

CAVENDISH

Green Gains.

What the rise of **eco-populism** means for policy, politics, and corporate reputation.

February 2026



You need to pay attention to the Green Party.

The growth of the Green Party since late 2025 is a signal of a deeper fragmentation on the British left, and a warning sign for a Labour Government increasingly exposed to pressure from within its own electoral coalition.

Under the leadership of Zack Polanski, the Greens have repositioned themselves from a niche environmental party into a broader eco-populist force. **Polling has risen from below 10 percent in summer 2025 to consistent figures around 15 percent, with peaks as high as 19 percent.** Membership, visibility and confidence have grown in parallel. Yet the party's real power lies less in its prospects of governing nationally and more in its ability to unsettle Labour, reshape political debate and force changes in behaviour.

The left of British politics is no longer unified. Alongside the Greens sit Corbyn-aligned groupings such as Your Party, and a growing ecosystem of issue led campaigns focused on Gaza, trans rights, housing and climate. Individually, most lack scale. Collectively, they have weakened Labour's monopoly on progressive voters and created a volatile political environment in which pressure matters more than power.

For businesses and organisations, the risk is not necessarily a Green-led government. It is policy drift, heightened reputational sensitivity, and a governing party more responsive to activist pressure and local electoral threat. Understanding the Greens therefore means understanding how influence now operates in a fragmented, multi party political culture.



This report examines where the Greens now exert pressure, how their ideas travel beyond formal party politics, and what their rise means for policy, reputation and risk management for organisations operating in the UK.

Fragmentation on the left.

The end of Labour's monopoly?

Since the 2024 General Election, Labour has governed as a party focused on fiscal restraint and stability. That approach has left many progressive voters feeling politically homeless.

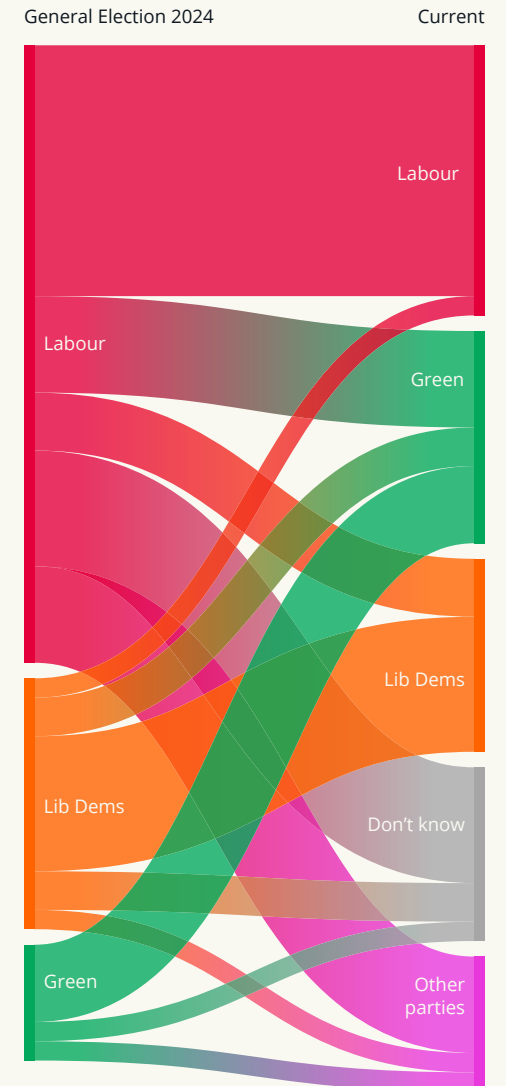
Issues that mobilise large sections of the left, including climate urgency, economic inequality, social justice, trans rights and the war in Gaza, seem to have been treated by the Government as reputational risks to manage rather than causes to champion.

The result has been fragmentation rather than realignment. Former Labour voters and members have dispersed across a range of alternatives. Some have gravitated towards independent MPs or Corbyn-aligned groupings such as Your Party. Others have engaged through issue specific campaigns or local protest candidates. In the absence of real electoral tests, these movements are yet to threaten Labour nationally, but they have altered the political environment in which Labour operates.

This fragmentation has reputational consequences before it has electoral ones - although electoral consequences could soon follow. Media narratives increasingly frame Labour as vulnerable on its left flank. MPs in inner cities and metropolitan areas face pressure from voters who are motivated less by governing credibility than by values alignment. For many of these MPs, this is the first time their seats have felt genuinely contested from the left, and it is changing behaviour.

The Greens are the clearest beneficiaries of this environment. Unlike newer left-wing movements, they have an existing electoral base, representation at multiple levels of government and a recognisable national brand across England and Wales. Unlike Labour, they are unburdened by the compromises of power. In a fragmented landscape, this combination allows them to consolidate discontent and convert it into influence.

Flow of the vote since the 2024 General Election. Notice particularly how Labour voters have split – with a large number switching to support the Greens.



Who's voting Green?

The Greens' increase in popularity is not evenly distributed across the electorate, or the UK.

Their appeal is concentrated among specific groups, many of whom previously formed part of Labour's broad coalition.

These include disaffected voters on Labour's left who feel alienated by the party's shift towards the centre, particularly on issues such as Gaza, climate ambition and welfare. Younger urban renters, many of whom face acute housing insecurity, are also a core constituency, as are graduates and socially liberal professionals who value values alignment over governing pragmatism.

In some areas, particularly parts of London and Greater Manchester, the Greens have also sought to capitalise on anger within Muslim communities over Labour's handling of the Israel-Gaza conflict. While in many cases this discontent has already been channelled towards independents or other disruptor parties, it contributes to a broader sense of volatility and fragmentation on the left.

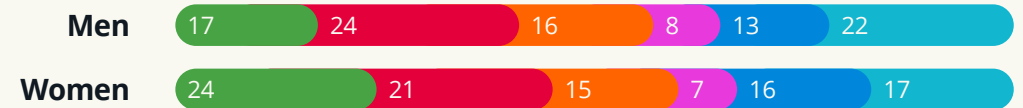
Crucially, this is not a Conservative problem. Nor is it primarily a contest with Reform. The Greens' rise is best understood as a Labour facing challenge, drawing support from voters who remain broadly progressive but no longer see Labour as an authentic vehicle for their priorities.

The Green Party is ahead with women from 18-49, and with 18-24 men.

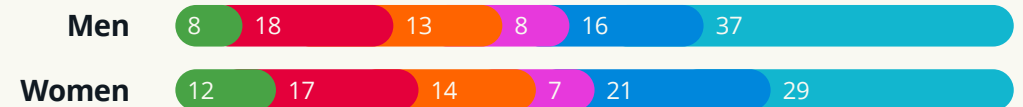
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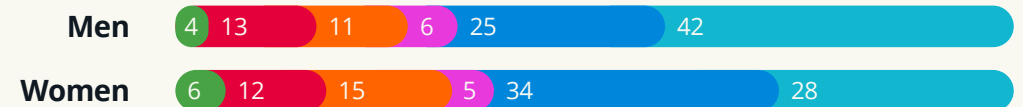
25-49



50-64



65+



Green Labour Lib Dems Independent Conservative Reform

The Polanski effect.

The Greens' recent surge is closely associated with the election of Zack Polanski as leader of the Greens in England and Wales in September 2025.

Polanski describes himself as an eco-populist. His politics reflect a broader shift within the global green movement, which has increasingly fused environmentalism with issues of inequality, social justice and anti-establishment sentiment. He frames politics as a conflict between the working majority and a small elite, arguing that populism is as viable a route to success on the left as it has been on the right.

The party under Polanski has so far been light on policy detail, instead emphasising headline positions such as a wealth tax, legalisation of drugs, strong support for trans rights and vocal opposition to Israel's actions in Gaza.

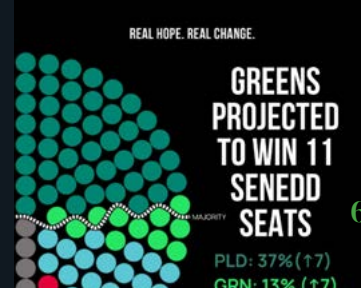
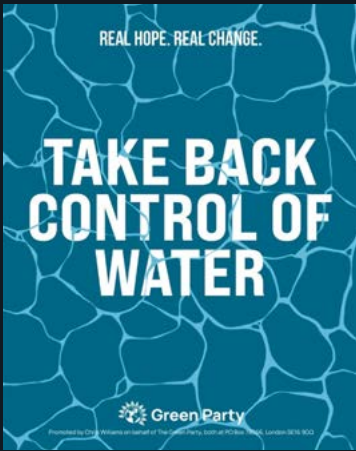
When pressed on economic, foreign or immigration policy, Polanski has at times shown a lack of detail but, at this stage in the election cycle, policy vagueness has not proven to be a weakness.

London Assembly / CC BY 3.0 / Wiki Commons

About Zack Polanski:

A former actor and activist, Polanski joined the Green Party in 2017 after failing to be selected as the Liberal Democrat candidate for the 2016 Richmond Park by-election.

Born David Paulden in Manchester, he adopted the name Zack Polanski to honour and reclaim his Jewish roots, and was elected to the London Assembly in 2021.



Polanski's overall strategy is clear:
build a movement first, do the policy detail next.

Membership growth and emotional identification are the product, momentum itself is the message.

Polanski's social feeds (and those of the wider Green movement) read less like a traditional party leader managing operations and more like an organiser running an insurgency: intentionally polarising, unapologetically radical, and speaking directly to young, disaffected, and formerly Labour-aligned voters.

“ As days find new I remain Green election become the onl

BOLD POLITICS

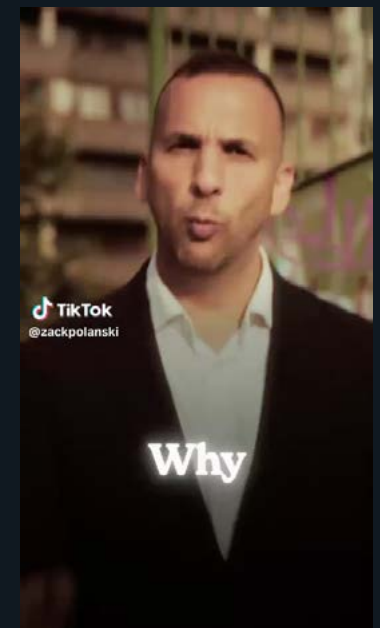
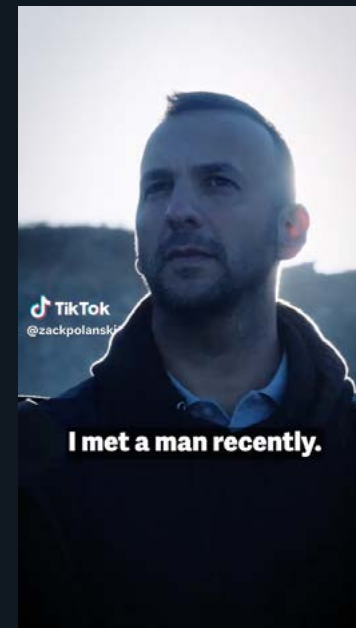
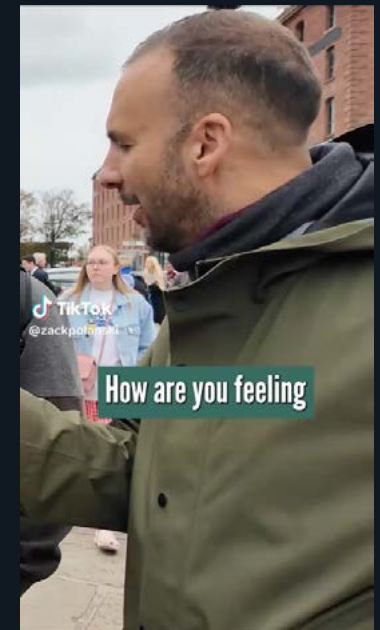
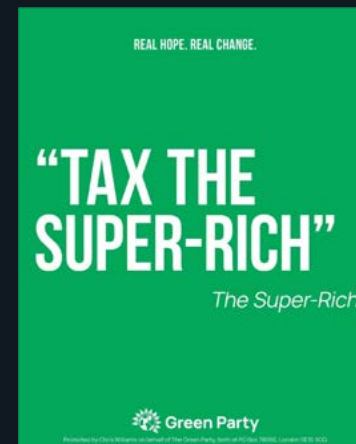
TikTok @zackpolanski

The comms behind the rise.

Under Polanski, the Greens have prioritised new media over traditional broadcast and print channels.

Social media has been central to his rise, allowing him to speak directly to voters who are disillusioned with mainstream politics and frustrated by the pace and direction of change since 2024. His message of hope, momentum and inevitability has resonated particularly strongly with younger, urban voters.

The narrative is highly performative and media-savvy. Polanski engages directly with mainstream and alternative outlets, from BBC interviews to appearances on The Last Leg, and launching his own "Bold Politics" podcast, ensuring coverage even when traditional outlets are critical. His team leverages milestones - membership growth, council wins, policy announcements - to drive attention and momentum, often highlighting right-wing media pushback as proof of impact.



The rhetoric is the reality.

Analysis of Zack Polanski's social feed since his election in September 2025 shows a disciplined, deliberately polarising voice built around one core question: **who does the system serve?**

Almost every post frames politics as a battle between power and ordinary people: billionaires vs everyone else, big business vs communities, polluters vs households, media barons vs democratic accountability.

Labour is a target more than Reform and the Conservatives. Polanski repeatedly positions the Greens as a replacement, not a protest: "We're not here to be disappointed in Labour. We're here to replace them."

The tone mixes anger with optimism. Posts rail against the wealthy, fossil fuel companies, and triangulating politicians, yet highlight membership surges, packed meetings, youth energy, and humour in the face of attacks. Social media pile-ons, critical media coverage, and broadcast interviews are repurposed as proof of momentum: if the Telegraph, GB News, or Clarkson hate us, we must be doing something right.

Polanski is not afraid to wade into culture war debates, but tends to focus his social output more on material issues: bills, housing, NHS, public ownership. International references - from US politics to climate inequality - signal that the Greens are part of a global left-populist movement, not parochial environmentalists.



Help us make hope normal again.
Join the Green Party now.



tax billionaires leader public services climate crisis work
conversation wealth vested interests
leader party country country members right
truth power wealth tax lower bills party bills right
lower bills work fight bills money
tax billionaires morning wealth conference
movement tax wealth podcast billionaires everything



Labour have blown it. This is it. Time to take on Reform.

Manchesters first Green MP is coming. Join us to help get them elected on Saturday.

actionnetwork.org/events/a-green...

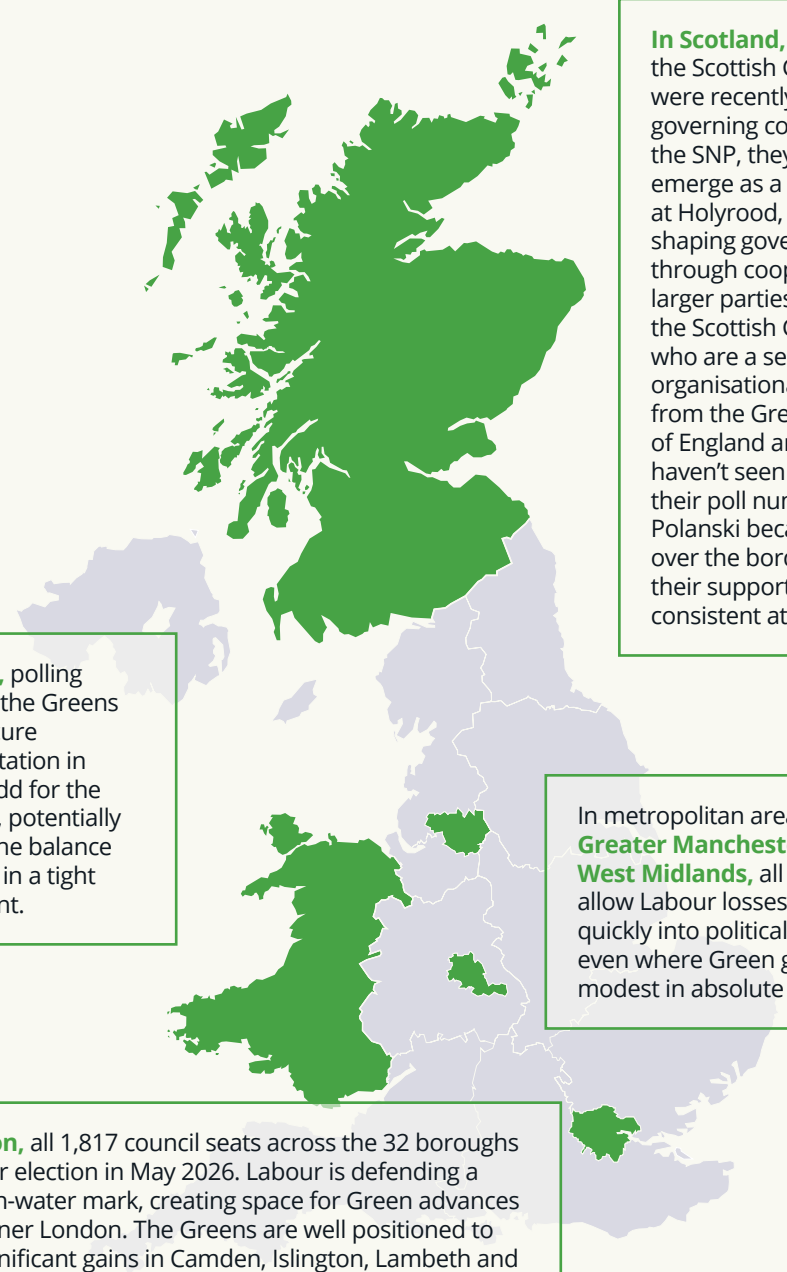


Applying pressure in 2026.

The Greens' most significant opportunities in 2026 lie not in winning control of councils or forming governments, but in exerting leverage within fragmented institutions.

Local government and devolved legislatures provide platforms for visibility, disruption and agenda setting.

Across these geographies, the common thread is leverage rather than control. The Greens' ability to slow, block or reshape decisions, particularly in planning, housing and infrastructure, is likely to grow regardless of whether they win executive power.



In Wales, polling suggests the Greens could secure representation in the Senedd for the first time, potentially holding the balance of power in a tight parliament.

In Scotland, where the Scottish Greens were recently part of a governing coalition with the SNP, they could again emerge as a pivotal force at Holyrood, capable of shaping government policy through cooperation with larger parties. However, the Scottish Greens - who are a separate party, organisationally distinct from the Green Party of England and Wales - haven't seen a bounce in their poll numbers since Polanski became leader over the border, and their support remains consistent at around 7%.

In metropolitan areas such as **Greater Manchester** and the **West Midlands**, all up elections allow Labour losses to translate quickly into political pressure, even where Green gains are modest in absolute terms.

In London, all 1,817 council seats across the 32 boroughs are up for election in May 2026. Labour is defending a 2022 high-water mark, creating space for Green advances across inner London. The Greens are well positioned to make significant gains in Camden, Islington, Lambeth and Lewisham, and are projected to **win control of Hackney**. Even where outright control falls short, Green gains are likely to push several boroughs into No Overall Control, increasing their leverage over policy direction, spending priorities and the local political narrative.

Policy on a page.

Even in the early days of Polanski's leadership, the Greens are not light on policy.

For brands, developers, and regulated sectors, the reputational risk often lies less in formal policy adoption and more in the narratives Greens legitimise, amplify, and normalise in public debate.


Area	Key positions	What to watch
Economic model & public spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong opposition to austerity and market-led public services • Support for wealth taxes, higher corporation tax, and windfall taxes on energy and finance • Expansion of public ownership across energy, water, rail, and mail • Significant increases in public spending on health, housing, and climate transition 	A shift in tone that frames profit, private provision, and shareholder value as inherently extractive. Even without policy delivery, this language can heighten scrutiny of pricing, dividends, executive pay, and private sector involvement in public services.
Climate & net zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerated net zero targets, often earlier than Government commitments • Opposition to new fossil fuel extraction and airport expansion • Strong support for renewables, insulation, and demand reduction • Preference for state-led or community-owned energy models 	Pressure on companies to move faster than regulatory baselines. Projects aligned with decarbonisation may benefit reputationally, while those seen as transitional, incremental, or "greenwashed" risk becoming symbolic targets.
Housing & planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support for social and council housing delivery • Introduction of rent controls • Scepticism toward large private developments, particularly where affordability or density is contested • Emphasis on retrofit over new build • Protection of Green Belt and local environmental assets 	Heightened risk for volume housebuilders and developers, especially in urban or suburban areas with active Green councillors. Planning debates may increasingly be framed around ethics, land ownership, and community control rather than housing need alone.
Transport & infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposition to road expansion and high-carbon infrastructure • Support for public transport investment, active travel, and low-traffic neighbourhoods • Conditional or hostile stance toward airport growth • Support for rail renationalisation 	Infrastructure schemes can become cultural flashpoints rather than technical debates. Even projects with climate credentials may face opposition if they are seen as top-down, corporate-led, or disruptive to local environments.
Business, regulation & standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger regulation of large corporations, particularly in energy, food, water, and housing • Support for tougher environmental, labour, and consumer standards • Criticism of lobbying and political access by big business 	Increased reputational sensitivity around lobbying, political donations, and trade body activity. Brands may be challenged not just on outcomes, but on intent, power, and proximity to Government.
Food, farming & land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for sustainable farming, reduced meat consumption, and shorter supply chains • Opposition to intensive agriculture and environmentally damaging practices • Strong stance on food standards and animal welfare 	Food and FMCG brands may face pressure on sourcing, land use, and environmental externalities. Campaigns are likely to focus on symbolism and storytelling rather than regulatory compliance alone.

Key players.

The Green Party of England & Wales and the Scottish Greens remain separate parties, with separate leaderships, structures and electoral strategies. But after a period of distance, the two parties are now moving closer together. Under Zack Polanski's leadership, shared positions on equality, trans rights and democratic reform have reopened formal cooperation, creating a more aligned Green ecosystem across Britain.

This page looks at the key players on both sides of the Scottish border.

Green Party of England and Wales.




Zack Polanski
Leader
A member of the London Assembly, Polanski decisively won the leadership election on an "eco-populist" platform.




Mothin Ali
Deputy Leader
Leeds City Councillor since 2024, Ali is an accountant, gardener, and prominent anti-racism campaigner.



Rachel Millward
Deputy Leader
Green candidate for Sussex and Brighton mayoral election, has been a Green councillor since 2021.




Anthony Slaughter
Welsh Leader
Leader of the Welsh Greens since 2018, Slaughter hopes to be elected as MS for Caerdydd Penarth in 2026.




Jon Nott
Chair
Former Treasurer and Chief Executive of the party, Nott has deep experience in party governance.




Ellie Chowns MP
Leader in House of Commons
North Herefordshire



Sian Berry MP
Brighton Pavilion



Adrian Ramsay MP
Waveney Valley



Carla Denyer MP
Bristol Central

Plus 898 councillors


Scottish Green Party.



Ross Greer MSP
West Scotland, Scottish Greens Co-leader; Education and Finance spokesperson



Gillian Mackay MSP
Central Scotland, Scottish Greens Co-leader; Health, Social Care and Sport spokesperson



Patrick Harvie MSP Glasgow
Net Zero, Constitution and External Affairs spokesperson



Ariane Burgess MSP Highlands and Islands
Housing, Communities and Rural Affairs spokesperson



Lorna Slater MSP Lothian
Economy and Fair Work spokesperson



Mark Ruskell MSP Mid Scotland and Fife
Environment and Transport spokesperson



Maggie Chapman MSP North East Scotland
Justice, Equalities, Social Justice and Human Rights spokesperson

Plus 34 councillors

The Labour reaction.

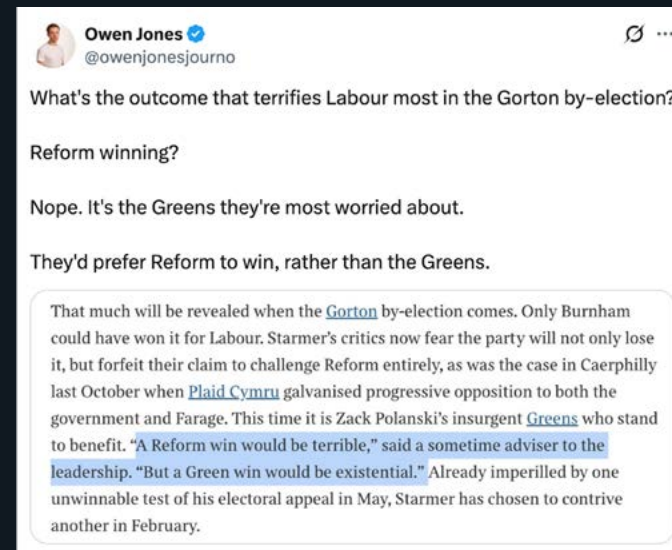
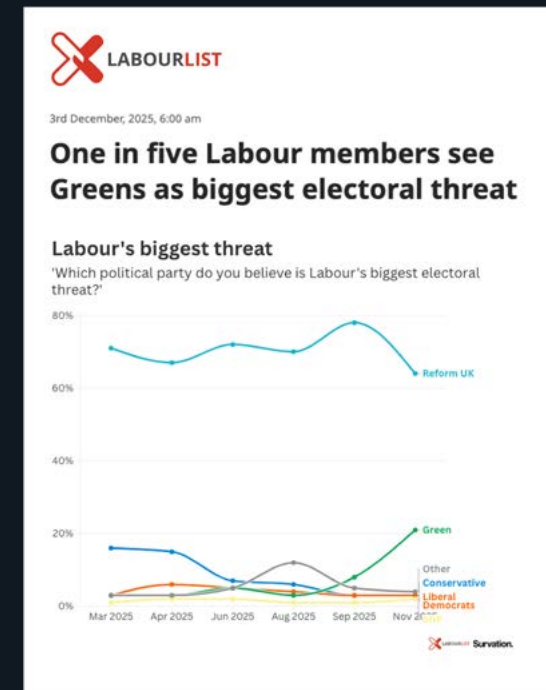
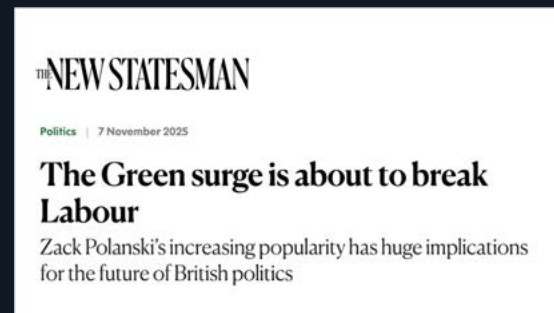
The Greens are already influencing Labour behaviour.

MPs in inner city and metropolitan seats report growing concern about their vulnerability to left-wing challengers, particularly in areas with high concentrations of younger renters and socially liberal voters.

This pressure is translating into public and private lobbying of government to adjust policy, tone and messaging. While Labour's leadership remains focused on the threat from Reform, many MPs believe the greater long term risk lies on the left, and that failing to address it could weaken the party's coalition ahead of the next General Election.

There is also growing speculation about leadership stability beyond the 2026 local elections. While predictions of an imminent leadership challenge may be premature, the rise of the Greens emboldens those within Labour who argue for a shift back towards the soft left as a means of defending vulnerable seats.

But even without a change of leader, this dynamic matters. A governing party under pressure from its own flank is more likely to compromise, delay or recalibrate policy, particularly where reputational risk is high.



Brands under fire.

For businesses and organisations, the rise of the Greens in a fragmented political environment highlights the need to rethink engagement.

- 1.** **First**, influence is no longer confined to government. Pressure is increasingly exerted through local government, devolved institutions and public campaigns that shape the reputational context in which decisions are made.
- 2.** **Second**, reputational risk has become more acute. Issues such as housing, energy infrastructure and climate policy are highly visible and politically charged. Even where government policy is settled, local opposition and activist pressure can delay or derail delivery.
- 3.** **Third**, engagement needs to start earlier and be broader. Organisations that rely solely on central government relationships risk being caught out by shifts in tone and pressure driven from below.

Understanding the Greens is therefore not about anticipating Green ministers, but about recognising how political pressure now operates, and how quickly narratives can shift in a fragmented, multi party system.

r/unitedkingdom · 4mo ago
JayR_97

Zack Polanski demands 'nationalisation of all UK utilities' to lower household bills



ZACK POLANSKI TELLS DEFENCE SURVEILLANCE CORPORATION PALANTIR TO 'PACK ITS BAGS AND GET THE HELL OUT OF THE NHS'

22 January 2026 / 21 January 2026 by [Green Party](#)

The Green Party leader has today delivered a notice of contract termination to Palantir which has a seven year £330m contract with the NHS to build FDP, the 'NHS Federated Data Platform' to link and manage patient data.

In summary:

The rise of the Greens under Zack Polanski is a symptom of a broader transformation in British politics. The era of stable, two-party dominance is giving way to a more fragmented landscape in which influence is diffused and pressure matters as much as power.

Even if the Greens never approach national government, their ability to shape debate, unsettle Labour and influence policy through reputational pressure is likely to grow. For organisations operating in the UK, this requires a more nuanced understanding of political risk and a willingness to engage beyond traditional channels.

Cavendish will continue to monitor the Greens' progress closely, alongside the wider fragmentation of the left, to help clients navigate this evolving political environment.

Get in touch.

For further information, or to discuss how your organisation can engage effectively, [get in touch with our team today.](#)

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