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The Twilight of Consensus? The Energy and Climate Policy in the Election Manifestos of Major British Political Parties Before the 2024 General Election

Abstract. The UK's transformation into a low-carbon economy has reached the halfway point. However, the next stage of the decarbonisation process will require socially unpopular actions to be taken more often than before. Against this background, British political parties published election manifestos before the general election in 2024. The analysis of these documents allows us not only to understand the parties' priorities in the energy and climate policy, but also to observe the evolution of the approach to this topic in the UK. Through the analysis of election manifestos, the article aims to examine the state of consensus of major British political parties on the green transformation that has existed for almost two decades. The research results shed light on the importance of public participation in designing political programmes in the area of energy and climate, which is also significant in the context of challenges related to Polish and European energy and climate transformation.

Keywords: the United Kingdom, election manifestos, climate policy, net zero, social acceptance

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Zmierzch konsensusu? Polityka energetyczno-klimatyczna w programach wyborczych głównych brytyjskich partii politycznych przed wyborami parlamentarnymi w 2024 r.

Streszczenie. Brytyjska transformacja w kierunku gospodarki niskoemisyjnej osiągnęła półmetek. Kolejny etap dekarbonizacji będzie jednak wymagał częstszego niż dotychczas podejmowania niepopularnych społecznie działań. Na tym tle brytyjskie partie polityczne opublikowały manifesty programowe przed wyborami parlamentarnymi w 2024 r. Analiza tych dokumentów pozwala nie tylko zrozumieć priorytety ugrupowań w polityce energetyczno-klimatycznej, lecz także zaobserwować ewolucję podejścia do tej tematyki w Wielkiej Brytanii. Poprzez analizę manifestów wyborczych artykuł ma na celu zbadanie stanu istniejącego od niemal dwóch dekad konsensusu głównych brytyjskich partii politycznych w sprawie zielonej transformacji. Wyniki badań rzucają światło na temat znaczenia udziału społeczeństwa w projektowaniu programów politycznych w obszarze energii i klimatu, co jest istotne także w kontekście wyzwań związanych z polską i europejską transformacją energetyczno-klimatyczną.

Słowa kluczowe: Wielka Brytania, manifesty wyborcze, polityka klimatyczna, net zero, akceptacja społeczna

1. Introduction¹

Over the last two decades, the United Kingdom² has served as an example of a nation pursuing a progressive energy and climate policy.³ The fight against climate change has become an important political topic in this nation, which culminated in the adoption of the Climate Change Act (CCA) in 2008, creating the institutional and legal framework for the British transformation process towards a low-carbon economy. The amendment of the CCA in 2019 introduced into legislation the goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 (net zero). The direction in energy and climate policy thus chosen has enjoyed the consensus of major British political parties for years (Biskup, 2022: 1).

The central element of the CCA is the so-called carbon budgets, indicating the maximum permissible level of territorial greenhouse gas emissions over a given five-year period. Currently, the UK is in the implementation phase of the fourth

¹ This article reflects the author's personal views and not the official position of his affiliated institution. The translation of the quoted Polish sources into English is mine (the author's).

² For practical reasons, the commonly known name – the United Kingdom (UK) – will be used in this article.

³ Due to limitations regarding the length of the text, the article concerns mitigation only.

budget, covering the years 2023–2027. The decarbonisation of the British economy has so far proceeded as planned. All carbon budgets were met, although most decarbonisation initiatives concerned the electricity generation sector (including a complete phase-out of coal) and industrial processes. These activities meant that the British transformation process reached the halfway point in 2022 (Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, 2022: 1).

The aim of the article is to analyse the contents of the election manifestos of major British political parties⁴ in order to examine the state of political consensus on the green transformation that has existed in this nation for almost two decades. The following research questions were asked: was the energy and climate policy an important element of the manifestos of the main British political parties? Do these parties present a convergent position on the implementation of the energy and climate goals set so far? The article hypothesises that the process of the re-politicisation of the energy and climate policy is beginning in the UK.

Additionally, the article sheds light on the political challenges of the decarbonisation process, which is relevant also in the Polish and European (continental) context. The qualitative analysis was based on a wide range of sources, including primary documents and scientific literature, and supplemented with government and parliamentary publications.

The article consists of the introduction and four parts. The first part presents the results of the 2024 British general election and indicates the importance of election manifestos. The second part presents the most important energy and climate policies set out in the manifestos. The next part provides a summary containing reflections on the potential use of British experience in the context of Polish and European energy and climate transformation. The article ends with conclusions from the analysis of election manifestos.

2. The British general election of 2024 – the importance of election manifestos

On 4 July 2024, elections to the House of Commons were held and ended with a decisive victory for the Labour Party, which won 411 of the 650 seats. This ended the fourteen-year period of the Conservative Party's rule. It can be argued that this shift reflects wider dissatisfaction with the government's handling of issues such as health care or immigration, but also, to some extent, energy and climate, which will be discussed in more detail later in this article.

⁴ Due to the specificity of the British electoral system, the article includes parties that won at least one million votes. Hence, the study does not include, for example, the Scottish National Party or the Democratic Unionist Party, which, although they won more seats than the Green Party of England and Wales, did not reach the adopted vote threshold.

Table 1. The 2024 UK general election results (political parties with over 1 million votes)

Party	Votes	Vote share	Seats
Labour	9 708 716	33,70	411
Conservative	6 828 925	23,70	121
Reform UK	4 117 620	14,29	5
Liberal Democrat	3 519 143	12,22	72
Green Party of England and Wales	1 842 436	6,40	4
Total		90,31	613 / 650

Source: own study, based on: Cracknell, Baker, 2024: 8–9.

The key moment of the election campaign in the UK is the announcement of election manifestos by the parties, which are discussed and carefully analysed by the media, pundits, and commentators in the course of the campaign. From this point of view, manifestos constitute a source of knowledge of the party's priorities and proposed actions. As a result of the Salisbury Convention (also known as the Salisbury-Addison Convention or the Salisbury Doctrine), which has been officially in force since the end of World War II, these documents are important not only in the context of election promises, but also in the government's subsequent practice.

Dennis Cavanagh highlights the role that manifestos play in the policymaking process, in particular as a factor that builds legitimacy and the government's mandate for action, often serving as a "battering ram for change" (Kavanagh, 1981: 8–15). Grzegorz Pastuszko, in turn, points out that "conventions play an extremely important role in the British constitutional system. Filling the space that in continental European countries is usually reserved for the provisions of the written constitution, they regulate a number of important, often even critical, areas of the operation of state power" (Pastuszko, 2015: 261). Put simply, the Salisbury Convention stipulates that the upper house of parliament will not block bills adopted by the House of Commons as long as they constitute the implementation of the promises contained in the election manifesto of the ruling party. In practice, however, the application of this convention has posed some difficulties. This was reflected in the establishment of the Joint Committee on Conventions in 2006, which confirmed the validity of the convention and clarified it. As Tomasz Wiecech notes, the Commission's report explains that

the Salisbury Convention mandates (...) the adoption of bills implementing the commitments of the ruling party's electoral manifesto at second reading; prohibits the introduction of amendments to such bills that modify their content contrary to the government's intentions (so-called wrecking amendments) and orders the bills to be adopted and returned to the House of Commons so that it can respond to the amendments introduced by the House of Lords within a reasonable time (Wiecech, 2011: 190).

The Salisbury Convention in its current form came into existence after the Labour Party had won the majority in the House of Commons in the 1945 election. At that time, the House of Lords was composed of a vast majority of Conservative hereditary peers. In practical terms, the Salisbury Convention has less direct significance when there is a Conservative government alongside a Conservative-dominated House of Lords. This is because the likelihood of the Lords blocking government legislation is already reduced due to party alignment. It should be noted, however, that even with party alignment, the House of Lords can be more independently minded, and many peers may not feel bound by party discipline in the same way as MPs. Thus, the Salisbury Convention serves as an important constitutional principle, strengthening democratic legitimacy and constitutional stability.

3. The energy and climate policy in election manifestos

Without prejudging the importance of energy and climate issues for the election results, it should be noted that these issues were a significant element of the manifestos of all the major political parties. They frequently devoted a separate chapter to these issues, which marked a change from the elections of previous years. The main energy and climate elements of the manifestos are presented below, including the parties' approaches to: 1) the net zero goal; 2) renewable energy sources (RES); 3) fossil fuels; 4) nuclear energy; 5) road transport decarbonisation; and 6) heating and energy efficiency, i.e. key areas from the perspective of the ongoing decarbonisation process.

The winning Labour Party's manifesto states that "the climate and nature crisis is the greatest long-term global challenge that we face" (Labour Party Manifesto 2024...: 49). Making the UK a leader in the field of clean energy was indicated as one of five missions that were to constitute the core of the Labour Party's policy after taking power. The party emphasised the importance of achieving the net zero goal, pointing to the benefits in the form of cheaper energy, job creation, and increased security. At the forefront of the Labour Party's policy is the commitment to completely decarbonise the electricity generation sector. For this purpose, doubling onshore wind capacity, tripling solar power, and quadrupling offshore wind by 2030 is planned. Another important commitment in this area is the creation of a new public company, the Great British Energy, the primary goal of which is to promote and support investments in the field of clean energy. The Party also supports the development of nuclear energy in terms of building both large new power plants and small modular reactors (SMRs). Regarding fossil fuels, the Labour Party promises to "maintain a strategic reserve of gas power stations to guarantee security of supply" (Labour Party Manifesto 2024...: 52). At the same time, the Party supports the gradual transformation of the North Sea oil and gas sector. In

practice, this means no new exploration licences in this area while respecting those issued during the rule of the Conservative Party. Labour also supports raising the windfall tax⁵ and promises its extension. With regard to the decarbonisation of road transport, the Labour Party commits to returning to the plan announced by the Conservative Party (later delayed) to phase out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030. Labour also plans to double the financial resources available for the home upgrade scheme (the Warm Homes Plan).

The Conservative Party also devoted a lot of space to energy and climate issues in its manifesto (The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2024...). In the chapter titled “Our plan for an affordable and pragmatic transition to net zero”, the Party emphasises its commitment to reaching the net zero goal and its achievements so far in this area. However, later in the manifesto, the intention to adopt a more pragmatic approach to net zero comes to the fore, expressed, *inter alia*, by establishing a priority for reducing the costs of transformation for the society and obtaining a stronger social mandate for further reforms. With regard to RES, the Conservative Party chiefly proposes tripling the offshore wind capacity. It also expresses support for the development of onshore wind farms and solar power plants, albeit subject to the priority given to the protection of agricultural land and landscape aesthetics, as well as the position expressed by local communities living in the area affected by this type of installation. In the area of fossil fuels, Conservatives point out the need to build new gas power plants to maintain energy security, given a rapid increase of RES in the system. They also support further development of the oil and gas sector in the North Sea, including the promise of new licences in this area. At the same time, windfall tax would be extended to the 2028–2029 tax year. The Conservative Party also supports the dynamic development of nuclear energy, including SMR. In principle, the Party advocates the decarbonisation of road transport. However, here it places emphasis on the protection of the domestic automotive sector and opposes the extension of the Ultra Low Emission Zones (ULEZ) in London. Similarly, in the area of heating and energy efficiency, the Tories stress their intention to allocate significant funds for the thermal modernisation of buildings, pointing to the associated economic benefits for households. At the same time, they also emphasise that households should be given sufficient time to adapt to the reforms and announce that none of the planned initiatives in this sector will enforce the replacement of used equipment, e.g. gas boilers.

Energy and climate issues were also highlighted in the election manifesto of Reform UK (formerly the Brexit Party). However, unlike the two principal British parties, Reform UK strongly emphasises that the net zero target has a negative impact on the British economy. It also points out that the emission reduction targets set so far are impossible to achieve, even in financial terms, and, therefore,

⁵ The Energy Profits Levy.

the Party will strive to repeal them. Consequently, Reform UK supports ending subsidies for RES, pointing out that the development of this sector has contributed to an increase in energy prices. The Party also indicates, *inter alia*, the need to protect agricultural land against its potential use for solar energy development. At the same time, Reform UK announces support for the shale gas sector and further development of the gas and oil industry in the North Sea. The manifesto also states support for coal mining. In the area of nuclear energy, the Party points to the need to develop small nuclear reactors produced in the UK. Reform UK is silent on the decarbonisation of heating and improving energy efficiency. With regard to road transport, the Party announces a package of actions aimed at stopping the development of electromobility, even by prohibiting the creation of clean transport zones or lifting the planned ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles.

The Liberal Democrats also devoted a separate chapter to energy and climate issues, pointing out that climate change is an existential threat requiring urgent action. In fact, it announces commitment to achieving net zero by 2045, i.e. five years earlier than the current goal. The party declares strong support for the development of RES in order to achieve a 90% share of this sector in the electricity generation structure by 2030. In the area of fossil fuels, Liberal Democrats advocate a ban on the use of hydraulic fracturing (fracking; used for shale gas extraction) and a ban on opening new coal mines. At the same time, the Party avoids taking a clear position on the future of the oil and gas sector in the North Sea, pointing only to the need to end subsidies for fossil fuels and implement the principles of a just transition. Liberal Democrats completely ignore the topic of nuclear energy. Regarding road transport, the Party advocates the development of electric vehicle charging stations as well as the reinstatement of the requirement that every new passenger or small commercial vehicle sold in the UK be zero emission from 2030. In terms of heating and energy efficiency, Liberal Democrats announce a new programme supporting the process of thermal modernisation of buildings and the installation of heat pumps in low-income households.

The Green Party of England and Wales emphasises that the UK's current climate targets do not reflect the urgency of the climate crisis. In this context, the Greens commit themselves to "push the government to transition to a zero-carbon society as soon as possible, and more than a decade ahead of 2050" (The Green Party's Manifesto...: 10). The Party also focuses on the dynamic development of RES, which are to constitute approximately 70% of the electricity generation structure by 2030. The Greens also commit to a number of actions aimed at reducing the role of fossil fuels in the British economy, including, among others, ending their subsidies, striving to introduce the so-called carbon tax, and revoking licences enabling their extraction. The Green Party also strongly supports the abandonment of nuclear energy, which it considers dangerous, harmful to the environment, and too expensive. In the area of road transport decarbonisation, the Party envisages ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2027,

as well as ensuring that the existing vehicles of this type are phased out of use by 2035. The Greens also announce their intention to launch extensive support programmes for the thermal modernisation of buildings and the installation of low-emission heating systems.

4. Practical implications

Reaching the milestone of British energy and climate transformation in the form of a 50% reduction in territorial greenhouse gas emissions heralds the opening of a new area of political conflict, the axis of which is not divergences regarding the instruments of decarbonisation, but the advisability of continuing this process in the first place. The increasingly visible erosion of political consensus on this matter means that the current British model of transformation will, for the first time since its creation, be subjected to political tests in the coming years. An analysis of these processes may provide an interesting contribution to the debate on dilemmas related to designing politically effective conditions for carrying out an advanced climate transformation.

At the halfway point of the British transformation, the political parties can be divided into three groups, i.e. those supporting further decarbonisation (the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, the Green Party of England and Wales); those against further decarbonisation (Reform UK); and those taking an ambiguous position (Conservative Party). It is, therefore, clear that in the UK, political parties with a positive attitude to decarbonisation still predominate. The challenges related to the implementation of the next phase of transformation mean that this proportion may change in the coming years, and the energy and climate policy may become a hostage to party interests in the future.

YouGov's data shows that while climate change denial in the UK remains very low, scepticism towards climate policy is on the rise. The proportion of people who see climate change as one of top political issues is falling, while the group indicating that the UK is already doing more for climate than other nations is growing. As YouGov points out, according to 2025 data, "even among those who voted Green at last year's general election – a party for whom the environment is their defining issue – just 51% see it as a top issue facing the country today, a noticeable contrast to 89% of Reform UK voters saying the same of immigration, arguably their defining issue" (Difford, 2025).

What is particularly important in this context is the fact that carbon budgets are becoming increasingly smaller, i.e. they set lower permissible emission levels, which in practice will make it difficult for subsequent governments to delay making socially-sensitive decisions. Climate Change Committee (CCC), which is an expert advisory and control body with significant political potential, points out,

despite the successful implementation of the first three carbon budgets, as of 2024, only one-third of the policy actions necessary to achieve the decarbonisation goal for 2030⁶ are covered by feasible plans (Climate Change Committee, 2024).

The British decarbonisation process, so far based mainly on activities in the energy sector, has taken place somewhat in the background, without the need for public engagement. The next phase of transformation will be different. Relatively small progress in domestic transport, agriculture, and the building sector will require effective social participation, including replacing petrol and diesel cars with electric ones or installing low-emission heating systems. The key to success in this context appears to be policies aimed at increasing social awareness of the complexity of decarbonisation, as well as social acceptance of the related changes, pointing first to possible individual benefits and satisfying the need for a sense of fair distribution of the costs.

British experience in this area may constitute a reference point for designing Polish and continental European energy and climate programmes. The expected acceleration in the EU's ambitions in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions⁷ will, in the coming years, require the adoption of socially-sensitive decisions in Poland, too. The negative political consequences of insufficient activities in the area of building public participation⁸ illustrated in this article constitute one of the main lessons to be drawn from the progress of green transformation in the UK to date. Failure to draw conclusions in this respect will result in increased risk of the ineffectiveness of the planned decarbonisation instruments⁹ and of social unrest, which will consequently negatively affect the prospects for successful energy and climate transformation in Poland and the EU.

5. Conclusions

The energy and climate policy formed an important part of the British electoral campaign, as evidenced by the fact that all major parties covered this topic extensively in their manifestos. All parties, except for Reform UK, declare their

⁶ I.e. emission reduction of 68%.

⁷ The EU's emission reduction target for 2030 is 55%. By 2040, it is to be 90%.

⁸ An interesting example of an initiative aimed at building a more deliberative model of climate policy in the UK was the establishment of the climate assembly in 2020. As Willis points out, this initiative enabled a structured dialogue between citizens, experts, and politicians to chart the future course of climate action in a spirit of cooperation rather than imposed top-down actions, and also provided a kind of training ground for politicians in which they could test rhetoric and public sentiment in relation to specific policies – see: Willis, 2020: 90–94.

⁹ E.g. ETS2, i.e. emissions trading system separate from the existing ETS system. ETS2 will cover emissions mainly from buildings and road transport sectors. It is expected to become fully operational in 2027.

support for further decarbonisation and the net zero target. However, they differ significantly in terms of the preferred pace of decarbonisation, the instruments used for this purpose, and, to a large extent, the political narrative around it.

What is particularly significant in this context is the attitude of the Conservative Party, which, while defending its heritage in the fight against climate change¹⁰ and maintaining its commitment to achieving net zero by 2050, clearly signals its readiness to significantly alter its policies in this area. It points to the costs associated with further decarbonisation and the need to make further reforms conditional on obtaining a clear social mandate.¹¹ The Conservatives contrast strongly in this respect with the Labour Party, whose rhetoric sees net zero as an opportunity, especially in terms of increased energy security, job creation, and lower energy bills. It should be noted that the attitude of the Conservative Party is largely due to the increasing popularity of Reform UK, which is sceptical about climate change,¹² although the internal inconsistency of the Tories in the field of energy and climate policy has deeper roots and a long-standing history (Carter, Pearson, 2024: 154–174). The actions and speeches of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in the pre-election period concerned primarily the need to change the tone of the discussion on net zero and adopt a “more pragmatic approach”, which meant slowing down and relaxing some of the climate goals and initiatives adopted by previous Prime Ministers from the Conservative Party.¹³ Kemi Badenoch, known for her sceptical statements about the net zero goal,¹⁴ became the new leader of the Party after the elections, which could suggest that in the coming years the Tories will strengthen their sceptical position towards ambitious climate actions.

Equally significant is the emphasis placed by individual parties on energy issues and economic benefits for households. It seems that this strategy results largely from the vivid memory of the energy crisis of 2022, the ongoing war in Ukraine, and the cost-of-living crisis. “Energy” and “renewable energy sources” were mentioned in the Labour Party manifesto more than twice as often as “climate” and “net zero”.¹⁵ A similar emphasis on energy issues can also be seen in the manifestos of other parties, except for Liberal Democrats.

¹⁰ It was during the government of Prime Minister Theresa May that the CCA amendment establishing the net zero target was adopted. Moreover, during Boris Johnson’s government, many sector strategies were developed in line with this goal.

¹¹ Former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak repeatedly pointed out that so far net zero has not been sufficiently subjected to public assessment and debate, see e.g. PM speech on Net Zero...

¹² As Dickson and Hobolt point out, “a large proportion of radical right-wing supporters in 2023 were Conservative Party supporters in 2020. Of the voters who switched from the Conservative Party, the vast majority are skeptical of climate policies” (see: Dickson, Hobolt, 2024: 18).

¹³ E.g. postponing the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars for five years.

¹⁴ E.g. in 2022, she called the net zero goal “unilateral economic disarmament”, (see: *The Independent*, Tory Leadership Hopeful...)

¹⁵ For the Liberal Democrats, climate and net zero feature a total of 55 times, while energy and renewables feature 43 times. In the case of the Labour Party, the ratio is 28 to 72; the Conservative Party – 21 to 55; Reform UK – 15 to 25; and the Green Party – 52 to 71.

Reform UK is the only major British political party that openly opposes further decarbonisation and calls for abandoning the net zero goal, pointing primarily to the negative impact of this process on the state of the national economy. This is part of a broader trend observed in many European countries. According to research conducted by Zachary Dickson and Sara Hobolt, radical right-wing parties in Europe have changed their previous strategy of ignoring climate policy to politicising this topic and turning it into a politically-sensitive issue (wedge issue) in order to polarise society and mobilise their electorate. For this purpose, these parties challenge the existing consensus on climate among mainstream parties (Dickson, Hobolt, 2024: 2). The emergence of a genuine political force¹⁶ that so openly questions climate achievements to date and the direction of progress in this field can be interpreted as an expression of concern by a significant part of the society about the challenges related to the decarbonisation of sectors other than energy. Furthermore, the growing popularity of this party,¹⁷ and the rhetoric it has used in the post-election period, also signals the need to change the tone of the debate on climate action, which was shaped after the adoption of the CCA Act. Referring to Samuel Fankhauser's words from 2011 that "there is still climate scepticism at the feral end of public opinion, but the constructive debate is no longer about the targets, but instead about how to meet them," (Fankhauser, 2011: 495) it can be argued that presenting sceptical opinions in this policy area is no longer solely the domain of niche parties, and the British debate may soon once again be about defining the climate goals themselves and not just how to achieve them.

Going further, the hypothesis that the process of the re-politicisation of energy and climate policy is beginning in the UK appears to be true. So far, the nation has been looking for stabilisation in this area in order to effectively "block" political obligations, largely as a response to the challenges related to the time inconsistency problem (Lockwood, 2021: 1235–1236). The tangible effect of these efforts was the adoption of the CCA, as well as the resulting requirement to adopt carbon budgets, and the creation of the Climate Change Committee (CCC), which is an expert advisory and control body with significant political potential. However, Matthew Paterson, Paul Tobin, and Stacy VanDeveer draw attention to the threats resulting from this approach, including insufficient democratisation of the reforms involved. They also point out that avoiding political conflict may, under certain conditions, be counterproductive. Therefore, researchers signal the need to look for points of convergence between approaches: on the one hand, that which postulates the creation of conditions for the stabilisation of energy and climate policy, and, on the other, that which treats conflict as a necessary or even

¹⁶ Due to the specificity of the British electoral system, Reform UK won only 5 seats while achieving the third result in the country in terms of the number of votes cast for the party – see Table 1.

¹⁷ According to *Politico*, as of 12 December 2024, support for Reform is at 23%, with 26% for the Labour Party and 25% for the Conservative Party (see *Politico*. Pool of Pools...).

desirable element for the implementation of ambitious climate actions (Paterson, Tobin, VanDeveer, 2022: 2). The observation of the British political scene shows that this need has already been noted in some political circles, as shown, *inter alia*, by proposals to strengthen the role of parliament in the process of adopting future carbon budgets or implementing measures aimed at improving parliamentary scrutiny and debate on this topic (Dunne, 2024). On the one hand, such proposals can reinforce the current stabilisation model, while on the other hand they introduce mechanisms that can foster political debate.

Neil Carter and Connor Little point out that party competition can take many forms, depending on the salience of the issue and the degree of inter-party disagreement. The authors identify four main structures of competition, namely 1) competitive consensus, characterised by low levels of conflict and high salience; 2) passive consensus, characterised by a low level of disagreement and low salience; 3) passive disagreement, characterised by a high level of disagreement and low salience; and 4) competitive disagreement, which means there is high inter-party disagreement and high salience. These structures are helpful in describing party competition on cross-sectional themes, such as climate change, as well as policy sectors and policy instruments (Carter, Little, 2021: 3–4). At the same time, the authors note that for years, party competition in the area of climate policy in the UK had been characterised by passive consensus, before it turned in 2006 into a period of competitive consensus that lasted until 2010. Then, a period of passive disagreement began, lasting until 2016, which later changed into a competitive disagreement in 2016–2017. According to researchers, since 2019, there has been a return to the period of competitive consensus (Carter, Little, 2021: 9). Going further, it should be stated that in the period preceding the British general election in 2024, competition in the area of energy and climate policy was again in the phase of competitive disagreement. As Madeleine Farstad and Marianne Aasen point out, such a period may result in ambitious climate initiatives, but with a significant risk of their short lifespan related to possible changes in government (Farstad, Assen, 2023: 733).

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