supplies by continuing to support the safe development of shale gas continue to support development of North Sea oil and gas.*
- provide start-up funding for promising new renewable technologies and research, but will only give significant support to those that clearly represent value for money*
- halt the spread of onshore windfarms by ending any new public subsidy for them and change the law so that local people have the final say on windfarm applications*

#### ***On climate change....***

- protect the planet...by pushing for a strong global climate deal later this year, [UNFCCC conference in Paris, Dec 15] and continuing to support the UK Climate Change Act*
- cut emissions as cost-effectively as possible, and will not support additional distorting and expensive power sector targets*

#### ***The Scottish Conservatives have also promised to....***

- scrap business rate exemptions for large renewable energy projects and introduce a compensation scheme for loss of property value due to windfarms*

windfarm development. Once again, key detail is missing, and of course, these proposals involve areas of policy devolved to Holyrood and so do not lie in Westminster's gift. They are there together with proposals on other devolved matters because the Scottish Conservatives are already positioning themselves for the Holyrood elections next May.

Both the UK and Scottish Labour manifestos do not mention wind. Renewables are only mentioned in relation to setting up an Energy Security Board to deliver the 'required' energy mix. The omission is significant. I would wager there is something of a split in the Labour Party, with cosmopolitan Labourites like Miliband being strongly pro-wind while rural and Scottish members like Neil Findlay and Jackie Baillie are clear that the corporate trashing of the countryside by wind energy has harmed communities and cannot continue unabated. With their commitment to bringing down electricity bills, a Labour government could not afford to continue a subsidy regime for wind energy which in any case, will cause exponential rises in the coming years. Labour's Green Plan rules out a moratorium on onshore wind, however.



## **Labour Party Manifesto 2015**

### ***On renewable technologies and energy production....***

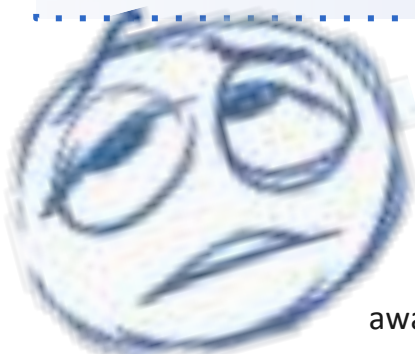
- *give the Green Investment Bank additional powers so that it can invest in green businesses and technology.*
- *create an Energy Security Board to plan and deliver the required energy mix, including renewables, nuclear, green gas, carbon capture and storage, and clean coal*
- *establish a regulatory regime for onshore unconventional oil and gas, [shale] before extraction can take place*
- *provide a long-term strategy for the offshore oil and gas industry, including more certainty on tax rates and making the most of the potential for carbon storage*

### ***On energy efficiency and energy markets....***

- *bring down energy bills by making homes more energy efficient*
- *freeze energy bills until 2017, ensuring that bills can fall but not rise, and give the regulator the power to cut bills this winter*
- *separate the generation and supply businesses of the 'Big Six' energy companies, requiring them to open up their books, and sell their electricity through an open exchange*
- *simplify energy tariffs and make it easier for people to compare prices to get the best deal*
- *protect small businesses by ending unfair contracts and automatic rollovers to more expensive tariffs*
- *create a new energy watchdog to enforce reforms, with powers to strip energy companies of their licences if they repeatedly harm the interests of consumers*

### ***On climate change....***

- *introduce a legal target to remove the carbon from the electricity supply by 2030*
- *pursue ambitious agreement on climate change at the UNFCCC conference in Paris, in December*
- *push for a goal of net zero global emissions in the second half of this century, for transparent and universal rules for measuring, verifying and reporting emissions, and for an equitable deal in which richer countries provide support to poorer nations in combatting climate change*



The Lib Dems also don't mention wind in their main manifesto, but want to see renewable energy making up a third of the UK's electricity supply by 2020. That means in practice doubling the amount of wind energy we already have, and thousands more turbines for Scotland (unless of course a Scottish Government introduced a planning moratorium). We wonder if the Lib Dems were aware of what they were suggesting when they included a nightmarish

image of invading offshore ogres in their Scottish manifesto.

Hidden away in the Lib Dems' Green Magna Carta is this little gem designed to keep the wind industry sweet: *'Encourage onshore wind in appropriate locations, helping meet our climate targets at least cost. We will end ideologically motivated interference in local planning decisions for windfarms by Government Ministers.'*

It doesn't look as if much thought went into the SNP manifesto's section on energy. As usual, they cock a snoot at the Westminster parties and basically want everything to carry on as before, but with more subsidy for Scottish offshore wind and more funding for transmission infrastructure to promote wind development in Scotland's islands. So a lot more turbines for Scotland, and in areas which have been mercifully spared so far, if the SNP has its way.



## **Liberal Democrat Party Manifesto 2015**

### **On renewables and energy production....**

- *ensure that renewable energy makes up one third of the UK electricity supply by 2020*
- *invest in research and development in cleaner energy*
- *prioritise saving energy, with council tax discounts for insulating your home*
- *energy efficiency help for low income families with high fuel costs.*
- *insist that energy companies allow customers the freedom to change to any cheaper supplier within 24 hours*

### **On energy markets....**

- *prioritise saving energy, with council tax discounts for insulating your home*
- *energy efficiency help for low income families with high fuel costs.*
- *insist that energy companies allow customers the freedom to change to any cheaper supplier within 24 hours*

### **On climate change....**

- *get rid of coal generation by 2025, and working towards a Zero Carbon emissions target by 2050*

## **SNP Party Manifesto 2015**

### **On renewable energy....**

- *seek alterations to the current Contracts for Differences (CFD) regime to ensure that support is given to the offshore wind sector. Allocations from the next round of CFD should be made early and projects in Scotland should be prioritised and receive their fair share of funding. [The SNP] want to see a long-term commitment to the development of this industry.*
- *continue to argue for changes to ensure that Scottish renewables, and Scotland's islands, are not penalised because of their distance from markets in the south of England. We believe that transmission arrangements should work to support, rather than undermine, production of renewable energy in the most favourable locations.*
- *press for onshore wind to continue to receive support through the lifetime of the next Parliament.*

### **On energy markets and climate change....**

- *support lower energy bills for consumers by pushing for the Energy Company Obligation to be funded through general taxation and not as a levy on energy bills.*
- *support new powers to make sure that energy companies pass on the benefits of lower prices to consumers.*
- *call on, and vote for, the UK Government to adopt Scotland's ambitious carbon reduction targets*
- *continue to support a moratorium on fracking*

As for the Greens, they are unafraid to talk about wind, calling for expansion of wind energy and 'bringing down costs, in part by reducing planning consents .... for onshore wind'. Oddly they do not include the environment, landscape, animals or people in their notion of costs. They plan to 'invest' up to £35 billion of 'public money' over the next parliament in renewable generation and the National Grid.



## **Green Party Manifesto 2015**

### **On renewables and energy production....**

- concentrate on expanding mature renewable technologies such as wind energy and solar PV in the period until 2030 and bringing down costs, in part by reducing planning constraints, including those for onshore wind.
- ensure that all schools, hospitals and other public buildings have solar panels by 2020
- set deployment targets to bring down costs and attract investment in manufacturing and supply chains, aiming for 42 GW of offshore wind by 2020 and 60 GW by 2030, and for 25 GW of solar PV by 2020
- phase out fossil-fuel-based generation, including the closure of all coal-fired power stations by 2023 at the very latest
- phase out nuclear power within ten years
- ban all UK fracking operations – following a growing number of nations worldwide

### **On energy markets....**

- ensure that there is a single scheme of regulation for the entire industry, whose objectives include achieving climate change targets as well as protecting consumer interests.

### **On climate change....**

- set in law a decarbonisation target for the power sector of 25–50 grams of carbon dioxide per kilowatt hour by 2030

## **UKIP Party Manifesto 2015**

### **On renewables and energy production....**

- will support and invest in renewables, where they can deliver electricity at competitive prices
- will withdraw taxpayer and consumer subsidies for new wind turbines and solar photovoltaic arrays, while respecting existing contractual arrangements, to ensure a level playing field for coal
- deliver secure, affordable energy supplies, by supporting a diverse energy market based on coal, nuclear, shale gas, conventional gas, oil, solar and hydro, as well as other renewables where these can be delivered at competitive prices
- support the development of shale gas, provided safeguards are in place to protect local communities and the environment. Community Infrastructure Levy income from shale gas operations will be earmarked for lower Council Taxes or local community projects.
- levy Petroleum Revenue Tax (currently 50 per cent) on any shale profits and invest the income into a Sovereign Wealth Fund

### **On energy markets and climate change....**

- repeal the Climate Change Act
- scrap the Large Combustion Plant Directive and stop the EU's planned Medium Combustion Plant Directive. Both attempt to close down secure, reliable and economical electricity generation

From many anti-wind farm campaigners' point-of-view, UKIP's proposals on energy and wind will be by far the soundest. Many will cheer a conclusion in UKIP's independent economic review of their manifesto: DECC should be axed! Nevertheless we were dismayed to see kippers explicitly state that they would respect 'existing contractual arrangements', ie. subsidies, which the first round of Contract for Difference allocations proved have been unnecessarily generous in the past. If it's legally impossible to revoke wind

subsidy contracts, why not claw back some of the excessive profits by means of a wind fall tax and make wind operators liable for damage to environments, property values and people's health and well-being?

Who knows, though, what wind policies will come out in the wash once the votes have been counted and the party deals thrashed out. While abolishing subsidies for turbines is likely to be a red line for UKIP, I'm not sure it will be for the Tories. We've pointed out before that there is a frightening lack of detail in the Tory promise to cut subsidies as they already think they are doing that through degeneration for FiTs and competitive tendering for finite pots of cash under CfDs. The manifesto also only refers to 'the spread of onshore windfarms' but gives no definition of windfarm. The proliferation of single turbines in many areas of Scotland has created straggling de facto windfarms, and in any case the impacts of a single turbine can be as unacceptable for residents as a large windfarm.

Nevertheless we should not be glum. Compared with five years ago energy policy has crept up the political agenda and climate change is slipping down. All the parties (apart from the Greens) realise onshore wind is a controversial topic and they can no longer completely blank local and national opposition to their wind energy policies. (I know it looks as if the Lib Dems are doing just that but many of their local MPs are not happy about this stance because they know what it is costing them in local support.)

No one, least of all the SNP, has a coherent, costed plan which will ensure either Scotland or the UK will be able to enjoy secure and affordable energy for the next 20 years. But at least Labour's proposal for an Energy Security Board implicitly acknowledges there is a huge problem politicians have failed to address, and indeed, are incapable of addressing. Whatever noises the parties make about carbon reduction targets and renewable energy, the fact is no government will be able to afford to continue the subsidy bonanza the wind industry has enjoyed up to now.

The renewables industry is far from happy with the manifestos of the main parties, but their gripes have received less media coverage than one might expect. RenewableUK blitzed the media today with [a new report](#) which claims to show the enormous economic benefit contributed by onshore

wind. You can read our response, and one by Jack Ponton of the Scientific Alliance Scotland on the SAS website.

*So, happy voting all – who knows what the outcome will be, but we'll bring you the latest news and analysis after the big day!!*

