

# Patriotic Britain

*The right, organised.*

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### **Author's Note**

This work was written by Donna Rachel Edmunds with the assistance of Claude AI, an artificial intelligence assistant developed by Anthropic. All analysis, arguments, editorial judgments, and conclusions are the author's own. Claude AI was used as a drafting and research tool; responsibility for the content rests entirely with the author.

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## Executive Summary

The British right is popular and powerless. It leads the polls, commands majority support on the issues that matter most to voters, and possesses millions of sympathisers who agree with one another on the fundamental questions facing the country. Yet the institutions that actually govern British life — the civil service, the charity sector, the professional bodies, the universities, local government, the regulatory apparatus — are overwhelmingly staffed, governed, and shaped by people who do not share these views and are not accountable to those who do.

This paper argues that the right's political weakness is not electoral but institutional, and that no electoral victory can produce durable change without the institutional infrastructure to sustain it.

### The Problem

Power in every society flows to organised minorities who capture leadership positions within institutions and shape them in their image. The left has spent over a century building the institutional ecosystem that sustains its influence: a dense, self-reinforcing network of parties, think tanks, trade unions, charities, professional bodies, universities, and media outlets in which each component strengthens the others. This ecosystem is substantially funded by the taxpayer, largely immune to electoral disruption, and so deeply embedded in British public life that most people operating within it no longer recognise it as ideological infrastructure. They simply think of it as how things work.

Key findings on the left's ecosystem include:

- The charity sector commands £96 billion in annual income, with approximately 46% derived from government funding. Two-thirds of MPs report being more persuaded by charity lobbying than by business groups. The sector campaigns almost exclusively in a progressive direction.
- Professional bodies — the BMA, the Law Society, the Royal Colleges, the teaching unions — adopt progressive positions through governance structures most members never engage with, lending the authority of entire professions to one end of the political spectrum.
- Three-quarters of UK academics support left-wing or liberal parties. Universities are the upstream source of the professional class that staffs every other captured institution.
- The civil service and local government employ approximately 2.5 million people whose professional formation, career incentives, and institutional culture consistently produce outcomes aligned with progressive priorities, regardless of who holds elected office.

The right has no equivalent ecosystem. Not a weaker one — none. It possesses individual assets: a capable think tank infrastructure, a growing media presence, latent social capital in rural and faith communities. But these exist in isolation. The think tanks publish for the media, the media broadcasts to an audience, the audience agrees and moves on, and nothing connects any of it to the institutional machinery where norms are set and the boundaries of acceptable discourse are drawn. The right has organisations, but not a network. Voices, but not a chorus. The infrastructure that would allow individual talent to accumulate into collective power does not exist.

### **The Electoral Consequences**

This institutional deficit is not merely a long-term strategic weakness. It is already costing the right seats. Reform UK's MRP-modelled polling projects 381 seats — a majority of 112. But MRP assumes every vote is backed by the same campaign infrastructure. It is not. This paper applies three corrections, each a direct consequence of the organisational asymmetry described above:

- **The ground game gap.** The left's decades of investment in community organising, union mobilisation, and tactical voting coordination — infrastructure the right has never built — costs Reform approximately 101 seats. A third of Reform members did no campaigning in 2024; those who did campaigned overwhelmingly online. In Runcorn and Helsby, Reform won by just 6 votes despite a 20.9-point swing. Organisation, not sentiment, determines margins.
- **The Muslim Vote.** The Muslim Vote operates as a constituency-level coordination machine of precisely the kind the right lacks: identifying target seats, endorsing candidates, consolidating the progressive vote below the waterline of national polls. This costs a further 50 seats. In Gorton and Denton, the MRP prediction was not marginally wrong but categorically refuted.
- **Right-wing vote-splitting.** The absence of any coordinating mechanism on the right means that Advance UK and Restore Britain haemorrhage Reform's activist base unchecked, costing a further 45 seats in marginals where every vote counts.

The corrected projection: 185 seats — 141 short of a majority. Every correction runs against Reform because every correction reflects the same underlying cause: the left is organised and the right is not.

The implication is double. The institutional deficit makes a majority harder to win — and less valuable if won. Even a Reform government would inherit the captured civil service, the progressive charity sector, the hostile professional bodies, the same universities. Electoral victory without institutional infrastructure produces policy

that is reversed the moment the government falls. The ballot box can change who sits in ministerial offices. It cannot change who runs the institutions those ministers oversee. That requires something the right has never built — which is what this paper proposes.

## **The Prescription**

This paper proposes seven core institutions the right must build:

- A central coordinating body to connect the right's fragmented organisations into a functioning ecosystem
- A leadership and organising academy to train the cadre of councillors, governors, trustees, and candidates the right currently lacks
- A national community organising network to provide the permanent, local, ground-level presence that converts sentiment into political power
- An electoral intelligence unit to produce constituency-level data, model vote-splitting, and enable tactical coordination
- A civil society incubator to launch right-of-centre charities and contest the governance of professional bodies
- A conservative philanthropic trust to coordinate donor strategy on ten-year horizons rather than annual grant cycles
- A strategic communications network to connect existing media to institutional action rather than mere commentary

These institutions should be policy-agnostic: built around shared infrastructure — training, data, legal support, candidate development — not ideological conformity. The right will not coordinate through sentiment. It must coordinate through incentives.

The roadmap is phased: foundational capacity-building in 2026–2028; institutional expansion across British public life in 2028–2033; and generational consolidation — academic infrastructure, cultural institutions, self-sustaining leadership pipelines — through to the mid-2040s.

The left did not win by accident. It built, deliberately and patiently, the institutional infrastructure that converts political energy into durable power. The right has not yet started. This paper is the blueprint for starting.

## Introduction

For over a century, the British right has been on the back foot in the fight against socialism. The Conservatives were in government for 57 of the 20th century's 100 years, yet throughout that century Britain grew increasingly socialist. Why? Because each left wing government used its time in power to push forward a socialist agenda, while the Conservatives were content merely to hold the line during their tenure.

The *coup de grace* came during Blair's government of 1997–2010. New Labour enacted sweeping changes to the British constitution which were nothing short of a quiet revolution—so quiet that it's only now, some 30 years on, that the right are starting to wake up to what was done.

The response, now the right has awoken, is a cavalier 'we'll just reverse it with a Great Repeal Act'. This misses the fact of the revolution entirely. Political change is not carried out with the flourish of a lawyer's pen. Laws sit on the surface of power, they can be passed quickly and just as quickly undone. *Culture* is where the real revolution is waged.

Where legislation is reversible, cultural change is cumulative and generational. It shapes what feels normal, legitimate, and possible. Over decades, the institutions that govern everyday life—civil service, local authorities, universities, charities, the media—were gradually staffed and socialised in one ideological direction. Each cohort trained the next, hardening assumptions into norms, and norms into "common sense".

This generational shift is visible in the attitudes of young Britons today. Recent polling finds that a significantly larger share of younger adults—around one-third of those aged 16 to 34—say they would consider voting for a new left-wing party, compared with only one-fifth of the population as a whole<sup>1</sup>. This gap shrinks sharply with age, underscoring a clear generational divide in political orientation.

Long-term social research confirms that this is not a momentary blip but part of a broader trajectory: people born in more recent years express less conservative social attitudes than earlier cohorts, indicating that these changes are not driven solely by current politics but by enduring shifts in values over generations<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ipsos, "One in Five Britons Would Consider Voting for a New Left-Wing Party, Rising to One in Three Young People and Labour Voters," August 20, 2025, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/one-five-britons-would-consider-voting-new-left-wing-party-rising-on-e-three-young-people-and-labour>

<sup>2</sup> Emanuele Addario and Tom Wilson, *Towards a More Liberal Britain: Generational Change or Different Times?* (London: National Centre for Social Research, May 21, 2024), <https://natcen.ac.uk/publications/towards-more-liberal-britain-generational-change-or-different-times>

Undoing the socialist revolution will require a conservative revolution of the same magnitude.

But revolutions of this kind are not spontaneous uprisings of public opinion. They are not delivered by viral moments, clever messaging, or the hope that ‘the people’ will one day awaken and sweep the old order aside. Cultural dominance is built patiently through organisation, networks, and the steady accumulation of institutional control. It is achieved not by persuading the largest number of people at once, but by coordinating a disciplined minority capable of shaping outcomes and setting the terms to which everyone else gradually adapts.

As Neema Parvini puts it in the introduction to his 2022 book *The Populist Delusion*<sup>3</sup>:

Those who wish to bring about political change cannot hope to do so if they adopt populist methods or have faith that at some point a critical mass of the public will suddenly reach a ‘tipping point’ after which elites will be inevitably toppled. Change always takes *concerted organisation* and cannot hope to be achieved simply by convincing the greatest number of people of your point of view. Power does not care, in the final analysis, how many likes you got on your Twitter account. In practice, the great bulk of people will adjust to new realities after the fact of change and reorient themselves to the new power structure one way or the other. In any case, ‘manufacturing consent’ can only be carried out once a group is *de facto* in power. A group may achieve *de jure* power only to find that they cannot execute or manufacture consent because they have not achieved *de facto* power—and, realistically, *de facto* power is the only power that counts.

This paper starts from the assumption that the right cannot roll back a century of creeping political change within one electoral cycle. Setting aside the fact that the right is not guaranteed to win the next election, even if it does, any attempts to enact sweeping change will be met with fierce resistance from the embedded left, which will tie a radical government up in knots and result in a one-term administration whose policies will be quickly and easily reversed.

Another way is proposed: that of slower organised subversion of the left’s hegemony to break the hold they have on the state.

If power flows to those who organise, then failure to organise is not bad luck or bad messaging, *it is negligence*. We cannot go on behaving like commentators, producing ever more arguments and hoping the public will eventually notice. Politics is not a debating society. It is a contest for control of institutions. Either we build the structures required to compete and win, or we accept permanent defeat. There is no third option.

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<sup>3</sup> Neema Parvini, *The Populist Delusion: Exposing the Politics, Economics, and Culture of Populism* (New York: All Points Books, 2022), p11.

## Chapter 1

### The Political Terrain

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A hundred men acting uniformly in concert, with a common understanding, will triumph over a thousand men who are not in accord and can therefore be dealt with one by one.

— Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*

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We are taught that Britain is governed by “the will of the people”, that elections transfer power to the public. That if enough of us agree on something, the system will eventually respond. In practice, politics does not work this way.

If we stop for even a moment to consider it, we know that power is never exercised by “the people” as a whole. Most people are not politically active, and so power is always exercised by small, organised minorities who coordinate their efforts while everyone else remains dispersed and preoccupied with ordinary life: mortgage payments, the next promotion at work, what’s for supper that evening, who’s winning I’m A Celebrity this year.

Whether the setting is a trade union, a corporation, a university, a political party, or an entire nation, the same pattern repeats: a small group organises, takes control of leadership positions, and directs outcomes. Democracy changes the language, but never the mechanics.

The terrain on which this game plays out can be termed ‘the political landscape’. It is not simply the formal architecture of the state, but the full ecology of organisations, institutions, and networks through which power is accumulated, exercised, and contested. It includes political parties, but also the think tanks that supply them with ideas, the universities that train their future personnel, the media that frames what counts as reasonable debate, the charities and professional bodies that shape public norms, and the unions and business lobbies that organise collective interests.

These institutions do not operate in isolation. They form relationships, share personnel, reinforce one another's assumptions, and together constitute something greater than the sum of their parts — a living environment in which certain political

ideas thrive and others wither. To understand who rules, you must first understand this terrain: who has built within it, who has colonised it, and who has been content merely to observe it from the outside.

Elite theory is concerned with mapping this terrain, so let's begin with a brief look at two key theorists in this realm.

### **Mosca: The Rulers And The Ruled**

In his 1895 book *The Ruling Class* (revised and expanded in 1923), Mosca wrote<sup>4</sup>:

“Among the constant facts and tendencies that are to be found in all political organisms, one is so obvious that it is apparent to the most casual eye. In all societies—from all societies that are very meagrely developed and have barely attained the dawns of civilization, down to the most advanced and powerful societies—two classes of people appear—a class that rules and a class that is ruled.”

Mosca used this truism to reject the notion of popular sovereignty. As there are only the rulers and the ruled, how can the ruled be sovereign?

Note, Mosca is doing more here than merely observing that there is always a ruling class. He is making a deeper claim; that the ruling class *cannot* be controlled by the ruled, even in a democracy.

As Mosca wrote<sup>5</sup>:

“What happens in other forms of government—namely, that an organized minority imposes its will on the disorganized majority—happens also and to perfection, whatever the appearances to the contrary, under the representative system. When we say that the voters ‘choose’ their representative, we are using a language that is very inexact. The truth is that the representative has himself elected by the voters, and, if that phrase should seem too inflexible and too harsh to fit some cases, we might qualify it by saying that his friends have him elected. In elections, as in all other manifestations of social life, those who have the will and, especially, the moral, intellectual and material means to force their will upon others take the lead over the others and command them.”

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<sup>4</sup> Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, ed. Arthur Livingston, trans. Hannah D. Khan (1895; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939), p. 50., cited by Neema Parvini, *The Populist Delusion: Exposing the Politics, Economics, and Culture of Populism* (New York: All Points Books, 2022), p14.

<sup>5</sup> Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, p. 154, cited by Parvini, *The Populist Delusion*, p. 15

These ‘friends’, he adds, tend to be wealthy people who can pay the politician to represent their interests over those of the majority. These same wealthy people can also pay the media to control the flow of information to the masses, and to indoctrinate them with opinions favourable to the minority. Furthermore, alternative candidates can also be pre-selected, ensuring that whichever candidate wins, elite interests are upheld.

### **Michels: The Iron Law of Oligarchy.**

Michels furthered Mosca’s work, agreeing with Mosca that democracy is a fiction as the moment “the election is finished, the power of the mass over the delegate comes to an end.”

“The rank and file are manipulated into accepting policies with which they would not otherwise agree, and which are not in their interests, or at least are primarily in the interests of the leadership group,” he wrote.

So far, so Mosca. Where he takes this forward is in expanding the analysis beyond the state level to all institutions: “[large] families, totems, tribes, cities, nations, empires, churches, economic classes, clubs, parties.”

Essentially what Michels is arguing is that in every group there will be an individual or sub group who take a leadership role, and that when they do, they shape that organisation in their image. “Organization implies a tendency to oligarchy.” This, then, is the Iron Law of Oligarchy.

Parvini writes<sup>6</sup>:

[T]he iron law of oligarchy explains, at a stroke, why the ‘Long March’ of the Left through the institutions since 1945 in both America and across Europe has been so effective. They never needed to persuade most people in the populace or even at an organizational level of their view, they simply needed to capture the leadership positions to impose their will. The typical student at a university is not an activist, they are mostly disinterested—as Michels says of young trade union members, ‘they are heedless, their thoughts run in erotic channels, they are always hoping some miracle will deliver them from the need of passing their whole lives as simple wage-earners’—but the leadership of the Student Union is not. In every university, therefore, the will of the Student Union Leadership will prevail on campus. If that will is to enforce a quasi-Marxist progressive hegemony, then that will be the case too, on every campus. And so, we might see how ‘society’ might wake up one day to find that it has sleepwalked into a quasi-Marxist progressive hegemony.

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<sup>6</sup> Parvini, *The Populist Delusion*, p. 40

Michels offers a number of psychological and practical factors that prove his law, however, the most important for our purposes is the tactical reason: the masses simply cannot organise without a leader.

Parvini notes<sup>7</sup>: “At times, Michels seems to write as if the masses possess some pathological need to be led. For example, he writes:

“The most striking proof of the organic weakness of the mass is furnished by the way in which, when deprived of the leaders in time of action, they abandon the field of battle in disordered flight; they seem to have no power of instinctive reorganization, and are useless until new captains arise capable of replacing those that have been lost.””

As for how to displace an oligarchy, the prescription is simple: form a new leadership and out-manoeuvre the old one.

### **The Political Ecosystem**

Politics is rarely the product of lone actors. Behind every successful political movement, party, or policy agenda lies a dense web of organisations, institutions, and networks that sustain, amplify, and reinforce one another. This web — a political ecosystem — is the invisible infrastructure of political power.

The term borrows deliberately from ecology. Just as a natural ecosystem is defined not by any single species but by the relationships between species, a political ecosystem derives its strength from interdependence. Political parties need ideas; think tanks supply them. Activists need funding and legitimacy; charities and foundations provide cover and resources. Trade unions deliver organised labour and public pressure; professional bodies lend expert credibility. Each actor occupies a niche, and each depends on the others to function effectively.

What holds an ecosystem together is not formal coordination — its members may never sit in the same room or sign the same documents — but a shared orientation toward a set of political goals. A right-leaning ecosystem might connect a governing party with free-market think tanks, business lobby groups, and sympathetic media outlets. A left-leaning one might knit together a labour movement, progressive NGOs, academic research centres, and community organising networks. The specific composition varies, but the underlying logic is the same: collective investment in a political direction that no single organisation could sustain alone.

This framing matters because it shifts our attention away from the dramatic moments of politics — elections, votes, speeches — and toward the quieter, slower work that makes those moments possible. Policy ideas do not spring fully formed

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<sup>7</sup> Parvini, *The Populist Delusion*, p 42, citing Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociology of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (1915; New York: The Free Press, 1962), p 90

from politicians' minds; they are incubated in research institutes, tested in public discourse, adopted by advocacy groups, and only later picked up by parties seeking a platform. Candidates do not build mass movements from scratch; they inherit networks of donors, volunteers, and sympathetic institutions cultivated over years or decades.

Understanding the political ecosystem also explains why political change is so difficult. Defeating a party at an election is relatively straightforward compared to dismantling the broader infrastructure that sustains its worldview. Ideas, institutions, and relationships outlast any single electoral cycle. A well-developed ecosystem can absorb defeats, regroup, and continue shaping the boundaries of acceptable debate even from opposition. Conversely, a political movement that lacks ecosystem depth — one with a charismatic leader but few supporting institutions — tends to be fragile, rising quickly and collapsing just as fast.

The concept is therefore both descriptive and strategic. It describes how political power is actually organised, and it suggests that anyone seeking durable political change must think not just about winning arguments or elections, but about building the institutional landscape that makes sustained influence possible.

### **Organisation is the Game**

Elite theory and the ecosystem concept are, at root, saying the same thing from different angles. Mosca shows us that power always flows to organised minorities. Michels shows us that whoever captures the leadership of an institution shapes it in their image. And the concept of the political ecosystem shows us the terrain on which this dynamic plays out at scale, not just within a single organisation but across the entire network of institutions that together constitute political life.

The implications, taken together, are clarifying. Political change is not primarily a matter of having the right ideas, the most compelling arguments, or the largest number of sympathisers. It is a matter of building and maintaining the organisational infrastructure through which ideas can be developed, legitimised, propagated, and ultimately institutionalised. An idea without an ecosystem to carry it is a pamphlet. An idea embedded in a network of think tanks, universities, charities, media outlets, and professional bodies is, eventually, common sense.

This is why the left's dominance has proved so durable. It is not simply that left-leaning people outnumber right-leaning ones, in fact polling consistently suggests otherwise. It is that the left has, over generations, built a dense and interlocking ecosystem that occupies the commanding heights of British institutional life. Individual elections come and go. The ecosystem persists.

It is also why electoral success alone cannot reverse this dominance. A government that wins power without a supporting ecosystem finds itself hemmed in at every turn — by a civil service socialised in different assumptions, by a media that sets hostile terms of debate, by charities and professional bodies that mobilise against its agenda, by universities training the next generation of administrators and journalists in a contrary direction.

This is the big challenge of our era. If the right can manage to win another election (at this point, questionable in itself), they will find that office without ecosystem is temporary. Not only will they have the fight of their lives simply getting basic policies past ‘the blob’, any policy that is actioned will simply be undone when the electoral math shifts. The left’s hegemony on culture, if left untouched, simply reasserts itself.

The question this paper sets out to answer, then, is not whether the right needs an ecosystem — it plainly does. The question is what that ecosystem should look like, where it currently falls short, and what it would take to build one capable of competing seriously, not just at the next election, but across the generational timescale on which cultural change actually operates.

## Chapter 2

### The Left Are Organised...

If the previous chapter established one thing, it's this: power flows to those who organise. That sounds obvious when stated, yet while the left seem to grasp it instinctively, it's precisely the lesson the right repeatedly ignores.

Part of this is ideological temperament. The right is, by nature, culturally individualist. It values autonomy, independence, and local control. Those traits have many virtues but they carry a political cost — they translate into a movement beset by in-fighting, gatekeeping, and empire building. Left to themselves, the right disperses their energy rather than concentrating it.

The modern left is, at heart, collectivist. It thinks in terms of groups, systems, and shared outcomes. Coordination comes naturally to it, pooling effort feels normal. Subordinating the individual to the collective goal is not experienced as a loss, but as the point of the exercise. Organisation is therefore not a learned tactic, it is simply how the left already sees the world.

The left does not treat politics primarily as debate or persuasion, it treats politics as logistics.

- It builds lists.
- It trains activists.
- It shares data.
- It redistributes resources.
- It concentrates effort where it matters and withdraws it where it does not.

In short, it behaves like a machine. When an opportunity presents itself, it can mobilise quickly because the infrastructure is already there—and that's where it has the edge. An organised minority will always outperform a larger but fragmented majority.

Let's take a look at the left's ecosystem in more detail.

### Parliamentary and Electoral Politics

The left does not fight elections through a single vehicle. It fields an ecosystem of parties, factions, and organising groups that, whether by design or convergent instinct, tend to reinforce one another's efforts, divide the political labour, and collectively convert left-leaning sentiment into seats. Understanding this requires

looking not just at the parties themselves, but at the infrastructure within and around them.

### **Labour and Its Internal Factions**

For the last century Labour has been the dominant electoral force of the British left, yet it is best understood not as a single organisation but as a coalition of competing factions, each with its own membership base, funding networks, and strategic priorities.

**Momentum** is the most prominent of these. founded in 2015 following Jeremy Corbyn's first leadership campaign, it is a semi-autonomous activist infrastructure that operates alongside the party, trains organisers, and deploys volunteers into target seats. Following the 2017 election, Momentum was widely credited with helping Labour achieve its highest share of the popular vote since Tony Blair's victory in 1997. Corbyn's Labour won 40.0% of the vote, a 9.6-point increase from 2015 and just short of Blair's 40.7% in 1997.

But it is not alone. **Labour Together**, a centrist internal grouping, played a significant role in developing the electoral strategy that delivered the 2024 landslide, commissioning detailed analysis of target seats and advocating for the disciplined, narrow-message approach that Starmer ultimately adopted. **Progress**, the longstanding Blairite organisation, maintains its own network of MPs, candidates and supporters, running training programmes and events that shape the party's moderate wing. Further to the left, the **Socialist Campaign Group** provides an organised parliamentary bloc for the Corbynite tradition, even as that tradition has been substantially marginalised from the party's leadership.

What this internal plurality demonstrates is that Labour functions, in ecosystem terms, as a host institution, one within which multiple distinct organising projects coexist, compete, and cooperate. Each faction maintains its own networks and pipelines, ensuring that whichever tendency dominates at any given moment, the party's organisational depth is not dependent on any single group. This is a structural resilience that single-faction parties conspicuously lack.

### **The Liberal Democrats**

The Liberal Democrats achieved what many considered impossible in 2024: they won 72 seats — their best result since 1923 — on a national vote share of just 12.2%. For context, Reform UK received 14.3% of the vote in the same election and returned... five MPs. The contrast is not a quirk of geography. It is the direct result of organisational discipline applied systematically over an entire parliamentary term.

Constituencies that didn't hit metrics for recruitment of volunteers or leaflet delivery were removed from the target seat list. At the time, it was seen as ruthless. “Now it is seen as a masterstroke,” an internal review found.<sup>8</sup> The party entered the election having spent years building local roots in carefully selected battlegrounds, converting second places into wins by concentrating resources where they could count rather than spreading effort thinly across unwinnable ground. All in all, according to UK Election Analysis, “46% of the Liberal Democrat vote came in the 72 seats the party won — a testimony to both campaign efficiency and tactical voting.”<sup>9</sup>

The model has deeper roots than a single election cycle. Under Paddy Ashdown, the party pioneered the so-called ‘focus’ approach to local campaigning, often referred to as ‘community politics’: hyper-local newsletters, relentless doorstep presence, and the recruitment and cultivation of community figures as candidates years before election day.<sup>10</sup> The lesson the Lib Dems teach, which the right has consistently failed to learn, is that electoral success at scale can be engineered from a relatively modest vote share, provided the organisation behind it is sufficiently disciplined and the targeting sufficiently precise.

### **The Green Party: A Green-Green Alliance**

Until recently, the Green Party occupied a familiar niche in British politics: principled, persistent, and electorally marginal. That picture has changed dramatically, and understanding why requires looking at two converging forces: a broader disillusionment with Labour among progressive voters, and a deliberate strategic pivot toward Muslim communities alienated by Starmer's handling of Gaza.

The party is experiencing something of a membership surge, which began in earnest in September 2025 following Zack Polanski's election as party leader. He secured 85% of the membership vote. His pitch was not the familiar Green one but something more ambitious: a direct challenge to Labour's claim to be the natural home of the British left, a message which has followed through into the party's messaging in early 2026.

Disaffected Labour members and voters, many of them younger, urban, and radicalised by what they saw as Starmer's abandonment of progressive

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<sup>8</sup> Liberal Democrat Conference 2024: Building on Blue Foundations. Edelman. <https://www.edelmanglobaladvisory.com/liberal-democrat-conference-2024-building-blue-foundations>

<sup>9</sup> Sloman, Peter. “Bouncing back: the Liberal Democrat campaign.” UK Election Analysis. Accessed 19 February 2026. <https://www.electionanalysis.uk/uk-election-analysis-2024/section-4-parties-and-the-campaign/bouncing-back-the-liberal-democrat-campaign/>

<sup>10</sup> Pack, Mark. “The Liberal Democrat Approach to Campaigning: The History and Debunking Some Myths.” Mark Pack, August 21, 2024. <https://www.markpack.org.uk/66632/the-liberal-democrat-approach-to-campaigning-the-history-and-debunking-some-myths/>.

commitments, are moving to the Greens in significant numbers; as of 10 February 2026, the party had reached 195,000 members.”<sup>11</sup> Multiple Labour councillor defections have followed, the largest being five Labour councillors from Brent London Borough Council, including the chief whip and a former cabinet member.

Alongside the exodus of disaffected Labour progressives, the Greens have been actively and deliberately courting Muslim voters, a community that had, by 2024, already begun a decisive break with Labour. The strategy has been structural as well as rhetorical. Mothin Ali, a pro-Gaza Muslim councillor was elected as the Green Party's co-deputy leader. The [Muslim Greens](#), an internal party group, have been actively recruiting Muslim members by arguing that Green values align with Islamic principles on justice, environmental stewardship, and opposition to oppression. And at the Gorton and Denton by-election, scheduled for 26 February 2026, [The Muslim Vote](#) formally endorsed the Green candidate, while the party published Urdu-language leaflets calling on voters to punish Labour for Gaza.<sup>12</sup> Polanski has been explicit about the strategy, telling *The Times* that the party planned to use the issue of Gaza directly to solicit votes from Muslim communities in the constituency.<sup>13</sup>

What is emerging is therefore not a simple single-issue alignment but a more durable strategic convergence. Gorton and Denton, where Muslims represent approximately 30% of the electorate and where both the Workers Party of Britain and Your Party stood aside to clear the field, represents the first serious test of whether this convergence can deliver a seat.

The success of this alliance is already reflected in the polling. The Greens have doubled their support since the 2024 general election, primarily due to an influx of Labour voters. A poll by Find Out Now taken on 18 February 2026 put the Greens in second place on 18%, behind only Reform on 28%. The Tories and Labour were tied for third place at 16%.<sup>14</sup> This is an outlier and should be read as such — the polling average for the Greens in the same week was 13.8% — but even as an outlier it is a striking one, and the direction of travel across all pollsters is unmistakably upward.

Whether the Greens-Muslim Vote axis holds into 2029 is a genuinely open question. There are real tensions between Green social liberalism and the more conservative values of many Muslim communities that a closer relationship will eventually

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<sup>11</sup> “Green Party of England and Wales.” Wikipedia, February 19, 2026. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green\\_Party\\_of\\_England\\_and\\_Wales](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Party_of_England_and_Wales).

<sup>12</sup> Bell-Cross, Lorin. “Gorton and Denton By-Election: Green Party Posts ‘sectarian’ Urdu Leaflets Calling on Voters to ‘Punish Labour for Gaza.’” *The Jewish Chronicle*, February 19, 2026. <https://www.thejc.com/news/politics/gorton-denton-by-election-green-party-leaflets-punish-gaza-xo-wsfkqm>.

<sup>13</sup> Eastlake, Daisy, and Steven Swinford. “Zack Polanski: Greens to Use Anger over Gaza to Win Gorton & Denton.” *The Times & The Sunday Times*, January 28, 2026. <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/reform-uk-labour-by-election-starmer-warning-sjwbwjmly>

<sup>14</sup> Surmon, Tyron. “Voting Intention: 18th February 2026.” Find Out Now. Accessed February 19, 2026. <https://findoutnow.co.uk/blog/voting-intention-18th-february-2026/>.

surface. But in the short term, the Greens have achieved something the rest of the left ecosystem has largely failed to do: they have identified a structural opportunity in a fragmenting party system, built the organisational relationships to exploit it, and are growing at a pace that demands to be taken seriously.

### **The Gaza Independents and The Muslim Vote**

The 2024 general election introduced something genuinely new to British electoral politics: a coordinated campaign infrastructure organised not around a party but around a demographic community and a single foreign policy issue, capable of delivering parliamentary seats. **The Muslim Vote** identified target constituencies, endorsed candidates aligned with pro-Palestinian positions, and mobilised community networks to concentrate effort where it could have decisive effect.

The results were, by any measure, extraordinary. Five independent MPs were elected, in Leicester South, Blackburn, Dewsbury, Islington North, and Perry Barr, on a combined vote of 78,321. Again, compare and contrast with Reform's 4,117,610 votes in the same election, which also resulted in five seats. Across a further 64 constituencies with significant Muslim populations, Labour's vote collapsed by an average of nearly 29 percentage points compared with 2019. The organisation had been founded just seven months before polling day.<sup>15</sup>

The Muslim Vote has also shown a clear awareness of its own limitations and how to work around them. In constituencies where running an independent candidate is not viable, whether due to lack of local profile, insufficient time, or a fragmented vote that would benefit the right, The Muslim Vote has demonstrated a willingness to redirect its endorsement to the most useful available vehicle. Its backing of the Greens in Gorton and Denton is the clearest example of this flexibility in action. In its endorsement statement on X the organisation declared that Labour had "drifted far from the promise of change" before concluding that the Greens offered "the strongest opportunity to win" and calling on other progressive candidates to stand aside accordingly.<sup>16</sup> Both the Workers Party of Britain and Your Party did exactly that. This is not the behaviour of a single-issue protest group. It is strategic political coordination, carried out with the kind of tactical discipline that most established parties would envy.

The Muslim Vote is unique in this combination of flexibility and focus. It is not wedded to any party, any leader, or any single vehicle. Its loyalty is to *outcomes*; specifically, to building and deploying Muslim political power in the constituencies where it can be decisive. Whether or not Gaza remains a live issue by 2029, the

<sup>15</sup> Battuta, Ibn. "The Muslim Vote: Initial Election Analysis." The Muslim Vote, July 5, 2024. <https://themuslimvote.co.uk/the-muslim-vote-initial-election-analysis>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://x.com/themuslimvoteuk/status/2015790318591869050?s=20>

infrastructure being built — the community networks, the data on target seats, the relationships with mosque leaderships and local organisations — will not disappear with it. The Muslim Vote is, in ecosystem terms, building for permanence.

What makes this significant for the purposes of mapping the left ecosystem is not the specific issue that animated it, but the structural model it represents. The Muslim Vote is demonstrating that in a fragmenting party system, demographic organisation around shared priorities can substitute for — and in some respects outperform — traditional party machinery. It is, in Michels' terms, a new organised minority inserting itself into the political landscape, building its own infrastructure, and directing outcomes in targeted contexts. If The Muslim Vote model proves transferable to other demographic or issue-based communities, the implications for how British elections are contested in 2029 and beyond are profound.

	<b>Shockat Adam</b> Independent	14,739	35.2%	35.2%
	<b>Jonathan Ashworth</b> Labour	13,760	32.9%	-35.3%
	<b>Adnan Hussain</b> Independent	10,518	27.0%	27.0%
	<b>Kate Hollern</b> Labour	10,386	26.7%	-39.3%
	<b>Iqbal Mohamed</b> Independent	15,641	41.1%	41.1%
	<b>Heather Iqbal</b> Labour	8,707	22.9%	-36.2%

	<b>Ayoub Khan</b> Independent	13,303	35.5%	35.5%
	<b>Khalid Mahmood</b> Labour	12,796	34.1%	-33.9%
	<b>Jeremy Corbyn</b> Independent	24,120	49.2%	49.2%
	<b>Praful Nargund</b> Labour	16,873	34.4%	-29.9%

All images: <https://members.parliament.uk/>

Taken together, these four actors — Labour with its internal faction ecosystem, the Liberal Democrats with their targeting discipline, the Greens with their membership surge, and The Muslim Vote with its demographic organising model — illustrate the same underlying principle from different angles. The left is not simply a set of parties. It is an interlocking set of organising projects, each occupying a different niche, each contributing to the overall political weight of the left-of-centre in British life. No single actor could achieve what they achieve together. That is what an ecosystem looks like in practice.

## Think Tanks and Policy Development

If electoral politics is where power is won, think tanks are where it is first imagined. The left has understood this for well over a century.

**The Fabian Society**, sometimes described as the world's first think tank, having begun life in 1884, was not merely a debating club for progressive intellectuals, it was an engine of policy production with a deliberate strategy of institutional influence. The Fabians called it 'permeation': rather than seeking direct power, they would seed their ideas into the civil service, the universities, the professions, and ultimately the Labour Party itself, allowing those ideas to become the default assumptions of the people who ran things. It was instrumental in founding the Labour Party in 1900 and every Labour Prime Minister has been a member. As one commentator put it, "the Fabian Society has always been central to helping Labour adapt the application of its

eternal values to changing circumstances. And this government can lay claim to being as Fabian as any we have ever had. All of the great offices of state are filled by Fabians, and last year's general election saw record numbers join the Labour benches.”<sup>17</sup> That is not a coincidence. It is the product of over a century of patient, unglamorous institutional work.

The Fabian model — producing research, training future politicians, and maintaining a continuous intellectual relationship with the Labour Party — has been replicated and expanded across a wide ecosystem of left-leaning policy organisations. The [Institute for Public Policy Research \(IPPR\)](#) is now perhaps the most operationally influential, functioning almost as an in-house research department for Labour governments. In the run-up to the 2024 election, the IPPR set out detailed proposals for public service reform, arguing for what it called a “smarter state”<sup>18</sup> built around prevention, personalisation and productivity, language that fed directly into Labour's early governing agenda. Its economists have been regular voices in Budget debates and spending reviews, providing the analytical scaffolding for policies that ministers then adopt as their own.

Beyond the Fabian Society and IPPR, the left's think tank ecosystem has diversified considerably in recent years, with different organisations occupying distinct niches. [Common Wealth](#), founded in 2019, focuses specifically on questions of economic ownership — public utilities, democratic enterprise, community wealth-building — arguing that “it's only by redesigning how our economy is owned, from energy to housing, businesses to utilities, that we can create the future we all deserve.”<sup>19</sup> It has punched well above its weight in influencing debates around public ownership and industrial policy. [The New Economics Foundation \(NEF\)](#) operates across a broader front, challenging orthodox economic assumptions on everything from welfare to working hours. NEF describes its reactive, rapid-fire analysis as influencing live government policy debates, with its policy analysis contributing to the manifesto development of multiple UK political parties — a claim that speaks to the ambition, if not always the reach, of the progressive think tank model. [CLASS \(the Centre for Labour and Social Studies\)](#) serves the trade union movement specifically, providing intellectual support and policy cover for union positions on workers' rights, wages, and public spending.

The picture is completed — and complicated — by the [Tony Blair Institute for Global Change](#), which occupies a category of its own. Founded in 2016 and operating in 40 countries with a staff approaching 800, the TBI is less a think tank in

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<sup>17</sup> Wallis, Ed. “Fabianism Isn't Just about the Big State. We Need to Unlock Community Power.” LabourList, May 19, 2025.

<https://labourlist.org/2025/05/fabian-society-reform-uk-nigel-farage-labour/>.

<sup>18</sup> “Radically Redesign Whitehall to Unlock Better Public Services, Says IPPR.” IPPR, Accessed February 19, 2026.

<https://www.ippr.org/media-office/radically-redesign-whitehall-to-unlock-better-public-services-say-s-ippr>.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.common-wealth.org/about>

the traditional sense than a global policy consultancy with a particular interest in shaping the centre-left. Blair stated at the group's founding that the institute was intended to function as "a new policy platform to refill the wide open space in the middle of politics," aimed at combating a "frightening authoritarian populism" that he says is undermining the west's belief in democracy.<sup>20</sup>

Its relationship with the current Labour government is close but not uncomplicated: the institute has at times pushed positions, particularly on clean energy targets and immigration, that sit awkwardly with Labour's stated commitments, illustrating how even allied ecosystem actors pursue their own agendas rather than simply serving the party.

What this ecosystem does, taken as a whole, is perform a function that no single political party could manage alone: it maintains a continuous, professionally staffed effort to develop, test, refine, and legitimate left-of-centre policy ideas across electoral cycles. When Labour is in opposition these organisations keep the intellectual flame alive, develop the policies that will become the next manifesto, and train the advisers who will staff the next government. When Labour is in power, they provide the research base that ministers cite, the frameworks that civil servants adopt, and the external pressure that keeps the government honest — or pushes it further than it might otherwise go. The ideas that become legislation do not originate in ministerial red boxes. They are incubated here, years or decades earlier, before being handed, polished and road-tested, to the politicians who will enact them. This is the policy pipeline. It runs continuously, regardless of who wins elections.

## **Activism and Community Organising**

If think tanks produce the ideas and parties contest the elections, it is the activist layer of the left ecosystem that does the work in between — building community power, shifting public attitudes, generating political pressure, and keeping issues alive in public debate across the long stretches between electoral cycles. This layer is diverse, decentralised, and in some respects the most ideologically varied part of the ecosystem. But it shares a common function: translating political sentiment into organised collective action.

### **Citizens UK: The Alinsky Model**

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<sup>20</sup> Wintour, Patrick. "Tony Blair Launches Pushback against 'Frightening Populism.'" *The Guardian*, March 17, 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/mar/17/tony-blair-launches-pushback-against-frightening-populism>.

The most structurally significant community organising body in Britain is [Citizens UK](#), founded in 1989 on the model developed by American organiser Saul Alinsky. Unlike campaign groups that pursue specific policy goals, Citizens UK is explicitly a leadership development organisation — its purpose is to build the capacity of communities to exercise power, rather than to exercise power on their behalf. It now has 18 chapters across England and Wales, representing more than 500 member institutions drawn from schools, universities, faith institutions, charities, and unions — a deliberately broad coalition that allows it to build coalitions across communities that rarely talk to one another.<sup>21</sup>

Citizens UK presents itself as non-partisan and is careful to maintain formal independence from any political party. But its model — building durable community power, training local leaders, and holding politicians to account through large public assemblies — consistently produces outcomes aligned with progressive priorities. It came to national prominence at the 2010 general election when all three party leaders addressed its “fourth debate” and committed publicly to working with the organisation if elected. Since then it has become a permanent feature of the political landscape: an institution that no serious politician seeking urban, diverse, or faith community support can afford to ignore.

### **Hope Not Hate: The Anti-Extremism Vehicle**

Hope Not Hate occupies a distinctive and structurally important niche in the left ecosystem, one that is worth examining carefully, because its power derives precisely from its ability to operate across the boundary between civil society and political campaigning in ways that other organisations cannot.

The organisation presents itself as an anti-extremism body, and in its earliest incarnation in 2004, rooted in the anti-fascist movement with a focus on countering the BNP, that description was broadly accurate. This image has given it access to public funding — £141,380 was paid by Boris Johnson’s Conservative government to the organisation in 2019/20 alone. Over time, however, its definition of extremism has expanded considerably, to the point where it now runs explicit campaigns targeting Reform UK, a party that, whatever one’s views of it, has the support of millions of British voters and sits within the mainstream of British electoral politics. Its website states openly that “Reform UK is growing faster than anyone expected. We are building a movement of thousands to bring people together, expose Reform UK’s tactics and push back in communities across the country.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> “Who We Are.” Citizens UK. Accessed February 21, 2026.  
<https://www.citizensuk.org/about-us/who-we-are/>.

<sup>22</sup> “Stop Reform UK’s Far-Right Agenda .” Hope Not Hate. Accessed February 21, 2026.  
<https://hopenothate.org.uk/stop-reform/>.

What makes this structurally significant is the legal architecture through which it operates. Hope Not Hate Limited is a private company, not a charity, and is therefore free to engage in political campaigning. Hope Not Hate Charitable Trust is a charity, and is therefore constrained from party-political activity — but, as Charlotte Gill has documented<sup>23</sup>, in 2023 the Hope Not Hate Charitable Trust granted £650,000 to its own campaigning wing to fund "policy, research, and education" activity, blurring the lines between charitable and political spending in ways the Charity Commission has not seen fit to challenge. Meanwhile, the organisation has received public funding, including £66,000 from the Department for Communities and Local Government and subsequent funding from the Greater London Authority, while campaigning actively against parties and candidates it deems extreme.<sup>24</sup>

Writing in *The Spectator*, Toby Young noted: “Since the 2024 General Election, Hope Not Hate has become even more enmeshed with the Labour party, with one of its former directors, Baroness Anderson, becoming a Government whip. Another Minister with close ties to the organisation is Lord Hermer, the Attorney General, who became friends with Nick Lowles when they both worked with *Searchlight*, an “anti-fascist” group which Hope Not Hate emerged from.”

Young concludes: “Holier-than-thou Lefties like Jolyon Maugham often complain about the ‘Tufton Street mafia’, a reference to centre-Right thinktanks. They claim these sinister organisations should be more transparent about who their donors are. But none of them can hold a candle to Hope Not Hate when it comes to wielding influence in the corridors of power. It’s time we learned more about who funds it — apart from the taxpayer, of course.”<sup>25</sup>

## The Climate Activist Movement

The climate activist movement represents a different kind of ecosystem actor: one that operates primarily through disruption rather than organisation, prioritising media attention and public agenda-setting over institutional influence. **Extinction Rebellion (XR)**, founded in 2018, brought this model to mainstream attention; its 2019 protests cost the Metropolitan Police an extra £7.5 million and succeeded in pushing the environment into the top three public concerns for the first time, according to YouGov polling.<sup>26</sup> Just Stop Oil, which emerged from XR's orbit in

<sup>23</sup> Gill, Charlotte. “How Hope Not Hate (the Charity) Is Able to Campaign against Reform.” Substack, April 26, 2025. <https://www.charlottegill.co.uk/p/how-hope-not-hate-the-charity-is>.

<sup>24</sup> “Hope Not Hate? How Britain’s Watchdog Lost Its Moral Compass.” Nuntiatoria, September 3, 2025. <https://nuntiatoria.org/2025/07/24/hope-not-hate-how-britains-watchdog-lost-its-moral-compass/>.

<sup>25</sup> Young, Toby. “Why Is Hope Not Hate out to Get Me?” *The Spectator*, February 18, 2026. <https://spectator.com/article/why-is-hope-not-hate-out-to-get-me/>.

<sup>26</sup> “Extinction Rebellion.” Wikipedia, accessed 20 February, 2026. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extinction\\_Rebellion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extinction_Rebellion).

2022, pursued a more confrontational version of the same strategy, generating extraordinary media coverage — including five front-page headlines from two activists throwing orange powder at a snooker match — before announcing in March 2025 that it was ending direct action, having claimed that its core demand to halt new fossil fuel licensing had effectively become government policy.<sup>27</sup>

The climate movement's ecosystem contribution is best understood not as direct policy influence — evidence for that is mixed — but as agenda-setting and Overton window management. By making radical positions visible and persistent, these groups shift the boundaries of what counts as a moderate position. A government that commits to net zero by 2050 looks reasonable when measured against activists demanding it by 2025. The radical flank, in other words, performs a function for the broader left ecosystem even when — perhaps especially when — it is publicly disavowed by mainstream left politicians.

### **Pro-Palestinian Activism: A Movement that Transcends the Local**

No account of the British left's activist layer would be complete without addressing the pro-Palestinian movement. Since October 2023 it has grown into arguably the most significant mass mobilisation on the British left in a generation, one whose ecosystem significance extends well beyond the immediate question of Gaza.

The organisational backbone of the movement is a formal coalition. National marches are organised jointly by the [Palestine Solidarity Campaign](#), the [Stop the War Coalition](#), the [Muslim Association of Britain](#), [Friends of Al-Aqsa](#), the [Palestinian Forum in Britain](#), and the [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament](#)<sup>28</sup> — a coalition that is itself a map of the broader left ecosystem, bringing together secular anti-war activists, Muslim community organisations, faith groups, and long-standing solidarity networks under a single operational structure.

The Stop the War Coalition, whose AGM resolutions for 2025 made clear the centrality of Palestine to its entire political programme<sup>29</sup>, has been particularly significant in providing the movement with organisational infrastructure built over two decades of anti-war campaigning. Its network constituted a ready-made skeleton that the post-October 2023 mobilisation was able to animate almost immediately.

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<sup>27</sup> “Just Stop Oil.” Wikipedia. Accessed February 21, 2026.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just\\_Stop\\_Oil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_Stop_Oil).

<sup>28</sup> “March for Palestine - Palestine Solidarity Campaign.” Palestine Campaign, October 14, 2023.

<https://palestinecampaign.org/events/march-for-palestine-end-the-violence-end-apartheid/>.

<sup>29</sup> “Stop the War Coalition AGM 2025: Resolutions.” Stop the War, February 3, 2025.

<https://www.stopwar.org.uk/article/stop-the-war-coalition-agm-2025-resolutions/>.

The scale of what has been built is without recent precedent. Following October 2023, the coalition organised dozens of mass national demonstrations in London, with most drawing hundreds of thousands of participants. The 30th national march, held in September 2025 as part of a Global Day of Action, drew more than 300,000 people through central London — one of the largest public demonstrations the city has seen in decades.<sup>30</sup> On the morning of 29 May 2025, several activists and actors including Steve Coogan, Toby Jones, and Juliet Stevenson gathered at Elizabeth Tower outside of the Palace of Westminster to hold a vigil that lasted more than 18 hours and read out the names of more than 16,000 children that were killed in Gaza. The vigil was organised by [Choose Love](#).<sup>31</sup> Alongside the national marches, the coalition has supported the organisation of almost daily actions in towns and cities across England, Scotland, and Wales, creating a level of sustained, geographically distributed activist activity that has no equivalent anywhere on the British right.

The PSC's own membership data illustrates the movement's organising reach. By April 2024, some 270,000 people had subscribed to the PSC's mailing list — more than four times the number signed up in September 2023.<sup>32</sup> That quadrupling of a mailing list in six months represents an extraordinary pipeline of newly engaged activists, many of whom have been drawn into political participation for the first time. The long-term significance of this is difficult to overstate: movements radicalise people, and radicalised people do not simply return to passivity when a specific campaign ends. They carry their newly developed political identity, their organising skills, and their networks into whatever comes next.

What makes the pro-Palestinian movement particularly significant in ecosystem terms is its explicitly international character. The marches in London take place in deliberate coordination with protests across Europe, North America, and beyond, situating British left activism within a global movement rather than a domestic one. This has two important effects. First, it provides the movement with a moral and political authority that purely domestic campaigns cannot claim: participants understand themselves as part of a worldwide response to a worldwide injustice. Second, it connects British left activists to a global network of organisers, ideas, financiers, and solidarity relationships that enriches and sustains the domestic ecosystem. The British left, through Gaza, has plugged itself into the global left in a way it has not managed since the anti-Iraq War movement of 2003, and in doing so

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<sup>30</sup> “Global Day of Action: Over 300,000 March in London to Demand Justice for Gaza .” Middle East Monitor, September 6, 2025.  
<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20250906-global-day-of-action-over-300000-march-in-london-to-demand-justice-for-gaza/>.

<sup>31</sup> William, Helen. “Child Victims of Gaza Onslaught Remembered in Westminster Vigil.” The Independent, May 29, 2025.  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/gaza-steve-coogan-westminster-toby-jones-uk-government-b2760338.html#>.

<sup>32</sup> Browne, Brendan Ciarán. “Unpacking the Crackdown on Palestine Solidarity Activism in the UK in a Post-7 October Reality.” Taylor and Francis Online, April 12, 2025.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2025.2484796>.

has recruited a generation of new activists who see their politics as inherently internationalist in character.

The parliamentary figures who have emerged from this movement — Jeremy Corbyn, Zarah Sultana, Apsana Begum — and the trade union leaders who have appeared on its platforms, underscore the degree to which the pro-Palestinian movement has become woven into the broader fabric of the British left ecosystem rather than operating as a separate phenomenon. It is connected to the unions, to the Green Party, to The Muslim Vote, to the Gaza independents, and to the emerging post-Labour left more generally. That connectivity is, in ecosystem terms, precisely the point. Movements that connect generate compounding power. And this one is very far from finished.

## Trade Unions

If think tanks are where the left's ideas are made, trade unions are where its power is banked. No other component of the British left ecosystem combines financial muscle, organisational infrastructure, and mass membership in the way the union movement does. But the historic picture of unions as the loyal financial and organisational backbone of the Labour Party is becoming an incomplete and increasingly misleading one. The union movement is fracturing away from its Labour anchor, and the fracture lines point toward something more politically significant than a lovers' tiff: the emergence of an increasingly autonomous left that is prepared to operate independently of, and in open tension with, a Labour government it regards as having betrayed its working-class base.

**The Trades Union Congress** represents 52 affiliated unions and nearly six million members across the public and private sectors. The financial relationship with Labour remains significant — Unite alone contributes £1.4 million a year in affiliation fees, on top of direct donations to MPs and candidates. But money is not the same as loyalty, and the gap between the two has been widening sharply since Labour took office.

The most consequential figure in this story is Unite general secretary Sharon Graham, whose approach to the Labour relationship has been consistently and deliberately transactional. During her campaign for the leadership in 2021, Graham declared that Unite's "obsession with the Labour Party needs to end." By the summer of 2025, following Unite's dramatic suspension of Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner over her handling of the Birmingham bin strikes, Graham was publicly describing the £1.4 million annual affiliation payment as "hard to justify, if I'm being

honest. Would that money be better spent on frontline services for my members?”<sup>33</sup> She has been explicit about what disaffiliation would mean: not a pivot to another party but the construction of an independent workers’ political force — “a strong, independent workers’ union that was the true, authentic voice for workers,” and use that power to move political debate.

The **RMT**, which disaffiliated from Labour in 2004 and has operated independently ever since, offers a working model of what that posture looks like in practice. Under Mick Lynch, the union became one of the most politically visible organisations in Britain during the 2022 rail strikes, filling a vacuum left by Labour’s hesitant opposition politics and demonstrating that working-class political voice need not flow through a party at all. Lynch’s successor, Eddie Dempsey, elected unopposed as general secretary in March 2025, has continued and in some respects radicalised this stance. Dempsey is not a member of any political party and the RMT is not affiliated to Labour, but his politics are unmistakably of the hard left: he has described the situation in Gaza as genocide, demanded an end to British military aid to Ukraine, and positioned the union explicitly as a vehicle for working-class interests that transcends party loyalty. When asked about growing support for Reform among trade unionists, Dempsey chose to sidestep the question, saying simply: “The place for anybody who is thinking of voting for Reform is to be in their trade union. I don’t care what your political outlook is.” The comment was met with criticism from the hard left, who pointed out that it was “hardly in keeping with the spirit or letter of the motion titled “OPPOSING REFORM UK IN OUR WORKPLACE & COMMUNITIES” that was passed at this year’s RMT AGM.”<sup>34</sup> Yet Dempsey’s stance positions the union not as a Labour auxiliary but as an independent political home — one capable of holding working-class voters who might otherwise drift rightward.

What is emerging from all of this is a union movement in transition. The old model — unions fund Labour, Labour wins power, unions get access — is breaking down on both sides. Labour has shown itself unwilling or unable to deliver on union priorities in government, while the unions have shown themselves increasingly unwilling to subsidise a party that treats them as an embarrassing legacy rather than a living partner. Where that energy flows next is one of the most consequential open questions in British left politics. If Unite disaffiliates and channels its organisational and financial weight toward a new political formation, whether the Corbyn-Sultana project, the Greens, or something not yet formed, it would represent one of the most significant shifts in the left ecosystem in a generation. The union movement is not abandoning the left. It is, increasingly, refusing to take instructions from any single part of it.

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<sup>33</sup> Clarke-Ezzidio, Harry. “Sharon Graham: Unite’s Labour Affiliation ‘Getting Harder to Justify.’” *New Statesman*, August 27, 2025.

<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/labour/2025/07/sharon-graham-interview-unite-labour-affiliation-angela-rayner-hard-to-justify>.

<sup>34</sup> “Dempsey: Don’t Sidestep ‘Reform.’” *Workers’ Liberty*, September 16, 2025.

<https://workersliberty.org/node/44656>.

## Funding the Ecosystem

Trade union money is just one tributary in the left wing funding stream. A well-watered political ecosystem requires money, and lots of it. Ideas need researchers to develop them, campaigns need staff to run them, activists need training and resources, organisations need offices.

The left's funding base rests on three distinct and overlapping streams that together give it a financial foundation of remarkable depth and durability: international philanthropic capital, trade union money, and — the most structurally significant and least visible of the three — public funds. Each has been explored in part elsewhere in this chapter; here we consider how they interact.

### International Philanthropic Capital: The Open Society Foundations

The most significant single source of international funding for the British left's civil society infrastructure is the [Open Society Foundations \(OSF\)](#), the philanthropic network founded by billionaire financier George Soros. The *New York Times* has described OSF as “a sprawling political and philanthropic empire that seeks to advance a liberal, democratic agenda around the globe.”<sup>35</sup> As of 2025, OSF has reported total expenditures in excess of \$24.2 billion since its establishment in 1993, making it one of the world's largest foundations.

In Britain, OSF's most visible intervention came during the Brexit debate. Between 2017 and 2019, OSF provided approximately £3 million to four British organisations working to keep the UK in the European Union, with Best for Britain alone receiving over £2.7 million across those three years.<sup>36</sup> The involvement of a foreign billionaire in British domestic politics attracted considerable controversy at the time, but OSF's British footprint extends well beyond Brexit, funding a broad range of civil society organisations working across immigration, human rights, criminal justice, and democratic participation. Crucially, its grants range from discrete project funding to general operating support covering day-to-day running costs, meaning it sustains the capacity of organisations to operate continuously between campaigns, not merely during them. An organisation in receipt of OSF general operating support does not

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<sup>35</sup> Schleifer, Theodore, and Kulish, Nicholas. “Why Is Trump Targeting George Soros's Foundation? Here's What to Know.” *New York Times*, September 25, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/25/us/politics/george-soros-foundation-trump.html>.

<sup>36</sup> “Open Society Foundations Support Campaign on Brexit.” Open Society Foundations, February 8, 2018. <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/newsroom/open-society-foundations-support-campaign-br-exit>.

need to win the current political battle to survive. It simply continues, accumulates expertise, and fights the next one.

### **Trade Union Money**

As the previous section detailed, trade union funding of the left is undergoing a structural shift. The historic model — unions fund Labour, Labour wins power, unions get access — is fracturing, with Unite in particular signalling a move toward a more autonomous and ecosystem-wide deployment of its financial weight. What this means in practice is that union money, rather than flowing through a single party channel, is increasingly available to a broader range of left actors: independent candidates, the Greens, community organising projects, and whatever new political formations emerge from the current period of party fragmentation. Union money is not leaving the left ecosystem, it is becoming more diffuse within it, and in the process, potentially more useful to the ecosystem as a whole than it ever was when locked into a single party relationship.

### **The Public Funding Problem**

More structurally significant than either of the above — because it is both larger in scale and rendered invisible by its apparent legitimacy — is the flow of public money into organisations that consistently campaign for left-of-centre policy positions. This is not a conspiracy and requires no central coordination. It is the cumulative product of decades of grant-making by government departments, local authorities, lottery bodies, and public institutions, operating through a charity law framework that has, over time, come to treat progressive political goals as inherently charitable, and therefore eligible for public subsidy.

The scale of this is substantial. A TaxPayers' Alliance analysis found that political research and campaigning organisations received at least £39.6 million from public bodies between 2017 and 2019, with a follow-up covering 2018-21 finding the figure had risen to £49 million across 192 public sector bodies. Six government departments provided £7,694,408 in grants over three years to organisations actively fighting the government's scheme to resettle migrants in Rwanda, including Migrant Help, Stonewall, Refugee Action, Hope Not Hate and Instalaw; NHS Confederation received £28,456,451 in grants and loans from 13 public sector bodies from 2018/19 to 2020/21, the highest amount given to any organisation. Gendered Intelligence, which works in the policy and media sphere to promote trans rights, received £287,954 from 18 public organisations during that same timeframe.<sup>37</sup> The pattern is

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<sup>37</sup> "Almost £50 Million of Taxpayers' Money Paid for Lobbying and Political Campaigning." TaxPayers' Alliance, May 22, 2022.

consistent: organisations that campaign against government policy frequently receive funding from the very departments responsible for that policy. The IEA has described these as “sock puppet” charities — bodies which receive government funding in order to argue for policies which politicians favour but which are unpopular with the wider public, creating a situation in which government effectively lobbies itself using taxpayers’ money.

### **The Internetworked Nature of Left Funding**

What makes this picture so structurally formidable is not the size of any individual stream but the way multiple streams reinforce and substitute for one another. This interconnected architecture has been painstakingly mapped by journalist Charlotte Gill, whose Substack series “[Woke Waste](#)” and associated research project [DOGE UK](#) have collated public funding data from government departments, the National Lottery Community Fund, Arts Council England, UK Research and Innovation, and a range of private foundations.

The picture that emerges is striking. DOGE UK documents that the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero alone distributed £80.81 billion across 62,773 projects between 2016 and 2024, much of it flowing to NGOs, research bodies, and advocacy organisations whose output consistently reinforces progressive policy positions.<sup>38</sup> Gill's February 2026 investigation into foreign money flowing into the British left illustrates a particular hypocrisy embedded in this landscape: the same Labour government that announced legislation to ban political party donations from foreign-owned companies presides over a civil society ecosystem substantially underwritten by foreign foundations — each channelling significant funds into British organisations campaigning on precisely the policy questions the legislation purports to ring-fence from foreign influence.<sup>39</sup>

A further dimension is revealed in Gill's analysis of the IPPR<sup>40</sup> — the think tank discussed earlier as perhaps the most operationally influential in Labour's policy ecosystem. The IPPR, while functioning as a de facto intellectual partner to the Labour government, receives significant public funding — meaning that taxpayers are, in effect, subsidising the production of policy arguments that the government then adopts as its own. The circularity is complete: public money funds the think

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[https://web.archive.org/web/20220702225337/https://taxpayersalliance.com/almost\\_50\\_million\\_of\\_taxpayers\\_money\\_paid\\_for\\_lobbying\\_and\\_political\\_campaigning/](https://web.archive.org/web/20220702225337/https://taxpayersalliance.com/almost_50_million_of_taxpayers_money_paid_for_lobbying_and_political_campaigning/).

<sup>38</sup> Doge UK. “Department for Energy Security & Net Zero : All Grants: Funding.” DOGE UK, February 5, 2026. <https://doge-uk.com/funding/department-for-energy-security-net-zero-all-grants/>.

<sup>39</sup> Gill, Charlotte. “The Foreign Money Flowing into Britain’s Left.” DOGE UK, February 16, 2026. <https://doge-uk.com/article/the-foreign-money-flowing-into-britains-left/>.

<sup>40</sup> Doge UK. “Taxpayer-Funded Think Tank Backs Votes for 16s.” DOGE UK, February 17, 2026. <https://doge-uk.com/article/taxpayer-funded-think-tank-backs-votes-for-16s/>.

tank; the think tank produces the policy; the government implements it; the public bears the cost.

The result is a funding ecosystem that is more resilient, more diffuse, and more deeply embedded in structures that persist regardless of electoral outcomes than anything the right currently possesses. An organisation that loses a government grant can fall back on foundation funding. One whose private donors dry up may still draw public money through charitable channels. The ecosystem is, in funding terms, deliberately redundant, and that redundancy is a form of institutional staying power that is very difficult to disrupt from the outside.

## Civil Society and the Charity Sector

If the funding section describes how money flows into the left ecosystem, the charity sector describes what much of that money builds. Britain's voluntary and civil society sector is vast. The [National Council for Voluntary Organisations \(NCVO\)](#), for example, represents 17,000 member organisations and is, in aggregate, one of the most powerful and least scrutinised components of the left's political infrastructure. This is not because charities are dishonest about what they do; most are entirely open about their campaigning activities. It's because the charitable framework itself confers a legitimacy — an appearance of disinterested concern for public welfare — that explicitly political organisations cannot claim. When a political party demands that the government build more social housing, it is making a partisan argument. When Shelter makes the same demand, it is speaking on behalf of homeless people.

That distinction, in practice, is increasingly difficult to sustain. Shelter's 2024-25 impact report describes how the charity “worked with MPs, campaigners and more than 100,000 supporters to maintain pressure on the government” over the Renters' Rights Bill, challenging proposed amendments and providing direct evidence to politicians.<sup>41</sup> Oxfam publishes what it explicitly calls a manifesto ahead of each general election, setting out policy demands on inequality, climate, and international aid — positions that align consistently with the left-of-centre of British politics.<sup>42</sup> Save the Children ran a multi-year campaign to scrap the two-child benefit cap, which it describes as a campaign success following the government's decision to abolish the policy. Each of these activities is entirely lawful under charity law. The cumulative political effect, however, is considerable.

The mechanism through which individual charities become collectively more powerful is the coalition. The [End Child Poverty Coalition](#) is perhaps the clearest

<sup>41</sup> “Changing the Housing System” 2023. Shelter England. Accessed 21 February 2026 [https://england.shelter.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/our\\_impact/introduction/political\\_activism](https://england.shelter.org.uk/what_we_do/our_impact/introduction/political_activism).

<sup>42</sup> “OXFAM MANIFESTO 2024 TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE for an EQUAL, GREEN FUTURE for US ALL.” Accessed 21 February 2026. [https://www.oxfam.org.uk/documents/804/Oxfam\\_Manifesto\\_2024\\_-\\_PPC\\_briefing.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org.uk/documents/804/Oxfam_Manifesto_2024_-_PPC_briefing.pdf).

illustration of how this works. Made up of over 130 organisations including the Child Poverty Action Group, Save the Children, Oxfam GB, Action for Children, Gingerbread, the TUC, and the National Children's Bureau, the coalition coordinates its members around shared policy demands and speaks with a collective authority that no single charity could muster. When a coalition of 130 organisations spanning charities, faith groups, unions, and social justice bodies declares that a government policy is causing harm to children, it is not easy to dismiss. The political weight generated is disproportionate to the resources deployed, precisely because it draws on the legitimacy of the entire charitable sector simultaneously. Direct campaigning by the Coalition, alongside other campaigners and charities, led to the government's decision in November 2025 to scrap the two-child benefit cap.<sup>43</sup> That is a concrete political outcome, delivered not by a party or a campaign group but by an ostensibly charitable coalition operating entirely within the rules of charity law.

Umbrella bodies amplify this effect further. The NCVO, whose own stated mission includes influencing<sup>44</sup> decision makers, engaging with government, and “boldly championing” the voluntary sector, provides a collective voice for its 17,000 members on matters of policy and regulation. When government proposes legislation that might constrain charity campaigning, the NCVO mobilises rapidly. For example, faced with proposals in 2016 to restrict charities receiving government grants from lobbying, it wrote to the Prime Minister with a letter signed by 158 charity representatives, describing the ability to campaign as “a defining characteristic” of the relationship between voluntary organisations and the state.<sup>45</sup> The proposals were withdrawn.

What makes this sector so structurally significant as a component of the left ecosystem is precisely its invisibility as a political actor. Charities speak in the language of need, evidence, and public welfare, a language that commands automatic moral authority in ways that explicitly political speech does not. Former Conservative minister for Civil Society Rob Wilson acknowledged the dynamic plainly: “Some Government Ministers already regard the charity sector with suspicion because it largely employs senior people with a Left-wing perspective on life.”<sup>46</sup> The observation is not wrong, but it misidentifies the source of the problem. The issue is not individual political sympathies but structural alignment: a sector in which the

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<sup>43</sup> Walters, Rachel. “End Child Poverty Coalition Warmly Welcomes Government’s Budget and Plan to Scrap the Two-Child Limit” End Child Poverty. November 26, 2025.

<https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/end-child-poverty-coalition-warmly-welcomes-governments-budget-and-plan-to-scrap-the-two-child-limit/>.

<sup>44</sup> “Influencing and Policy.” n.d. NCVO. <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/influencing-policy/>.

<sup>45</sup> “Charities’ letter to the prime minister on anti-advocacy clauses in grant agreements” NVCO. 10 February 2016.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160401093541/https://www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/1249-charities-letter-to-the-prime-minister-on-anti-advocacy-clauses-in-grant-agreement>

<sup>46</sup> Wilding, Karl. “Look around you: charity is changing”. NCVO. 30 January 2018.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20231208155417/https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2018/01/30/look-around-you-charity-is-changing/>

definition of charitable purpose has, over time, come to encompass a set of social and political goals that consistently map onto the progressive end of the political spectrum. Poverty reduction, housing access, migrant welfare, climate action, racial equity — these are the dominant preoccupations of the charity sector, and they are, without exception, the terrain on which the left fights its political battles.

That convergence would be significant enough on its own. It becomes structurally decisive when set against the financial reality of how the charity sector is funded. The UK charity sector's total income was approximately £96.43 billion in 2023<sup>47</sup> up from £69.1bn in 2021/22 and £63.5bn the year before. According to NCVO's own figures, government funding through grants and contracts combined contribute approximately 46% of the voluntary sector's income in 2021/22. If that percentage held steady the following year, it means that on a sector income of nearly £100 billion, somewhere in the region of £45 billion of public money flowed into civil society organisations in 2023, a significant portion of which campaign actively on political questions.<sup>48</sup>

The circularity this creates is the same one identified in the funding section, but operating at an altogether larger scale: public money funds the charities; the charities campaign for progressive policy; the government implements it; the public bears the cost — and funds the next round of campaigning. That convergence may not be conspiratorial. But it is real, it is deep, and it is sustained, to the tune of tens of billions of pounds a year, by the British taxpayer.

## **Professional Bodies and Regulatory Capture**

Another structurally important but minimally visible component of the left ecosystem is its penetration of professional bodies and regulatory institutions. The Law Society, the British Medical Association, various Royal Colleges, teaching unions, social work bodies, and journalism organisations like the National Union of Journalists each set professional norms, training standards, and ethical frameworks for their respective fields. Over time, and through the mechanism Michels describes, the leadership of these bodies has come to reflect a broadly progressive consensus. This matters enormously because professional bodies are not perceived as political actors. They speak with the authority of expertise rather than ideology, yet the positions they take on contested social and policy questions are rarely neutral.

The Law Society of England and Wales is perhaps the clearest illustration of this dynamic. Representing over 200,000 solicitors, it commands significant institutional

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<sup>47</sup> The Charity Commission. "Annual Return 2023 Analysis Report." GOV.UK. July 10, 2025. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-return-2023-analysis-report/annual-return-2023-analysis-report>.

<sup>48</sup> What is the state of the sector's finances? NCVO. 20 November 2024. <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/uk-civil-society-almanac-2024/financials/>

authority and is routinely treated by government and media as a disinterested voice on matters of law and justice. Yet its political positions on contested questions are consistently and predictably aligned with the progressive end of the spectrum. When the Labour government repealed its predecessor’s planned Rwanda asylum scheme, Law Society of England and Wales president Richard Atkinson welcomed the move, saying: “Repealing the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024, which was one of the most damaging pieces of legislation in recent history, is the right thing to do.” He added “We also welcome the repeal of most of the Illegal Migration Act – an Act which was incompatible with our international obligations and tarnished our international reputation. We campaigned against both these pieces of legislation which threatened and undermined both the rule of law and access to justice.”<sup>49</sup>

On the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill introduced in 2025, the Society argued not merely that it was an improvement on its predecessors but that it “should go much further,” calling for additional protections for asylum seekers and the repeal of further provisions from the Nationality and Borders Act.<sup>50</sup> These are not narrow technical observations about legal drafting. They are substantive political positions on one of the most contested policy areas in British public life, advanced with the full institutional authority of a body that represents the entire legal profession.

The British Medical Association tells a similar story. With 195,000 members, it is the largest professional body and trade union for doctors in the UK, and its public interventions carry commensurate weight. In 2024, the BMA attracted significant criticism from senior medical figures<sup>51</sup> for initially disavowing the Cass Review, the independent review of gender identity services for children, which had been accepted by both the outgoing Conservative government and its Labour successor, before eventually retreating to “a neutral position” under pressure<sup>52</sup>. The episode illustrated both the progressive orientation of the BMA’s leadership and the limits of how far that orientation could be pushed before generating internal revolt. *The Spectator* noted that the BMA’s growing militancy — balloting 50,000 doctors for strike action in support of a 29% pay claim — reflected a pattern familiar from the capture of other institutions: a leadership whose political instincts run significantly ahead of the general membership. The publication likened what was happening within the BMA

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<sup>49</sup> “Dangerous act repealed as new bill introduced”. The Law Society. 31 January 2025.

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/contact-or-visit-us/press-office/press-releases/dangerous-act-repealed-as-new-bill-introduced>

<sup>50</sup> “Written evidence submitted by the Law Society of England and Wales to Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill Committee (BSAIB08)”. UK Parliament. Public Bill Committee. 24 February 2025.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5901/cmpublic/BorderSecurityAsylumImmigration/memo/BSAIB08.htm>

<sup>51</sup> “Doctors resign from BMA over union’s opposition to Cass review” The Telegraph. 26 August 2024. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/08/26/doctors-resign-bma-opposition-cass-review-puberty-blockers/>

<sup>52</sup> “BMA takes ‘neutral position’ on gender review” BBC. 27 September 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c20pno164ypo>

to the takeover of Liverpool City Council by militant Marxists in the 1980s.<sup>53</sup> This is Michels' Iron Law in action: not a conspiracy, but the predictable result of activist minorities being more motivated to seek leadership positions than the apolitical majority is to contest them.

The National Union of Journalists provides a further illustration, operating at the intersection of professional regulation and media culture. The NUJ sets ethical guidelines, negotiates employment terms, and shapes the professional identity of working journalists across print, broadcast, and digital media. Its political character is openly left-wing — it is affiliated to the TUC and has long taken positions on issues well beyond narrow industrial concerns, including foreign policy, civil liberties, and press freedom in ways that consistently align with progressive rather than conservative priorities. It's currently running a campaign titled “Back the BBC”, “calling for sustainable funding, universal access, governance reform and protection from political interference [...] to secure the BBC's future at the centre of UK cultural life.”<sup>54</sup> The significance of this for the broader ecosystem is structural: the NUJ helps set the professional norms through which journalists understand their own role, what counts as legitimate inquiry, and which sources and framings carry authority. Those norms are not neutral, and their cumulative effect on the culture of British journalism is considerable.

What unites these bodies — the Law Society, the BMA, the NUJ, the teaching unions, the social work bodies, the Royal Colleges — is that none of them are perceived as political actors. Rather they present themselves as authoritative custodians of professional standards, speaking on behalf of expertise and the public interest. When the Law Society opposes a piece of immigration legislation it is not heard as a political campaign, it is heard as a legal verdict. When the BMA takes a position on a contested clinical or social question, it speaks with the authority of medicine itself. This is a form of political power that no party, think tank, or campaign group can replicate — and it is one of the most deeply embedded advantages the left possesses within the British institutional landscape.

## **The Permanent State: Local Government and the Civil Service**

Local government and the national civil service are rarely discussed together, yet they share a structural characteristic that makes them, in ecosystem terms, a single phenomenon: both are institutions in which elected political control sits atop a permanent professional bureaucracy that is largely insulated from electoral change — and in which that permanent layer consistently exerts a gravitational pull in a progressive direction, regardless of who nominally holds power.

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<sup>53</sup> Pollard, Stephen. “The growing militancy of the BMA”. The Spectator. 30 May 2025.

<https://spectator.com/article/the-growing-militancy-of-the-bma/>

<sup>54</sup> “Back The BBC” NUJ. 6 February 2026. <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/back-the-bbc.html>

The scale of the permanent state is considerable. Local government employs approximately 2 million people across the UK, while the civil service employs a further 550,000 — figures that have been rising consistently<sup>55</sup>. These are not people who leave when governments change. They are the continuous institutional presence through which policy is drafted, advice is given, decisions are implemented, and commitments are made. Elected politicians — whether local councillors or national ministers — are, in an important sense, guests in institutions that predate them, will outlast them, and are run day-to-day by people whose professional formation, career incentives, and institutional loyalties are entirely independent of the electoral cycle.

The composition of the permanent workforce in both institutions skews, as the academia section predicts it would, toward the progressive end of the political spectrum. The civil service draws heavily from the same graduate pipeline — Russell Group universities, humanities and social science disciplines, a metropolitan professional culture — that supplies the think tanks, charities, and media outlets discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Civil Service Statistics 2025 confirm that the service is significantly more ethnically diverse and more highly educated than the general population, and that nearly 20% of all civil servants are based in London — the most politically progressive region in the country<sup>56</sup>. At the local level, the professional classes who run councils — planners, social workers, equality officers, policy analysts — are drawn from degree programmes in social policy, law, urban planning, and public administration that carry, as we have seen, a broadly progressive ideological orientation. They are not appointed by the councillors they serve. They are career professionals who inhabit the institution across multiple administrations.

The institutional logic reinforces the compositional bias. Both local and national government are designed, structurally, to identify need and commission responses to it — to expand provision, employ staff, and build programmes. The entire apparatus of statutory duties, inspection regimes, grant conditions, and legal obligations creates a gravitational pull toward spending and intervention rather than restraint. A Conservative minister who wishes to reduce the size of the state inherits a department full of people whose professional purpose is to deliver, expand, and defend its programmes. The incentives run entirely in one direction: cutting generates opposition, litigation, and political cost; maintaining or expanding generates institutional momentum and stakeholder gratitude. The result is the ratchet effect that has characterised British government for a century, each left-wing administration expanding the state, each Conservative one consolidating rather than reversing what it inherited, before the next expansion begins.

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<sup>55</sup> Public sector employment, UK: September 2025. Office for National Statistics. Accessed 22 February 2026.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/bulletins/publicsectoremployment/september2025>

<sup>56</sup> “Statistical bulletin - Civil Service Statistics: 2025” The Cabinet Office. 29 October 2025.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2025/statistical-bulletin-civil-service-statistics-2025>

This dynamic operates with particular force in local government, where elected councillors are part-time, often inexperienced, and almost entirely dependent on the officers they nominally oversee for advice, information, and implementation. A newly elected administration inherits not only a professional bureaucracy with different instincts from its political masters, but a web of existing commitments — contracts with voluntary sector organisations, conditions attached to external funding, equality schemes embedded in procurement rules, and above all statutory duties in areas like adult social care and children's services — that are extremely difficult to unpick from the inside.

Nowhere has this been more vividly illustrated than in the experience of Reform UK following its breakthrough in the May 2025 local elections, when the party swept to victory on a platform of cutting waste and reducing council tax. Reform's then-chairman Zia Yusuf, appearing on the BBC after the results, was explicit: What voters wanted were the key services: potholes filled, bins collected, waste cut. “They don't want their council tax going up,” he said. “And Reform will deliver on those things.”<sup>57</sup> Six months later, eight of the thirteen councils Reform control had indicated plans to raise council tax — in several cases by the maximum 4.99% permitted by law<sup>58</sup>.

Kent County Council, described by the party as the “shop window” for the party in government, and which set up an Elon Musk-inspired Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE), found itself facing a £46.5 million budget overspend — up 66% in just three months — and bracing for the maximum council tax rise. A Reform cabinet member told the *Financial Times*: “Everyone thought we'd come in and there were going to be these huge costs we could cut away but there just aren't.” The explanation is structural rather than political: as one analyst noted, in Kent alone more than £787 million — 48% of the entire budget — goes on adult social care, a statutory obligation that no administration can simply choose not to fund. That didn't stop the Lib-Dem opposition spinning the problem as ‘heartless right wingers’. One councillor told the *Byline Times* he was concerned the council would “try to cut costs by moving residents to cheaper care homes, something we've already seen from Reform-run councils elsewhere,” adding “That is deeply unsettling for older people, who rely heavily on familiar surroundings and carers.”<sup>59</sup>

The pressure proved too much for Reform councillor and head of DOLGE Matthew Fraser-Moat, who quit his Cabinet position in February. Illustrating the structural behemoth he found himself up against, Cllr Fraser-Moat commented: “It was a great

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<sup>57</sup> “Reform Watch 12: Reform promise cuts and deliver tax rises” Hope Not Hate. 8 October 2025. <https://hopenothate.org.uk/2025/10/08/reform-watch-12/>

<sup>58</sup> “Reform councils set to raise taxes for nearly 5 million people despite promising cuts” LBC. 4 November 2025. [https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/reform-uk-council-tax-rise-nigel-farage-5HjdGKc\\_2/](https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/reform-uk-council-tax-rise-nigel-farage-5HjdGKc_2/)

<sup>59</sup> Mortimer, Josh. “Reform UK's ‘Cost Cutting’ Council Prepares to Raise Taxes After Presiding Over £46 Million Overspend”. *Byline Times*. 24 November 2025. <https://bylinetimes.com/2025/11/24/reform-uks-cost-cutting-council-prepares-to-raise-taxes-after-residing-over-46-million-overspend/>

honour to be asked to serve as a Cabinet Member and since then I have tried to balance my Council responsibilities with the responsibilities of my family business. The pressure of giving my best to both roles led to a lapse of judgement in a recent conversation with a journalist in which I was very disappointed to see my words twisted to fit what I believe to be an anti-KCC narrative by the newspaper in question. It has become clear to me that continuing as Head of DOLGE is not sustainable, and now that KCC has delivered a balanced budget and stabilised the council's finances, I have decided to step down from my role as a cabinet member.”<sup>60</sup>

Organisation structure, political opposition, media narrative — all combined to thwart Reform's tax cutting agenda. This is the power of the left's ecosphere in action. The same dynamic plays out nationally, if less visibly. The 2010-2015 coalition government's attempts to reform the public sector were repeatedly frustrated by departmental resistance, legal challenge, and the sheer institutional inertia of a state that had been expanding for thirteen years. The 2022-2024 Conservative government's experience was more dramatic still: the Rwanda scheme tied up in judicial review for years; ministers repeatedly finding that the policy they announced bore little resemblance to the policy that was eventually implemented. The Institute for Government has documented extensively how ministers across multiple administrations have struggled to translate political direction into administrative reality. Its *Whitehall Monitor 2026* found that civil service growth has continued “in spite of sustained and explicit ministerial commitments to reduce the size of the civil service,” and that “too many ministers feel very poorly served by the system” — a frustration shared, it notes, by Labour governments as well as Conservative.<sup>61</sup>

That last point is worth dwelling on. Starmer's Labour government — which might be expected to find the civil service a congenial partner — has experienced its own version of the same frustration. Starmer publicly accused some civil servants of being “too comfortable,” and dismissed cabinet secretary Chris Wormald after little over a year in post. Labour ministers have complained that the machine is slow, risk-averse, and institutionally resistant to the pace of change they want to deliver. This is not, on reflection, surprising — and it does not undermine the thesis of this section. The civil service does not advance progressive goals because it is loyal to the left. It advances them because its internal logic, professional culture, and incentive structures produce those outcomes as a structural default. That is, if anything, more powerful than political loyalty — because it cannot be switched off even when a Labour government tries to redirect it. In Michels' terms, the institution has fully matured: its oligarchic leadership now serves its own institutional interests rather than any

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<sup>60</sup> “An update on Kent County Council's DOLGE” Kent County Council. 3 February 2026. <https://news.kent.gov.uk/articles/an-update-to-kent-county-councils-cabinet>

<sup>61</sup> Keenan, Hannah. “Whitehall Monitor 2026: Foreword and Overview” Institute for Government. 13 January 2026. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/whitehall-monitor-2026/overview>

political master's agenda. The ecosystem has, in its most important institutions, become self-sustaining.

What local government and the civil service represent for the left ecosystem, then, is not active collaboration but structural alignment: institutions whose internal logic, workforce composition, and incentive structures consistently produce outcomes congruent with progressive priorities, regardless of who nominally controls them. The left does not need to win every election for these institutions to serve its purposes. It needs only for them to continue functioning as they are currently designed — which they invariably do. And it is this, more than any individual policy or party, that makes the left's hold on the permanent infrastructure of the British state so difficult to dislodge.

## Media

Of all the components of the left ecosystem, media is the one most people instinctively recognise as having a bias, and yet it is also the one most commonly misunderstood. The temptation is to see media bias as the product of editorial conspiracy, of proprietors and producers imposing a political line from above. The reality is more interesting and more structural than that. What the left possesses is not a coordinated media operation but something more durable: a media landscape in which the dominant institutions — public broadcasting, the prestige print press, and an increasingly confident digital media — share a broadly progressive set of professional assumptions, aesthetic preferences, and social networks. These institutions do not coordinate their coverage. They do not need to. They are staffed by people who largely share the same educational backgrounds, the same metropolitan social world, and the same sense of which ideas are serious and which are not. The result is a media environment in which left-of-centre perspectives enjoy structural amplification, not through any act of conscious bias but as the natural output of institutions shaped, over decades, in a particular cultural direction.

## The BBC

The BBC occupies a unique and contested position in the British media landscape. Publicly funded — the annual licence fee now stands at £180 — and constitutionally committed to impartiality, it is simultaneously one of the most trusted and most disputed media institutions in the country. Overall, 31% of Britons believe the BBC is biased in favour of left-wing views, but another 19% think it is biased in favour of right-wing views, 19% say it is not biased at all, and a further 31% simply don't

know.<sup>62</sup> Accusations of bias fall, of course, along predictably partisan lines. A survey of 11,170 people carried out between December 2022 and June 2024 showed striking differences between how people with left and right-wing party affiliations felt about the broadcaster: Liberal Democrat voters averaged 4.54 on a one-to-seven trust scale, Labour voters 3.88, Conservative voters 3.17, and Brexit Party voters just 2.16. One of the researchers involved in the survey commented: “When we asked respondents to place themselves on a political spectrum of left to right, we saw a similar patterns. Trust peaked around the centre-left, dropped at the centre, and stayed low on the right. The pattern clearly indicates that trust in the BBC is not uniform, nor does it develop in a vacuum.” The researchers found that the pattern was not observed in relation to Japan’s public broadcaster, where those on the left and right report similar levels of trust, “suggesting something specific is happening in the UK.”<sup>63</sup>

The significance of this for ecosystem mapping is not whether the BBC is, in some objective sense, biased — a question on which the evidence is genuinely contested and on which this paper takes no definitive position. It is the structural role the BBC plays within the broader media environment. As the most widely consumed news source in the country, reaching 94% of UK adults monthly, it sets the baseline for what counts as mainstream, authoritative, and credible. Ideas and framings that receive sustained BBC coverage become part of public common sense in ways that coverage in partisan outlets cannot replicate. The BBC's editorial instincts, whatever their precise ideological character, therefore carry disproportionate weight in shaping the boundaries of acceptable debate. The NUJ's campaign to defend it is, in ecosystem terms, a campaign to defend one of the left’s most valuable institutional assets, whether or not that is how either party would describe it.

The BBC's future is, as of early 2026, genuinely uncertain. Its Royal Charter expires at the end of 2027, and the government's charter review green paper — launched in December 2025 and open for public consultation until 10 March 2026 — sets out a range of options for its future funding, including the possibility of scrapping the licence fee entirely in favour of taxation. Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy is reportedly “minded to abolish the annual fee” in favour of direct Treasury funding, a change that would make the BBC's finances directly dependent on government goodwill in ways the current model does not.<sup>64</sup> For the left ecosystem, the stakes of this review are high: a BBC funded through taxation and subject to more direct political oversight would be a qualitatively different institution from the one that exists today.

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<sup>62</sup> Smith, Matthew. “Is the BBC biased?” YouGov. 10 November 2025. <https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/53363-is-the-bbc-biased-what-the-public-think-following-the-davie-and-turness-resignations>

<sup>63</sup> Pickering, Steven David. “Trust in the BBC is heavily tied to political identity” The Conversation. 10 November 2025. <https://theconversation.com/trust-in-the-bbc-is-heavily-tied-to-political-identity-269434>

<sup>64</sup> Mohan-Hickson, Matthew. “BBC TV licence fee: Labour ‘considers’ radical BBC funding shake-up - what is Lisa Nandy's plan?” The Star. 13 January 2025. <https://www.thestar.co.uk/news/uk-news/bbc-tv-licence-fee-could-be-scrapped-4940785>

## Legacy Print and Digital Media

Beyond the BBC, the left's media landscape is well populated. *The Guardian* is the most explicitly progressive of the national broadsheets, functioning in many respects as a house journal for the professional left, covering politics, culture, and social affairs from a consistently centre-left perspective and providing a platform for the thinkers, politicians, and campaigners who populate the broader ecosystem. *The Mirror* serves a more working-class Labour readership. *Channel 4 News* has a well-documented left-liberal editorial character. *The Independent*, operating as a digital-only outlet since 2016, occupies similar territory. Together these outlets ensure that the left's ecosystem has continuous media infrastructure through which ideas can be tested, amplified, and driven into public debate; infrastructure that operates independently of, and is not dependent on, any particular political party.

## The Digital Left: Novara Media and Beyond

The most significant development in left media over the past decade has been the emergence of a confident and technically sophisticated digital left, of which [Novara Media](#) is the leading example. Founded in 2011 by Aaron Bastani and James Butler during the student protests against tuition fee increases, *Novara* has grown from a community radio show into one of the most influential political media operations in Britain. Its YouTube watchtime doubled in 2023, with subscribers increasing by 300% to 666,000 and Instagram followers tripling. As of 2024, its website receives around 500,000 monthly visits making it the dominant British left digital platform by some margin. *Novara's* readership is typically 18- to 30-year-olds and left-leaning people dissatisfied with more traditional news outlets. It is funded entirely by donations, having reached 15,000 monthly donors in January 2024, a model that gives it editorial independence from advertisers, foundations, and political parties alike.<sup>65</sup>

*Novara's* significance for the ecosystem is not merely within its audience size, however; the platform functions as a talent pipeline and ideas incubator for the broader left. Figures including Ash Sarkar, Grace Blakeley, and Aaron Bastani have moved from *Novara* into mainstream media appearances, book deals, and political influence, carrying the outlet's intellectual framework with them into wider public discourse. The platform has also proved adept at navigating the transition from Corbynite Labour politics to the more diffuse post-Labour left: despite backing Jeremy Corbyn and becoming a major alternative media flank for the Corbyn project, *Novara* has managed to avoid the trap of becoming a party project with sectarian commitments, repositioning itself as an independent voice for a left that now

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<sup>65</sup> "Novara Media" Wikipedia. Accessed 21 February 2026.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novara\\_Media#Readership\\_and\\_funding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novara_Media#Readership_and_funding)

stretches across the Greens, the Gaza independents, and whatever emerges from the current period of party fragmentation.<sup>66</sup>

Novara is not alone. *Tribune*, *The Canary*, *Jacobin's* UK output, and a growing constellation of Substack writers and podcast networks collectively constitute a digital left media ecosystem that did not exist a decade ago. These outlets do not share editorial control, but they share audiences, amplify one another's content, and together constitute an alternative media infrastructure that allows the left to communicate with its activist base independently of legacy outlets and without reliance on the BBC's gatekeeping function.

### **The Media Ecosystem as Amplifier**

Taken together, the left's media landscape — the BBC as institutional anchor, the *Guardian* and *Channel 4* as legacy progressive outlets, and *Novara* and the digital left as the activist edge — performs a function that no other component of the ecosystem can replicate: it continuously translates political ideas into public common sense. Think tanks produce research; the media decides which research becomes news. Charities campaign for policy change; the media decides which campaigns gain traction. Activists organise on the streets; the media decides how those protests are framed. At every point in the ecosystem, media amplification is the mechanism through which influence is converted into power. A movement that understands this — and the left, with its deep institutional roots in broadcasting and digital media alike, broadly does — has a structural advantage that goes well beyond what any individual outlet could provide.

### **Academia**

British universities are, in many respects, the left ecosystem's most structurally important component, because it is the one that operates furthest upstream. Every other institution in the ecosystem draws on the human capital that universities produce: its think tanks are staffed by graduates, its charities led by them, its civil servants trained through them, its journalists formed by them. Whatever ideological orientation universities impart, through their faculty culture, their curriculum, their social environment, flows outward into the entire ecosystem over time. The university is not merely one institution among many. It is the headwater from which much of the rest of the ecosystem is fed.

The political orientation of British academic staff is well documented. A YouGov survey of 820 UK academics commissioned by Policy Exchange found that fewer

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<sup>66</sup> White, Josh. "Leftist Success Story: The Case of Novara" *The Battleground*. 12 May 2025. <https://thebattleground.eu/2025/05/12/leftist-success-story/>

than 20% voted for right-leaning parties, with 75% voting Labour, Liberal Democrat, or Green.<sup>67</sup> The same survey found that 53% of respondents identified as left, 35% as centrist, and just 9% as right, and that this imbalance had real institutional consequences: between a third and a half of left-wing academics said they would mark a grant bid lower if it took a right-wing perspective, while around 65% of those who identified as "very right wing" reported experiencing a hostile work environment due to their political beliefs.<sup>68</sup> One in four academics reported feeling unable to express their views at work for fear of disagreeing with their peers. This is not merely a question of unfairness to individual academics. It is a question of what ideas get funded, published, and legitimised — and therefore of what ideas the rest of the ecosystem receives as credible, evidence-based, and intellectually serious.

The effect on students is more contested. Research suggests that university study does not straightforwardly "indoctrinate" students in the way critics sometimes allege — the causal relationship between faculty political orientation and student attitude change is weaker than is often claimed. What universities do demonstrably produce, however, is a graduate cohort with significantly more liberal cultural attitudes than non-graduates. Larger numbers of graduates and the rise of sociocultural professions — journalists, teachers, academics — in what researchers term the new "knowledge societies" has resulted in a more socially liberal population, with voting patterns at the 2024 UK general election showing those with degrees much more likely to support the Greens, Labour, and the Liberal Democrats, while those with less education preferred Reform UK and the Conservatives.<sup>69</sup> As the proportion of each cohort attending university has risen — from around 5% in 1960 to over 50% today — this graduate liberalisation effect has become one of the most powerful long-term demographic forces in British politics.

The pipeline function of universities is as significant as the attitudinal one. The Sutton Trust's *Elitist Britain 2025* report provides a detailed picture of where the people who run Britain's institutions came from. Elites are over five times more likely to have attended a Russell Group university and 21 times more likely to have attended Oxford or Cambridge than the general population, with the pipeline from independent school to elite university remaining strong — one in four members of the British elite having gone from a private school to a Russell Group university.<sup>70</sup> The report also, notably for our purposes, includes for the first time data on the third sector: 34% of charity CEOs attended private school, as did 25% of think tank senior leaders, with think tank senior staff ranking eighth out of 47 professions in terms of

<sup>67</sup> "The Threat of Growing Leftism in U.K. Academia" Berkeley Political Review. 3 April, 2024. <https://bpr.studentorg.berkeley.edu/2024/04/03/the-threat-of-growing-leftism-in-uk-academia/>

<sup>68</sup> McKie, Anna. "UK academics 'discriminate against political opposites' – survey" Times Higher Education. 3 August, 2020. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/uk-academics-discriminate-against-political-opposites-survey>

<sup>69</sup> Scott, Ralph. "Why are graduates more socially liberal?" UK in a Changing Europe. 13 August 2024. <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/why-are-graduates-more-socially-liberal/>

<sup>70</sup> "Elitist Britain 2025" The Sutton Trust. 18 September 2025. <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/elitist-britain-2025/>

Oxbridge attendance. What this means in practice is that the leadership of the left's civil society ecosystem — its think tanks, its charities, its advocacy organisations — is drawn disproportionately from the same narrow educational pipeline that supplies the civil service, the judiciary, and the media. They share educational formation, social networks, and a set of assumptions about the world that were substantially shaped in the same institutions. This is entirely in line with what Michels would predict: leadership cohorts form from those with the motivation, confidence, and social capital to seek leadership positions — and universities, particularly elite ones, are where that capital is accumulated.

The discipline-level picture reinforces this. Sociology, education, law, media studies, social policy, and the humanities lean heavily left in their faculty composition and their dominant theoretical frameworks. These are not peripheral subjects, they are the disciplines that train social workers, teachers, lawyers, journalists, policy analysts, and charity workers — the professional classes who staff the institutions of civil society. The intellectual frameworks they absorb at university, on inequality, power, identity, and the role of the state, do not simply stay in the seminar room. They travel with their graduates into every institution they subsequently inhabit, shaping how those institutions understand the problems they are trying to solve and the solutions they consider credible. This is the generational mechanism through which Michels' Iron Law operates at the grandest possible scale: not within a single organisation, but across the entire institutional landscape of a society, one graduating cohort at a time.

## **The Ecosystem in Sum**

What makes this ecosystem function is not any central coordination but a shared set of assumptions, relationships, and personnel flows that connect its parts. People move between these institutions throughout their careers; from university to a think tank, from a think tank to a charity, from a charity to a political adviser role, from there into journalism or a quango. Funding flows similarly, with foundations, public bodies, and sympathetic donors sustaining organisations across multiple sectors simultaneously.

Mapped in full like this, the British left's political ecosystem rises like a monolith before us; a formidable thing. It is not a shady conspiracy run by an elite cabal, and it has no headquarters. No single organisation directs it, no single leader commands it, and no single funding source sustains it. It is, rather, the accumulated product of over a century of patient institution-building — a dense, interlocking network in which parties, think tanks, unions, activists, charities, professional bodies, media outlets, and universities each occupy a distinct niche while reinforcing the work of all the others.

What makes it so structurally powerful is precisely this redundancy. Remove any single component and the rest continues to function. Defeat Labour at an election and the think tanks keep producing policy, the charities keep lobbying, the universities keep training the next cohort, the media keeps setting the terms of debate. The ecosystem absorbs electoral setbacks in a way that no single party ever could — and it is, if anything, becoming more resilient as it diversifies away from its historic Labour anchor and spreads its weight across a broader range of vehicles.

This is the inheritance the right faces. Not a party to beat, nor a civil service to overcome, but a landscape to contest. Understanding it in full is the necessary precondition for doing anything about it — which is where this paper now turns.

## Chapter 3

### ... The Right Are Not

The previous chapter mapped, in considerable detail, the political ecosystem of the British left. What emerged was not a conspiracy but something more formidable: a dense, interlocking network of parties, think tanks, unions, activist organisations, charities, professional bodies, media outlets, and universities, each occupying a distinct niche while reinforcing the work of all the others. No single component is decisive on its own. The ecosystem's power lies in its redundancy, its connectivity, and the sheer patient accumulation of institutional presence across every domain in which political life is actually conducted.

The natural next question is: what does the equivalent picture look like on the right?

The honest answer is that there is no equivalent picture. The right does not possess a political ecosystem in any meaningful sense of the term. It possesses fragments — some of them genuinely impressive in isolation — but fragments that do not connect, do not reinforce one another, and do not collectively perform the ecosystem function of sustained, cross-institutional influence that the left's infrastructure delivers as a matter of routine.

This is not, primarily, a failure of ideas or of talent. The British right has no shortage of either. It is a failure of architecture. The right has built platforms where it needed pipelines, audiences where it needed members, and commentary where it needed organisation. It has invested heavily in winning arguments and almost nothing in building the institutional infrastructure through which arguments are converted into cultural power. The result is a political movement that is structurally incapable of translating even widespread public sympathy into durable political outcomes — a movement that can win elections, occasionally, but cannot hold the ground it wins, because there is no ecosystem to defend it.

The temperamental roots of this failure were noted previously. The right is, by disposition, individualist. It values autonomy, distrusts collective enterprise, and instinctively resists the subordination of personal judgement to organisational discipline. These are admirable qualities in many contexts, but they are fatal ones in the contest for institutional power. The left organises because organisation is what it believes in. The right fails to organise because organisation feels like a concession to the very collectivism it opposes. The irony is acute: in refusing to organise on principle, the right guarantees that the organisers win — and that the principles are lost. That inertia must now be overcome.

What follows is an honest audit of the right's political landscape: what it has, what it lacks, and — perhaps most importantly — what it possesses without knowing it. For alongside the visible assets of think tanks, media outlets, and donor networks, there exists a set of latent institutional resources, concentrated particularly in rural

England, that have never been connected to any political project but which represent, if properly understood and mobilised, the raw material from which a genuine right-wing ecosystem could be built.

The picture is not hopeless. But it is far more serious than most on the right are willing to admit.

## Parliamentary and Electoral Politics

The first and most visible contrast between the left's electoral infrastructure and the right's is this: the left's parties, for all their differences, function as complementary actors within a shared ecosystem. The right's parties are competitors fighting over the same ground, and the result is a division of effort that the electoral system punishes with extraordinary severity.

As previously detailed in Chapter 2, The 2024 general election provided the starkest illustration of this. Reform UK received 4,117,610 votes — 14.3% of the national total — and won five seats. The Liberal Democrats received fewer votes (3,519,143, or 12.2%) and won 72 seats.<sup>71</sup> The five pro-Palestinian independents, whose combined vote across their constituencies was a fraction of Reform's national total, also won five seats.<sup>72</sup> The difference was not luck or geography in any simple sense. It was organisation. The Liberal Democrats had spent years building local roots in carefully selected battlegrounds, concentrating resources with surgical precision. The Muslim Vote had identified target constituencies and mobilised community networks where they could be decisive. Reform spread its support thinly across the country, winning large numbers of votes in hundreds of constituencies and decisive numbers in almost none.

The damage went further than Reform's own seat count. The party's presence split the right-wing vote catastrophically. According to analysis by Thomas Quinn in *The Political Quarterly*, in 95 constituencies Labour overturned Conservative majorities of over 20 percentage points, often with only modest increases in its own vote, because Reform drew away enough right-leaning voters to let Labour through the middle.<sup>73</sup> In 137 of the seats the Conservatives lost to Labour, and 26 of those lost to

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<sup>71</sup> House of Commons Library, "General Election 2024: Results and Analysis" July 2024. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10009/>

<sup>72</sup> As documented in Chapter 2 of this report. See also: Ibn Battuta, "The Muslim Vote: Initial Election Analysis," *The Muslim Vote* 5 July 2024. <https://themuslimvote.co.uk/the-muslim-vote-initial-election-analysis>

<sup>73</sup> Quinn, Thomas "'Surge-and-Collapse' under First Past the Post: Reform UK's Electoral Threat to the Conservative Party," *The Political Quarterly*, October 2025. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-923x.70016>

the Liberal Democrats, the combined Conservative and Reform vote share exceeded the winner's total.<sup>74</sup> The right had the votes. It did not have the coordination.

The left, by contrast, coordinated with remarkable efficiency — not through any formal pact, but through a combination of tactical voting infrastructure and implicit mutual understanding. Dedicated tactical voting websites including [StopTheTories.vote](#) and [Tactical.Vote](#) provided constituency-level recommendations to left-leaning voters, directing them toward whichever progressive candidate had the best chance of defeating the Conservative incumbent; StopTheTories claimed 1.5 million people looked up their tactical vote through the site and boasted a 99.67% accuracy rate.<sup>75</sup> YouGov found that one in five voters were voting tactically in 2024, with Labour voters the most likely to do so at 29%.<sup>76</sup> The result was that the left's parties, while formally independent, functioned in practice as a loose anti-Conservative coalition — each occupying a different niche, each drawing different voters, but collectively directing their combined weight toward shared outcomes. Nothing remotely equivalent existed on the right.

The structural picture has, if anything, deteriorated since 2024. The right's electoral landscape is now fragmenting further. Reform UK claims over 270,000 members as of early 2026, making it by its own account the largest political party in Britain by membership.<sup>77</sup> The Conservatives, reduced to 121 seats and haemorrhaging members and MPs to their rival — Robert Jenrick, Andrew Rosindell, Suella Braverman and Danny Kruger all defected to Reform between September 2025 and January 2026<sup>78</sup> — face what has been described as a potential 'surge-and-collapse' dynamic that could threaten their very existence as a major party.<sup>79</sup>

Advance UK, founded in June 2025 by former Reform deputy leader Ben Habib, represents a further fracture along a different fault line. Habib left Reform citing both ideological differences — he favoured a harder line on deportations — and structural ones: he publicly criticised the party's lack of internal democracy, rooted in Farage's personal ownership of what was, until recently, a limited company rather than a membership-controlled party.<sup>80</sup> Advance was explicitly designed as the antithesis of this model. Its constitution establishes an elected 'college' of member

<sup>74</sup> Prosser, Chris et al., "Fragmentation Revisited: The UK General Election of 2024," *West European Politics*. 2024. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402382.2024.2430915>

<sup>75</sup> "2024 UK General Election Results," StopReformUK.vote. <https://stopreformuk.vote/results>

<sup>76</sup> "One in Five Voters Say They Are Voting Tactically at the 2024 General Election," YouGov. 1 July 2024.

<https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/49886-one-in-five-voters-say-they-are-voting-tactically-at-the-2024-general-election>

<sup>77</sup> eform UK website, accessed February 22, 2026. <https://www.reformparty.uk>. Note: the accuracy of Reform's self-reported membership figures has been disputed; see "Reform UK's 'Largest Party' Membership Claim," UK Fact Check (December 14, 2025). <https://www.ukfactcheck.com/article/114/>

<sup>78</sup> "Reform UK," Wikipedia, accessed February 22, 2026. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform\\_UK](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_UK)

<sup>79</sup> Quinn, Thomas et al. "Surge-and-Collapse' under First Past the Post: Reform UK's Electoral Threat to the Conservative Party" *The Political Quarterly*. 21 October 2025.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-923x.70016>

<sup>80</sup> "Advance UK," Wikipedia, accessed February 22, 2026.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advance\\_UK](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advance_UK).

representatives with the power to vote on policy and remove the leader through a vote of no confidence, a governance structure that Habib described as reflecting the party's founding principle that Britain must restore democratic accountability.<sup>81</sup> The party was registered with the Electoral Commission in December 2025 and as of February 2026 holds nine council seats through defections, mostly from Reform.

For a time, Advance appeared to be the natural home for the growing number of right-wing activists who had concluded that Reform was being captured by the very political establishment it had promised to challenge. The defections of Nadhim Zahawi, Suella Braverman, and Robert Jenrick from the Conservatives to Reform sharpened this concern considerably: for many in Reform's original base, the arrival of career politicians who had presided over record immigration while in government was not a sign of strength but of ideological dilution. If Reform was simply becoming the Conservative Party under a different name, with the same personnel and the same instincts, then what exactly had been gained?

The launch of Restore Britain in February 2026 split this disaffected constituency further. The two parties, Restore and Advance, now compete for what is essentially the same segment of right-wing opinion: voters who regard Reform as insufficiently radical or insufficiently democratic, but they appeal to different temperaments within it. Advance, with its college governance model and Habib's emphasis on civic nationalism, equality before the law, and the restoration of democratic institutions, attracts those who frame their politics in terms of constitutional principle and cultural identity.<sup>82</sup> Restore Britain, with Lowe's more confrontational rhetoric and explicit focus on demographic change and the replacement of the white British population, appeals to those whose primary concern is ethnic and demographic rather than civic.<sup>83</sup> The distinction is real but the overlap is substantial, and the practical effect is the same: another division of the right-wing vote, another fragmentation of organisational effort, another illustration of Michels' observation that movements without cohesive leadership will fracture rather than cohere.

The right now fields, at minimum, four competing vehicles — the Conservatives, Reform, Advance, and Restore Britain — where the left fields a complementary ecosystem. Habib himself has acknowledged the possibility of cooperation with

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<sup>81</sup> "Ben Habib Launches New Political Party 'Advance UK' with Rallying Cry to Restore British Democracy" Conservative Post. 30 June 2025. <https://conservativepost.co.uk/ben-habib-launches-new-political-party-advance-uk-with-rallying-cry-to-restore-british-democracy/>. Advance UK's constitution establishes that "Party members will elect a representative 'College,' a body charged with ensuring the leadership remains true to the party's founding principles."

<sup>82</sup> "Britain's Patriotic New Voice: AdvanceUK's Policy Launch in London" Gateway Pundit. 7 February 2026. <https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2026/02/britains-patriotic-new-voice-advanceuks-policy-launch-london/>. At its February 2026 conference, Advance UK set out policies rooted in what it described as Britain's Judeo-Christian heritage, emphasising assimilation, equality before the law, and national unity.

<sup>83</sup> "Restore Britain," Wikipedia, accessed February 22, 2026. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restore\\_Britain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restore_Britain)

Restore Britain, and Habib initially called Lowe's suspension from Reform 'an injustice.'<sup>84</sup> But acknowledgement is not coordination, and goodwill is not infrastructure. As of February 2026, the four parties have no electoral pact, no tactical voting arrangement, no shared data operation, and no mechanism for directing their collective weight toward shared outcomes. They are, in the most literal sense, competitors rather than allies.

The contrast with the left's ecosystem could not be sharper. On the left, Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Greens, and The Muslim Vote occupy distinct electoral niches – different voter bases, different geographic strengths, different strategic functions – and the system rewards their collective diversity. On the right, the Conservatives, Reform, and now Advance UK and Restore Britain are fighting over the same voters, the same ideological ground, and in many cases the same constituencies. Where the left's fragmentation has made it collectively stronger under First Past the Post, the right's fragmentation is making it collectively weaker. Each new party that enters the field further divides a vote that is already spread too thinly to convert sentiment into seats.

The problem is not merely one of coordination but of organisational depth. None of the right's parties possesses the internal faction ecosystem that gives Labour its structural resilience. Labour can accommodate Momentum and Progress, the Socialist Campaign Group and Labour Together, all within the same institutional structure, each maintaining its own networks and pipelines so that the party's organisational depth is not dependent on any single tendency. Other than vague ideological leanings toward Thatcherism or One Nation Conservatism which tend to coalesce around favoured think tanks, the Conservatives have no equivalent pluralism. Reform's internal structures remain those of a top-down company rather than a democratic party, with Nigel Farage having only recently surrendered his controlling shares. When disagreements arise, as they did between Farage and Lowe, they produce not internal competition but external rupture. The organism does not adapt; it splits.

Nor does the right possess anything resembling the demographic organising model pioneered by The Muslim Vote. There is no equivalent attempt to identify and mobilise a specific community around shared priorities, build the infrastructure to concentrate its electoral weight in target constituencies, and deploy that weight with the tactical flexibility to back whichever vehicle is most useful in a given race. The right has voters. It does not have an organised electorate.

The electoral picture, in sum, is this: the right enters the next general election divided between at least two and possibly as many as four competing parties, without a tactical voting infrastructure, without demographic organising capacity, without the targeting discipline the Lib Dems have demonstrated, and facing a left-of-centre bloc that has shown itself capable of coordinating informally to devastating effect.

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<sup>84</sup> "Ben Habib," Wikipedia, accessed February 22, 2026. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben\\_Habib](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Habib).

Electoral Calculus analysis from September 2025 found that anti-Reform tactical voting alone could deprive Reform of 67 seats, potentially the difference between a majority and a hung parliament.<sup>85</sup> The right has no equivalent mechanism for concentrating its vote. The votes are there. The architecture to convert them into power is not.

## Think Tanks and Policy Development

If the right's electoral infrastructure is its weakest point, its think tank ecosystem is, by some distance, its strongest. The cluster of organisations based in and around Tufton Street in Westminster — [Policy Exchange](#), the [Institute of Economic Affairs \(IEA\)](#), the [Adam Smith Institute \(ASI\)](#), the [Centre for Policy Studies \(CPS\)](#), [Civitas](#), and the [TaxPayers' Alliance \(TPA\)](#) — constitutes a genuine, historically rooted policy infrastructure with decades of institutional memory and an established record of shaping government action.

The pedigree runs deep. The IEA, founded in 1955, is one of the oldest think tanks in Britain. Inspired by Friedrich Hayek's argument that the post-war drift toward collectivism could only be reversed by changing the intellectual climate rather than directly seeking power, the IEA spent decades making the case for free markets before the political class was ready to listen. When Margaret Thatcher arrived in Downing Street, the IEA's ideas arrived with her. The Centre for Policy Studies, co-founded by Thatcher and Keith Joseph in 1974, provided the more directly political complement: a body designed not merely to produce ideas but to arm a specific political tendency within the Conservative Party with the intellectual ammunition it needed.<sup>86</sup> The Adam Smith Institute, established in 1977, completed the trio, describing its own approach with characteristic immodesty: its president Madsen Pirie once said the ASI's method was to propose things regarded as being on the edge of lunacy, so that the next thing you know, they're on the edge of policy.<sup>87</sup> The ASI was the primary intellectual force behind the privatisation programme that defined the Thatcher era, and alongside the CPS and IEA advanced the free-market revolution in public policy that was, for a generation, the right's most consequential achievement.<sup>88</sup>

Policy Exchange, the youngest of the major right-wing think tanks, was founded in 2002 by Conservative modernisers including Francis Maude and Nick Boles who believed the party needed to move beyond strict Thatcherite economics. It rapidly

<sup>85</sup> Baxter, Martin. "Tactical Voting 2025," Electoral Calculus. September 2025.

[https://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk/blogs/pseph\\_tactical\\_2025.html](https://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk/blogs/pseph_tactical_2025.html)

<sup>86</sup> "Centre for Policy Studies," DeSmog. <https://www.desmog.com/centre-policy-studies/>

<sup>87</sup> "Adam Smith Institute," Wikipedia. Accessed 22 February 2026.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam\\_Smith\\_Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Smith_Institute).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. "The ASI formed the primary intellectual force behind the privatisation of state-owned industries during the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, and alongside the Centre for Policy Studies and Institute of Economic Affairs advanced a neoliberal approach toward public policy."

became the most politically connected think tank on the right. The *Daily Telegraph* described it in 2007 as “the largest, but also the most influential think tank on the right.”<sup>89</sup> Policy ideas developed by Policy Exchange that were subsequently adopted as government policy include free schools, police and crime commissioners, garden villages, and legislation protecting the Armed Forces from prosecution under human rights laws. Its Judicial Power Project, examining the expansion of judicial authority, has been particularly influential in shaping Conservative thinking on the relationship between elected government and unelected courts.

This is a genuine institutional infrastructure and it should not be understated. The Tufton Street ecosystem coordinated closely enough that, according to one former insider, the groups held biweekly meetings to agree on a single set of talking points and secure maximum media exposure.<sup>90</sup> At their most effective, these organisations functioned as something approaching the right-wing equivalent of the left’s policy pipeline, developing ideas in opposition that became government policy in power.

Yet for all its depth, the right’s think tank ecosystem suffers from three structural weaknesses that the left’s does not.

**First, it is overwhelmingly concentrated on economics.** The IEA, CPS, and ASI are, at root, free-market economics organisations. Their intellectual heritage, their donor base, and their institutional DNA are oriented toward questions of tax, regulation, trade, and the size of the state. These questions mattered enormously in the 1980s and still matter now, but they are not the questions that dominate contemporary political contestation. The terrain of political conflict has shifted decisively toward culture: identity, immigration, institutional capture, media, education, the relationship between citizens and an increasingly activist state. The right’s think tank ecosystem was built for an economic war and finds itself fighting a cultural one.

The gap has been recognised, and the most promising attempt to fill it is the [New Culture Forum](#). Founded in 2006 by the late Peter Whittle to be Britain’s first right-wing think tank dealing primarily in cultural matters, NCF challenges, as Whittle put it, “the cultural orthodoxies dominant in the media, academia, education, and wider British culture.”<sup>91</sup> As Douglas Murray wrote following Whittle’s death in November 2025, “too many conservatives for too long felt the crucial battles were

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<sup>89</sup> “Policy Exchange” Wikipedia. Accessed 22 February 2026.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy\\_Exchange](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy_Exchange)

<sup>90</sup> “55 Tufton Street,” Wikipedia. Accessed 22 February 2026.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/55\\_Tufton\\_Street](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/55_Tufton_Street). Former Vote Leave employee Shahmir Sanni accused the nine lobby groups of using biweekly meetings to “agree on a single set of right-wing talking points” and “securing more exposure to the public.”

<sup>91</sup> “Peter Whittle (politician),” Wikipedia. Accessed 22 February 2026

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_Whittle\\_\(politician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Whittle_(politician))

about economics. He helped to correct that error.”<sup>92</sup> Critically, the NCF has begun building something that goes beyond commentary. Its NCF Locals programme, which by late 2025 had established almost 40 branches across the country, creates exactly the kind of local, face-to-face gathering infrastructure — free events, discussion groups, community connections — that the right otherwise almost entirely lacks.<sup>93</sup> The potential here is significant. If NCF Locals can deepen its local roots, develop the capacity to identify and train community leaders, and connect its branches into the broader right-wing ecosystem as nodes of organised civic engagement rather than purely social gatherings, it would begin to fill one of the most consequential gaps in the right’s institutional landscape. The model exists. The challenge now is to scale it deliberately, and to ensure the institution outlasts any single individual; the transition from personality-driven project to self-sustaining organisation being, as this chapter argues throughout, the step the right most consistently fails to take.

**Second, the right’s think tanks are structurally tethered to a single party — and to specific factions within it.** The Tufton Street ecosystem was built around the Conservative Party. Policy Exchange was founded by Conservative MPs, the CPS was co-founded by a future Conservative Prime Minister, and the revolving door between these organisations and Conservative government has been well documented — Rishi Sunak himself once headed Policy Exchange’s Black and Minority Ethnic Research Unit.<sup>94</sup>

The relationship, however, is not simply one of think tanks serving a party. It is one of think tanks serving as *factional infrastructure* within that party, with different organisations anchoring different ideological tendencies. Policy Exchange, born of the Portillo modernisers in 2002 and later described as the “policy shop” of the Cameron premiership,<sup>95</sup> became the intellectual home of the party’s centrist, socially liberal wing, the architects of the Big Society, free schools, and what one Cambridge sociologist characterised as “using centre-right means to progressive ends.”<sup>96</sup> The CPS and IEA, by contrast, anchored the Thatcherite tendency: low tax, deregulation, supply-side economics. When Liz Truss arrived in Downing Street in 2022, it was the CPS and IEA that supplied the intellectual framework for her short-lived economic programme — and it was Policy Exchange alumni who had spent the preceding decade quietly distancing themselves from precisely that approach. The [Centre for](#)

<sup>92</sup> Peter Whittle, founder of the New Culture Forum which challenged Left-liberal cultural 'groupthink,'" *The Daily Telegraph*, December 1, 2025. Accessed via Yahoo News.

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/peter-whittle-founder-culture-forum-150548198.html>

<sup>93</sup> New Culture Forum, X post, November 1, 2025: "NCF Locals is our grassroots organisation. We have almost 40 branches around the nation."

<https://x.com/NewCultureForum/status/1984573286888126819>

<sup>94</sup> "Policy Exchange," Powerbase. [https://powerbase.info/index.php/Policy\\_Exchange](https://powerbase.info/index.php/Policy_Exchange). Lists "Rishi Sunak - Head of the Black & Minority Ethnic Research Unit."

<sup>95</sup> González Hernando, Marcos. "Policy Exchange: The Pros and Cons of Political Centrality" Springer Nature . pp. 191–232. 15 June 2019

[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-20370-2\\_6](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-20370-2_6)

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

**Social Justice**, co-founded by Iain Duncan Smith in 2004<sup>97</sup>, carved out a third niche as the think tank of compassionate conservatism, focusing on poverty, family breakdown, and welfare reform, providing Duncan Smith with the policy architecture for his time as Work and Pensions Secretary.

This factional mapping has a superficial resemblance to the left's internal plurality, where Labour accommodates Momentum and Progress, the Socialist Campaign Group and Labour Together, each maintaining its own networks and intellectual support structures. But the resemblance is misleading. Labour's factions coexist within a single institutional structure that provides the resilience to survive whichever tendency is ascendant at any given moment. The Conservative Party's think tank factions, by contrast, are externally housed and have no mechanism for coexistence when the party's direction shifts. When the modernisers held power, the Thatcherite think tanks were sidelined. When the Truss tendency briefly triumphed, Policy Exchange's careful positioning counted for nothing. And now that the Conservative Party itself is in existential crisis — reduced to 121 seats, haemorrhaging members and MPs to Reform, unsure even whether it will survive as a major party — the think tanks that built their entire model around influencing it face a profound question of relevance. A policy pipeline is only as useful as the institution it feeds into. If the Conservative Party ceases to be a plausible vehicle for government, the Tufton Street ecosystem becomes an engine without a chassis.

Nor have the right's think tanks shown any significant capacity to adapt to a multi-party landscape on the right. The left's policy organisations — the IPPR, the Fabian Society, Common Wealth, NEF — maintain relationships with Labour, the Liberal Democrats, and increasingly the Greens, ensuring that their ideas can find a vehicle regardless of which left-of-centre party is best placed to implement them. The right's think tanks remain overwhelmingly oriented toward the Conservatives. No major right-wing think tank has established a serious working relationship with Reform UK, and Reform itself has shown little interest in the kind of externally produced, evidence-based policy development that the think tank model provides. Reform's policy process, to the extent it has one, operates internally and top-down. The ideas being developed in Tufton Street have, for now, no obvious destination.

**Third, the pipeline from think tank to government is broken.** On the left, the IPPR functions almost as an in-house research department for Labour governments, its economists providing the analytical scaffolding for policies that ministers then adopt as their own. Staff move seamlessly between the think tank and ministerial offices. The relationship is so close that it is sometimes difficult to tell where the IPPR ends and the Labour government begins.

No equivalent transmission mechanism exists on the right — at least, not any longer. It did once. During the Thatcher era, the pipeline from IEA research paper to

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<sup>97</sup> "Think Tanks". Politics.co.uk. Accessed 22 February 2026.  
<https://www.politics.co.uk/reference/think-tanks/>

government White Paper was real and well-documented. During the Cameron years, Policy Exchange performed a similar function. But that pipeline depended on a confident governing party that knew what it wanted to do and needed intellectual reinforcement to do it. The Conservative Party of the 2020s was none of those things. Under Johnson, Truss, and Sunak, the party lurched between contradictory policy directions — levelling up, then tax cuts, then fiscal restraint — without the coherence to sustain any of them. Think tank recommendations were produced, published, occasionally cited by ministers, and then filed alongside all the other good ideas that went nowhere. The problem was not the quality of the ideas. It was the absence of a political vehicle with the will and the capacity to implement them.

The right's think tank ecosystem, in sum, is a genuine asset — one of the few areas in which the right can claim institutional depth comparable to the left's. But it is an asset built for an era that may have passed: oriented toward economic questions in an age of cultural contestation, tethered to a party that may no longer be the right's primary vehicle, and disconnected from the broader ecosystem that would be needed to convert its ideas into lasting political change. Ideas without a pipeline are, as noted in this paper's introduction, pamphlets. The right has many excellent pamphlets. What it lacks is the infrastructure to turn them into common sense.

## **Activism and Community Organising**

This is perhaps the single most consequential gap in the right's political landscape. For all the noise of its media, the reach of its think tanks, and the raw numerical potential of its electoral support, the British right has essentially no community organising infrastructure. There is no conservative equivalent of Citizens UK. No right-wing Momentum. No network of trained community leaders being cultivated, year after year, in the patient, invisible work that converts atomised individuals into organised political power.

The contrast with what the left has built is not one of degree but of kind. Citizens UK, as documented in Chapter 2, operates through 18 chapters across England and Wales, bringing together schools, universities, churches, mosques, synagogues, charities, and unions into a permanent alliance of civil society institutions.<sup>98</sup> Since 1989, it has trained over 4,000 community leaders through its accredited programmes — six-day residential courses that teach relational organising, power analysis, campaign strategy, and negotiation — with several thousand more developed through shorter local programmes.<sup>99</sup> It operates a Guild of Community Organisers and an Institute for Community Organising offering professional qualifications. Its campaigns — including the Living Wage campaign, which has

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<sup>98</sup> "Local Chapters" Citizens UK. <https://www.citizensuk.org/chapters/>

<sup>99</sup> "What Is Community Organising?" Citizens UK. <https://www.citizensuk.org/about-us/what-is-community-organising/>.

generated over £2 billion in additional wages — demonstrate the kind of sustained, issue-based power-building that the right has never attempted. Momentum, whatever one thinks of its politics, built a network of tens of thousands of activists capable of doorstep canvassing, phone-banking, and voter mobilisation at a scale and speed that no organisation on the right has come close to matching.

What does the right have? The honest answer is: commentary. The right’s “activism” consists overwhelmingly of online activity: tweets, YouTube videos, Substack posts, podcasts, GB News phone-ins. These generate engagement, which is easily mistaken for influence, and reach, which is easily mistaken for organisation. But they do not produce any of the outputs that community organising produces: trained local leaders, durable relationships of trust, the capacity to turn out bodies in a specific place at a specific time for a specific purpose, and the institutional memory to do it again next month and the month after that. An X following is not a membership. A viral video is not a ground campaign. The right has built an impressive apparatus for talking to people who already agree. It has built almost nothing for organising them into collective action.

The most significant right-wing organisation that operates in anything resembling this space is the [Free Speech Union](#), founded in 2020 by Toby Young (now Lord Young of Acton). The FSU has grown rapidly to over 40,000 members, and has provided genuine, practical support to individuals facing professional or legal consequences for lawful speech, assisting over 5,000 people since its founding<sup>100</sup>. It funded the successful appeal of Hamit Coskun's conviction for burning a Quran, assisted Graham Linehan after his arrest over social media posts, and has established an All-Party Parliamentary Group on free speech.<sup>101</sup> These are real achievements. But the FSU is structurally defensive: it exists to protect individuals who have been attacked, not to build the kind of proactive, community-rooted organisational power that shifts the terms of debate before the attacks come. It is, in military terms, a field hospital rather than an army. The right needs both.

Beyond the FSU, the landscape is sparse. There are local anti-development campaigns, occasionally successful but always reactive and episodic. There are online communities that generate energy around specific outrages — grooming gangs, immigration, trans ideology in schools — but that energy dissipates as quickly as the news cycle moves on, because there is no institutional container to hold it. The pattern is always the same: outrage, mobilisation, brief intensity, and then nothing, because there is no organisation capable of converting a moment into a movement.

The farmers’ protests of 2024-2026 provide the most instructive recent example of both the right’s mobilisation potential and its organisational limits. The response to the Labour government’s proposed changes to agricultural inheritance tax, dubbed

<sup>100</sup> <https://freespeechunion.org/>

<sup>101</sup> “New APPG on free speech launched” Care. 31 January 2025. <https://care.org.uk/news/2025/01/new-appg-on-free-speech-launched>

the “tractor tax”, was extraordinary by any measure. On 19 November 2024, thousands of farmers gathered on Parliament Square; in December, hundreds of tractors were driven into Whitehall for a rally organised by Save British Farming. On 10 February Save British Farming organised a second rally attended by over 1,000 tractors. 1,800 farmers met with their MPs in Westminster to lobby them directly. Hundreds of tractors blocked central London streets on multiple occasions, go-slow convoys disrupted ports and market towns from Dover to Anglesey, and a petition opposing the changes gathered nearly 150,000 signatures.<sup>102</sup> The NFU deputy president, David Exwood, declared that the government had “completely blown their trust with the industry” and warned that the union “will not sit quietly.”<sup>103</sup> On Budget Day in November 2025, farmers drove tractors into Westminster in open defiance of a Metropolitan Police ban, with several arrested for refusing to comply.<sup>104</sup>

And, remarkably, the campaign worked — at least in part. In December 2025, the government raised the threshold for agricultural property relief from £1 million to £2.5 million, meaning married couples could pass on up to £5 million of farming or business property without paying inheritance tax.<sup>10</sup> This was a significant concession, won through sustained, visible, emotionally compelling protest that dominated the national conversation for weeks at a time.

Yet the very success of the farmers’ campaign illuminates the structural problem. The mobilisation was reactive, triggered by a specific policy threat to a specific sectoral interest. It was sustained by existing farming organisations (the NFU, Save British Farming, Fairness for Farmers) that possessed their own institutional base but no connection to any broader political project. And once the immediate threat was partially addressed, the energy had no institutional channel through which to flow toward wider political objectives. Farmers who had marched shoulder to shoulder on inheritance tax did not become a permanent organised force on planning policy, on rural services, on immigration’s impact on agricultural labour, on the dozen other issues where the right’s base has strong views and no organisational vehicle. The concession was won and the movement dispersed. Compare this with the left’s model: Citizens UK’s Living Wage campaign did not end when the first employer signed up. It became a permanent institution — the **Living Wage Foundation** — that continues to expand its reach, train new leaders, and build organisational power year after year. That is the difference between a protest and an ecosystem.

The deeper problem is temperamental as much as structural. Community organising, as practised by Citizens UK and the broader left, requires a set of skills and

<sup>102</sup> “2024–2026 United Kingdom farmers' protests” Wikipedia.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024%E2%80%932026\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_farmers%27\\_protests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024%E2%80%932026_United_Kingdom_farmers%27_protests)

<sup>103</sup> Lawless, Jill. “Thousands of UK farmers descend on Parliament to protest a tax they say will ruin family farms” Associated Press. 19 November 2024

<https://apnews.com/article/uk-farmers-tax-protest-dc3fd3640acb1628cd85d43b8413fado>

<sup>104</sup> “UK Farmers Defy Met Police Tractor Ban in Westminster Inheritance Tax Protest on Budget Day 2025” TechStock2. 26 November 2025.

<https://ts2.tech/en/uk-farmers-defy-met-police-tractor-ban-in-westminster-inheritance-tax-protest-on-budget-day-2025/>

dispositions that sit uncomfortably with the right's instincts: patience, collective discipline, willingness to work within organisations rather than as individual voices, and a comfort with the slow, unglamorous work of building relationships one meeting at a time. The left's organising tradition descends from Saul Alinsky through the trade union movement and into the modern community organising infrastructure; it has deep intellectual roots and decades of practical refinement. The right has no equivalent tradition. Its cultural heroes are the lone voice crying in the wilderness — the individual standing against the mob, the contrarian refusing to bend. These are admirable qualities in a commentator. They are useless ones in a community organiser.

This is not to say the gap is unfillable. The NCF Locals programme, discussed in the previous section, represents one embryonic attempt to build face-to-face community infrastructure on the right. But the scale of what is needed dwarfs anything currently in existence. What the right requires is not one initiative but an entire organising culture: a network of trained local leaders, present in communities year-round, capable of identifying issues, mobilising neighbours, holding local institutions to account, and converting individual frustration into collective power. The left has spent decades building this. The right has not yet started.

## **The Rural Institutional Landscape**

The picture of organisational absence painted in the preceding section is real but incomplete. It considers only what the right has deliberately built, and ignores what it already has. The right's support base is disproportionately rural, and rural England possesses a dense fabric of institutional and community assets that have no urban equivalent on the political landscape — assets that are latently conservative, already in place, and entirely unconnected to any political project.

This matters because it changes the strategic question. The left's community organising infrastructure was built largely from scratch over decades — Citizens UK constructed its alliance of schools, churches, and mosques institution by institution, training by training, relationship by relationship. The right does not need to build equivalent institutions from nothing. In many cases, the institutions already exist. What is missing is anyone connecting them.

## **Faith Communities**

Religious institutions represent some of the densest concentrations of social capital remaining in modern Britain, and they skew heavily toward the kind of values — family, tradition, mutual obligation, moral seriousness — that the right claims to

champion. Yet the right has made essentially no systematic attempt to engage with them as potential nodes in an organising network.

In large part, the lack of engagement stems from an entirely reasonable observation: that the Church of England is in institutional decline bordering on collapse.<sup>105</sup> In rural areas, many parish churches are attended by a handful of worshippers, often fewer than ten; a 2015 Church Buildings Review found over 2,000 rural churches had congregations in single figures, a sharp increase from 800 such parishes in 2001. In rural dioceses, some 40 per cent of worshippers are over seventy.<sup>106</sup> Vicars are routinely shared between three, four, or five churches — a logistical arrangement that makes any one parish church a less viable centre of community life than it was even a generation ago. The infrastructure exists on paper; in practice, much of it is an empty shell.

The opportunity lies not in the exhausted structures of the established church but in the broader landscape of religious life. Evangelical and charismatic churches, many of them independent or loosely networked through organisations like the Evangelical Alliance, frequently draw larger and younger congregations than traditional denominations, and their culture of active participation, small-group discipleship, and practical community service produces exactly the kind of engaged, relationally connected people that political organising requires. Catholic parishes in many areas retain a depth of institutional life — schools, social clubs, charitable works, intergenerational community — that has largely disappeared from secular civic life. The various Orthodox churches serving Eastern European diaspora communities are quietly growing and deeply socially conservative. Beyond Christianity entirely, mosques, gurdwaras, and Hindu temples function as comprehensive community institutions in ways that most churches have long since ceased to do, combining worship with education, welfare, social support, dispute resolution, and collective identity formation. Sikh organisations like the [Sikh Awareness Society](#) have for years used gurdwaras as platforms for grooming awareness campaigns, delivering talks to hundreds of community members on a near-weekly basis and working directly with police and social services — a striking example of a religious institution functioning as protective civic infrastructure where the state had failed.<sup>107</sup> These are institutions overwhelmingly oriented around family, tradition, and social conservatism in ways that align far more naturally with the right's stated values than much of the right seems to recognise.

Citizens UK understood this from the beginning. Its alliance model deliberately weaves together churches, mosques, synagogues, gurdwaras, schools, and other civic

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<sup>105</sup> Goddard, Andrew “Episcopal Jenga” Living Church. 23 July 2024.

<https://livingchurch.org/covenant/episcopal-jenga/>

<sup>106</sup> Cooper, Trevor. “The Future of England’s Rural Parish Churches” Building Conservation. Accessed 23 February 2026.

<https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/rural-parish-churches/rural-parish-churches.htm>

<sup>107</sup> Andrew Gold | Heretics. “The Sikh Leader Exposing the Grooming Gangs - Mohan Singh.” YouTube. May 19, 2025. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7\\_agI3erawQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_agI3erawQ).

institutions into a single organising framework, not despite their theological and cultural differences but because the breadth of the coalition is itself a source of power. The left grasped that a mosque in Birmingham and a Catholic parish in Liverpool and a Quaker meeting house in Bristol, despite having little else in common, all produce people who are accustomed to gathering, to collective action, to moral reasoning, and to showing up, and that these habits, once connected, become political power.

The right has largely failed to engage with this landscape for two reasons. The first is a narrowly ethnic and cultural conception of its own base that makes engagement with non-Christian faith communities feel alien or even contradictory. This is a strategic error of the first order. British Hindus shifted markedly toward the Conservatives from 2010 onwards — a 2015 British Future survey found the Tories enjoyed an eight-point lead over Labour among Hindu and Sikh voters, a dramatic reversal from 2010 when Labour led among both groups.<sup>108</sup> A 2021 Carnegie Endowment survey found that a plurality of British Indian Hindus and Christians would vote Conservative in a snap election.<sup>109</sup> A UK in a Changing Europe analysis noted that British Pakistani and British Bangladeshi voters believed, by a margin of 20-30 points, that LGBT rights had gone too far, yet voted Labour overwhelmingly because the broader political package, and distrust of Conservatives on identity matters, outweighed their social conservatism.<sup>110</sup> These are not natural opponents of the right's project, they are potential allies who have been left entirely to the left's organising infrastructure because the right has never bothered to show up.

The second reason is the right's general allergy to institutional engagement of any kind: the patient, relationship-based work of building trust with community leaders, attending events, listening before speaking, and demonstrating sustained commitment rather than parachuting in during election season. Faith communities can spot insincerity at considerable distance, and the right has given them little reason to believe it is interested in anything beyond their votes.

The asset here is real but latent. Religious communities across all faiths and denominations represent ready-made networks of trust, institutional permanence, moral authority, and community engagement. They are, in many parts of the country, the last institutions standing. Engaging with them seriously would require the right to broaden its conception of who belongs in its coalition, and to invest in the kind of slow, relational work that its temperament resists. Both are necessary. Both are possible.

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<sup>108</sup> Ehsan, Rakib. "How the Conservatives stole the British Indian vote from Labour" The Conversation. 17 May 2017.

<https://theconversation.com/how-the-conservatives-stole-the-british-indian-vote-from-labour-77275>

<sup>109</sup> Duckworth, Caroline et al. "Britain's New Swing Voters? A Survey of British Indian Attitudes" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 18 November 2021. Accessed via Archive Today:

<https://archive.is/7kSQR#selection-1259.0-1259.64>

<sup>110</sup> Kanagasooriam, James. "Non-white Britain is more diverse than ever" The Times. 3 January 2024.

<https://www.thetimes.com/comment/columnists/article/non-white-britain-is-more-diverse-than-ever-db3bf6bcl>

## Parish and Town Councils

There are roughly 10,000 parish and town councils in England alone, and they constitute the most local tier of government. Many are uncontested, with seats going unfilled or filled by co-option rather than election. This is both a symptom of disengagement and an extraordinary opportunity. Parish councils control modest but real resources: precepts (local taxes), community assets, allotments, and planning consultation rights. More importantly, they function as a training ground for local political leadership, a first step on a ladder that can lead to district councils, county councils, and beyond.

The Liberal Democrats understood decades ago that local government is where you build the organisational base for national politics. Their “pavement politics” strategy of winning control of local councils by being visibly present on local issues, then using that local base to build credibility for parliamentary campaigns, was the foundation of their revival from the ruins of the old Liberal Party. The right has never applied this insight at the parish level, despite the fact that rural parish councils represent the single most accessible entry point into political life for conservative-leaning people. Most require no formal party affiliation. Most meet monthly in the village hall. Many have vacant seats waiting to be filled. This is not a theoretical opportunity; it is a structural one, available immediately to anyone willing to turn up.

This opportunity is becoming more urgent by the month. Across England, cash-strapped unitary authorities are quietly devolving services downward to parish and town councils — not out of democratic idealism but out of financial necessity. In Shropshire, where the Liberal Democrats took control of the unitary council in 2025, the Cabinet approved in February 2026 a pilot programme to transfer streetscene services — sweeping, litter picking, waste bins, parks maintenance — to town and parish councils, with the explicit acknowledgement that this was happening “at a very challenging time for local government” and in the context of “unprecedented financial difficulties.”<sup>111</sup> Cornwall pioneered this pattern after its 2009 reorganisation, with parish and town councils taking on public libraries, CCTV monitoring, and public toilets as Cornwall Council’s revenue support grant was cut by 90 per cent between 2013 and 2019.<sup>112</sup> In Wiltshire, Salisbury City Council — technically a parish council — saw its precept rise by 69 per cent in a single year as it absorbed street cleaning, parks maintenance, and environmental services from the

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<sup>111</sup> “Cabinet Supports First Phase of Devolution to Town and Parish Councils” Shropshire Council Newsroom. 11 February 2026.  
<https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/2026/02/cabinet-supports-first-phase-of-devolution-to-town-and-parish-councils/>.

<sup>112</sup> Quinn, Sam “What Effect Will Local Government Reorganisation Have on Parish and Town Councils?” LGIU. 24 July 2025.  
<https://lgiu.org/blog-article/what-effect-will-local-government-reorganisation-lgr-have-on-parish-and-town-councils/>.

unitary authority above it.<sup>113</sup> The LGIU observed that “an unintended consequence of unitarisation is the empowerment of parish and town councils,” with those in reorganised areas gaining significantly more responsibility. This is a pattern that will only accelerate as the current wave of local government reorganisation creates new, larger unitary authorities across 21 areas of England, each serving populations of 500,000 or more and each incentivised to push discretionary services downward. The question of who controls parish councils — who sits on them, who sets priorities, who decides what services to fund and how to deliver them — is therefore not an abstract matter of democratic principle but an increasingly practical question about who governs local life. If the right ignores this tier while the left organises within it, it will find that the infrastructure of everyday governance has been shaped, quietly and permanently, by people who do not share its values.

### **Farming Organisations**

The [NFU](#) represents over 43,000 farming and growing businesses across England and Wales, with a broader membership including countryside, professional, and retired categories bringing the total substantially higher.<sup>114</sup> The [Country Land and Business Association \(CLA\)](#) represents landowners and rural businesses. The [Tenant Farmers Association \(TFA\)](#) covers another constituency entirely. These are genuine membership organisations with institutional permanence, professional staff, regional structures, and direct relationships with government — the NFU maintains offices in Westminster and Brussels and engages routinely with ministers.

The inheritance tax protests demonstrated what this institutional base can produce when activated. But as argued in the preceding section, the activation was reactive and single-issue. The NFU does not talk to the think tanks in Tufton Street about the cultural framing of rural policy. The CLA does not coordinate with right-wing media on a shared narrative about the countryside's place in national life. The farming organisations operate as sectoral lobbies — highly effective within their niche, entirely disconnected from the broader political ecosystem that would be needed to make their concerns part of a sustained national conversation. The left's trade unions, by contrast, function simultaneously as industrial organisations, political donors, activist networks, and ideological anchors — each role reinforcing the others. The farming organisations perform only the first of these functions.

### **Young Farmers**

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<sup>113</sup> Merrick, Neil. “Parish councils and the devolution of services” LocalGov. 6 June 2018. <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Parish-councils-and-the-devolution-of-services/45414>

<sup>114</sup> “About Us”. NFU. Accessed 23 February 2026. <https://www.nfuonline.com/about-us/>

The [National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs](#) has approximately 23,000 members aged 10 to 28, organised across 575 clubs in 46 county federations throughout England and Wales. This is significant because it is one of the very few organisations on the right's side of the cultural ledger that reaches young people, provides leadership training, builds social networks, and creates a sense of collective identity — all functions that the left's infrastructure performs through universities, Momentum, and activist groups, but which the right has otherwise entirely failed to replicate.

Young Farmers clubs are run by members for members, unlike most other youth organisations. They are deeply embedded in rural communities, operated by volunteers, and produce exactly the kind of confident, practically minded, community-oriented young people who could form the backbone of a serious right-wing organising effort. They are also almost entirely ignored by political strategists. No right-wing think tank has studied the Young Farmers model as a template for youth engagement. No party has attempted to build a pipeline from Young Farmers' leadership structures into local or national politics. The asset exists; nobody has thought to use it.

### **The Countryside Alliance and Country Sports Networks**

The [Countryside Alliance](#) is probably the closest thing the rural right has to a permanent campaign infrastructure that extends beyond a single sector. Forged in the hunting ban fight, it draws together shooting, fishing, hunting, and broader rural interests into a single organisation with professional lobbying capacity, a media operation, and a charitable foundation. The 2002 Liberty and Livelihood march, organised in opposition to the proposed hunting ban, drew over 400,000 people to London — one of the largest demonstrations in British history.<sup>115</sup>

The social networks around field sports remain dense and remarkably durable. The [British Association for Shooting and Conservation \(BASC\)](#) has over 150,000 members, making it one of the largest membership organisations in the country. The networks around hunts, shoots, and fishing bind together landowners, farmers, rural workers, and village communities in a web of reciprocal relationships that has no urban equivalent on the right.

These networks already function as informal community organising structures: people trust each other, help each other, turn up for each other. Tim Montgomerie and Matthew Elliott, in a 2009 presentation on the infrastructure of the conservative movement in Britain, explicitly identified the Countryside Alliance as part of that

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<sup>115</sup> “20 years on: Remembering the biggest rural protest the UK has ever seen” Countryside Alliance. 26 September 2022.

<https://www.countryside-alliance.org/resources/news/remembering-the-biggest-rural-protest-in-the-uk>

infrastructure.<sup>116</sup> But it remains a part that has never been connected to any broader political project. The social capital is enormous. Its political deployment is close to nil.

### **Village Halls, Agricultural Shows, and Community Gathering Points**

Rural England possesses a physical infrastructure of community gathering that urban areas largely lack — village halls, market towns, agricultural shows, county fairs, local pubs, and churches. These are places where people meet face to face, build trust, and form the kind of thick social bonds that are prerequisites for political organisation. The left has had to build its equivalent of this — community centres, union halls, activist spaces — largely from scratch or through institutional capture. In rural areas, the spaces already exist. What is missing is any attempt to use them as nodes in a political network.

Agricultural shows deserve particular mention. Events like the Royal Agricultural Show, county agricultural shows, and local livestock markets bring together thousands of rural people in settings that combine social function with professional purpose. They are, in effect, ready-made gatherings of the right's natural constituency — but no political organisation has ever systematically used them as organising opportunities in the way that the left uses trade union conferences, charity sector events, and university freshers' fairs.

### **Military and Veterans' Communities**

Rural areas have disproportionately strong connections to the armed forces through regimental associations, Royal British Legion branches, cadet forces, and the dense social networks that surround military bases and their surrounding communities. These communities carry significant social capital and moral authority, they skew right, and they involve exactly the kind of disciplined, institution-minded people who might form the backbone of a serious organising effort. They are also, critically, accustomed to hierarchy and collective action in a way that the right's individualist temperament usually resists. The armed forces covenant, veterans' welfare, military heritage — these are issues with deep emotional resonance across the right's base and essentially no organised political infrastructure behind them, despite the existence of organisations like the [Royal British Legion](#) (with over 180,000 members) and [SSAFA](#) that could, in principle, be part of a broader ecosystem.

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<sup>116</sup> Montgomery, Tim. "The growth of Britain's conservative movement" Conservative Home. 14 March 2009. Accessed via Archive <https://archive.is/XcMZ1#selection-138.0-138.1>

## **An opportunity to be seized**

The rural landscape is rich in exactly the kind of latent institutional assets that a political ecosystem needs: membership organisations, community gathering points, dense social networks, shared identity, trusted leadership figures, and a physical infrastructure of meeting places that the urban right can only dream of. What it lacks entirely is any connective tissue linking these assets to one another or to a broader political project. The NFU does not coordinate with the Countryside Alliance, which does not talk to Young Farmers, which does not engage with parish councils, which have no relationship with the think tanks in Tufton Street. Each exists in its own silo, performing its own narrow function, unaware that it is a potential node in a network that nobody has thought to build.

The left, by contrast, has spent decades connecting its equivalent institutions — unions to Labour, charities to think tanks, universities to the media, community organisations to each other — into the interlocking ecosystem described in Chapter 2. Citizens UK’s entire model is based on the principle that power comes from connecting existing institutions into a broader alliance. The rural right possesses the raw materials for exactly such an alliance. What it lacks is anyone doing the connecting work. That is an architectural problem, and architectural problems have architectural solutions.

## **The Business Lobby**

If trade unions are the left's mass-membership organisations, providing funding, activist networks, ideological anchorship, and institutional permanence, then the business lobby is, in theory, the right's structural equivalent. The [Confederation of British Industry \(CBI\)](#) claims to speak for 190,000 businesses. The [Federation of Small Businesses](#) represents some 160,000 members and describes itself as the UK's largest grassroots business campaigning group. The [British Chambers of Commerce](#) operates a network of 53 accredited chambers representing over 50,000 businesses employing six million people. The [Institute of Directors](#) has around 20,000 individual members, down from a peak of 55,000 in 2005. Together, these organisations possess substantial reach, institutional permanence, and routine access to government. In a functioning right-wing ecosystem, they would serve as the backbone of political infrastructure in the way Unite, Unison, and the GMB serve Labour.

Yet currently they do not. The pattern is now familiar: in the late 1990s The CBI supported euro adoption; its then Director General Adair Turner urging business leaders not to be swayed by “ill-informed scare stories” about European Monetary

Union.<sup>117</sup> In 2016, the CBI positioned itself firmly for Remain. After the referendum, the CBI lobbied to retain membership of the EU customs union, with Director General Carolyn Fairbairn dismissing a Canada-style deal in 2018 as “an ocean away from what we need.” According to *Prospect Magazine*, “That year, May did move a long way towards the CBI’s position, culminating in the Chequers proposals of July 2018, which triggered Boris Johnson’s resignation as foreign secretary. Johnson, who claimed May’s deal amounted to a “semi-Brexit,” had already made clear that the intervention of business on the side of a soft departure in the debate was unwelcome.”<sup>118</sup>

On immigration, the CBI has consistently called for the dropping of numerical targets and for the post-Brexit system to remain “sufficiently open to support the economy.”<sup>119</sup> On net zero, the CBI supports a net-zero economy by 2050, advocates “ambitious climate policy,” and campaigns for expanded offshore wind deployment and vehicle electrification.<sup>120</sup>

The reason is not that the interests of business are inherently aligned with the progressive centre, it is that the business lobby has been subject to precisely the same institutional capture documented throughout this paper — and the right has done nothing to contest it. Some of these positions can be explained by the rational self-interest of large businesses: access to cheap labour, regulatory harmonisation, and predictable policy environments serve the interests of FTSE 100 firms whose supply chains and workforce planning depend on stability and scale. But this explanation only goes so far — and for some of the business lobby’s most enthusiastically adopted positions, it does not go far at all. Net zero compliance imposes enormous costs on businesses, particularly in energy-intensive sectors and among the SMEs that make up the vast majority of the economy. Diversity, equity, and inclusion bureaucracies add layers of administrative overhead, legal risk, and ideological constraint that no rational cost-benefit analysis would recommend to a small business struggling with margins. ESG reporting requirements divert management attention and resources toward metrics that bear no demonstrated relationship to profitability.

The UK Corporate Governance Code, revised in 2024, now requires boards to promote “diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity” in appointments and succession plans, to report on how they have implemented diversity initiatives and linked them to strategy, and to assess how “desired culture has been embedded” —

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<sup>117</sup> Halligan, Liam. “The CBI has got it wrong again – of course business wants Brexit” UnHerd. 25 January 2018. <https://unherd.com/2018/01/cbi-got-wrong-course-business-wants-brexit/>

<sup>118</sup> Wallace, Paul. “The humbling of the CBI” *Prospect Magazine*. 21 July 2021.

<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/ideas/economics/37819/the-humbling-of-the-cbi>

<sup>119</sup> “CBI warns of labour shortages as it calls for post-Brexit immigration system to combine openness with control” Electronic Immigration Network. 13 August 2018.

<https://www.ein.org.uk/news/cbi-warns-labour-shortages-it-calls-post-brexit-immigration-system-combine-openness-control>

<sup>120</sup> “Confederation of British Industry (CBI) - Climate Policy Engagement Analysis” LobbyMap.

Accessed 24 February 2026. <https://lobbymax.org/influencer/Confederation-of-British-Industry-CBI>

language that, whatever its intent, functions in practice as a compliance architecture for progressive social priorities.<sup>121</sup> The Parker Review sets voluntary targets for ethnic minority representation on FTSE boards and publishes annual league tables tracking progress.<sup>122</sup> And when the Trump administration's rollback of DEI programmes in the United States prompted questions about whether British business might follow suit, it was the Institute of Directors — supposedly the voice of Britain's company directors — whose policy director Roger Barker told firms to “keep calm and carry on,” insisting that “a constructive approach to inclusion and diversity makes sense from a business perspective, despite the political headwinds.”<sup>123</sup> A March 2025 IoD survey found that 71 per cent of UK business leaders reported maintaining or expanding DEI efforts, with only 11 per cent foreseeing any scaling back.<sup>124</sup> These are not positions that emerge naturally from the pursuit of commercial advantage. They are positions that have been imported into business organisations by a professional managerial class that absorbed the assumptions of the institutions — universities, consultancies, HR departments, legal firms — through which it was trained and socialised.

Michels would recognise the pattern instantly. The activist minority that controls the apparatus prevails over the passive majority whose interests the apparatus nominally serves. The same dynamic that captured the Law Society, the BMA, and the teaching unions has captured the CBI and its peers. The mechanism is identical: professional staff drift leftward because they are recruited from the same graduate talent pool as every other institution, they absorb the same assumptions, and they face the same social incentives. The business members — busy running actual businesses — do not contest internal elections, do not attend governance meetings, do not scrutinise the policy positions issued in their name, and wake up one morning to discover that the organisation supposedly representing British business is campaigning for positions that most British business owners oppose.

This has consequences far beyond the business lobby itself. When the CBI supports net zero mandates, that support is reported as “business backs climate action”, lending the authority of the entire business community to a position that a professional clique adopted without meaningful consultation. When the IoD promotes diversity initiatives, the imprimatur of “Britain's directors” is attached to

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<sup>121</sup> Financial Reporting Council, “UK Corporate Governance Code 2024” January 2024. <https://www.frc.org.uk/library/standards-codes-policy/corporate-governance/uk-corporate-governance-code/>. Principle J revised to require appointments and succession plans to “promote diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity.” Provision 23 amended to require reporting on diversity initiatives, their link to strategy, and progress in achieving objectives.

<sup>122</sup> “UK Corporate Governance — Key Developments in 2024” Davis Polk. January 2025. <https://www.davispolk.com/insights/client-update/uk-corporate-governance-key-developments-2024>.

<sup>123</sup> Hinks, Gavin. “Ministers Defend DEI Measures in UK Governance Code”. Board Agenda. 20 March 2025. <https://boardagenda.com/2025/03/20/ministers-defend-dei-measures-in-uk-governance-code/>.

<sup>124</sup> “Has the Retreat from DEI Reached the UK?” The Social Investment Consultancy. 14 May 2025. <https://www.tsiconsultancy.com/2025/05/14/has-the-retreat-from-dei-reached-the-uk/>.

an ideological programme that most directors, if asked, would regard with scepticism or hostility. The captured business lobby does not merely fail to support the right; it actively legitimises the left's agenda by allowing progressive positions to be presented as the considered view of British commerce. It is, in this sense, one of the most effective tools in the left's ecosystem, and one that costs the left nothing, because the right has never thought to contest it.

The Federation of Small Businesses is, in principle, a more natural fit. Small business owners skew right, are more likely to have supported Brexit, and are more directly affected by regulation, taxation, and the costs of net zero compliance. Polling during the Brexit debate consistently showed that SME owners and entrepreneurs favoured Leave, in contrast to the large corporate interests that dominated the CBI.<sup>125</sup> But the FSB, like all lobby organisations, is institutionally cautious, professionally staffed, and temperamentally drawn to the insider lobbying model: working with government through quiet negotiation rather than functioning as a political force. It provides legal advice, tax support, and networking events. It does not train political leaders, build activist networks, or connect small business owners to a broader conservative project in the way that trade unions connect workers to Labour.

The strategic implication is clear, and it points in a different direction from the one the right has typically assumed. The conventional view treats business organisations as automatically on-side and therefore ignorable. But this concedes a battleground that the right can ill afford to lose. Business lobby organisations possess exactly the institutional assets — membership, legitimacy, government access, media platforms — that the right lacks elsewhere. If the professional staff of these organisations have been captured (and it seems they have), the answer is not to now abandon the organisations but to contest them: to encourage right-leaning business owners to engage with governance structures, stand for internal positions, challenge policy statements made without proper consultation, and hold professional staff accountable to the membership they are supposed to serve. The same strategy that the left used to capture these institutions can be used to recapture them — if the right is willing to show up. The fact that it has not done so is yet another instance of the temperamental problem identified throughout this chapter: the right's allergic reaction to the patient, unglamorous, institutional work that is the only reliable path to durable influence.

## **Uncontested Territory: The Charity Sector, Professional Bodies, and Academia**

The previous sections have examined institutions left fallow, or where structural capture has turned nominally sympathetic organisations against their own base. But there are entire sectors of British public life where the right is not outmatched as

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<sup>125</sup> UnHerd, *ibid.*

such, it has simply never shown up. The charity sector, the professional bodies, and the universities represent three vast institutional landscapes, collectively employing over two million people, commanding tens of billions in annual revenue, and exercising profound influence over public discourse, that the right has simply abandoned to progressive domination by default.

## The Charity Sector

The charity sector alone commands resources that dwarf the entire right-wing ecosystem many times over. There are over 170,000 registered charities in England and Wales, with a combined annual income of £96 billion and a workforce of over 1.1 million employees supported by more than 6.5 million volunteers.<sup>126</sup> This is not a marginal corner of national life; it's a sector whose income exceeds that of many government departments and whose workforce constitutes roughly three per cent of all UK employment. And it's a sector with enormous political influence: research by the Hansard Society found that two-thirds of MPs reported being more persuaded by lobbying from charities than from business groups.<sup>127</sup> The sector's perceived independence and moral authority make it one of the most powerful amplifiers of political messaging in the country — and it amplifies almost exclusively in one direction.

As Peter Applebee noted in *The Critic*, changes to charity law under New Labour and the Coalition Government have progressively expanded what counts as a charitable purpose to include activities that are, in practice, indistinguishable from left-wing political campaigning. The promotion of diversity, a contested and often controversial political position, is specifically permitted as a charitable activity.<sup>128</sup> Grant-giving foundations sitting on vast endowments — the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation — fund a network of activist groups that campaign on immigration, criminal justice, climate policy, and racial politics, positions that align precisely with the progressive left and that frequently operate in direct opposition to elected government policy. The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust has funded organisations including Compass (a Labour-affiliated membership organisation), Corporate Watch (publishers of “Capitalism: What Is It and How Can We Destroy It?”), and the now infamous Hope Not Hate, which campaigned against Brexit alongside Gina Miller's Best for Britain and is now running an ongoing campaign against Reform UK.<sup>129</sup> The Runnymede

<sup>126</sup> "UK Charity Statistics 2025," PolicyBee. Accessed 24 February 24 2026.

<https://www.policybee.co.uk/blog/uk-charity-statistics>.

<sup>127</sup> Parvin, Philip. “Friend or Foe? Lobbying in British Democracy” Hansard Society. 2007.

<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/media/subjects/politics-international-studies/images/staff-profiles/downloads/friendorfoe.pdf>

<sup>128</sup> Applebee, Peter. "Don't Trust the Runnymede Trust," *The Critic*. 26 October 2024.

<https://thecritic.co.uk/dont-trust-the-runnymede-trust/>.

<sup>129</sup> “The Brazen Hypocrisy of the Charity Commission” Guido Fawkes. 5 February 2019. Accessed via Web Archive

Trust, funded by multiple progressive foundations, coined the term “Islamophobia,” launched a successful judicial review against the government over the appointment of Baroness Harding, and has campaigned against Conservative immigration policy — all while retaining charitable status.<sup>130</sup>

The regulatory environment compounds this asymmetry. When the Institute of Economic Affairs published *Plan A+*, a report proposing an alternative Brexit framework, the Charity Commission ordered its removal, issued a formal official warning — a sanction that, as the IEA noted, had in the same year been applied to Oxfam for its failure to prevent staff abusing vulnerable beneficiaries in Haiti — and demanded written assurances that the IEA would not engage in further political activity.<sup>131</sup> The Commission found the report was “not sufficiently balanced and neutral” and that its launch event, which featured David Davis and Jacob Rees-Mogg, constituted impermissible political activity. The warning was subsequently withdrawn after a review found the Commission’s handling of the case was “not as good as it should have been.”<sup>132</sup> Meanwhile, charities openly campaigning against government immigration policy, launching judicial reviews against ministers, and funding explicitly anti-Conservative organisations continue to operate without comparable regulatory scrutiny. The message to the right is unmistakable: charitable status is available to those who campaign for progressive causes, but will be contested when used to advance conservative ones.

There is no right-wing Shelter. There is no conservative Oxfam. There is no free-market equivalent of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation distributing grants to build institutional capacity for the right’s political priorities. The entire moral authority of “speaking for the vulnerable” — the rhetorical high ground that allows charities to shape media coverage, influence parliamentary debate, and constrain government action — is a left monopoly. And it is a monopoly the right has never seriously attempted to challenge, either by building its own charitable infrastructure or by contesting the governance of existing organisations.

## Professional Bodies

The professional bodies present an identical picture. The British Medical Association, with approximately 190,000 members representing two-thirds of practising UK doctors, has moved far beyond its core function as a trade union negotiating pay and

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<https://web.archive.org/web/20190719111856/https://order-order.com/2019/02/05/double-standards-charity-commission/>

<sup>130</sup> Applebee, *ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> “IEA responds to the Charity Commission’s Official Warning” The Institute of Economic Affairs. 5 February 2019. <https://iea.org.uk/media/in-response-to-the-charity-commissions-official-warning/>

<sup>132</sup> IEA, written evidence to Charities Bill 2021-22, House of Lords. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/39060/html/>.

conditions.<sup>133</sup> The BMA now campaigns on climate change — its annual representative meeting has passed motions calling for the UK to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030, twenty years ahead of the government’s already ambitious target<sup>134</sup> — and has publicly welcomed the Green Party manifesto for “so many policies we've campaigned for.”<sup>135</sup> The Royal College of Physicians convenes the Inequalities in Health Alliance, a coalition of over 250 organisations campaigning for a “cross-government strategy to reduce health inequalities,” and is a founder member of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change.<sup>136</sup> The Royal College of Psychiatrists has published a position statement declaring climate change and biodiversity loss a “climate and ecological emergency” and calling for NHS net-zero targets.<sup>137</sup> These positions, which reframe political questions about energy policy, economic redistribution, and the scope of state intervention as clinical matters, are adopted through governance structures that most members never engage with, by professional staff who share the same progressive assumptions as their counterparts in every other captured institution.

The Law Society, the Royal College of Nursing, the teaching unions, the social work professional bodies — across every regulated profession, the pattern repeats. The organisations that credential, represent, and speak for professionals whose individual political views span the full spectrum consistently adopt positions that cluster on the progressive left. The mechanism is always the same: low member engagement in governance, professional staff drawn from the same graduate talent pool, social incentives that reward progressive positioning, and no organised conservative presence to contest any of it.

## Academia

The universities sit upstream of everything else. Three-quarters of UK academics support left-wing or liberal parties; fewer than one in five support parties of the

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<sup>133</sup> BMA, "About the BMA," accessed February 24, 2026.

<https://www.bma.org.uk/about-us/about-the-bma>.

<sup>134</sup> Patel, Latifa. “COP26 must address effects on health of climate change”. BMA. 26 October 2021.

<https://www.bma.org.uk/news-and-opinion/cop26-must-address-effects-on-health-of-climate-change>

<sup>135</sup> “BMA responds to Green Party General Election manifesto” BMA 12 June 2024.

<https://www.bma.org.uk/bma-media-centre/bma-responds-to-green-party-general-election-manifesto>

<sup>136</sup> "Health Inequalities and Prevention" Royal College of Physicians. Accessed 24 February 2026.

<https://www.rcp.ac.uk/policy-and-campaigns/our-policy-priorities/health-inequalities-and-prevention/>.

<sup>137</sup> "Position Statement PS03/21: Our Planet's Climate and Ecological Emergency" Royal College of Psychiatrists. 2021.

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/better-mh-policy/position-statements/position-statement-ps03-21-climate-and-ecological-emergencies-2021.pdf>.

right.<sup>138</sup> Only nine per cent of social science and humanities academics voted Leave in the 2016 referendum, compared to 52 per cent of the general public.<sup>139</sup> A Policy Exchange survey found that 72 per cent of academics who supported Leave felt uncomfortable expressing their beliefs, and that six in ten Conservative-supporting students agreed that students with conservative views were reluctant to express them at their university.<sup>140</sup> Matthew Goodwin, former Professor of Politics at the University of Kent, described the experience of holding heterodox views in British academia: being disinvited from workshops, receiving abuse from colleagues, being asked about personal political views during grant interviews, and experiencing systematic social distancing — treatment that “would simply never have occurred had I woken up on 24 June, 2016, and announced, as many of my colleagues did, that I was going to oppose Brexit with every fibre of my being.”<sup>141</sup>

This matters not because universities should be conservative institutions — they should not be any political institution — but because they are the upstream source of the professional class that staffs every other institution examined in this chapter. The charity officers, the BMA policy directors, the IoD’s professional staff, the CBI’s communications team, the think tank researchers, the civil servants, the journalists: they were all trained in institutions where progressive assumptions are ambient, where conservative ideas are absent or stigmatised, and where the intellectual toolkit for understanding the world is overwhelmingly drawn from the left’s theoretical traditions. The university is the factory that produces the personnel who go on to capture everything else. The right’s absence from academia is not merely an intellectual embarrassment; it is the root cause of its institutional weakness across every sector of British public life.

What connects these three domains — charity, professional bodies, academia — is that in none of them has the right *even attempted* serious contestation. The left did not seize these institutions in some dramatic coup; it filled vacuums that the right had no interest in occupying. Conservative-inclined doctors do not stand for BMA council positions. Right-leaning solicitors do not contest Law Society governance. Academics sympathetic to conservative ideas self-select out of careers in the social sciences and humanities, or learn to keep quiet if they remain. Potential donors to right-wing causes do not establish charitable foundations with the institutional permanence and grant-giving capacity of their progressive equivalents. At every level, the right’s temperamental preference for getting on with life — running a

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<sup>138</sup> Osman, Abdirahim & Mohamed, Ayan. “New report findings show an overrepresentation of left-liberal views in academia”. The Boar. 13 March 2017.

<https://theboar.org/2017/03/8-out-of-10-university-lecturers-are-left-wing/>

<sup>139</sup> Goodwin, Matthew. “How universities shut out conservative academics” UnHerd. 3 August 2020.

<https://unherd.com/2020/08/how-universities-shut-out-conservative-academics/>

<sup>140</sup> Policy Exchange, cited in Berkeley Political Review, “The Threat of Growing Leftism in U.K. Academia” April 2024.

<https://bpr.studentorg.berkeley.edu/2024/04/03/the-threat-of-growing-leftism-in-uk-academia/>.

<sup>141</sup> Goodwin, *ibid*.

business, practising medicine, teaching a subject — means it has ceded the institutional terrain to people who regard institutional power as the whole point.

## Media

The right's online media ecosystem is genuinely vibrant and, in several respects, growing faster than its left-wing equivalent. On YouTube, *Triggernometry*, hosted by Konstantin Kisin and Francis Foster, has accumulated approximately 1.4 million subscribers and over 430 million total views since its 2018 launch. It now averages 14 million views a month.<sup>142</sup> *The Podcast of the Lotus Eaters*, founded by Carl Benjamin, has built a substantial daily output reaching over 586,000 subscribers with more than 390 million views.<sup>143</sup> GB News's YouTube channel has around 2 million subscribers and over two-and-a-half billion views, complementing its linear television audience.<sup>144</sup> Beneath these larger channels lies a dense undergrowth of smaller shows, Substacks, X accounts, and Rumble channels producing a daily flood of content on immigration, free speech, institutional decline, net zero, and the failures of both Labour and the Conservative establishment. The right-of-centre podcast and YouTube ecosystem is entrepreneurial, prolific, and — within its audience — deeply engaged.

In traditional media, the picture is mixed. Right-leaning daily newspapers, including *The Times*, *The Telegraph* and *The Sun* hold a combined circulation advantage of roughly 2.2 million to 300,000 over their left-wing equivalents.<sup>145</sup>

### Total UK newspaper circulations by political stance

Average daily circulation per ABC or using Press Gazette estimates where no official data available.



Chart: Press Gazette • [Get the data](#)

<sup>142</sup> Triggernometry. Social Blade. Accessed 25 February 2026.

<https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UC7oPkqeHTwuOZ5CZ-R9f-6w/realtime>

<sup>143</sup> The Podcast of the Lotus Eaters. Social Blade. Accessed 25 February 2026.

<https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UC7edjYPNhTm5LYJMT7UMtoQ>

<sup>144</sup> GBNews. Social Blade. Accessed 25 February 2026.

<https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UCovn8ISa4LKMunLbzaXLnOO>

<sup>145</sup> Ponsford, Dominic. "Partisan publishers: Why Keir Starmer will have an easier election than Neil Kinnock" Press Gazette. 13 March 2024.

[https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media\\_metrics/uk-media-bias-2024/](https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media_metrics/uk-media-bias-2024/)

*The Spectator* has made good use of tech to become the only audited current affairs magazine to grow both print and digital sales in recent years, reaching a total weekly sale of 114,911 in 2025 — the highest in its 198-year history.<sup>146</sup> However, while GB News, which launched only in 2021, overtook both the BBC News Channel and Sky News in average viewership for six consecutive months by the end of 2025, it could not match them on total reach or digital followings. According to the Press Gazette “GB News continues to have a lower total weekly reach than the BBC News Channel and Sky News. But its higher average viewership suggests it is watched consistently by a smaller but more loyal audience.”<sup>147</sup>

In print, broadcast, and digital, the right commands attention. But attention is not influence. This is the critical distinction that much of the right’s media ecosystem fails to make.

The right’s online strength is real, but it is not as dominant as it feels from inside the ecosystem. The most listened-to political podcast in Britain is not *Triggernometry* or the *Lotus Eaters* but *The Rest is Politics*, hosted by Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart — a Labour strategist and a liberal former Conservative who left the party over Boris Johnson. By the third quarter of 2024, Edison Research ranked it the number one UK-made podcast and second overall in Britain, behind only Joe Rogan.<sup>148</sup> The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism identified it alongside *The News Agents* — another centrist-to-left production — as the most frequently cited political podcast in the UK.<sup>149</sup> On YouTube, the left has its own substantial presence: *Novara Media* has grown to approximately 1.2 million subscribers, and averages 13 million views a month.<sup>150</sup> *The Guardian* has two YouTube channels, *Guardian News*, which boasts 4 million subscribers and 17 million views a month — more than *Triggernometry* and *GBNews* combined — and *The Guardian*, dedicated to documentaries, which has 2.5 million subscribers and just under 5 million views a month.<sup>151</sup> Neither side has a monopoly on online audiences.

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<sup>146</sup> Ponsford, Dominic. “New subs technology helps Spectator reach 198-year sales high” Press Gazette. 19 February 2026.

[https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media\\_metrics/new-subs-technology-helps-spectator-reach-198-year-sales-high/](https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media_metrics/new-subs-technology-helps-spectator-reach-198-year-sales-high/)

<sup>147</sup> Tobitt, Charlotte. “GB News beats Sky and BBC on average viewers for six months in a row.” Press Gazette. 12 January 2026.

[https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media\\_metrics/gb-news-viewing-figures-2025-sky-bbc/](https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media_metrics/gb-news-viewing-figures-2025-sky-bbc/)

<sup>148</sup> “The Rest is Politics now #1 UK-made podcast” PodNews. 27 November 2024.

<https://podnews.net/update/trip-number-one-uk>

<sup>149</sup> Robertson, Craig T. “The changing landscape for news podcasts across countries” Reuters Institute. 17 June 2025.

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/changing-landscape-news-podcasts-across-countries>

<sup>150</sup> Novara Media. Social Blade. Accessed 25 February 2026.

[https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UCOzMAa6IhV6uwYQATYG\\_2kg](https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UCOzMAa6IhV6uwYQATYG_2kg)

<sup>151</sup> Guardian News. Social Blade. Accessed 25 February 2026.

<https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UCIRYBXDze5krPDzAEOxFGVA> & The Guardian. Social Blade. Accessed 25 February 2026.

<https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UChpw8xwDNhU9gdohEcJu4aA>

What matters is not who is louder, but the role that media plays. Within the left's ecosystem, the media is a node in a heavily interlinked network. A Joseph Rowntree Foundation report is cited by the BMA, amplified by *The Guardian*, referenced in a select committee, and incorporated into a charity's judicial review. The left's network fires like synapses in every direction — from knowledge production through institutional legitimisation to media amplification to policy influence and back again, each node reinforcing the next.

By contrast, the right's signal runs from knowledge production to media amplification — and terminates. Campaign groups like Migration Watch generate research designed for media consumption, or a think tank publishes a report. It is picked up by *The Telegraph* or discussed on *GB News*. It trends on X for an afternoon. The host expresses agreement, the audience nods along... and then nothing happens. There is no network of sympathetic charities waiting to incorporate the findings into a sustained policy campaign. There is no constellation of professional bodies whose governance structures might lend institutional weight to the argument. The signal reaches the media node and finds no onward connection. The conversation happens. The policy does not change. The right has a speaker system. The left has a nervous system.

This is not a deficiency in the right's media, it's a deficiency in everything around it. But there's a further problem: the right's online vibrancy *actively disguises* this structural absence. The sheer volume of right-of-centre content creates what might be called a *perception of momentum*: a feeling, strongest among those most deeply immersed in the ecosystem, that the right is winning the argument, that opinion is shifting decisively, and that political consequences must inevitably follow. The X timeline is full of supportive content. The YouTube comments are overwhelmingly sympathetic. The podcast hosts are confident, articulate, and angry about the right things. From inside this environment, it is natural to conclude that a movement is building which will sweep all before it.

The Restore Britain phenomenon illustrates the dynamic perfectly. In February 2026, outspoken backbench MP Rupert Lowe announced that his Restore Britain think tank would be transitioned to a political party. On X, Restore content circulated widely, generating intense engagement from accounts already sympathetic to its positions. Within the podcast-and-YouTube ecosystem, a narrative rapidly consolidated: here, finally, was the authentic vehicle the right had been waiting for.



Carl Benjamin   @Sargon\_of\_Akkad · 22h

7% in the polls and 90,000 members.



Say it with me:

WE. ARE. GOING. TO. WIN.

The error is a specific and recurring one: the right mistakes clicks for votes. A like on

X is not a knock on a door. A YouTube view is not a conversation with a neighbour. A podcast download is not a leaflet delivered. The right's online ecosystem operates through algorithms designed to show users content that reflects their existing preferences. Engagement metrics — likes, shares, comments, views — measure the intensity of agreement within a self-selecting community, not the breadth of support across an electorate. A post praising Rupert Lowe that receives ten thousand likes tells you that ten thousand people within a curated digital community pressed a button. It tells you nothing about the forty-seven million registered voters who did not see it, would not have engaged with it if they had, and will encounter Restore Britain for the first time — if at all — on a ballot paper. The echo chamber does not merely amplify the signal, it distorts the map. The people inside it cannot perceive the vast territories of the electorate into which their message does not penetrate — the apolitical, the moderate, the disengaged, the millions who do not follow political accounts and have never listened to a political podcast — because those territories are, by definition, outside their field of vision.

This is why the right's media strength may paradoxically be making the institutional deficit harder to diagnose. If you spend your evenings watching *Triggernometry*, reading *The Spectator*, listening to the *Lotus Eaters*, and scrolling through a curated X feed of accounts that share your analysis, the world looks as though it is moving in your direction. The momentum appears irresistible. But the BMA is still campaigning for net zero by 2030. The Charity Commission is still enforcing rules that constrain the right more effectively than the left. Universities are still producing the graduates who staff every institution in the country. Professional bodies are still adopting progressive positions through governance structures their members never engage with. The regulatory framework — equality duties, corporate governance codes, charitable purposes definitions — is still being written and enforced by people who have never watched a single episode of any of these programmes and are wholly unaffected by whether ten thousand or ten million people agree with a podcast host on X.

The right's media is doing what media does: producing content, building audiences, shaping conversation. It is often doing it well. But the conversation is taking place in the loudest room of an otherwise empty building. The volume persuades the people inside that the building is full. It is not. The institutions — the charities, the professional bodies, the regulatory frameworks, the universities, the grant-making foundations — are elsewhere, and they are not listening. They do not need to listen, because the right's media, however loud, is not connected to anything that can compel them to.

Commentary has never changed a country. Institutions have. Until the right understands this — not as an intellectual proposition that its podcasters occasionally discuss, but as an operational reality that reshapes how it allocates time, money, and human effort — its media will remain a spectacular consolation prize for a movement that is not yet in the game.

## Funding

If the right's institutional ecosystem is a building with empty rooms, its funding structure is the reason they were never filled. The amount of money flowing into right-of-centre institutional infrastructure in Britain is not merely modest by comparison with the left, it's modest by comparison to that which any serious political movement requires to sustain itself. In comparison with what the American right deploys to achieve the institutional dominance that British conservatives admire from afar (and have entirely failed to replicate), they are downright laughable.

The numbers are quickly stated. The IEA reported an annual income of a little over £1.3 million in 2024/25.<sup>152</sup> Policy Exchange recorded income of £4.3 million in 2023/24.<sup>153</sup> A 2024 investigation by DeSmog and Democracy for Sale found that seven Conservative donors, including four sitting peers, had between them funnelled £6.85 million into Tufton Street think tanks over five years. Of this, a single donor, IEA Life Vice President Nigel Vinson, accounted for £3.74 million in a single investment.<sup>154</sup> The right's institutional infrastructure is not funded by a movement. It is funded by a handful of individuals whose continued generosity is the only thing standing between these organisations and insolvency.

Now consider what the American right spends. The Heritage Foundation — one think tank among many — received \$95 million in contributions in 2022 alone, a 26 per cent increase on the previous year.<sup>155</sup> It employs over a hundred policy experts, maintains half a million dues-paying members, its researchers are invited to testify before Congress roughly forty times a year, and it was able to disburse \$1.67 million in grants to other linked nonprofits.<sup>156</sup> The American Enterprise Institute reported revenues of approximately \$85 million in 2015.<sup>157</sup> The Federalist Society, which functions less as a think tank than as an institutional placement network for

<sup>152</sup> "The Institute of Economic Affairs Ltd". The Charity Commission. Accessed 25 February 2026. [https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/?p\\_p\\_id=uk\\_gov\\_ccew\\_onereg\\_charitydetails\\_web\\_portlet\\_CharityDetailsPortlet&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=0&p\\_p\\_state=maximized&p\\_p\\_mode=view&uk\\_gov\\_ccew\\_onereg\\_charitydetails\\_web\\_portlet\\_CharityDetailsPortlet\\_regId=235351](https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/?p_p_id=uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=maximized&p_p_mode=view&uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet_regId=235351)

<sup>153</sup> "Policy Exchange Ltd". The Charity Commission. Accessed 25 February 2026. [https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/3993017?uk\\_gov\\_ccew\\_onereg\\_charitydetails\\_web\\_portlet\\_CharityDetailsPortlet\\_organisationNumber=3993017](https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/3993017?uk_gov_ccew_onereg_charitydetails_web_portlet_CharityDetailsPortlet_organisationNumber=3993017)

<sup>154</sup> Geoghegan, Peter & Amin, Lucas. "Who funds you? Tory donors funnel almost £7 million into Tufton Street". Democracy For Sale. 13 June 2024.

<https://democracyforsale.substack.com/p/tory-donors-funnel-almost-7-million>

<sup>155</sup> Doyle, Katherine. "Donations Have Surged to Groups Linked to Conservative Project 2025" NBC News, 17 November 2023.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2024-election/donations-surged-groups-linked-conservative-project-2025-rcna125638>

<sup>156</sup> "About Heritage". The Heritage Foundation. Accessed 25 February 2026.

<https://www.heritage.org/about-heritage/mission>

<sup>157</sup> "American Enterprise Institute" Wikipedia. Accessed 25 February 2026.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Enterprise\\_Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Enterprise_Institute). "AEI's revenues for the fiscal year ending June 2015 were \$84,616,388."

conservative lawyers, maintains chapters at over two hundred law schools and counts more than 90,000 members, including five sitting Supreme Court justices.<sup>158</sup> When manufacturing magnate Barre Seid wished to support the conservative legal movement, he donated \$1.6 *billion* to the Marble Freedom Trust, a nonprofit run by Federalist Society co-chairman Leonard Leo.<sup>159</sup> That single donation — from one man, to one organisation, in one transaction — is worth more than the entire Tufton Street ecosystem has spent in its collective history.

The comparison is not offered to suggest that the British right should simply write larger cheques to existing organisations, though that would help. It is offered to illustrate the difference between a movement that treats institutional infrastructure as a strategic investment and one that treats it as a discretionary expense. The State Policy Network, a web of right-leaning think tanks operating across all fifty states, reported combined member revenues exceeding \$152 million.<sup>160</sup> This is not philanthropy. It is the construction of a permanent counter-establishment, built systematically over half a century and funded on a scale that treats political infrastructure with the same seriousness that corporations treat capital expenditure.

The British right has nothing remotely comparable — and it is worth pausing to recall what it is up against. As Chapter Two documented, the left’s institutional ecosystem does not rely on the generosity of sympathetic donors. It is substantially funded by the public purse: through government grants to charities that campaign for expanded state intervention, through public sector contracts awarded to organisations whose policy positions are indistinguishable from advocacy, through the equality and diversity infrastructure embedded in every arm of government. The right is not merely being outspent by wealthy progressives, it is being outspent *by the state itself*, using taxpayers’ money to fund an institutional landscape that the right then has to challenge using whatever it can raise from private donors over annual dinners. The asymmetry is not just financial, it is structural: one side’s funding is guaranteed, recurring, and insulated from market forces; the other’s depends on the continued enthusiasm of a handful of individuals who could redirect their giving at any time.

And even setting aside the public funding question, the British right’s donors give generously by the standards of British political philanthropy, but they give as patrons rather than as investors — funding organisations they personally admire rather than building an ecosystem designed to achieve specific institutional outcomes. There is no British equivalent of the Koch seminars, which for decades convened wealthy conservative donors to coordinate strategy and pool resources toward shared

<sup>158</sup> “Federalist Society” Wikipedia. Accessed 25 February 2026.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federalist\\_Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federalist_Society)

<sup>159</sup> Perez, Andrew et al. “How a Secretive Billionaire Handed His Fortune to the Architect of the Right-Wing Takeover of the Courts” ProPublica & Lever. 22 August 2022.

<https://www.propublica.org/article/dark-money-leonard-leo-barre-seid>

<sup>160</sup> Armiak, David. “State Policy Network and Affiliates Raises \$152 Million Annually to Push Right-Wing Policies” Exposed by CMD. 30 September 2022.

<https://www.exposedbycmd.org/2022/09/30/state-policy-network-and-affiliates-raises-152-million-annually-to-push-right-wing-policies/>

objectives. There is no British equivalent of DonorsTrust, the donor-advised fund that channels tens of millions annually to conservative organisations while providing donors with anonymity and strategic coordination.<sup>161</sup> There is no British equivalent of the Federalist Society's forty-year project to reshape the legal profession from the ground up, a project that required not just money but sustained institutional patience — funding law school chapters, mentoring young lawyers, building the networks that eventually placed sympathetic judges on every tier of the federal judiciary.<sup>162</sup>

What the British right has instead is a collection of thinly capitalised organisations, each dependent on a vanishingly small donor base, operating in isolation from one another with no shared strategy, no coordinated funding model, and no mechanism for converting financial support into institutional power. When a single donor can account for more than an organisation's entire annual income — as Vinson's investment did for the IEA — that is not an organisation with a funding base. It is an organisation with a benefactor. And benefactors die, lose interest, or redirect their money.

This is not an argument for importing the American model wholesale. The scale of US political spending reflects a political system with few spending limits, a culture of philanthropy far deeper than Britain's, and a federal structure that creates fifty separate arenas for institutional competition. But the principle underlying American conservative investment applies with equal force in Britain: if you want to change the institutional landscape, you must fund the effort to change it on a scale commensurate with the task, over a timeframe measured in decades rather than electoral cycles. A movement that spends less on its entire institutional infrastructure than a single Premier League club spends on transfers in a single window is not a movement that is serious about power. It is a movement that has mistaken commentary for strategy and assumed that being right is a substitute for being organised.

The money exists. Britain has no shortage of wealthy individuals who hold broadly right-of-centre views on taxation, regulation, immigration, and the role of the state. What it lacks is any structure for mobilising that wealth toward institutional objectives, any culture of strategic giving that looks beyond individual organisations to the ecosystem as a whole, and — most critically — any shared understanding among potential donors that the institutional terrain is where the decisive battles are fought. Until that changes, the right will continue to fund a handful of think tanks at

<sup>161</sup> Arora Seth, Anika. "SFFA funded by large conservative groups with Federalist Society ties". Yale News. 2 November 2022. <https://yaledailynews.com/articles/sffa-funded-by-large-conservative-groups-with-federalist-society-ties>

<sup>162</sup> Steven Teles, *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement: The Battle for Control of the Law* (Princeton University Press, 2008). See also Federalist Society, Wikipedia: The Washington Post described the Federalist Society as a "talent network and placement agency" where junior lawyers "hone their arguments, seize a chance to shine and come to the attention of mentors higher up in the political-legal hierarchy." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federalist\\_Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federalist_Society).

a level that permits them to publish reports and host events, while the left's institutional network, funded by government contracts, charitable endowments, membership dues, and the sheer accumulated capital of decades of institutional entrenchment, continues to operate on a scale that makes competition impossible.

The right does not have a funding problem in the sense that there is no money available. It has a funding problem in the sense that the money that is available is not being deployed with anything resembling strategic intent. And until the people who have the resources recognise that institutional infrastructure is not a luxury but a prerequisite — not a nice thing to fund after the important things are paid for, but *the most important thing* — the gap will only widen.

## The Ecosystem in Sum

This chapter has mapped the right's institutional landscape and found a consistent pattern across multiple domains. The right possesses individual assets, some of them genuinely impressive, but those assets exist in isolation from one another, disconnected from any wider structure that could convert their outputs into institutional power. The result is not an ecosystem but a collection of fragments: a few think tanks that produce research nobody outside media picks up; a business lobby that has been captured by the very framework it should be contesting; a vast landscape of charities, professional bodies, and universities in which the right is simply largely absent; a media ecosystem that is loud, growing, and talking largely to itself; and a funding model that depends on the generosity of a handful of individuals rather than the strategic commitment of a movement.

Compare this for a moment with the left's infrastructure as documented in Chapter Two. The left's ecosystem is not a collection of independent organisations that happen to share broadly progressive sympathies. It is a network — dense, interconnected, self-reinforcing — in which each node strengthens the others. A university produces research and graduates. The graduates staff charities, professional bodies, and the civil service. The charities commission further research, which is amplified by sympathetic media, cited by professional bodies, referenced in parliamentary proceedings, and used to inform regulatory frameworks that entrench the assumptions on which the entire cycle depends. Funding flows through government grants, charitable endowments, membership subscriptions, and public sector contracts — sources that are largely immune to electoral disruption and that renew themselves automatically. The left did not build this network in a single generation or through a single act of strategic genius. It built it over decades, institution by institution, appointment by appointment, governance structure by governance structure, until the network became so deeply embedded in the fabric of

British public life that most of the people operating within it do not recognise it as ideological infrastructure at all. They simply think of it as ‘how things work’.

The right has no equivalent. Not a weaker equivalent, not a smaller equivalent — *no equivalent*. It has organisations, but not a network. It has voices, but not a chorus. It has money, but not a strategy for deploying it. It has talented individuals, but no structures to connect them to one another or to multiply their efforts. Each component of the right’s infrastructure operates in its own silo: the think tanks publish for the media, the media broadcasts to an audience, the audience agrees and moves on, the donors write cheques to whichever organisation last invited them to dinner, and nothing connects any of it to the institutional machinery — the charities, the regulators, the professional bodies, the university governance structures, the grant-making foundations — where policy is actually shaped, norms are actually set, and the boundaries of acceptable discourse are actually drawn. This is not a problem of personnel. The right does not lack intelligent, committed, articulate people; it has them in abundance. The problem is architectural. These people are not connected to one another in any structured way, their efforts are not coordinated toward shared institutional objectives, and the infrastructure that would allow individual talent to accumulate into collective power simply does not exist.

The asymmetry has a compounding quality that makes it worse with every passing year. Each institution the left controls becomes a platform for extending its influence into adjacent institutions. A charity that secures a government contract gains the resources to commission research, which generates findings that influence a professional body, which adopts a position that shapes regulatory guidance, which constrains how businesses operate, which alters the environment in which the next generation of graduates is trained. The right, absent from all of these institutions, is not merely failing to compete — it is falling further behind, because the ground it would need to contest is being reshaped in real time by institutions it has never attempted to build, staff, fund, or influence. The left’s institutional advantage is not static, it is accelerating. And every year the right spends producing commentary instead of building counter-institutions is a year in which the gap becomes harder to close.

None of this is inevitable. The left’s institutional dominance was not ordained by history or guaranteed by demography. It was built — deliberately, strategically, over time — by people who understood that cultural and political power flows from institutional control and who were willing to do the unglamorous, long-term work of securing it. The American right understood this too, and responded by building an institutional counter-establishment of extraordinary scale and ambition: think tanks with nine-figure budgets, a legal network that reshaped the federal judiciary, grassroots organisations with millions of members, donor coordination mechanisms that channelled billions toward shared strategic objectives, and state-level policy networks operating in all fifty states. Whether one admires or deplores the American

conservative movement, it is impossible to deny that it understood the game it was playing and funded itself accordingly.

The British right has not yet understood the game. It has understood the symptoms — the leftward drift of institutions, the progressive capture of professional bodies, the asymmetric enforcement of charity law, the ideological monoculture of universities — and it has discussed those symptoms at length, in print, on air, online, and at conferences. What it has not done is respond to the diagnosis with anything resembling a serious programme of institutional construction. It has complained about the left's dominance of the charity sector without founding charities. It has lamented the progressive capture of professional bodies without contesting their governance elections. It has criticised universities without building alternative credentialing institutions or funding conservative scholarship at scale. It has identified the problem with precision and addressed it with words.

Words are not enough. The right's media can describe the institutional landscape. Its think tanks can analyse it. Its podcasters can rail against it. But none of that will change it. What changes an institutional landscape is *institutions* — built, funded, staffed, governed, and sustained over decades with the same patience and strategic purpose that the left has demonstrated and the right has so far lacked.

The next chapter examines what will happen if we fail to heed the warning.

## Chapter Four: The Next General Election

### The Teal Mirage

If nothing changes, if the institutional landscape mapped in the preceding chapters remains as it is and the right continues to mistake commentary for strategy, what happens next?

Many on the right believe they already know the answer. Reform UK has led the national polls for over a year. As of 24 February 2026, the PollCheck seven-poll moving average puts Reform on 27.7%, Labour on 18.6%, the Conservatives on 18.4%, and the Greens on 15.1%.<sup>163</sup> Multilevel Regression with Post-stratification (MRP) projections have translated these numbers into seat counts that would constitute one of the most dramatic electoral realignments in British history. More in Common's January 2026 MRP projected Reform winning 381 seats — a majority of 112 — with Labour collapsing to 85 and the Conservatives to 70.<sup>164</sup> Electoral Calculus, using a different methodology and sample, projected 335 Reform seats with a majority of 20.<sup>165</sup> Matt Goodwin and others have produced constituency maps showing the country painted almost entirely in teal, Reform's colour, a visual that has become totemic in right-of-centre circles — shared, celebrated, treated as prophecy.

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<sup>163</sup>PollCheck, "UK Polls Today — Latest Voting Intention Tracker," 7-poll moving average as of 24 February 2026. <https://www.pollcheck.co.uk/gb-polls>

<sup>164</sup>More in Common, "January MRP," January 2026. Based on polling of more than 16,000 Britons. <https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/latest-insights/more-in-common-s-january-mrp/>

<sup>165</sup>Electoral Calculus/Find Out Now, "MRP Poll January 2026," fieldwork 1–8 December 2025, sample size 5,596. [https://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk/blogs/ec\\_vipoll\\_20260113.html](https://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk/blogs/ec_vipoll_20260113.html)



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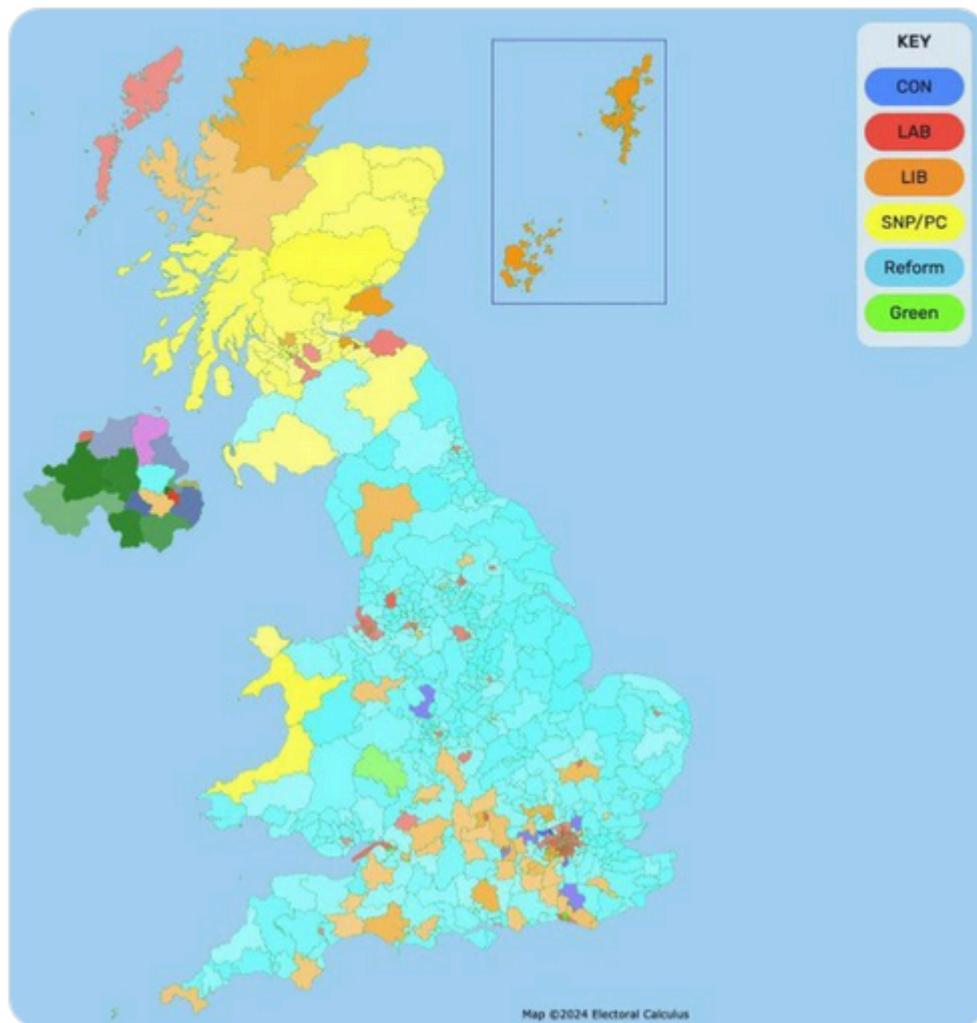
This is what the political **map** of the UK looks like based on today's poll

When I explained why Reform would replace the Tories, people laughed

But it is now happening

This is the most significant revolt since the rise of the Labour Party

[mattgoodwin.org/p/a-political-...](https://mattgoodwin.org/p/a-political-...)



80

375

1.6K

41K



The assumption underpinning this confidence is straightforward: if Reform maintains anything like its current polling lead until the next general election, which must be held by August 2029 at the latest, then the combination of first-past-the-post and a four-way split among Labour, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, and the Greens will hand Reform a commanding majority on a relatively

modest share of the national vote, much as Labour won its landslide in 2024 on just 33.7%.

This assumption is not unreasonable, but it is incomplete. The factors it fails to account for do not all cut in one direction; some will help Reform while others will hurt it badly. The net effect, once all of them are properly considered, suggests a 2029 outcome considerably messier, more fragmented, and less favourable to the right than the teal-soaked maps imply.

Three forces, in particular, are inadequately captured by national polling and the MRP models built on it. The first is structural: polling numbers have nothing to say about the campaign infrastructure needed to convert those numbers into seats under first-past-the-post. The second is sectarian. The Muslim Vote is galvanising Muslim voters along sectarian lines in a way never before seen in British politics. The third concerns the right itself, where Reform's vote is fracturing along ideological lines.

These forces have already been real-world tested. Since this parliament began two by-elections have been held, and their results are instructive. In Runcorn and Helsby, the kind of post-industrial, white, Leave-voting seat where the teal maps predict comfortable Reform victories, Reform won by six votes — the closest post-war by-election in British history. In Gorton and Denton, a diverse urban seat with a 28% Muslim population, the progressive vote consolidated behind the Greens to beat Reform by over four thousand votes in what the polls had predicted would be a dead heat. Both results point in the same direction: the teal maps overstate Reform's ability to convert polling leads into parliamentary seats.

The significance of these results is underscored by the Electoral Calculus “sorted seat” rankings, which use the predicted difference between party vote shares to identify both safe seats and key battlegrounds.<sup>166</sup> Gorton and Denton is listed as a battleground seat: ranked 148th for Labour and 236th for Reform, meaning that Labour has just 147 easier seats to contest, and Reform has 235. All those above Gorton and Denton on the list are harder mountains to climb, and should not be taken for granted. A Reform loss in Gorton therefore implies the party is on course for 236 seats or fewer at the next election — not merely short of a majority, but short of being able to form a government even in coalition with the Conservatives.

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<sup>166</sup>Electoral Calculus, “Sorted Seats”. Accessed 28 February 2026  
<https://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk/orderedseats.html>

Compare and contrast with More In Common’s MRP model which predicted 30.0% for Reform, 28.3% for Labour, 23.1% for the Greens.<sup>167</sup> The actual result — Greens 40.7%, Reform 28.7%, Labour 25.4% — was not a marginal deviation from the model. It was a categorical refutation of it.

## The Baseline

In January, More In Common polled over 16,000 people on voting intention, and created a seat by seat Multilevel Regression with Post-stratification (MRP) projection for the next general election. As they explain: the MRP “uses data from a voting intention poll to model how people will vote based on their demographics, previous voting behaviour and information about their constituency. These results are then applied to the demographic and electoral makeup of each constituency to make a constituency-level prediction. The model is ‘multilevel’ because it uses both individual and constituency-level data.” It predicted that Reform would [win 381 seats](#) on 31 per cent of the vote, giving them a majority of 114 MPs. This is the baseline we are working from.

What follows is an attempt to quantify the effects of three different phenomena which challenge Reform’s apparent lead:

1. Reform’s ground game, which is lacking.
2. The Muslim Vote, which is tactical and organised.
3. The right wing split with Advance and Restore.

Together these create a cascade effect, eating away at Reform’s seat projection until the party falls far short of the 325 seats required to form a majority — so far that even a coalition with the Conservatives becomes impossible.

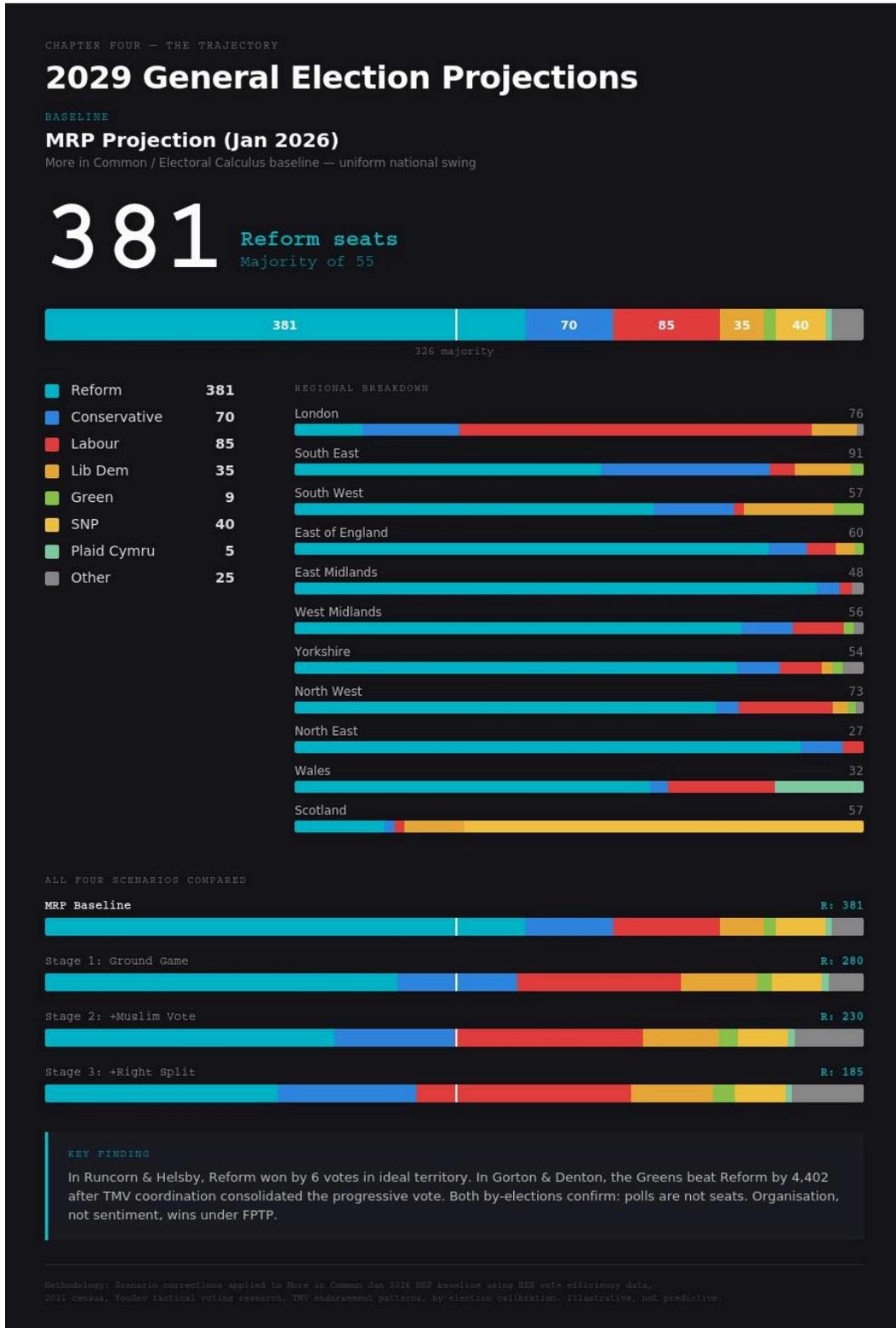
The methodology is straightforward: using Claude AI’s Opus 4.6 Extended model, I took the published More In Common projection and applied three successive corrections. Claude drew upon: vote efficiency data from the British Election Study; constituency-level demographic data from the 2021 census, the Henry Jackson Society and The Muslim Vote; tactical voting research from YouGov; and the organisational profiles of the competing parties. The assumptions were then tested against the two by-election results to calibrate.

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<sup>167</sup>More in Common, January 2026 MRP

<https://www.moreincommon.org.uk/latest-insights/more-in-common-s-january-mrp/>

The result is not an exact seat prediction — elections three years hence are too uncertain for that, and constituency level predictions based on these factors would need more granular data to have any hope of being accurate. Rather, what’s presented here is an analytical framework for understanding why polls are not seats, and why the gap between the two is likely to be very large.



## The Ground Game: More Votes, Fewer Seats

Before considering any specific political force that might erode Reform's projected majority, there is a more fundamental problem with the teal maps: they assume that polling translates into seats at a roughly uniform rate. Under first-past-the-post, it does not. It never has. And the 2024 general election proved this with a level of clarity that should serve as a wake up call to anyone projecting a Reform landslide from national vote share alone.

In 2024, the Liberal Democrats won 12.2% of the national vote and 72 seats. Reform UK won 14.3% of the national vote and... 5 seats.<sup>168</sup> That's right, Reform outpolled the Lib Dems by over two percentage points nationally and won *sixty-seven fewer seats*. This was not a statistical anomaly, nor an artefact of geographic distribution alone. It was the product of something MRP models fundamentally cannot measure: the difference between a vote backed by a canvasser, a leaflet, a bar chart, and decades of community politics infrastructure, and a vote backed by nothing but vibes.

The British Election Study's analysis of the 2024 results makes the mechanism explicit. Forty-six per cent of all votes cast for the Liberal Democrats were concentrated in the 72 constituencies they won — a staggering feat of targeting that meant nearly half their national vote was doing useful work.<sup>169</sup> Reform's votes, by contrast, were spread thinly and evenly across the country, piling up impressive-looking percentages in hundreds of constituencies and converting almost none of them into victories.

This is not a quirk of one election. It is a structural feature of first-past-the-post that parties either learn to exploit or suffer under. The Liberal Democrats have spent forty years building the infrastructure to exploit it: community politics at ward level, focus leaflets that make hyper-local issues the basis of political identity, bar chart literature that frames every constituency as a two-horse race, and a targeting operation that concentrates resources in seats where they can win while effectively abandoning everywhere else. Labour has its own version: the union networks, the Constituency Labour Party structures, the door-knocking operations run by Unite and UNISON, the deep roots in communities where the party has been organising for a century.

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<sup>168</sup>“2024 United Kingdom general election” Wikipedia. Accessed 1 March 2026.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_general\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_United_Kingdom_general_election)

<sup>169</sup>Griffiths, James D; Green, Jane; Fieldhouse, Ed. “The Liberal Democrats in 2024: Efficiency and tactical voting” British Election Study. 5 September 2024.

<https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/bes-impact/the-liberal-democrats-in-2024-vote-efficiency-and-tactical-voting/>

Even the Conservatives, diminished as they are, retain the muscle memory of centuries of constituency association work.

Reform has none of this. The party's own internal data tells the story. Analysis published by *The Conversation*, drawing on party membership surveys, found that a third of Reform members had done no campaigning at all during the 2024 election — and that even among those who did, efforts were overwhelmingly concentrated online.<sup>170</sup> Reform members were significantly more likely than those of any other party to have campaigned through social media, online forums, and digital channels, but significantly less likely to have leafleted, canvassed door-to-door, or attended local campaign events. In a system where the difference between winning and losing a constituency can be a few hundred votes — and where those votes are often determined by whether a volunteer knocked on the door, delivered a leaflet, or drove a pensioner to the polling station — a party whose members campaign from behind screens is a party whose polling numbers flatter to deceive.

The organisational deficit runs deeper than volunteer apathy. Reform paid £144,000 to a vetting company that, according to reports, returned no meaningful research on prospective candidates.<sup>171</sup> The consequences were immediate and visible: the party shed eleven councillors after the 2025 local elections, and subsequently loosened its vetting standards rather than tightening them.<sup>172</sup> This is not the profile of a party building the ground-level infrastructure needed to fight and win six hundred and fifty individual constituency campaigns simultaneously.

The Runcorn and Helsby by-election of May 2025 provides the sharpest available test of this thesis. Runcorn is precisely the kind of seat where the polling predicted comfortable Reform dominance: post-industrial, predominantly white, Leave-voting, with a disgraced Labour incumbent who had resigned after an assault conviction. National polling at the time put Reform roughly nine points clear of Labour. If polls translate into seats at anything like a uniform rate, Reform should have won comfortably.

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<sup>170</sup>Bale, Tim; Webb, Paul; Chrona, Stavroula. "UK election: Reform and Green members campaigned more online – but pounded the pavements less" *The Conversation*. 27 September 2024.

<https://theconversation.com/uk-election-reform-and-green-members-campaigned-more-online-but-pounded-the-pavements-less-239570>

<sup>171</sup>Horton, Harry. "Farage blames vetting company after ITV News finds Reform candidates in offensive Facebook group" *ITV* 18 June 2024.

<https://www.itv.com/news/2024-06-18/reform-uk-leader-nigel-farage-questioned-about-vetting-of-party-candidates>

<sup>172</sup>Martin, Matilda. "Reform Is Losing Councillors Elected In May At An "Unusual" Rate" *Politics Home*. 31 October 2025. <https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/reform-losing-councillors-at-unusual-rate>

Reform won by a mere six votes out of 32,655 cast, a margin smaller than the number of spoiled ballots. Labour's Karen Shore, defending a seat vacated in scandal for a deeply unpopular government, came within a handful of votes of holding it — because Labour could put canvassers on doorsteps, because the union networks held, because the local party infrastructure, however battered, still functioned. Reform's polling lead, formidable on paper, very nearly failed to produce a single extra seat when subjected to the granular test of an actual constituency contest.

Now consider what the progressive parties are building in response to Reform's rise. The Liberal Democrats enter the next election as incumbents in 72 seats, each with a sitting MP, an established constituency office, the ability to channel funding into their constituency, and the community politics infrastructure that won the seat in the first place. Their challenge is defence, not attack, and incumbency advantage under FPTP is substantial. Labour, even in its diminished state, retains the union mobilisation networks that have been the backbone of its ground operation for over a century. UNISON, the country's largest public sector union, published an explicit anti-Reform campaign guide in 2025, directing its 1.3 million members to campaign in constituencies where Reform threatens to win.<sup>173</sup> These are not abstract political preferences. They are boots on the ground: organisers, canvassers, drivers, envelope-stuffers, in precisely the seats where Reform needs to convert polling leads into actual victories.

Then there's the tactical voting. YouGov's February 2026 research found that 63 to 77 per cent of Labour voters say they would switch to the Greens or Liberal Democrats to stop Reform winning their constituency. Crucially, the same research found that in a seat where the only realistic outcome was a Conservative or Reform win, left-wing voters would favour the Tories by 31% to 24%. Similarly, 57-58% of Lib Dem and Green voters would tactically vote for Labour to stop Reform UK winning in their seat, though just 43-44% would do so to stop the Tories. In other words, Reform faces a far greater tactical voting challenge than the Conservatives.<sup>174</sup>

And the threat is real. Compass, the centre-left pressure group, has been coordinating progressive tactical voting since 2017; its post-2024 report documented that 35 of its 41 endorsed candidates — 85 per cent — won their seats, demonstrating that tactical coordination is not merely a theoretical possibility but a proven electoral

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<sup>173</sup>“New guide to help you fight far-right party Reform UK” Unison. 13 January 2026.

<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2026/01/new-guide-to-help-you-fight-far-right-party-reform-uk/>

<sup>174</sup>“What is the tactical voting landscape in February 2026?” YouGov. 18 February 2026.

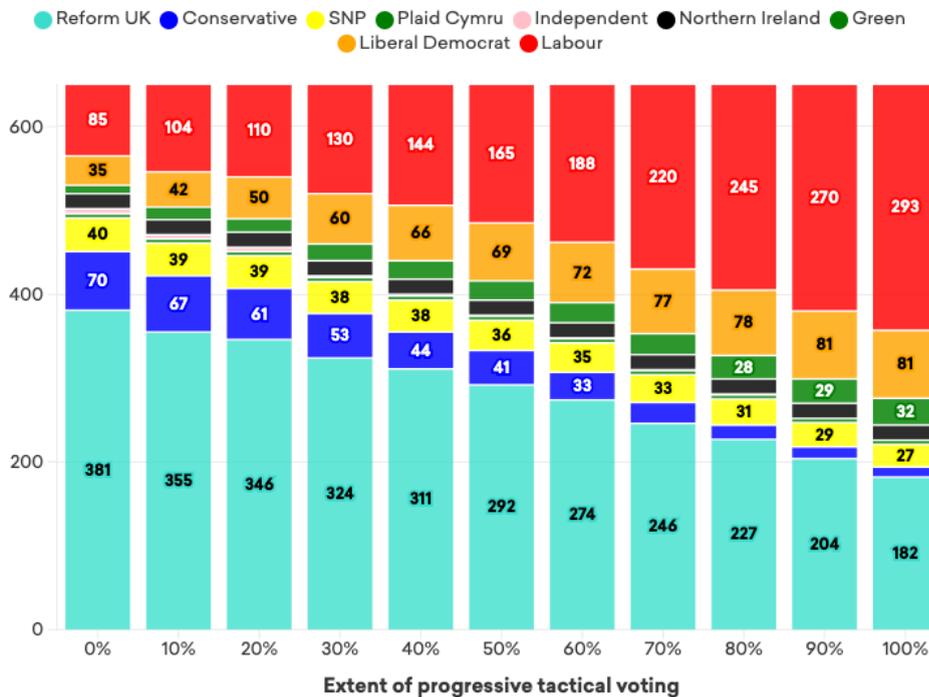
<https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/54117>

mechanism with a substantial track record.<sup>175</sup> [TacticalVote.co.uk](https://TacticalVote.co.uk) and similar websites provide constituency-level recommendations.

More in Common’s own research found that if just 60 per cent of progressive voters voted tactically — a figure well within the range suggested by YouGov’s polling — the result would be a Commons in which Reform falls well short of a majority. According to the organisation: “If just one in five voters who intend to vote for Labour, the Greens, or the Liberal Democrats voted tactically within this bloc in seats where their preferred party was less likely to win, they could take an extra 46 seats. If twice as many voted tactically [...] Reform would no longer be projected a majority.

“At 60 per cent tactical voting it would be more likely we would see a 5 party rainbow coalition of the left than a Reform Government or Tory-Reform Coalition, while Liberal Democrats losses would be reversed with a degree of tactical voting at this level. The caveat here is that in a volatile multi-party environment it will be difficult for voters to predict which direction to tactically vote.”<sup>176</sup>

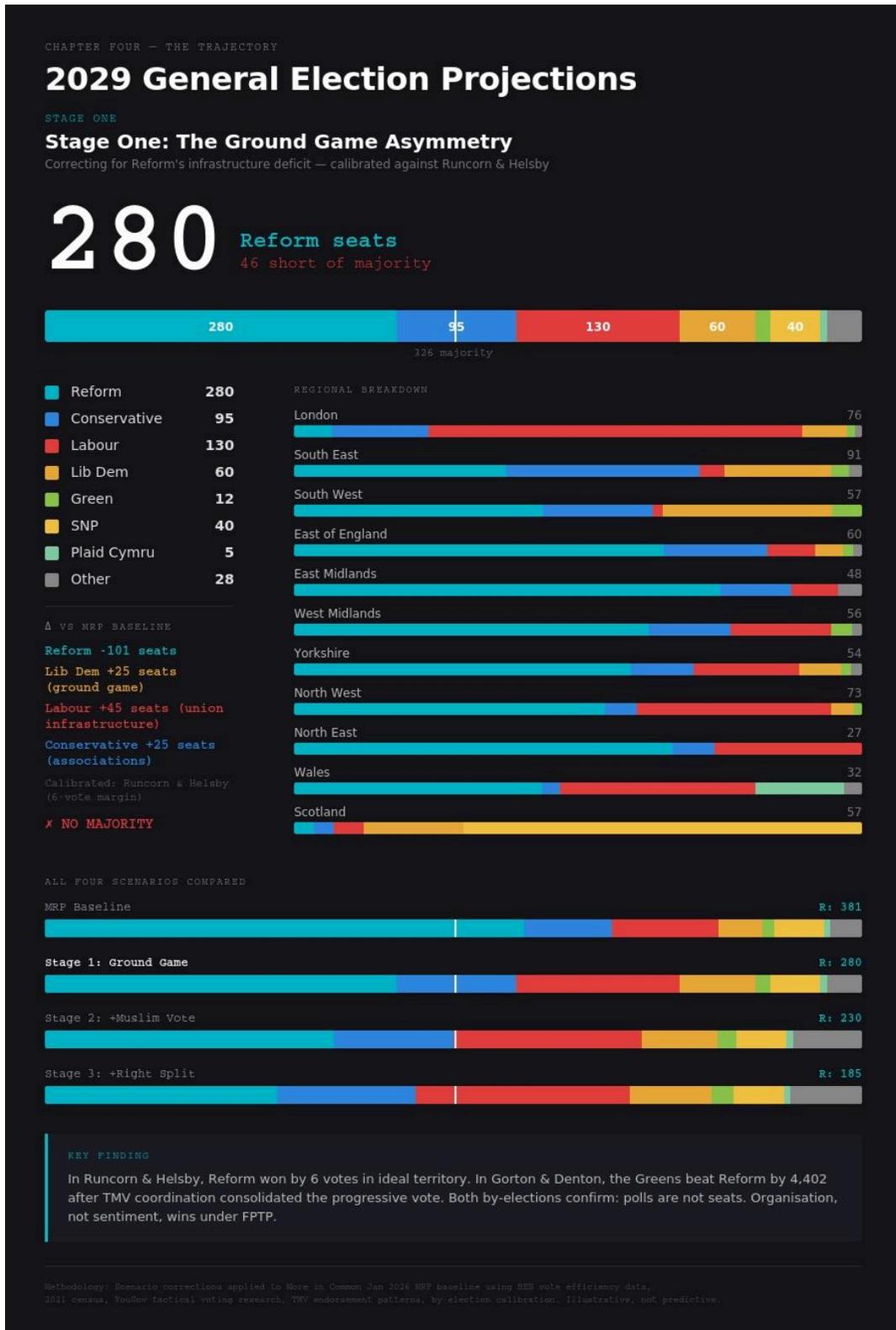
### Reform's majority could crumble in the face of progressive tactical voting



<sup>175</sup>“We won as one”. Compass. 8 July 2024. <https://www.compassonline.org.uk/general-election-2024-report/>

<sup>176</sup> More in Common, *ibid.*

The MRP models capture none of this. They project seats from vote shares using statistical models that assume, in effect, that every vote is equal — that a Reform voter in Clacton who will walk to the polling station unprompted is identical, for seat-projection purposes, to a Reform voter in a marginal Midlands constituency who might or might not turn out depending on whether anyone asks them to. Under FPTP, these voters are not equal. The first is a safe vote in a safe seat. The second is a vulnerable vote in a decisive seat, and the question of whether a canvasser knocks on that door — or whether a tactical voting website tells a Labour supporter in the same constituency to vote Lib Dem instead — can determine the outcome.



*Stage One — Ground Game Asymmetry. Reform drops from 381 to approximately 280 seats, 46 short of a majority. The Lib Dems gain on incumbency and community politics infrastructure. Labour gains on union mobilisation networks. Reform loses in every marginal where the difference between winning and losing is organisation, not sentiment.*

This is the foundational correction to the teal maps, and it operates before any of the specific political forces discussed below are even considered. The ground game asymmetry alone — the gap between Reform’s polling numbers and the campaign infrastructure needed to convert them into seats — is sufficient to eliminate Reform’s projected majority.

But it is just the beginning.

## **The Muslim Vote: The Force That Doesn’t Show Up in Polls**

In the 2019 general election, 86% of British Muslim voters backed Labour. By 2024, that figure had collapsed<sup>177</sup>. A Survation poll conducted before the election found only 43% of Muslims saying they would vote Labour, with 70% saying the Gaza question would be “very important” in deciding their vote.<sup>178</sup> The actual results were worse. In the 21 constituencies where Muslims make up more than 30% of the population — all of which had elected Labour MPs in 2019 — Labour’s average vote share fell from 65% to 36%. As noted in Hyphen: “In these seats, the total number of Labour votes fell from more than 600,000 in 2019 to just under 300,000 in 2024. That is the equivalent of more than half the total national drop in the Labour vote between the two elections (Labour has lost 537,688 votes compared with 2019).”<sup>179</sup>

This was not merely a protest. It was, in part, due to the emergence of an organised political force with deep roots in Islamist civil society. [The Muslim Vote](#) launched in December 2023 with the involvement of Jalaluddin Patel, formerly the leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain, and Anas Altikriti, CEO of the Cordoba Foundation, an organisation that has documented links to the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>180</sup> It bills itself as “pro-democracy and anti-genocide,” and, as detailed in Chapter 2, aimed to mobilised Britain’s nearly four million Muslims around a specific strategic objective: to demonstrate that the community’s votes could no longer be taken for granted.

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<sup>177</sup>Khan, Shehab. “British Muslim support for Labour falls drastically, according to new poll” ITV. 5 February 2024. <https://www.itv.com/news/2024-02-05/british-muslim-support-for-labour-halves-according-to-new-poll>

<sup>178</sup>“Exclusive Survation Poll of British Muslim Voters” Labour Muslim Network. 5 February, 2024.

<https://www.labourmuslims.org/post/exclusive-survation-poll-of-british-muslim-voters>

<sup>179</sup>Baston, Lewis. “The impact of Muslim voters at the 2024 election was even bigger than you think” Hyphen. 6 July 2024.

<https://hyphenonline.com/2024/07/06/the-impact-of-muslim-voters-at-the-2024-election-was-even-bigger-than-you-think-apsana-begum-shabana-mahmood-birmingham-perry-barr-blackburn-leicester-dewsbury-uk-election/>

<sup>180</sup>Sigsworth, Tim. “Muslim Vote frontman suggested Britain helped ‘create racism’” The Telegraph. 25 May 2024. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/05/25/muslim-vote-campaign-frontman-britain-racism/>

The results in 2024 were remarkable. Five independent candidates were elected to Parliament — the highest number since 1950 — all endorsed by The Muslim Vote. Four of these directly defeated Labour incumbents: Ayoub Khan in Birmingham Perry Barr, Adnan Hussain in Blackburn, Iqbal Mohamed in Dewsbury and Batley, and Shockat Adam in Leicester South. Jeremy Corbyn, also TMV-endorsed, held Islington North as an independent after Labour expelled him. In the 50 constituencies with the biggest Muslim populations where independent candidates stood, they secured more than 329,000 votes.<sup>181</sup> In dozens of other constituencies, previously safe Labour seats were turned into marginals — Wes Streeting held Ilford North by just 528 votes against TMV-backed independent Leanne Mohamad. TMV’s own post-election analysis was explicit about the scale of what had been achieved: major Labour majorities had been slashed in constituency after constituency, with Bethnal Green and Stepney’s majority collapsing from 37,524 to 1,689, Birmingham Yardley from 12,720 to just 700, and Ilford North becoming a true marginal.<sup>182</sup> The organisation also claimed credit for the record Lib Dem and Green seat counts, arguing that Muslim voter mobilisation had been decisive in numerous constituencies won by those parties.

Here is what matters for 2029: almost none of this showed up in national polling before the election, and it would not show up now. National polls ask respondents which party they intend to vote for. They list Labour, Conservative, Reform, Green, Liberal Democrat, and sometimes a handful of others. They do not list independent candidates, because independent candidates are by definition constituency-specific. They do not list The Muslim Vote, because The Muslim Vote is not a party, it’s a coordination mechanism that endorses candidates across multiple parties and as independents. The result is a systematic blind spot: in any constituency where TMV is active, national polling will undercount the support for its preferred candidates and overcount the support for the parties those candidates are challenging.

This matters enormously for projecting 2029 because The Muslim Vote has explicitly stated it is a long-term project. Its own post-election analysis noted that of the 40 constituencies where the Green Party finished second, 22 had a Muslim population exceeding 10%.<sup>183</sup> The clear implication — and one that TMV, the Greens, and the nascent Your Party have all signalled interest in — is that a more coordinated alliance

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<sup>181</sup>Strzyżyńska, Weronika & Javed, Saman. “Muslim voters credited for election of five independent pro-Palestinian MPs” Hyphen. 5 July 2024.

<https://hyphenonline.com/2024/07/05/muslim-voters-credited-for-election-of-five-independent-pro-palestina-n-mps-shockat-adam-iqbal-mohamed-adnan-hussain-ayoub-khan-uk-election/>

<sup>182</sup>The Muslim Vote, “Initial Election Analysis,” post-election statement, 5 July 2024.

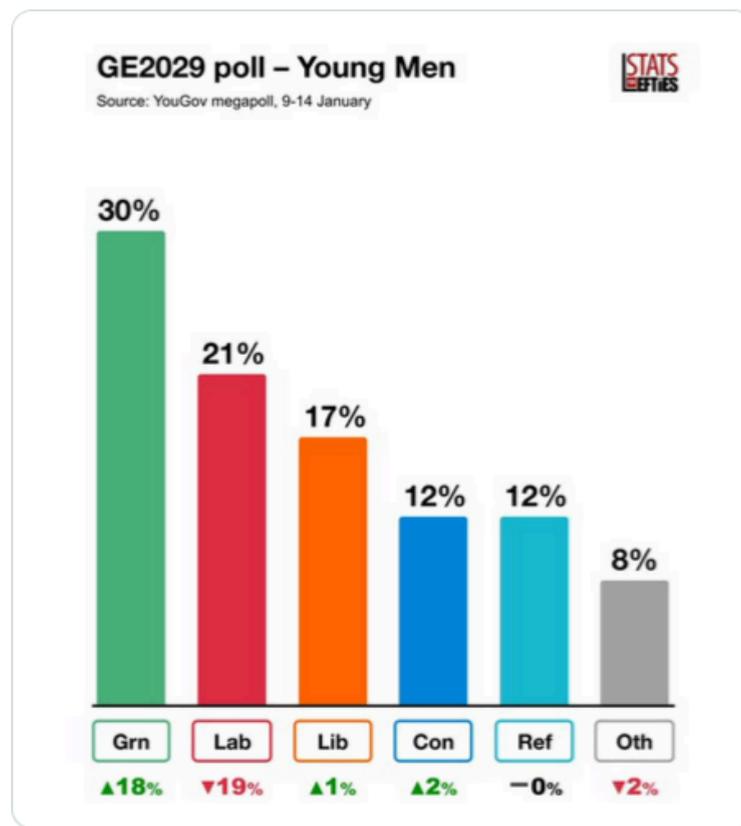
<https://themuslimvote.co.uk/the-muslim-vote-initial-election-analysis/>

<sup>183</sup>Ibid.

between Muslim community organisers, the Greens, and the socialist left could dramatically expand the number of seats where the progressive-Muslim coalition is competitive.

Since 2024, the infrastructure for this has been developing rapidly. Your Party, launched by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana in July 2025, has attracted 55,000 members and explicitly positions itself as a vehicle for the Muslim-left alliance. Its founding was directly catalysed by the independent victories in Muslim-majority constituencies.<sup>184</sup> The Greens themselves, under new leader Zack Polanski, have surged to 15% nationally with membership exceeding 180,000, overtaking both the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, and are polling at 38% among 18-to-24-year-olds.<sup>185</sup>

Via @YouGov, 14 Dec - 9 Jan (+/- vs GE2024)



And then of course we have the Gorton and Denton result.

<sup>184</sup>Williamson, Harriet. "Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana Are on Rival Slates for Your Party Leadership". Novara Media. 16 January 2026.

<https://novaramedia.com/2026/01/16/jeremy-corbyn-and-zarah-sultana-are-on-rival-slates-for-your-party-leadership/>

<sup>185</sup>Statista, "UK election polls by age 2026." 6 January 2026.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1379439/uk-election-polls-by-age/?srsltid=AfmBOopbeBXFhgdzbsB3VZnsj1leUWslhx3--NXKHdqzgZY8gIULBWnE>

The constituency is 28% Muslim. Labour won it with 50.8% of the vote in 2024, a majority of 13,413. The polls in the weeks before the by-election predicted a three-way dead heat: Green, Reform, and Labour all within two or three points of each other. What the polls did not predict was the scale of what happened on 26 February 2026.

Hannah Spencer, the Green candidate endorsed by The Muslim Vote, won with 14,980 votes — 40.7% of the vote. Matt Goodwin, Reform’s candidate, came second with 10,578 (28.7%). Labour’s Angeliki Stogia trailed in third with 9,364 (25.4%) — barely half the party’s 2024 vote in the same constituency. The Conservatives received 706 votes, below the deposit threshold. The Green majority was 4,402, not the knife-edge finish the polls predicted, but a comfortable, decisive victory.<sup>186</sup>

What happened between the polls and the ballot box was precisely the tactical consolidation this chapter’s framework predicts. TMV endorsed the Green candidate. Progressive voters — including Labour supporters who recognised, in deputy leader Lucy Powell’s own concession on the night, that the Greens had “won the argument that they were best placed” to block Reform — consolidated behind Spencer. The combined progressive vote (Green 14,980 plus Labour 9,364 plus Liberal Democrat 653) exceeded 25,000, more than double Reform’s total. The progressive vote did not split to let Reform through the middle. It consolidated to lock Reform out.

Reform’s own performance is instructive. Goodwin’s 28.7% vote share was almost identical to Reform’s national polling average of 27.7%. In other words, Reform converted its national poll share almost exactly — and it was nowhere near enough, because in a constituency with a significant Muslim population and an activated progressive coordination machine, the ceiling on Reform’s support is far below the level needed to win. The MRP models, projecting from national vote shares, assume that a four-way progressive split lets Reform through the middle in seats like these. In Gorton, the split did not materialise.

Now consider what this means for a Reform seat count already reduced by the ground game correction. In the approximately 20 constituencies where Muslims constitute more than 30% of the population, the combined progressive-Muslim vote is so large that Reform is extremely unlikely to win regardless of its national polling lead. These are seats in Birmingham, Bradford, Leicester, Blackburn, parts of East London, and Greater Manchester. The socio-economic profile of these constituencies — younger, more ethnically diverse, more urban — is precisely the profile that

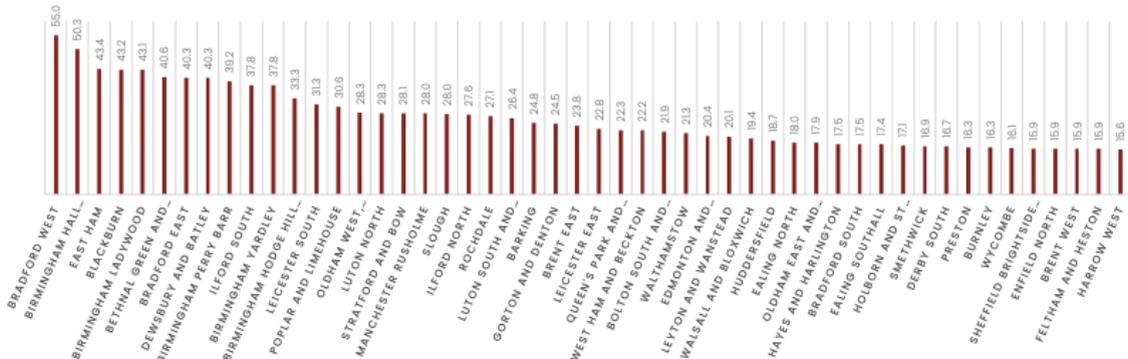
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<sup>186</sup> “2026 Gorton and Denton by-election” Wikipedia. Accessed 2 March 2026.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026\\_Gorton\\_and\\_Denton\\_by-election#Result](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Gorton_and_Denton_by-election#Result)

academic analysis identifies as unfavourable to Reform and favourable to the Greens.<sup>187</sup>

In the approximately 70 further constituencies where Muslims constitute between 10% and 30% of the population, the crucial question is whether the progressive vote consolidates or splits. Gorton, at 28%, provides the first parliamentary evidence. It consolidated decisively. If Gorton is indicative rather than exceptional – and the structural incentives all point toward consolidation rather than fragmentation in constituencies where TMV is active – then a significant number of these 70-odd seats will be held by progressive candidates against Reform.

**TOP 50 PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES BY % OF MUSLIM AGED 18 YEARS AND ABOVE ON 4TH JULY 2024**



<sup>187</sup> Whiteley, Paul. “Who will win in Gorton and Denton?” The Conversation. 20 February 2026. <https://theconversation.com/who-will-win-in-gorton-and-denton-what-the-results-of-every-byelection-since-2010-tell-us-276135>



*Stage Two — Adding The Muslim Vote. Layered onto the ground-game-adjusted baseline, TMV constituency coordination drops Reform from approximately 280 to 230 seats, nearly 100 short of a majority. Greens, Your Party, and TMV-endorsed independents gain across London, the West Midlands, Yorkshire, the North West, and the East Midlands.*

The MRP models do not account for this. They cannot, because they are built on national polling that does not capture constituency-level independent candidates, TMV endorsements, or the tactical coordination between Muslim community networks and progressive parties that operates below the level of national surveys. Gorton and Denton is the first parliamentary proof that this blind spot is real — and that its electoral consequences are large.

## **The Right Splits: Advance UK and Restore Britain**

If the ground game represents a structural correction and The Muslim Vote represents a force that MRP models cannot see on the left, Advance UK and Restore Britain represent forces they do not count at all on the right — because, as of February 2026, neither party has been included in any national voting intention poll.

The political dynamics are straightforward. Both parties were founded by former Reform UK figures who left acrimoniously and believe Farage is insufficiently radical. Ben Habib, Advance UK's leader, served as Reform's co-deputy leader until July 2024 before falling out with Farage and Zia Yusuf over the lack of party democratisation and policy direction. He launched Advance UK in June 2025, attracted Elon Musk's endorsement — Musk declared that “Advance UK will actually drive change. Farage is weak sauce who will do nothing” — and claims 37,000 members.<sup>188</sup> Rupert Lowe, leader of Restore Britain, was elected as a Reform MP for Great Yarmouth in 2024 before being suspended following allegations of threats against the party chairman. He launched Restore Britain as a pressure group in June 2025, converting it to a registered political party on 13 February 2026, and claims membership has already exceeded 100,000.<sup>189</sup>

The policy platforms of both parties are positioned explicitly to Reform's right. Advance UK promotes mass deportations, leaving the ECHR, and a Christian nationalist framing of British identity.<sup>190</sup> Restore Britain advocates net-negative immigration, reinstating the death penalty, banning the burqa and niqab, abolishing halal and kosher slaughter, and what Lowe has described as “full-scale restoration” of Christian Britain.<sup>191</sup> Both parties appeal to voters who feel Reform has become too

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<sup>188</sup>Advance UK, Wikipedia entry; Musk quote from X, 26 August 2025.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advance\\_UK](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advance_UK)

<sup>189</sup>Restore Britain, Wikipedia entry [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restore\\_Britain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restore_Britain)

<sup>190</sup>Advance UK mission statement. Accessed 2 March 2026. <https://advanceuk.org.uk/mission>

<sup>191</sup>Lampard, Rod. “Restore Britain's Rupert Lowe: “Britain Is a Christian Country, and It Will Remain So.”” The Daily Declaration. 23 February 2026.

<https://dailydeclaration.org.au/2026/02/23/restore-britain-christian-country/>

moderate, a constituency that, while small in national percentage terms, is concentrated in precisely the seats Reform needs to win.

As of late February 2026, Restore Britain has already attracted defections from Reform: councillors in Kent, Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, and North Northamptonshire have crossed the floor.<sup>192</sup> Advance UK stood a candidate in Gorton and Denton — Nick Buckley, a former Reform candidate — though his vote was minimal. Both parties have signalled they intend to field hundreds of candidates at the next general election.

Historical precedent suggests the threat is real. The Commons Library's analysis of Reform's 2024 performance notes that Reform's 14.3% national vote share was comparable to UKIP's 12.6% under Farage in 2015, when UKIP won one seat. In 2019, the Brexit Party won 2% of the national vote and no seats, but it stood in only 275 constituencies, having declined to contest the 317 seats previously held by the Conservatives; where it did stand, it averaged 5.1% of the vote.<sup>193</sup> If Advance UK and Restore Britain can match even the Brexit Party's 2019 performance — a modest target given their combined claimed membership and the backing of figures like Musk and Tommy Robinson — each would average approximately 3,650 votes per constituency. In a seat like Runcorn, where Reform's margin was six votes, that scale of vote leakage would be catastrophic.

The by-election evidence on the right-wing split is limited, and anyway, by-elections are poor tests of minor-party strength: the national spotlight and the intense focus on a three-way race between the Greens, Reform, and Labour suppressed the minor-party vote through the familiar squeeze effect. The real test will come at the May 2026 local elections and ultimately at the general election, when Advance UK and Restore Britain can field candidates across hundreds of constituencies without the same pressure to vote tactically. Notably, no right-wing splinter candidate stood in Runcorn and Helsby — yet even without the split, Reform barely won. The implication is clear: any leakage at all to the right of Reform, in seats where margins are this tight, would be fatal.

The electoral arithmetic is unforgiving. Reform's projected majority in the MRP models depends on winning hundreds of seats with pluralities, not majorities. In the More in Common January MRP, Reform wins 381 seats on 31% of the vote — meaning it wins 60% of seats on less than a third of votes cast, one of the most

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<sup>192</sup> "Restore Britain" Wikipedia, *ibid*.

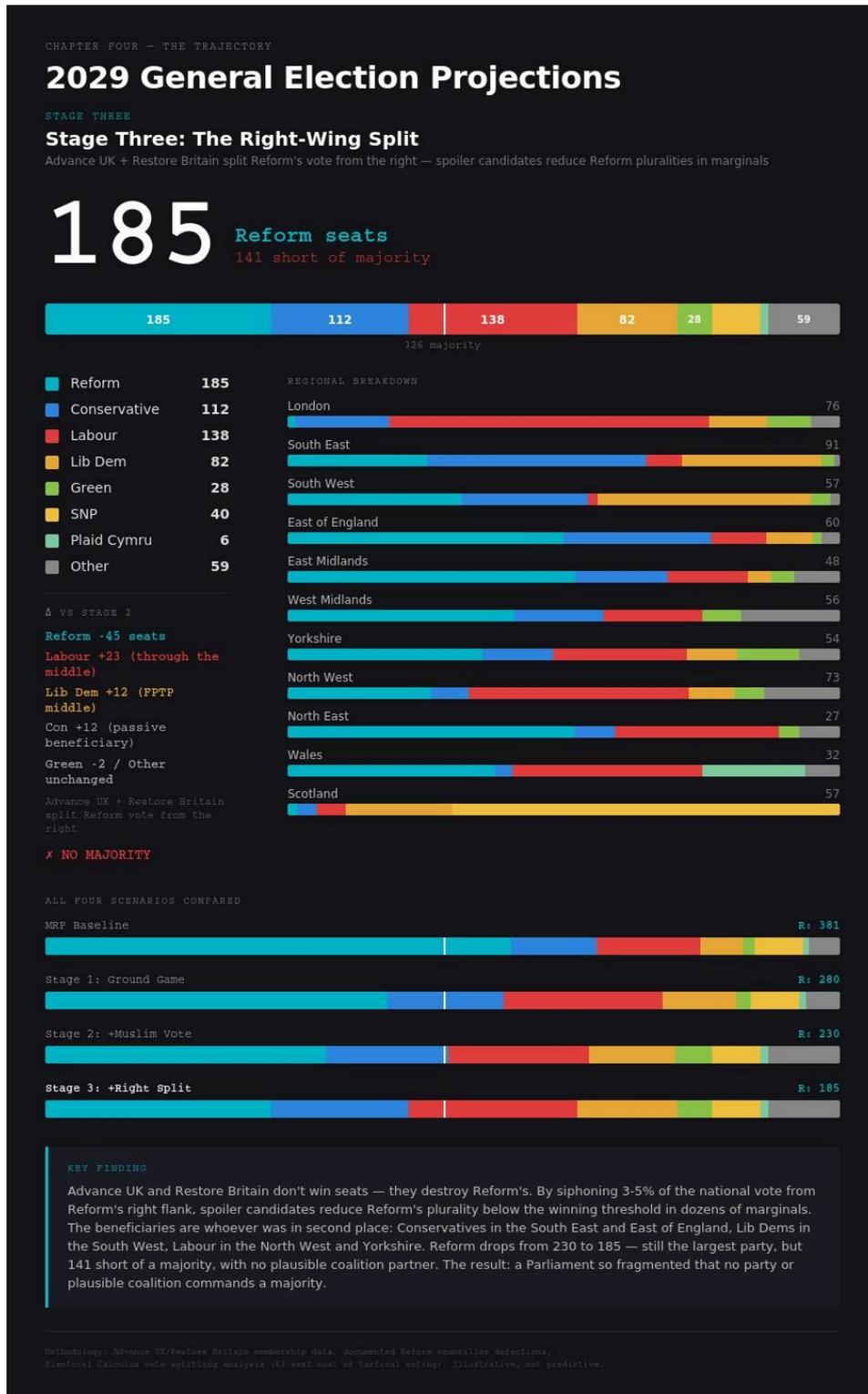
<sup>193</sup> "2024 General Election: Performance of Reform and the Greens." Commons Library. 16 August 2024. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/2024-general-election-performance-of-reform-and-the-greens/>

disproportionate results in modern British history.<sup>194</sup> This level of disproportionality is only possible because the opposition vote is split four or five ways. But the same logic works in reverse: even a small split in Reform's own vote could cost it seats in every marginal it's projected to win. Consider: if Advance UK and Restore Britain together take 5% of the national vote — a plausible figure given their combined claimed membership of over 100,000 and the visible anger in far-right online spaces toward Farage's perceived moderation — the effect on Reform's seat count would be devastating.

And every defection compounds the ground game problem. Every councillor who crosses the floor to Restore Britain is not just a lost vote but a lost canvasser, a lost local organiser, a lost piece of the ground operation Reform desperately needs to build. The ground game deficit and the right-wing split are not independent variables. They reinforce each other.

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<sup>194</sup>More in Common January MRP, *ibid.*



*Stage Three — Adding the Right-Wing Split. As the final layer on top of both the ground game correction and the Muslim Vote adjustment, the right-wing split drops Reform from approximately 230 to 185 seats — some 140 short of a majority. The Conservatives are the main beneficiaries as right-wing vote splitting hands marginals back to them, particularly in the South East, East of England, and the South West.*

## The Cascade — and What the By-Elections Confirm

The four figures accompanying this chapter tell the story as a cascading correction, each stage building on the last, each factor compounding rather than operating in isolation. It is worth reviewing the full sequence, because the cumulative effect is considerably larger than any single adjustment would suggest.

The MRP Baseline gives Reform 381 seats on current polling: a majority of 112. This is the number that circulates on social media, that Goodwin and others celebrate, that has become the foundation of right-of-centre confidence. It assumes uniform national swing, consolidated right-wing support, a fragmented left, and, crucially, that every Reform vote is backed by the same campaign infrastructure as every Labour, Lib Dem, or Conservative vote. It assumes, in other words, that polls are seats. The methodology behind MRP — multilevel regression and post-stratification — is sophisticated, but its sophistication is applied to the wrong problem. It can tell you how demographic groups in each constituency are likely to vote. It cannot tell you whether anyone will knock on their door to ensure that they do.

**Stage One: The Ground Game** corrects this foundational assumption. Even before considering any specific political force, the gap between Reform’s national polling and its local campaign infrastructure — the absence of canvassers, the vetting failures, the third of members who did no campaigning, and the overwhelming preference for online activism over the pavement-pounding that wins marginal seats — reduces the party’s likely seat count to approximately 280. The Lib Dems gain on incumbency and four decades of community politics. Labour gains on union mobilisation networks. Reform loses in every marginal where the difference between winning and losing is a knocked door or a driven voter. This single correction eliminates Reform’s majority. The party falls some 46 seats short. We applied this correction using the British Election Study’s vote efficiency data from 2024 as our baseline, adjusting for the Lib Dem incumbency effect, Labour’s documented union mobilisation capacity, the proven 85% success rate of Compass’s tactical voting recommendations, and the tactical voting willingness measured by YouGov. The Runcorn and Helsby by-election — where Reform’s national polling dominance translated into a six-vote margin in maximally favourable territory — suggests this correction may, if anything, be too generous to Reform.

**Stage Two: The Muslim Vote** layers constituency-level coordination onto the ground-game-adjusted baseline. Using 2021 census data on Muslim population by constituency, TMV’s documented endorsement patterns, and the emerging Green-Muslim-Your Party alliance infrastructure, we estimate that in the 90-plus constituencies where Muslims exceed 10% of the electorate, TMV endorsements and

progressive coordination create a wall of resistance that national polls cannot detect. Reform drops to approximately 230 seats — nearly 100 short. The effect is concentrated in London, the West Midlands, Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the East Midlands. The Gorton and Denton by-election, where the Greens, backed by TMV, won by 4,402 votes in a constituency the polls predicted would be a dead heat, and where the MRP model had projected a Reform plurality, suggests this correction is well-calibrated and possibly conservative. The scale of the progressive consolidation in Gorton exceeded what the polling predicted: the combined anti-Reform vote was more than double Reform's total.

**Stage Three: The Right-Wing Split** applies the final correction. Advance UK and Restore Britain, fielding hundreds of candidates in the Leave-voting heartlands where Reform's support is deepest, siphon 3 to 5 per cent of the national vote from Reform's column. We base this estimate on the parties' combined claimed membership of over 100,000, the pattern of councillor defections from Reform, the historical precedent of UKIP and the Brexit Party's vote shares in FPTP elections, and Electoral Calculus's analysis of the seat cost of anti-Reform tactical voting (63 seats). The votes go nowhere useful — neither party wins seats — but they reduce Reform's plurality in dozens of marginals. Reform drops to approximately 185 seats. Still the largest party. Still a historic achievement for a movement that held five seats in 2024. But roughly 140 seats short of a majority, and with no plausible coalition partner willing to put Farage in Downing Street.

One further finding from the by-elections deserves mention, because it complicates the picture in ways the projections above do not fully capture: the Conservative collapse. In Runcorn, the Conservatives polled 7% — down from 16% at the 2024 general election. In Gorton, they polled 1.9%, below the threshold for retaining their deposit. Charlotte Cadden received 706 votes. If the Conservative vote continues to disintegrate at this rate, the redistribution of seats becomes more complex than any simple model can project. Some of those seats will go to Reform, in constituencies where the Conservatives were the main challenger. Others — particularly in the south, where the Lib Dems are strongest — will go to the Liberal Democrats. The net effect may be a Parliament even more fragmented than the four-stage cascade suggests.

The most likely outcome of the next general election, on current trajectory, is a Parliament so fragmented that no party or plausible coalition commands a majority. Reform is the largest party but is shunned by every other party in the Commons. The Conservatives, reduced but not eliminated, face an existential choice about whether to prop up a Farage government or join a progressive blocking coalition. Labour, the

Greens, the Liberal Democrats, the SNP, Your Party, and the independents collectively outnumber Reform but agree on almost nothing except that they do not want Farage in Downing Street. The result is either a minority Reform government that can pass almost no legislation, or a chaotic anti-Reform coalition that can agree on little other than that they want a progressive Britain.

## Why a Pact Is Not the Answer

The instinctive response on the right will be obvious: if vote-splitting is the problem, then a pre-election pact must be the solution. Such thinking is mistaken: it treats the symptom, not the cause.

The structural disadvantage facing Reform is not primarily arithmetic, *it is ecological*. As the analysis above demonstrates, the erosion of Reform's projected majority operates at three distinct layers: organisation on the ground, coordinated tactical behaviour within key demographics, and the broader institutional environment in which campaigns are fought. A deal between parties would address only the last-mile question of candidate overlap. It would do nothing to change the terrain on which those candidates compete.

The left's advantage is precisely that it does not rely on formal pacts. Labour, the Greens, the Liberal Democrats, the unions, activist networks, community organisers, charities, and demographic campaigns such as The Muslim Vote operate as a loose but mutually reinforcing system. They share data, activists, narratives, and institutional backing. Coordination happens culturally and operationally, not contractually. This is what a mature political ecosystem looks like: a distributed network in which each actor performs a different function but pulls in the same strategic direction. The British right has nothing comparable.

A right-wing electoral pact, by contrast, would be a thin layer of cooperation resting on top of an otherwise fragmented landscape. It might prevent a handful of three-way contests, but it would not create activists where none exist, build community trust where none has been cultivated, generate candidate pipelines where the vetting process has already failed, or supply the institutional reinforcement that converts votes into durable power. The scenario modelling makes this clear: even before the right-wing split is introduced, Reform's projection has already fallen far short of a majority once organisational and ecosystem factors are accounted for.

A pact could change who stands where. It cannot change who shows up, who mobilises, who funds, who frames the debate, or who shapes the local political culture. Those are ecosystem functions, and they are precisely where the right is weakest. The lesson is not that cooperation is unnecessary, but that it must be deeper than electoral convenience. The left wins without formal alliances because it has spent decades building the connective tissue that makes coordination automatic. If the right wants to compete on equal terms, it must build its own institutional infrastructure: training networks, community organisations, policy pipelines, funding streams, and cultural institutions that persist between elections and compound in their effect from one cycle to the next.

Until that infrastructure exists, any pact will be a tactical fix applied to a structural deficit. And structural deficits, as the cascade demonstrates, always reassert themselves.

## **What This Means for the Right**

This projection is not a counsel of despair for the right, but it should be a counsel against complacency. The assumption that Reform's polling lead translates automatically into governmental power — and that governmental power translates automatically into the institutional transformation this paper argues is necessary — is doubly flawed.

It is flawed electorally because the teal maps overstate Reform's likely seat count by ignoring forces that operate at every level of the electoral system. The ground game asymmetry is structural: it reflects decades of organisational underinvestment that cannot be corrected by polling leads alone, as the 2024 result — 14% of the vote, 5 seats — demonstrated with brutal clarity, and as the Runcorn by-election — a six-vote margin in Reform's heartland — confirmed. The Muslim Vote is real, it is growing, it is strategically sophisticated, and it is invisible to the instruments the right is using to measure its own prospects: as Gorton demonstrated, the progressive vote does not split obligingly to let Reform through. Advance UK and Restore Britain are real, they are actively haemorrhaging Reform's activist base, and they are not going away.

And it is flawed strategically because even a Reform majority government, *even if every optimistic projection came true*, would inherit exactly the institutional landscape described in Chapters Two and Three. A government staffed by the same civil service, constrained by the same legal frameworks, opposed by the same charities, monitored by the same professional bodies, educated in the same

universities, and covered by the same institutional media. The experience of every right-of-centre government in living memory is that electoral victory without institutional infrastructure produces, at best, the temporary imposition of policy that is reversed the moment the government falls and, at worst, the gradual capture of the government itself by the institutions it nominally oversees.

The teal maps are seductive. They promise that the ballot box can deliver what decades of institutional neglect have forfeited. *They cannot*. The ballot box can change who sits in ministerial offices. It cannot change who staffs the departments those ministers oversee, who runs the charities those departments fund, who governs the professional bodies those charities collaborate with, who teaches in the universities those professional bodies accredit, or who sets the cultural assumptions within which all of these institutions operate. That requires something the right has never built and shows no sign of building: an institutional counter-establishment that can contest the left's dominance across every layer of British public life, not just the one layer — electoral politics — where the right has always been most comfortable.

The next chapter asks what building that counter-establishment would actually require.

## **A Note on Methodology**

The projections in this chapter are not outputs of a formal statistical model. They are scenario-based corrections applied to published MRP projections, designed to illustrate the cumulative effect of forces that MRP cannot capture. The baseline is the More in Common January 2026 MRP (381 Reform seats), which we treat as the most optimistic available estimate of what would happen if national polling translated uniformly into constituency results. Each successive stage applies a correction grounded in specific evidence:

Stage One (ground game) draws on the British Election Study's 2024 vote efficiency analysis, Reform's own membership survey data as reported by The Conversation (including the finding that Reform members campaigned overwhelmingly online rather than on the streets), documented vetting failures, Lib Dem incumbency effects, UNISON's anti-Reform mobilisation programme, Compass's documented 85% success rate in tactical voting recommendations, and YouGov's tactical voting research (63–77% of Labour voters willing to vote tactically). The Runcorn and Helsby by-election result (Reform +20.9pp swing from 2024, yet winning by only 6

votes) provides a real-world calibration point. The Electoral Calculus sorted seat rankings contextualise what these margins imply at scale.

Stage Two (Muslim Vote) draws on 2021 census data on Muslim population by constituency, TMV's documented endorsement patterns in 2024 (including the specific majority-slashing results claimed in TMV's own post-election analysis), the emerging Green-Muslim-Your Party alliance, and the tactical voting willingness measured by YouGov. The Gorton and Denton by-election result (Green victory by 4,402 in a constituency the MRP model had projected as a Reform plurality) provides a real-world calibration point — and a particularly powerful one, given that the deviation from the MRP prediction was not marginal but categorical.

Stage Three (right-wing split) draws on Advance UK and Restore Britain's claimed membership figures, documented councillor defections from Reform, the Commons Library's analysis of UKIP and Brexit Party performance in previous elections (providing a baseline for expected vote share of right-wing splinter parties), Electoral Calculus's analysis of the seat cost of anti-Reform tactical voting (63 seats), and the historical pattern of vote-splitting in FPTP systems. This stage has the weakest direct evidence, as neither right-wing splinter party has been tested at parliamentary level.

The resulting seat projections (381 → 280 → 230 → 185) are illustrative, not predictive. They are designed to test the MRP consensus, not to replace it. The specific numbers should be treated as indicative of direction and magnitude rather than as point estimates. What we are confident of is the direction: every correction runs against Reform, and their cumulative effect is to eliminate any realistic prospect of a Reform majority on current evidence.

## Chapter 5

### Taking On The Blob

The preceding chapter demonstrated that Reform's path to a parliamentary majority is considerably narrower than the teal tsunami maps suggest. But suppose the right overcomes every obstacle — the ground game deficit, The Muslim Vote, the right-wing splinter parties, the tactical voting coordination ranged against it — and wins a majority regardless? What then?

The institutional deficit documented in this paper costs the right twice over. It makes elections harder to win *and* it makes electoral victory less valuable when won. This chapter addresses the second problem, which is in many respects the more important of the two because it persists even in the right's best-case electoral scenario. It's the problem that every right-of-centre government in living memory has discovered too late to do anything about it.

#### The Ratchet

The pattern is consistent across decades and administrations. A right-of-centre party wins office, often with a significant majority and a clear mandate. It arrives in government intending to reform the state, reduce its scope, and reverse the institutional drift documented in the preceding chapters. It then discovers that the machinery of government — the civil service, the regulatory apparatus, the network of statutory duties, contractual commitments, and legal frameworks that constitute the permanent state — is not a neutral instrument waiting to be directed. It is an institution with its own culture, its own incentives, and its own gravitational pull, and that pull runs consistently in one direction.

The Conservatives governed for fourteen years between 2010 and 2024. They held commanding majorities for much of that period. They had clear manifesto commitments... and they left office with the civil service larger than when they arrived. The Institute for Government's Whitehall Monitor 2026 found that civil service growth continued "in spite of sustained and explicit ministerial commitments to reduce the size of the civil service," and that "too many ministers feel very poorly served by the system."<sup>195</sup> The universities became more ideologically uniform during this period, not less. The charity sector grew more politically active. The professional bodies adopted more progressive positions. The regulatory framework — equality duties, corporate governance codes, charitable purposes definitions — became more

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<sup>195</sup> Keenan, Hannah. "Whitehall Monitor 2026: Foreword and Overview." Institute for Government, 13 January 2026.  
<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/whitehall-monitor-2026/overview>

deeply embedded, not less. The state that the Conservatives bequeathed to Labour in 2024 was, by every institutional metric documented in Chapters Two and Three, further to the left than the state they had inherited in 2010.

The ratchet effect has operated for a century. Each left-wing government expands the state: new statutory duties, new regulatory bodies, new funding streams to civil society organisations that campaign for further expansion. Each Conservative government consolidates rather than reverses what it inherited, because the institutional cost of genuine retrenchment — the litigation, the media opposition, the professional body mobilisation, the charity sector campaign — exceeds the political will available to sustain it. The next Labour government expands further. The baseline never returns to where it was.

Two recent case studies illustrate this dynamic with particular clarity, one at the national level, one at the local, and they are worth examining in some detail, because they demonstrate not merely that the institutional landscape resists right-wing reform, but the specific mechanisms by which that resistance operates.

### **Case Study: Gove versus the Blob**

Michael Gove's tenure as Education Secretary from 2010 to 2014 represents perhaps the most determined attempt by a Conservative minister in recent decades to confront the institutional landscape head-on. Gove arrived at the Department for Education with a clear agenda backed by think tank analysis, substantial political backing, and the intellectual firepower of advisers including Dominic Cummings. He understood, more explicitly than most of his colleagues, that the education establishment — the teaching unions, the university education departments, the local education authorities, the inspectorates, and the professional bodies — constituted precisely the kind of interlocking institutional ecosystem this paper has described. He called it "the Blob," borrowing a term originally coined by William Bennett, Reagan's education secretary in the 1980s: an amorphous, self-reinforcing mass of bureaucrats, unions, and academics who would resist reform by any means available.<sup>196</sup>

His reforms were sweeping. Academies — schools freed from local authority control — expanded from 203 to nearly 4,000 during his tenure.<sup>197</sup> He launched free schools, modelled on Sweden's independent school system, allowing parents, charities, and other groups to establish new schools outside local authority oversight. He

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<sup>196</sup> Sewell, Dennis. "Michael Gove vs. the Blob." *The Spectator*, 13 January 2010.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20191030141744/https://www.spectator.co.uk/2010/01/michael-gove-vs-the-blob/>

<sup>197</sup> Birrell, Graham. "Gove's revolution leaves behind a fast-food education system." *The Conversation*, 15 July 2014.

<https://theconversation.com/goves-revolution-leaves-behind-a-fast-food-education-system-29190>

overhauled the national curriculum, reintroducing rigorous academic content. He reformed GCSEs to end modular assessment. He scrapped national pay frameworks for academy teachers and introduced performance-related pay.<sup>198</sup> He was, by any measure, the most consequential Education Secretary in a generation.

The resistance was immediate, sustained, and operated across every node of the institutional ecosystem. The National Union of Teachers unanimously passed a vote of no confidence in Gove and called for his resignation in 2013. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers passed its own no-confidence motion the same year.<sup>199</sup> Nearly 200 figures, including the Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, alongside academics from Oxford, Bristol, and Newcastle, signed a letter to *The Times* condemning his reforms.<sup>200</sup> His own History curriculum adviser, Simon Schama, turned on the finalised proposals, calling them “insulting and offensive” and “pedantic and utopian.”<sup>201</sup> Oxford’s head of admissions warned the reforms would “wreck the English education system.”<sup>202</sup> A hundred education academics signed a letter complaining there were too many facts in the national curriculum.<sup>203</sup> A senior civil servant admitted that controversial parts of the proposed secondary curriculum had been written internally by the Department for Education without any input from external experts — not because Gove wanted to exclude them, but because the experts available were so uniformly hostile to the direction of travel that consultation had become a mechanism of obstruction rather than improvement.<sup>204</sup>

The institutional resistance was not merely rhetorical. In February 2011, a judicial review deemed Gove's decision to cancel school-building projects in six local authority areas unlawful.<sup>205</sup> The Liberal Democrats, the coalition partner, blocked further reforms. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg refused to speak to Gove “for months.”<sup>206</sup> The Trojan Horse scandal in Birmingham schools exposed governance failures that required the Prime Minister’s personal intervention and generated a damaging public dispute between the Department for Education and the Home

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid. Academies rose from 203 to 3,979; 174 free schools were established; national pay frameworks were scrapped and performance-related pay introduced; GCSE modular assessment was ended.

<sup>199</sup> "Michael Gove as Education Secretary." Wikipedia, citing NUT and ATL conference proceedings, 2013. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael\\_Gove%27s\\_tenure\\_as\\_Education\\_Secretary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Gove%27s_tenure_as_Education_Secretary)

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. Letter to *The Times*, October 2013, signed by approximately 200 figures including Carol Ann Duffy and Michael Rosen.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Hazell, Will. “Exclusive: ‘I don’t want to be education secretary again,’ says Michael Gove” *TES Magazine*. 31 March 2017. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/exclusive-i-dont-want-be-education-secretary-again-says-michael-gove> Gove: “‘The Blob’ - which I used very rarely - was specifically a reference to the 100 education academics who wrote a letter saying there were too many facts in the national curriculum, and I linked them to ultra militant figures in the trade unions. And that was it.”

<sup>204</sup> "Michael Gove as Education Secretary." Wikipedia.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid. "In February 2011, a judicial review deemed Gove's decision to axe BSF projects in six local authority areas unlawful as he had failed to consult."

<sup>206</sup> "The Sacking of Michael Gove." *Impact Teachers*, 15 July 2014. <https://impactteachers.com/blog/the-sacking-of-michael-gove/>

Office. Gove was fighting on every front simultaneously: against the unions, against the universities, against his own civil servants, against his coalition partners, against the legal system, and against the media.

In July 2014, private polling showed that Gove had become a “toxic liability” among teachers. The Conservative Party’s campaign strategist, Lynton Crosby, advised David Cameron that Gove’s brand was electoral poison.<sup>207</sup> Cameron removed him from the education brief in a cabinet reshuffle widely reported as a demotion, replacing him with the less combative Nicky Morgan. Dominic Cummings described the move as Cameron’s “surrender” to education pressure groups.<sup>208</sup>

That word — “surrender” — captures the dynamic precisely. Gove was not defeated because his reforms were wrong or unpopular with parents. Polling consistently showed public support for more rigorous academic standards. He was defeated because the institutional ecosystem he was fighting was denser, more deeply embedded, and more operationally resilient than any individual minister, however determined, however well-advised, however politically backed. The unions could outlast him. The academics could outpublish him. The legal system could outwait him. And his own party could be made to fear the electoral cost of supporting him more than they valued the reforms he was delivering.

What came next merely confirms the thesis. Gove’s key reforms — academy freedoms, curriculum autonomy, independent pay structures — survived his departure and, for a decade, quietly transformed parts of the English school system. England rose in international league tables. Academy trusts developed innovative approaches to teaching disadvantaged children. But the institutional ecosystem that Gove had fought never accepted the settlement. It waited.

In December 2024, the Labour government introduced the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill.<sup>209</sup> The bill requires all academies to follow the national curriculum — reversing the core freedom that had been the foundation of the entire academy programme. It reimposes national pay and conditions on academy teachers. It ends the requirement for failing schools to be academised. It restores local authority powers over admissions and new school proposals. As the House of Commons Library summarised: the bill would “roll back many of the freedoms these schools were given when the current academy framework was established.”<sup>210</sup> The Conservative Shadow Education Secretary described it as “the policy equivalent of a wrecking ball” and “an all-out assault on teachers, the education system and

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<sup>207</sup> "2014 British cabinet reshuffle." Wikipedia. "Gove's move... came after Conservative campaign chief strategist Lynton Crosby warned Cameron that Gove's brand was 'toxic' in polling."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014\\_British\\_cabinet\\_reshuffle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_British_cabinet_reshuffle)

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> "Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024–25." House of Commons Library, Research Briefing CBP-10165. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10165/>

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

standards.”<sup>211</sup> David Cameron, intervening from the House of Lords, called it “damaging and nonsensical” and accused Labour of wielding a “spite-laden wrecking ball” against the free schools programme.<sup>212</sup>

The speed and comprehensiveness of the reversal is instructive. A decade of reform, driven by the most determined Education Secretary in a generation, backed by substantial political capital, is being unwound within a single parliamentary session. The teaching unions that fought Gove from 2010 to 2014 did not need to win the argument in real time. They needed to outlast the minister, wait for the government to fall, and then work with a sympathetic successor to restore the status quo. The Blob, as Toby Young observed in the *Spectator*, made short work of Tony Blair’s earlier attempts at academy reform in the same way — “silently wrapping its tentacles around the Academies and choking every measure of independent life out of them.”<sup>213</sup> The mechanism is identical each time. The institutional ecosystem absorbs, resists, waits, and reverses. The ratchet turns.

## **Case Study: Kent’s Department of Local Government Efficiency**

If Gove’s experience illustrates the dynamic at national level, the experience of Reform UK in Kent County Council illustrates it at local level, in sharper focus and on a compressed timescale that makes the structural forces unmistakable.

Reform swept to control of Kent CC, England’s largest county council, in May 2025 on a platform of cutting waste and reducing council tax. The party’s then-chairman Zia Yusuf was explicit about what voters could expect: potholes filled, bins collected, waste eliminated. “They don’t want their council tax going up,” he told the BBC. “And Reform will deliver on those things.”<sup>214</sup> The party established a Department of Local Government Efficiency — DOLGE — modelled on Elon Musk’s federal equivalent in the United States, and promised to open the books and find out where the waste lay.

What the councillors discovered, once they were inside the machinery, was that the waste they had promised to cut was largely a fiction — not because the council was well-run in every respect, but because the cost base was overwhelmingly determined

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<sup>211</sup> "Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill." Hansard, House of Commons Debates, 8 January 2025. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-01-08/debates/656F7D15-EA9D-46EA-8D8A-795738402CE9/Children%E2%80%99SWellbeingAndSchoolsBill>

<sup>212</sup> Cameron, David. “We must halt Labour’s damaging and nonsensical attack on our schools” *The Telegraph*. 2 February 2026. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/02/02/starmer-taking-a-wrecking-ball-to-englands-schools/>

<sup>213</sup> Young, Toby. "My battle with Michael Gove's Blob." *The Spectator*, 8 February 2014. <https://spectator.com/article/my-battle-with-michael-gove-s-blob/>

<sup>214</sup> "Reform Watch 12: Reform promise cuts and deliver tax rises." Hope Not Hate, 8 October 2025. <https://hopenothate.org.uk/2025/10/08/reform-watch-12/>

by statutory obligations over which elected members had almost no discretion. In Kent alone, more than £787 million — 48% of the entire budget — was committed to adult social care, a legal obligation that no administration can simply choose not to fund. Children’s services, another statutory commitment, consumed a further substantial share. By the time mandatory services, contractual commitments, and debt servicing were accounted for, the discretionary budget available for the kind of cuts Reform had promised was vanishingly small.<sup>215</sup>

Six months after taking office, eight of the thirteen councils Reform took control of had indicated plans to raise council tax, six by the maximum 4.99% permitted by law.<sup>216</sup> Kent itself was bracing for the same. The £46.5 million budget overspend — up 66% in just three months — was being funded by drawing down reserves from £78.5 million to £41 million, well below the council’s own target of holding reserves at 5% of the revenue budget.<sup>217</sup>

The DOLGE team’s own assessment was devastating. Paul Chamberlain, one of the Reform cabinet members responsible for the efficiency programme, told the *Financial Times*: “We made some assumptions that we would come in here and find some of the craziness that DOGE found in America and that was wrong, we didn’t find any of that.”<sup>218</sup> His colleague Matthew Fraser-Moat, the head of DOLGE, told the same paper he was “really proud that the Reform council has not actually made any cuts” and that “we haven’t cut frontline services other than what the Conservatives had already planned to do.”<sup>219</sup> Reform had, in fact, *blocked* some of the previous administration’s proposed cuts, including the closure of several libraries.

When Reform’s claimed £100 million in savings was scrutinised, nearly £40 million turned out to be based on hypothetical projects that had never been formally proposed, including £32 million supposedly saved by scrapping an uncosted scheme to improve the environmental performance of council properties and £7.5 million by not purchasing electric vehicles that had never been budgeted for.<sup>220</sup> A Green Party councillor described the figures as a “blatant lie,” noting that the DOLGE team had “delivered precisely nothing while costing over £70,000 in special responsibility

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<sup>215</sup> Mortimer, Josh. "Reform UK's 'Cost Cutting' Council Prepares to Raise Taxes After Presiding Over £46 Million Overspend." *Byline Times*, 24 November 2025.

<https://bylinetimes.com/2025/11/24/reform-uks-cost-cutting-council-prepares-to-raise-taxes-after-presiding-over-46-million-overspend/>

<sup>216</sup> "Reform councils set to raise taxes for nearly 5 million people despite promising cuts." LBC, 4

November 2025. [https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/reform-uk-council-tax-rise-nigel Farage-5HjdGKc\\_2/](https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/reform-uk-council-tax-rise-nigel Farage-5HjdGKc_2/)

<sup>217</sup> "Kent County Council Budget Overspend at Half-Time." ShepwayVox, 19 November 2025.

<https://shepwayvox.org/2025/11/19/kent-county-council-budget-overspend-at-half-time-reform-uk-era-faces-adult-social-care-crisis/>

<sup>218</sup> Sledge, Joe. "Reform UK admits Kent County Council 'Doge' efforts failed to uncover major savings despite promises." GB News, 2 February 2026.

<https://www.gbnews.com/money/reform-elon-musk-doge-failed-savings>

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Skwawkbox “‘Simply making it up’ — Reform-led council invented supposed £40m saving” The Canary. 8 February 2026.

<https://www.thecanary.co/skwawkbox/2026/02/08/reform-led-council-simply/>

allowances between them.”<sup>221</sup> The Liberal Democrat opposition leader was equally blunt: “On course to deliver £100 million savings this year? No. This year is forecast to end with an overspend of £36.5 million. The Reform press release reads to me like DOLGE is dead. It did little and was a waste of money.”<sup>222</sup>

Fraser-Moat resigned his cabinet position in February 2026. His resignation statement acknowledged the structural reality obliquely: “It has become clear to me that continuing as Head of DOLGE is not sustainable.”<sup>223</sup> His replacement, Councillor Christopher Hespe, inherited a programme whose credibility had been comprehensively undermined, not by political opponents or hostile media, but by the structural facts of local government finance that Reform had failed to understand before seeking power over it.<sup>224</sup>

The lesson of Kent is not that Reform’s councillors were incompetent. Many were capable people who genuinely believed they would find waste to cut. The lesson is that arriving in office without having done the institutional groundwork — without understanding statutory frameworks, without a pipeline of trained councillors who know what they are walking into, without think tank support producing a credible reform agenda in advance, without community organisations capable of delivering services differently — produces exactly the outcome Mosca’s framework predicts. The existing institutional machinery, designed and refined over decades, overwhelms the newcomers. As one Reform cabinet member told the *Financial Times*: the previous Conservative administration “weren't crazy, they were business people.”<sup>225</sup> The structural constraints were not the product of incompetence. They were the product of an institutional architecture that had been built, deliberately and incrementally, to resist exactly the kind of disruption Reform was attempting.

## The National Implication

What happened in Kent would happen at Westminster, at vastly greater scale and with vastly higher stakes, as Gove’s experience proves.

A Reform majority government would inherit a civil service of over 550,000 people, drawn overwhelmingly from the same graduate pipeline that supplies every other

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<sup>221</sup> Finlay, Simon. “Kent County Council Reform UK cabinet member for cutting waste resigns over ‘lapse of judgement’” Kent Online. 4 February 2026. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/kcc-reform-uk-cabinet-member-resigns-over-lapse-of-judgement-335998/>

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> “An update on Kent County Council’s DOLGE.” Kent County Council, 3 February 2026. <https://news.kent.gov.uk/articles/an-update-to-kent-county-councils-cabinet>

<sup>224</sup> “Reform’s new DOLGE boss is extremely online.” Kent Current, 9 February 2026. <https://www.kentcurrent.news/reforms-new-dolge-boss-is-extremely-online/>

<sup>225</sup> Sledge, Joe. “Reform council admits Elon Musk-inspired ‘Doge’ efforts failed to uncover major savings despite promises”. GB News. 2 February 2026. <https://www.gbnews.com/money/reform-elon-musk-doge-failed-savings>

progressive-leaning institution documented in this paper. It would inherit a network of statutory duties, contractual commitments, and legal frameworks that constrain ministerial discretion at every turn. It would face a charity sector commanding £96 billion in annual income that would mobilise against its agenda with the moral authority of speaking for the vulnerable. It would confront professional bodies lending the authority of entire professions to opposition. It would be covered by institutional media whose framing assumptions are shaped by the same graduate culture. And it would be litigated against by organisations with the resources, the legal expertise, and the institutional patience to tie policy up in the courts for years.

Gove had all the advantages a minister could hope for — intellectual clarity, political backing, a clear agenda, capable advisers — and the institutional ecosystem still defeated him. His reforms were reversed within a decade. Kent's DOLGE had the enthusiasm of outsiders determined to shake up the system, and the structural realities of local government finance overwhelmed them within months. Neither failure was a failure of intent or ability. Both were failures of institutional architecture: **the right had no ecosystem to sustain its reforms against the permanent ecosystem ranged against them.**

A right-wing government without an institutional counter-establishment is a government that will spend its entire term fighting on uneven ground, battling the civil service for control of its own departments, battling the charities for control of the public narrative, battling the professional bodies for control of expert opinion, battling the universities for control of the intellectual pipeline, and battling the regulatory apparatus for permission to implement the manifesto it was elected on. It will exhaust itself in these battles. Its ministers will age visibly. Its supporters will grow disillusioned. And when it eventually falls — as it will, because governing against your own institutional landscape is unsustainable — every policy it managed to implement will be reversed, quickly and efficiently, by the very institutions that resisted it from the start. The machinery is designed to snap back. It always has.

## The Trap

The right has fallen into the same trap repeatedly: treating elections as the destination rather than the starting point. The teal maps reinforce this error. They promise that the ballot box can deliver what decades of institutional neglect have forfeited. It cannot. The ballot box can change who sits in ministerial offices; it cannot change who staffs the departments those ministers oversee, who runs the charities those departments fund, who governs the professional bodies those charities collaborate with, who teaches in the universities those professional bodies accredit, or who sets the cultural assumptions within which all of these institutions operate.

That requires something altogether different from an electoral campaign. It requires an institutional counter-establishment — built, funded, staffed, governed, and sustained over decades — that can contest the left's dominance across every layer of British public life, not just the one layer where the right has always been most comfortable. It requires, in short, *an ecosystem*.

The next chapter sets out what building one would require.

## Chapter 6

### Recommendations

The preceding chapters have mapped a landscape and identified an absence. The left possesses a political ecosystem — dense, interconnected, self-reinforcing — in which parties, think tanks, unions, charities, professional bodies, media outlets, and universities each occupy a distinct niche while strengthening the work of all the others. The right possesses fragments: talented individuals, thinly capitalised organisations, a growing media presence, and a vast reservoir of public sympathy that it has no institutional means of converting into durable power. Chapter Four demonstrated the electoral consequences of this asymmetry. This chapter asks what correcting it would actually require.

The answer is not a manifesto. It is a construction programme.

What follows is organised in three parts. The first identifies the specific organisations and institutions that must be created — the structural components without which no ecosystem can function. The second outlines a sector-by-sector strategy for contesting the institutional terrain the left currently dominates unchallenged. The third sets out a phased roadmap: what must be done in the next two years, the next seven, the next twenty.

This is, of course, not a detailed policy plan, nor a comprehensive accounting of every structure that must be built. It's not intended to be prescriptive, but rather as the start of a conversation, one that lays out the scale of what the right must do if we want our country back. I hope it's a conversation that everyone on the right will engage in with vigour and good will.

### The Organisations We Need

The right's institutional deficit is not a matter of degree, but a matter of kind. The left does not simply have more organisations than the right; it has *categories of organisation that the right does not possess at all*. No amount of optimising what currently exists will close this gap. New institutions must be built from the ground up — and they must be built to connect to one another, because an ecosystem is not a collection of organisations but a network of relationships between them.

Seven institutional types are absent from the right's landscape. Each addresses a specific structural gap identified in the preceding chapters, and each is designed to function not in isolation but as a node in a wider system. Together, they constitute

what might be termed the right's institutional spine — the minimum viable infrastructure without which no serious challenge to the left's dominance is possible.

### **1. A Central Coordinating Body**

Every other recommendation in this chapter depends on this one. Without coordination, every new initiative the right launches will replicate the pattern documented in Chapter Three: talented people working in isolation, organisations operating in silos, money flowing to whichever project last attracted a donor's attention, and no mechanism for converting individual effort into collective effect. The left achieves coordination informally, through shared personnel, overlapping boards, common funding streams, and the cultural assumptions that flow naturally from decades of institutional proximity. The right, which has none of these connective structures, must achieve it deliberately.

What is proposed is not a party, nor a faction, nor a central command. It is a strategic coordinating body — a meta-institution whose purpose is to make the rest of the ecosystem function as a system rather than as a scattering of independent actors. Its functions would include: mapping existing organisations, identifying duplication and gaps, sharing data and training resources across institutions, coordinating targeting across elections, campaigns, and cultural initiatives, and directing capital strategically rather than emotionally. It would operate as a convening authority rather than a governing one — setting the table at which the right's organisations agree on shared priorities, without claiming the power to dictate to any of them.

The closest precedent on the left is not a single organisation but the web of relationships documented in Chapter Two: the revolving doors between think tanks, charities, unions, and the civil service; the grant-making foundations that fund across multiple sectors simultaneously; the informal networks through which progressive professionals move between institutions throughout their careers. The closest precedent on the American right is the network of donor coordination mechanisms — the Koch seminars, the Council for National Policy, the State Policy Network — that transformed conservative philanthropy from a collection of individual patronage relationships into a strategic investment programme. The British right has nothing remotely equivalent. Until it does, every other recommendation in this chapter risks becoming what the paper's introduction warned against: isolated heroics in a siloed landscape.

### **2. A Leadership and Organising Academy**

The right does not have a shortage of sympathisers. It does have a shortage of trained operatives — people who know how to canvass a street, run a committee meeting,

chair a charity board, organise a local campaign, analyse electoral data, manage media discipline, and turn up reliably, month after month, for the patient work that converts sentiment into seats.

What is proposed is a permanent, non-party-political training institution — a right-wing equivalent of what Citizens UK's Institute for Community Organising provides for the left, but broader in scope. Citizens UK has trained over 4,000 community leaders through accredited residential courses in relational organising, power analysis, campaign strategy, and negotiation. The right has trained none. The Academy would offer structured programmes in community organising, campaign management, data analytics, media communications, policy literacy, and institutional governance. Its output would not be commentators or influencers but the cadre of people without whom no institution can function: local councillors, school governors, charity trustees, professional body committee members, parish council chairs, and — eventually — parliamentary candidates who arrive at Westminster with a decade of institutional experience behind them rather than a social media following and nothing else.

Mosca's insight, with which this paper opened, is that organised minorities rule disorganised majorities. The corollary is that the quality of the minority's organisation determines the quality of its rule. The left understood this and built the training infrastructure to ensure its organised minority was competent, disciplined, and strategically literate. The right must do the same. Organisation implies oligarchy, as Michels observed. The question is not whether oligarchies will form, but whether they will be composed of people who know what they are doing, and have the right attitude.

### **3. A Community Organising Network**

This is the gap Chapter Three identified as perhaps the single most consequential in the right's political landscape. The right has commentary. It has media. It has online engagement. What it does not have is the capacity to turn out bodies in a specific place at a specific time for a specific purpose, and to do it again the following month.

What is proposed is a national network of local organising hubs — permanent, staffed, community-rooted presences that perform the functions the left's infrastructure performs through Citizens UK chapters, Momentum branches, union local offices, and constituency party organisations. Each hub would be embedded in a specific community, run by a trained local organiser (drawn from the Academy described above), and tasked with the patient, invisible work that constitutes the foundation of all political power: identifying local issues that matter to residents, building relationships of trust, recruiting and developing local leaders, connecting people to one another who would otherwise remain atomised, and creating the

institutional memory that allows a community to act collectively not once but repeatedly.

The NCF Locals programme, with its almost 40 branches by late 2025, represents the most promising embryonic model. But as Chapter Three noted, the challenge is to deepen these from social gatherings into genuine civic organising nodes, and to ensure the institution outlasts any single individual. The network proposed here would build on the NCF Locals model but professionalise it: paid organisers rather than purely volunteer efforts, structured training for local leaders, formal connections to the wider ecosystem (think tanks, media, candidate pipelines, legal support), and a deliberate strategy for connecting the latent conservative social capital documented in Chapter Three — Young Farmers clubs, agricultural shows, the Countryside Alliance, hunt networks, village halls, veterans' communities, faith congregations — into a functioning political infrastructure.

The farmers' protests of 2024–2026 demonstrated what the right's base can achieve when mobilised: 400,000 people on the streets, tractors blocking Westminster, a significant government concession on inheritance tax. They also demonstrated the structural problem: the mobilisation was reactive, single-issue, and dispersed the moment the immediate threat was partially addressed. The community organising network exists to solve this problem — to provide the institutional container that holds the energy between crises, that converts moments into movements, and that ensures the right's next mobilisation builds on the last rather than starting from nothing each time.

#### **4. An Electoral Intelligence Unit**

Chapter Four demonstrated that national polling is a profoundly unreliable guide to electoral outcomes under first-past-the-post. The Muslim Vote operates below the waterline of national surveys, coordinating constituency-level tactical consolidation that MRP models cannot see. As we've seen, tactical voting organisations like Compass achieve an 85% success rate in endorsing winning candidates. The Liberal Democrats' targeting operation concentrates resources so effectively that 46% of their national vote is cast in constituencies they win. The right has no equivalent analytical capacity, no organisation that maps constituencies at a granular level, models the interaction between ground game, tactical voting, and demographic coordination, and translates that analysis into actionable intelligence for candidates and campaign teams.

What is proposed is a non-party-political electoral research and coordination body. Its functions would include: constituency-by-constituency data gathering and analysis; dedicated polling at constituency level to build a clearer picture of challenges and opportunities; modelling of vote-splitting scenarios involving

Advance UK, Restore Britain, and any future right-wing splinter parties, with the results made public so that all actors in the ecosystem receive signals on where best to place their resources without the need for official pacts; development of a right-wing tactical voting capacity that can communicate to voters where their support is most needed; and — critically — shared campaign infrastructure (phone banks, apps, boots on the ground) that right-of-centre candidates can opt into without ceding organisational control. The aim is not to enforce discipline across a fractious right — that is neither realistic nor, given the right's temperamental individualism, desirable — but to structure the competition so that rivalry drives effectiveness rather than fragmentation. When vote-splitting is visible and its consequences quantified in real time for all to see, the incentive to cooperate becomes rational self-interest rather than a demand for surrender.

## **5. A Right Civil Society Incubator**

There is no conservative Shelter. There is no right-wing Oxfam. There is no free-market equivalent of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The entire moral authority of speaking for the vulnerable — the rhetorical high ground that allows charities to shape media coverage, influence parliamentary debate, and constrain government action — is a left monopoly. Chapter Three documented this absence. Chapter Two documented its consequences: a charity sector commanding £96 billion in annual income, substantially funded by the taxpayer, with the power to set the terms of public debate on housing, poverty, criminal justice, immigration, and a dozen other issues on which the right's voice is simply not heard in the register that matters.

What is proposed is an incubator for right-of-centre civil society organisations — a body that identifies policy areas where charitable intervention is needed, provides the legal, financial, and organisational scaffolding to launch new charities, supports them through their early years, and connects them to the wider ecosystem. The incubator would target what might be called high-legitimacy policy areas: housing and homelessness (where the right's emphasis on property rights, planning reform, and self-reliance offers a genuinely distinctive perspective), education (where parental choice and curricular diversity are underrepresented in the charitable landscape), criminal justice (where victims' rights and community safety perspectives are marginal), and veterans' welfare (where the right's natural constituency is currently served primarily by legacy organisations with no political edge). The objective is not to create charities as front organisations for political campaigning — the Charity Commission's regulatory framework, whatever its asymmetries, is a constraint that must be navigated honestly — but to ensure that the charitable sector contains voices that reflect the full spectrum of public opinion rather than the narrow progressive consensus that currently dominates it.

In parallel, the incubator would develop a Professional Bodies Strategy Unit — a dedicated operation focused on organising conservative members within existing professional bodies (the BMA, the Law Society, the Royal Colleges, the teaching unions) to contest governance elections, challenge politicised position statements, and ensure that institutions that claim to speak for entire professions do not do so exclusively from one end of the political spectrum. The mechanism that allowed progressive capture — low member engagement in governance, professional staff drawn from a narrow talent pool, social incentives that reward progressive positioning — can be turned in the other direction, if and only if somebody organises the effort.

## **6. A Conservative Philanthropic Trust**

The funding comparison with the American right, set out in Chapter Three, is devastating. The Heritage Foundation alone receives \$95 million annually. The entire Tufton Street ecosystem operates on a fraction of that, dependent on a handful of individual donors whose continued generosity is the only thing between these organisations and insolvency. The right's donors give generously by British standards, but they give as patrons rather than as investors — funding organisations they personally admire rather than building an ecosystem designed to achieve specific institutional outcomes. There is no British equivalent of DonorsTrust. There is no equivalent of the Koch seminars. There is no coordinating mechanism that transforms individual philanthropy into strategic infrastructure investment.

What is proposed is a donor coordination and trust network — a permanent body that convenes right-of-centre donors, pools resources, coordinates strategy, and channels investment toward shared institutional objectives on ten-year funding horizons rather than annual grant cycles. The Trust would require basic professional standards from the organisations it funds — competent governance, transparent reporting, evidence of impact, and a commitment to non-defamation of ecosystem partners — and would prioritise operational capacity over ideological purity. Its guiding principle would be that political infrastructure should be treated with the same seriousness that corporations treat capital expenditure: not as a discretionary expense to be reviewed each year, but as a long-term strategic investment whose returns compound over decades.

The Trust would also fund specific capabilities that currently do not exist on the right: a legal defence fund and rapid-response litigation unit (the right's equivalent of Liberty or the Good Law Project, capable of mounting strategic legal challenges and defending individuals and organisations targeted for their views); a media research unit providing investigative capacity across the ecosystem; and core operational funding for the institutions described throughout this chapter. Money, as the notes to

this chapter observed, must be boring, steady, and patient. The left has elasticity. The right needs shock absorbers.

## 7. A Strategic Communications Network

Chapter Three acknowledged that the right's media is one of its genuine strengths — GB News, Talk TV, a flourishing landscape of podcasts, Substacks, and YouTube channels that reach millions. It also argued that this media is the loudest room in an otherwise empty building, disconnected from the institutional infrastructure that would allow it to convert audience engagement into political power. The BMA is still campaigning for net zero by 2030 regardless of how many podcast listeners disagree. The Charity Commission is still enforcing asymmetric regulatory standards regardless of how many Substack posts document it. Commentary has never changed a country. Institutions have.

What is proposed is not another media outlet but a communications infrastructure that connects the right's existing media to its institutional ecosystem. This means: coordinated messaging between media outlets, think tanks, campaign organisations, and legal initiatives, so that a media investigation drives a regulatory challenge, which generates a campaign, which produces a policy outcome — rather than generating a viral moment that dissipates within the news cycle. It means journalists embedded at local level, willing to cover right-wing community organisations and to scrutinise progressive institutional capture in their areas. It means youth-facing content that reaches the demographics the Greens currently dominate (38% of 18-to-24-year-olds) with the right's message. And it means a deliberate shift from outrage to infrastructure — from narrative as entertainment to narrative as a tool of institutional change.

Charlotte Gill's DOGE UK project, mapping public funding flows to progressive organisations, illustrates the model: forensic investigation that provides the evidential base for legal, regulatory, and political action. The right needs more of this, and it needs the institutional connections to ensure the evidence is acted upon rather than merely discussed. The strategic communications network exists to close that gap — to make the right's media the voice of a movement rather than a substitute for one.

These seven institutions — a coordinating body, a training academy, a community organising network, an electoral intelligence unit, a civil society incubator, a philanthropic trust, and a strategic communications network — constitute the minimum institutional spine the right requires. None of them exists today in any meaningful form. All of them must be built within the next five years if the right is to have any realistic prospect of contesting the left's institutional dominance within a

generation. They are not luxuries, *they are prerequisites*. Without them, every electoral victory the right achieves will be temporary, every policy implemented will be reversed, and every cultural gain will be eroded by the institutional machinery that the left controls and the right has never built.

The following section examines how these core institutions, once established, would operate across specific sectors of British public life.

## **Sector-by-Sector Strategy**

The seven core institutions described above provide the spine. But a spine without limbs is inert. The purpose of the ecosystem is to contest the institutional terrain mapped in Chapters Two and Three — the specific sectors of British public life in which the left's dominance is most deeply entrenched and in which the right's absence is most consequential. What follows is a strategy for each, necessarily compressed but sufficient to indicate the direction of effort required. In every case, the strategic logic is the same: stop protesting the institutions, start entering them. The Fabians did not storm the gates. They permeated. What is needed now is a permeation strategy for the right.

### **Local Government**

This is the single most undervalued arena in British politics, and the one where returns on investment are most immediate. Local government controls planning, housing, education, social care, libraries, parks, highways, licensing, and a hundred other functions that shape daily life far more directly than anything decided at Westminster. It employs approximately two million people. Its spending dwarfs that of most central government departments. And as Chapter Three documented, the current wave of local government reorganisation — creating larger unitary authorities that push discretionary services downward — is empowering parish and town councils at precisely the moment when nobody on the right is paying attention.

The strategy has three tiers. The first is parish and town councils: approximately 10,000 exist in England, many with vacant seats, most requiring no party affiliation, all accessible to anyone willing to turn up to a monthly meeting in the village hall. The Liberal Democrats built their revival on this insight — their pavement politics strategy of winning local control by being visibly present on local issues. The right has never applied it, despite the fact that rural parish councils represent the single most accessible entry point into political life for conservative-leaning people. The immediate action is simple: identify every parish council with vacancies, get co-opted onto them, and use them as platforms from which to map local needs, build

community relationships, and develop the ground-level intelligence that feeds the wider electoral strategy. You need 500 councillors before you need 50 MPs.

The second tier is district and unitary councils. Reform's 2025 local election breakthrough was instructive in both its promise and its limitations. The party swept to power in thirteen councils on a platform of cutting waste and reducing council tax, and within six months eight of those councils were planning maximum council tax rises, because the structural realities of statutory obligations — £787 million of Kent's budget alone goes to adult social care — overwhelmed the political aspirations the party had brought to office. The lesson is not that local government is unconquerable but that it must be approached with preparation rather than enthusiasm. The think tank ecosystem should be redirected to produce a practical agenda for radical local government reform: what can actually be cut, what can be devolved further to parish level, how statutory services can be restructured, and how the funding crisis can be leveraged to replace council-delivered services with independent community organisations that skew culturally conservative. The community organising network builds the local groups. The think tanks design the policy framework. The council seats provide the platform to implement it.

The third tier is strategic: using local government as a proving ground for both policy and leadership. Every future parliamentary candidate should have served in local government. Every policy proposal should have been tested in a council chamber before it reaches a manifesto. Local government is where the right learns to govern — and where it builds the track record that makes voters trust it with national power.

### **The Civil Service and the Permanent State**

Chapter Three documented the structural alignment between the permanent bureaucracy and progressive priorities: the graduate pipeline from Russell Group universities, the incentive structures that reward expansion over restraint, the web of statutory duties and contractual commitments that make radical reform extraordinarily difficult from the inside — as Reform's experience in Kent County Council demonstrated with painful clarity. Chapter Five documented what happens when a right-of-centre administration attempts to govern without having changed the institutional culture it inherits. The conclusion is not that the permanent state is unconquerable, it is that it cannot be conquered from the ministerial suite alone.

The right's instinct has been to treat the public sector as enemy territory — somewhere to be reformed from above rather than contested from within. This is a strategic error of the first order. Local government alone employs over two million people across England. The NHS employs a further 1.4 million. These are not distant, inaccessible institutions, they are the largest employers in most communities in the country, and they are hiring continuously. The right does not need to wait for

upstream university reform to begin changing who works inside them. It needs to start placing its people there *now*.

A Conservative Public Service Network, functioning as something between a professional development body and a protective association, analogous in some respects to the Free Speech Union but oriented toward career support rather than crisis response, would provide the institutional scaffolding that right-of-centre public servants currently lack entirely. At present, a council officer or civil servant who holds conservative views on immigration, policing, education, or the scope of the state has no professional network, no peer group, no mentoring structure, no legal support, and no institutional backing. They keep their heads down, self-censor, and either assimilate or leave. The progressive assumptions documented in Chapter Three are ambient not because every public servant personally holds them but because there is no countervailing structure that makes it safe or professionally advantageous to challenge them. The Free Speech Union has demonstrated that the mere existence of an institutional backstop changes behaviour: members report greater confidence in speaking openly once they know support exists if they face reprisals. A public service equivalent would do the same — not by encouraging confrontation, but by providing the quiet solidarity that allows people to remain in post, advance into leadership positions, and gradually shift the internal culture through their presence rather than their protests.

The network would operate on several levels simultaneously. At entry level, it would actively encourage right-of-centre graduates to apply for public sector roles rather than defaulting to the private sector or political commentary — treating local government, the NHS, and the civil service as institutions to be populated, not merely criticised. It would provide practical preparation: how local authority budgets actually work, what statutory obligations constrain discretion, where the genuine room for manoeuvre exists. The lesson of Kent is that Reform’s councillors did not fail because the system was rigged against them. They failed because nobody on their side had done the preparatory work of understanding the system from the inside before attempting to direct it from the top. A pipeline that places informed, capable people into mid-level public sector roles — planning officers, commissioning managers, heads of service, school governors, clinical leads — would build the institutional knowledge the right currently lacks entirely.

At the professional development level, the network would function as an alternative career structure within the public sector: connecting members across departments and authorities, facilitating mentoring from senior figures who have navigated the system successfully, and creating the kind of informal professional community that the progressive left takes for granted through union networks, professional body committees, and the alumni connections of a shared educational formation. Over time, this community would produce its own senior leaders — directors of children’s services, chief executives of NHS trusts, permanent secretaries — who arrived in

those positions not as isolated individuals but as members of a network with institutional depth behind them.

At the protective level, the network would offer the kind of support the FSU provides in the private and academic sectors: legal advice, casework support, and the institutional weight to push back when members face disciplinary action or career consequences for holding or expressing mainstream conservative views. The knowledge that such support exists — even if rarely invoked — changes the calculus for every member. It makes staying worth the discomfort. And staying is the strategy: not infiltration, not subversion, but the patient, professional occupation of roles the right has abandoned to the left by default.

The current wave of devolution amplifies the opportunity. As services are pushed downward from unitaries to parish councils, the question of who delivers those services is opened for contestation. Community organisations, social enterprises, and volunteer networks that the right builds at local level can compete for contracts and service delivery roles that would otherwise default to the existing progressive infrastructure. The right should be positioning itself not merely to win council seats but to build the civic capacity that allows it to govern effectively when it does — and to staff the machinery of local government with people who share its assumptions about the proper scope of the state, the primacy of the family, and the value of individual responsibility.

None of this requires parliamentary legislation. None of it requires a sympathetic government. It requires only what the left built decades ago: the willingness to treat public institutions as places where the right belongs, and the organisational infrastructure to support its people once they are inside.

### **The Charity Sector**

The sector commands £96 billion in annual income, employs over 1.1 million people, and wields political influence that two-thirds of MPs consider more persuasive than lobbying from business. It is, functionally, a left monopoly. The strategy for contesting it operates on two fronts.

The first is creation. The Civil Society Incubator described in Section I exists to launch right-of-centre charities in policy areas where the right's perspective is entirely absent from the charitable landscape: housing (emphasising property rights, planning reform, and self-build), education (parental choice, curricular diversity, classical liberal education), criminal justice (victims' rights, community safety, restorative alternatives to state dependency), and veterans' welfare. These must be genuine charities — properly governed, transparently funded, operationally competent — not thinly disguised political campaigns. Their legitimacy depends on doing real work for real communities, and their political value lies precisely in the

moral authority that accrues from being seen to serve the vulnerable rather than merely to comment on their condition.

The second front is governance. The mechanism that allowed progressive capture of the existing charity sector — low member engagement, professional staff drawn from a narrow talent pool, social incentives rewarding progressive positioning — can be exploited in reverse. Organised conservative participation in the governance of major charities and grant-making foundations, contested trustee elections, scrutiny of how charitable purposes are interpreted, and sustained pressure on the Charity Commission’s documented regulatory double standards would, over time, introduce ideological pluralism into a sector that currently lacks it entirely.

### **Professional Bodies**

The BMA campaigns for net zero by 2030. The Law Society adopts positions on immigration that align precisely with the progressive left. The Royal Colleges, teaching unions, and social work bodies consistently produce policy statements that cluster at one end of the political spectrum, adopted through governance structures that most members never engage with. The mechanism is always the same: a small, professionally active minority sets the agenda while the vast majority of members — whose individual political views span the full spectrum — remain disengaged.

The strategy is straightforward in conception and demanding in execution: organise conservative members to contest governance elections. Coordinated slates of candidates for BMA council, Law Society governance, Royal College boards, and equivalent bodies, supported by organised voter mobilisation campaigns among right-leaning members who have never previously participated in their professional body’s internal politics. The Professional Bodies Strategy Unit within the Civil Society Incubator would provide the central coordination, identifying which elections are winnable, developing candidate pipelines, and running the campaigns. The objective is not to politicise professional bodies — they are already politicised — but to ensure that the politicisation reflects the full range of professional opinion rather than the narrow consensus of an uncontested progressive staff culture.

Where capture is too deep to reverse within a reasonable timeframe, the alternative is parallel institutions: professional networks that provide credentialing, development, mutual support, and collective voice for conservative professionals in specific fields. The Free Speech Union’s model — 40,000 members, practical case support, an All-Party Parliamentary Group — demonstrates that demand exists. What is needed is a proactive rather than defensive version: organisations that do not merely protect people after they are attacked but build the professional communities and institutional power that prevent the attacks from succeeding in the first place.

### **Academia**

Three-quarters of UK academics support left-wing or liberal parties. Nine per cent of social science and humanities academics voted Leave. Conservative-supporting students report being reluctant to express their views. The university is, as Chapter Two documented, the factory that produces the personnel who go on to capture everything else. The right's absence from academia is not merely an intellectual embarrassment; it is the root cause of its institutional weakness across every other sector.

The honest assessment is that the universities cannot be recaptured within a single generation. The ideological monoculture is too deeply embedded, the hiring and promotion incentives too firmly aligned, and the social penalties for heterodox views too severe. The strategy must therefore operate on two timescales simultaneously.

In the medium term, the right must establish a visible academic presence within existing institutions: endowed chairs, research centres, fellowship programmes, and scholarship funds for right-leaning postgraduate students. These create islands of intellectual pluralism within a hostile landscape, develop the next generation of conservative scholars, and produce the research that feeds the think tank and policy ecosystem. The investment must be at scale — not one fellowship but dozens, not one research centre but a network — and it must be sustained over decades with the same patience the left demonstrated in building its own academic dominance.

In the longer term, the right must build alternative credentialing and training institutions that operate outside the university system entirely. Online education platforms, apprenticeship programmes, residential summer schools, professional training courses, and specialist institutes that provide the intellectual formation and professional credentials the universities currently supply — but without the progressive ideological monoculture that distorts the output. This is not anti-intellectualism. It is the recognition that the existing academic model has become, in important respects, dysfunctional, and that the right cannot wait for the universities to reform themselves before building the intellectual infrastructure its movement requires.

## **Media**

The right's media is one of its genuine strengths, and the temptation is to invest further in what is already working. The temptation should be resisted — not because the existing media is unimportant, but because more of the same will not solve the structural problem. The right does not need another podcast. It needs the institutional connections that make its existing podcasts consequential.

The Strategic Communications Network described in Section I provides the architecture. What is needed at the sector level is a shift in the purpose of right-wing media: from entertainment and commentary to institutional accountability and

ecosystem coordination. This means investigative journalism that maps and exposes the funding flows, personnel movements, and governance structures through which the left's institutional dominance is maintained — the model Charlotte Gill's DOGE UK has pioneered. It means local journalism that covers right-wing community organisations, scrutinises council decisions, and provides the informational infrastructure on which local political organising depends. It means youth-facing content that competes for the 18-to-24 demographic the Greens currently dominate. And it means a deliberate refusal to mistake reach for influence: a podcast with a million listeners that generates no institutional action is less politically valuable than a local newsletter with five hundred subscribers that drives a successful council campaign.

## **Funding**

Every recommendation in this chapter costs money. The Conservative Philanthropic Trust described in Section I provides the coordinating mechanism. At the sector level, the funding strategy rests on three principles.

First, diversification. The right's current dependence on a handful of wealthy patrons is an existential vulnerability. Mass membership programmes, small-donor fundraising, earned revenue models, and — eventually — the kind of institutional revenue streams (service delivery contracts, training fees, publication sales) that provide the left's organisations with financial resilience must replace the annual dinner circuit as the primary funding mechanism.

Second, coordination. Donors must be investors, not patrons. This means funding an ecosystem rather than a collection of organisations: directing capital toward strategic gaps rather than personal enthusiasms, requiring evidence of inter-institutional cooperation as a condition of continued support, and maintaining ten-year funding horizons rather than annual grant cycles.

Third, challenging the public funding of politically active organisations. Tens of billions of taxpayer money flow through charities, NGOs, and quangos whose output is indistinguishable from progressive political campaigning. A sustained campaign for transparency — documenting these flows, publishing the findings, pursuing Freedom of Information requests, and building the legal and political case for restricting public funding of ideological advocacy — would simultaneously constrain the left's resource base and build public support for reform. This is not merely a financial strategy. It is a democratic argument: that taxpayers should not be compelled to fund the institutional infrastructure of one political tendency to the exclusion of all others.

## Demographic Mobilisation

Chapter Four documented The Muslim Vote's model: a coordination mechanism that identifies constituencies where a specific demographic is electorally decisive, endorses candidates, mobilises voters, and operates below the waterline of national polling. The model is structurally instructive regardless of one's view of its politics. The question for the right is: which demographics are under-organised on its own side?

The answer, as documented throughout Chapter Three, is almost all of them. Skilled tradespeople, small business owners, rural communities, parents' networks, veterans, and retirees all represent constituencies that lean right in their sympathies and are entirely unorganised in their political expression. The right has voters. It does not have networks. The difference, as Chapter Four demonstrated, is the difference between a polling number and a parliamentary seat.

The demographic strategy is not separate from the community organising network — it is the content that gives the network its purpose. Each organising hub should be tasked with identifying and mobilising the specific demographics in its area: the farming families, the ex-service personnel, the small business owners, the parents concerned about what their children are being taught. The objective is not merely to register these people as voters but to connect them to one another, to give them institutional expression, and to ensure that their concerns are represented in the local council, the school governing body, the parish council, and eventually the parliamentary constituency — not as isolated complaints but as organised political power.

The sector strategies outlined above are not sequential. They must be pursued simultaneously, because the ecosystem's power lies in the connections between its components rather than in any single element. A charity that lacks media support cannot build legitimacy. A media outlet disconnected from community organisations cannot drive institutional change. A council strategy without trained candidates will replicate Reform's experience in Kent. A funding strategy without investable institutions is philanthropy without purpose. Everything connects. That is the nature of an ecosystem, and it is the central lesson the left has taught — inadvertently — through a century of patient institutional construction.

The following section sets out the phased roadmap for building it.

## The Roadmap

The strategies outlined above cannot all be pursued at once. Resources are finite, attention is scarce, and the right's instinct for the dramatic gesture over the patient

programme is itself one of the obstacles that must be overcome. What follows is a phased roadmap — not a manifesto to be announced but a construction schedule to be executed. The first phase is measured in months and years, not parliamentary terms. The second extends to the end of the decade. The third looks beyond the next election to the next generation.

The guiding principle throughout is that success at each stage is measured not in votes or media coverage but in institutional capacity: trained people, functioning organisations, sustainable funding, durable local presence, and the connections between them. These are the leading indicators. Electoral results are the lagging ones.

## **Phase I: The Foundation (2026–2028)**

This phase is about building the machinery that makes everything else possible. It requires no parliamentary power, no electoral breakthroughs, and no permission from anyone. It requires only money, will, and the willingness to begin locally.

### **At a glance — Phase I priorities:**

- Establish a central coordinating body and complete the first comprehensive audit of the right's institutional landscape
- Launch the Leadership and Organising Academy with its first training cohorts
- Professionalise 10–20 existing local groups and seed 20–30 new community organising hubs (target: 50+)
- Systematically audit and fill parish and town council vacancies across England
- Convene a coordinated donor network with multi-year funding commitments
- Stand up an Electoral Intelligence Unit producing constituency-level data before the next local elections
- Formalise a Strategic Communications Network connecting existing media to institutional actors
- Prepare candidates and infrastructure for the May 2027 local elections

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**Establish the coordinating infrastructure.** The central coordinating body described in Section I must be the first institution created, because without it every subsequent initiative will replicate the pattern of isolated effort that has defined the right for decades. Its immediate tasks are practical rather than strategic: mapping every existing right-of-centre organisation in Britain — think tanks, campaign groups, media outlets, local associations, membership bodies, donor networks — and producing the first comprehensive audit of what the right actually has, where the gaps are, and where duplication is wasting resources. This mapping exercise is the foundation on which all subsequent coordination depends. It should be completed within the first year.

**Launch the training programme.** The Leadership and Organising Academy does not need a campus or a royal charter. It needs a curriculum, a cohort of trainers, and its first intake of students. The curriculum should be modelled on what works: Citizens UK's residential courses in community organising, the Liberal Democrats' campaign training programmes, and the American right's established leadership development infrastructure. The first cohorts should be small — dozens, not hundreds — and drawn from people already active in right-of-centre politics at local level: councillors, party activists, community group leaders, aspiring candidates. The objective in this phase is not to produce thousands of trained operatives but to prove the model, refine the curriculum, and develop a cadre of trainers who can scale the programme in Phase II.

**Seed the community organising network.** The NCF Locals model provides the starting point. In this phase, the objective is to professionalise ten to twenty existing local groups into genuine organising hubs — with paid or part-time coordinators, structured programmes of local issue identification and community engagement, and formal connections to the wider ecosystem — and to launch a further twenty to thirty new hubs in areas identified by the coordinating body as strategically important. Priority should be given to: constituencies where Reform is projected to win by narrow margins and ground-level infrastructure could be decisive; rural areas where latent conservative social capital (Young Farmers, agricultural shows, hunt networks, veterans' communities, faith congregations) is dense but politically unconnected; and areas undergoing local government reorganisation, where the devolution of services to parish level creates immediate opportunities for community-level civic engagement.

**Occupy parish councils.** This is the lowest-cost, highest-return action available and should begin immediately. A systematic audit of parish and town council vacancies across England, followed by a coordinated campaign to fill them with sympathetic individuals drawn from the community organising network, would produce visible results within months. Many parish councils actively seek co-opted members and receive no applications. The right does not need to win elections to begin governing at this level; it needs only to show up. In parallel, the coordinating body should identify the May 2027 local elections as the first major electoral test and begin preparing candidates, campaign infrastructure, and targeting data at least eighteen months in advance.

**Convene the donor network.** The Conservative Philanthropic Trust requires neither legislation nor public launch. It requires a convener with credibility, a room, and a frank conversation with the dozen or so individuals whose philanthropy currently sustains the right's institutional infrastructure. The conversation is simple: your generosity is keeping these organisations alive, but it is not building an ecosystem. The same money, coordinated strategically, directed toward shared objectives, and committed on multi-year horizons, could produce ten times the institutional return. The Trust should aim to have its operational structure,

governance, and first coordinated funding round in place within eighteen months of formation.

**Build the electoral intelligence capacity.** The Electoral Intelligence Unit should be operational before the next set of local elections. Its initial product should be a constituency-by-constituency analysis of the seats where right-wing vote-splitting is most likely to cost victories. This intelligence should be shared across the right's party and campaign infrastructure — available to Reform, to the Conservatives, and to any independent candidates operating within the ecosystem — on the principle that making vote-splitting visible is the first step toward making cooperation rational.

**Connect media to the ecosystem.** The Strategic Communications Network does not require building a new media empire. It requires formalising the relationships between existing media outlets, think tanks, legal initiatives, and campaign organisations, so that coverage drives action rather than engagement. In this phase, the practical steps are: establishing a regular coordination mechanism (a shared briefing, a private forum, a weekly call) between the right's principal media voices and its institutional actors; commissioning investigative journalism capacity focused on mapping public funding flows to progressive organisations; and launching youth-facing content initiatives that compete for the 18-to-24 demographic.

**Outcome of Phase I.** By the end of 2028, the right should possess:

- A shared strategic picture of its own institutional landscape
- A functioning training programme producing its first cohorts of organisers and candidates
- A network of 50+ community organising hubs with professional coordination
- A significant and growing presence on parish and town councils
- A coordinated donor network channelling capital strategically
- An electoral intelligence operation producing actionable data
- A communications infrastructure that connects media to institutional action

None of these are electoral objectives. All of them are prerequisites for electoral success. This is the phase in which the ecosystem starts to manifest.

## **Phase II: Institutional Expansion (2028–2033)**

With the foundational machinery in place, the focus shifts from building capacity to occupying terrain. This is the phase in which the right stops being absent from the institutions that shape British public life and begins contesting them systematically.

**At a glance — Phase II priorities:**

- Scale the community organising network to 150–200 hubs covering every English region
- Expand the Academy to produce several hundred trained operatives per year
- Contest district, unitary, and county council elections with prepared, policy-literate candidates
- Launch flagship charities in housing, education, criminal justice, and veterans' welfare
- Run coordinated governance campaigns within the BMA, Law Society, and Royal Colleges
- Broaden the think tank ecosystem from economics to cultural and institutional questions
- Establish endowed chairs, research centres, and doctoral scholarships across multiple universities
- Diversify the funding model toward mass membership, small donors, and institutional revenue

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**Scale the organising network and candidate pipeline.** The community organising hubs established in Phase I should expand to cover every English region, with a target of 150 to 200 hubs by the end of Phase II. The training academy should be producing cohorts of several hundred per year, feeding a candidate pipeline that supplies not only council candidates but school governors, charity trustees, professional body committee members, and magistrates — the full range of civic roles through which institutional culture is shaped. The objective is to make conservative civic participation normal rather than exceptional: a standing expectation within the right's base rather than a heroic individual effort.

**Contest local government at scale.** The parish strategy established in Phase I should scale upward into district, unitary, and county council elections. By the end of Phase II, the right should be competing seriously for control of councils across rural and suburban England, with candidates who arrive prepared — equipped with the policy knowledge, the legal understanding of statutory obligations, and the practical governance experience gained at parish level that would have prevented the debacle Reform experienced in Kent. The think tank ecosystem should, by this stage, have produced a comprehensive agenda for local government reform: a practical blueprint for what a competently governed right-of-centre council actually does, how it navigates statutory constraints, where it can genuinely reduce costs and redirect resources, and how it builds the local civic infrastructure that makes future electoral success self-reinforcing.

**Launch the charity sector offensive.** The Civil Society Incubator should, by this phase, have launched its first flagship charities — in housing, education, criminal

justice, and veterans' welfare — and be supporting a second wave in areas identified through the community organising network's ground-level intelligence. These charities must have, by this stage, established operational track records sufficient to attract government contracts, media coverage, and the public legitimacy that comes from doing visible, competent work. Simultaneously, the governance contestation strategy should be producing results: organised conservative participation in the governance of major charities and grant-making foundations, contested trustee elections, and a sustained challenge to the Charity Commission's regulatory double standards.

**Organise within professional bodies.** The Professional Bodies Strategy Unit should, in this phase, run its first coordinated campaigns for governance positions within the BMA, the Law Society, and the Royal Colleges. These campaigns need not win immediately; their value lies as much in demonstrating that conservative professionals exist, are organised, and intend to contest the progressive monopoly on professional voice as in any specific governance outcome. Where parallel institutions are needed — alternative professional networks, specialist associations, independent credentialing bodies — Phase II is the period in which they should be founded and begin building membership.

**Rewire the think tank ecosystem.** The existing Tufton Street infrastructure should, by this phase, have broadened its focus from economics to the cultural and institutional questions that dominate contemporary political contestation. More importantly, think tanks should have developed explicit policy-to-implementation pipelines: formal relationships not only with parties but with the charities, community organisations, media outlets, and legal initiatives that translate policy papers into institutional change. The think tanks should also, by this stage, have detached from exclusive dependence on the Conservative Party and built working relationships across the right's party landscape — with Reform, with whatever remains of the Conservatives, and with independent actors operating outside the party system entirely.

**Begin the academic project.** Endowed chairs, research centres, and fellowship programmes should be established in this phase — not in one university but across several, creating a network of conservative academic presence that can support and sustain individual scholars within a hostile institutional environment. A scholarship fund for right-leaning doctoral students should be producing its first graduates. These are seed investments whose returns will not be visible for a decade; they must be made now precisely because the right has spent decades not making them.

**Deepen the funding base.** By the end of Phase II, the Conservative Philanthropic Trust should have diversified the right's funding model substantially: mass membership programmes generating recurring revenue, small-donor infrastructure capable of responding to moments of political opportunity, and — crucially — institutional revenue streams (service delivery contracts held by right-of-centre

charities, training fees from the Academy, consultancy income from the electoral intelligence operation) that reduce dependence on philanthropic capital. The campaign against public funding of progressive advocacy should, by this stage, have produced concrete policy proposals and a body of investigative evidence sufficient to sustain a parliamentary campaign when the political opportunity arises.

**Outcome of Phase II.** By 2033, the right should possess:

- Institutional footholds across every sector of British public life
- A charity sector presence with operational credibility and government contracts
- Professional body governance campaigns producing measurable shifts
- Policy pipelines that translate ideas into institutional action
- A network of competently governed councils demonstrating the right can govern as well as campaign
- An academic presence that will grow over the following decade
- A funding model resilient enough to survive the loss of any single donor

At this stage, the ecosystem can shape outcomes even from electoral opposition — because the institutions the right has built continue to function regardless of who holds parliamentary power. That is the structural advantage the left has possessed for decades. By the end of Phase II, the right should have its own version of it.

### **Phase III: The Generational Horizon (2033–2046)**

This is where the roadmap becomes necessarily less specific and more directional. Elections three years hence are uncertain; the institutional landscape twenty years hence is unknowable in its particulars. What can be stated with confidence is the strategic logic: if Phases I and II are executed competently, Phase III is the period in which the right's institutional infrastructure matures from a collection of new organisations into a self-reproducing ecosystem — one that generates its own leadership, sustains its own funding, shapes its own cultural norms, and accumulates institutional power with the same compounding logic that has sustained the left's dominance for a century.

**At a glance — Phase III priorities:**

- Build academic infrastructure at scale: a generation of conservative scholars across multiple universities
- Establish alternative credentialing institutions operating outside the university system
- Invest in cultural institutions — arts, publishing, community spaces, civic education — that shape norms

- Produce second- and third-generation alumni through self-sustaining youth and leadership pipelines
  - Create durable civic identity infrastructure: community solidarity networks and mutual aid structures
  - Achieve a self-reproducing ecosystem in which leadership pipelines, funding, and cultural production are self-sustaining
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**Build academic infrastructure at scale.** The seed investments of Phase II should, by this stage, have produced a generation of conservative academics occupying positions across multiple universities, publishing research that feeds the think tank and policy ecosystem, and training students who go on to staff the charities, professional bodies, and civil service with the same intellectual formation their progressive counterparts currently receive. In parallel, alternative credentialing institutions — training programmes, specialist institutes, professional development courses operating outside the university system — should be established as a permanent complement to the traditional academic pipeline. The objective is not to replace universities but to break their monopoly on the intellectual formation of the professional class.

**Develop cultural institutions.** Cultural change is cumulative and generational — the central thesis of this book. By Phase III, the right should be investing in the institutions that shape what feels normal, legitimate, and possible: arts organisations, community spaces, festivals, publications, civic education programmes, and the cultural infrastructure that creates and sustains a conservative civic identity. These are not political organisations in any narrow sense. They are the substrate on which political organisation depends — the reason that progressive assumptions feel like common sense to a generation raised within progressive institutions, and the mechanism by which conservative assumptions can eventually achieve the same status.

**Establish self-sustaining youth and leadership pipelines.** Student networks, early-career programmes, training academies, summer schools, and mentorship structures that feed young people into politics, media, civil society, and the professions should be, by this phase, producing their second and third generations of alumni. The ecosystem reproduces itself: a young person enters through a community organising hub, receives training through the Academy, serves on a parish council, moves to a charity board, stands for a district council, and eventually enters Parliament with fifteen years of institutional experience and a network of relationships that spans the entire ecosystem. This is how the left has operated for decades. It is how every successful political movement in history has operated. The right must build the same pipeline.

**Create durable civic identity infrastructure.** The Muslim Vote's power lies not merely in its electoral coordination but in the community solidarity it both reflects and reinforces: the sense of shared identity, mutual obligation, and collective purpose that makes political mobilisation a natural expression of community life rather than an imposition upon it. The right needs its own version of this — not necessarily along ethnic or sectarian lines, though the reality of an increasingly balkanised political landscape must be acknowledged, but through community solidarity networks, mutual aid structures, local associations, and civic organisations that give the right's base a political identity that persists between elections. When people belong to something, they show up. The right's base currently belongs to nothing. Giving them something to belong to is, in the long run, more important than any specific policy proposal.

**Outcome of Phase III.** By the mid-2040s, if the programme is executed with the patience and strategic discipline it requires, the right should possess:

- Universities producing research and graduates that feed a network of think tanks, charities, professional bodies, and media outlets
- Community organisations embedded in every region of the country
- A funding model sustained by institutions rather than individuals
- A leadership pipeline producing competent, experienced people at every level of public life
- A cultural infrastructure that makes conservative assumptions feel as natural and inevitable as progressive ones feel today

Political victories, at that point, become easier to win and harder to reverse — because the institutional machinery that translates electoral power into durable change is, at last, in place.

This is when a movement becomes a settlement.

## **A Note on the 2029 General Election**

The roadmap above is deliberately oriented toward institutional construction rather than electoral outcomes. This is not because the next general election is unimportant — Chapter Four demonstrated that its consequences for the right could be severe — but because the structural deficits the right faces cannot be corrected within a single electoral cycle, and the temptation to subordinate long-term institution-building to short-term electoral tactics is precisely the trap the right has fallen into repeatedly.

That said, Phase I overlaps entirely with the period before the next general election, which must be held by August 2029 at the latest. The community organising network, the electoral intelligence unit, the candidate pipeline, and the tactical

coordination mechanisms described above will all be operationally relevant to that contest. They should be deployed in its service — but they should not be designed exclusively for it. The test of every institution built in Phase I is not whether it helps win the 2029 election but whether it continues to function, grow, and accumulate institutional power regardless of the result. If Reform wins a majority, these institutions provide the connective tissue between electoral power and institutional transformation that Chapter Four argued was otherwise absent. If Reform falls short and a hung parliament or progressive coalition results, these institutions provide the infrastructure for contesting and constraining that government from outside Parliament — through local government, through the charity sector, through professional bodies, through media, and through the organised civic presence that the right has never previously possessed.

Either way, the institutions endure. That is the point. That is what the left understood and the right, so far, has not.

## **From Commentary to Construction**

The core argument of this chapter can be stated simply. The right does not lack supporters, sympathisers, or talent. It lacks the institutional architecture that connects them to one another, multiplies their efforts, and converts individual commitment into collective power. Building that architecture is not a distraction from electoral politics, it's the precondition for electoral politics to produce durable results.

Mosca demonstrated that organised minorities rule disorganised majorities — always, everywhere, regardless of the formal constitution. The right currently is the disorganised majority: millions of sympathisers who agree on the fundamental questions and yet remain dispersed and politically inert. The seven institutions proposed in this chapter — a coordinating body, a training academy, a community organising network, an electoral intelligence unit, a civil society incubator, a philanthropic trust, and a strategic communications network — are the instruments through which a disorganised majority begins to organise itself into a governing minority. Michels tells us how: whoever occupies the leadership positions within an institution shapes it in their image. The sector strategies laid out above are Michels applied in reverse — contesting BMA council elections, filling parish council vacancies, standing for charity trustee positions, running coordinated slates for professional body governance. Not dramatic insurgency. Patient occupation of the positions the right has left empty for decades, and that Michels' iron law guarantees will be filled by somebody whether the right shows up or not.

The right cannot replicate a century of construction in a decade, but it can begin. And the beginning matters more than the timeline, because the left's advantage is

compounding: each institution it controls becomes a platform for extending its influence into adjacent institutions, and each year the right remains absent is a year in which the gap becomes harder to close. The seven institutions are the spine. The sector strategies are the directions of effort. The roadmap is the schedule. None of this will be achieved by a single leader, a single election, or a single act of political will. It will be achieved, if it is achieved at all, by the slow, patient, unglamorous work of institutional construction.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### The Moral Case for Organisation

The conservative tradition, at its deepest, is a tradition of stewardship. The Burkean inheritance, the idea that society is a partnership between the living, the dead, and those yet to be born, is an argument for custodianship: that each generation receives something precious, is obligated to maintain and improve it, and must pass it on in at least as good a condition as it was received. This is the moral intuition that animates conservative concern for national sovereignty, for constitutional continuity, for the preservation of institutions and traditions that embody accumulated wisdom.

Yet the right has applied this principle selectively. It has defended the sovereignty of Parliament while ignoring the capture of the civil service that drafts its legislation. It has championed the constitution while abandoning the universities that train the lawyers who interpret it. It has celebrated British culture while ceding every institution through which culture is transmitted — schools, charities, professional bodies, the arts — to people who hold that culture in contempt. The stewardship has been rhetorical. It has not been institutional.

If the nation's institutions are the inheritance, then the right has been a negligent trustee. It has watched the estate being stripped, room by room, and responded not by contesting the stripping but by writing eloquent letters of complaint about it. The think tanks have documented the problem with admirable precision. The media has broadcast the diagnosis to an audience of millions. The audience has agreed, passionately, that something must be done. And then everyone has gone home, because the right possesses no institutional vehicle through which agreement can be converted into action.

This is not a strategic failure, *it is a moral one*. If you believe that the nation is in decline, that its institutions have been captured, its culture degraded, its sovereignty eroded, its children educated in assumptions hostile to everything the conservative tradition holds dear, then the failure to build the organisations that could contest that decline is itself a betrayal of the stewardship you claim to value. Organisation is not cynical. It is the most concrete expression of the belief that something is worth fighting for. The right has spent decades saying the right things. It has not done them. Saying is not stewardship. Building is.

### Competition, Not Conformity

The right is, at its core, individualist. Its instincts are toward self-reliance, personal responsibility, getting on with the job, and leaving other people alone to do the same.

Its cultural heroes are the lone dissenter, the entrepreneur who built something from nothing, the contrarian who refused to bend. These are admirable qualities. They are also, in the context of institutional politics, catastrophic ones.

The left organises because it is collectivist. Collective action is not a strategic choice for the left; it is an expression of its foundational values. The trade union, the community campaign, the solidarity march, these are not tactics adopted reluctantly in pursuit of power, they are what the left believes in. Organisation comes naturally to people who believe that collective endeavour is morally superior to individual effort.

The right believes no such thing. And it does not need to. The call here is not for unity. Unity is a fantasy, and pursuing it is a waste of energy the right does not have. The left does not achieve its institutional dominance through unity. It achieves it through a shared infrastructure that accommodates disagreement. Labour and the Greens disagree on nuclear power. Momentum and Progress despise each other. Unite and Unison pursue different industrial strategies. Citizens UK and Compass operate on entirely different theories of change. These disagreements are real and sometimes bitter. They do not prevent the left's ecosystem from functioning, because the ecosystem is not built on ideological agreement. It is built on shared infrastructure — training networks, funding streams, data systems, personnel pipelines, institutional relationships — that each component can use in pursuit of its own objectives.

The right must learn the same lesson, adapted to its own temperament. The British right will not coordinate through sentiment. It must coordinate through incentives. The task is not to abolish competition but to structure it — to create an environment in which cooperation increases the viability of each actor and fragmentation decreases it, so that coordination becomes the rational choice rather than a demand for ideological surrender.

This means, in practice, aligning around infrastructure rather than ideology. The coordinating body, the training academy, the electoral intelligence unit, the philanthropic trust — these institutions should be agnostic on the policy questions that divide the right. You can disagree on immigration levels or tax policy. You cannot disagree on the need for competent organisers, reliable electoral data, professional candidates, and sustainable funding. The shared infrastructure serves everyone. The policy debates continue within it. The ecosystem does not require its members to sing from the same hymn sheet. It requires them to use the same stage.

This means, equally, engineering selective convergence rather than demanding total alignment. The Electoral Intelligence Unit should identify the ten to fifteen hyper-marginal constituencies where right-wing fragmentation is catastrophic — where the difference between a Reform victory and a progressive hold is measured in hundreds of votes, and where Advance UK or Restore Britain candidacies will hand

the seat to the left. Coordination pressure should be concentrated there and only there. Elsewhere, let competition run. Contain the damage without attempting to eliminate the rivalry. The aim is not a choir but a competitive league with rules — a structure in which rivalry drives improvement and innovation rather than mutual destruction.

And this means building elite-level social capital quietly, without the public declarations of unity that look artificial and provoke the very suspicion they are intended to dispel. Off-record leadership retreats, private strategy forums, informal relationships between the principals of organisations that publicly compete — these are the mechanisms through which coordination actually happens, on the right as on the left. Familiarity reduces paranoia. Relationships precede cooperation. Mosca's organised minority does not form through press conferences. It forms through the slow accumulation of trust among a small group of people who have come to understand, through repeated private interaction, that their interests are better served by coordination than by mutual sabotage.

The core principle is this: the left coordinates because it is collectivist; the right can coordinate because it is ambitious. Design mechanisms where cooperation increases personal success, fragmentation decreases viability, and professionalism unlocks resources that amateurism cannot access. Rivalry can be healthy; mutual destruction is not. The difference between the two is structure — and building that structure is what this paper has proposed.

## **The Work Before Us**

The left did not inherit Britain. It built its position within it.

It built patiently. It built deliberately. It built when no one was watching and continued building when others assumed the argument had been won. It trained its leaders, funded its organisers, placed its people, and tended its institutions across decades. When elections were lost, the foundations remained. When governments fell, the machinery endured.

That is not destiny. That is discipline. And discipline is not the monopoly of any ideology.

There is no law of nature that says Britain must forever be governed by institutions hostile to the instincts of its own people. There is no historical decree that says cultural power, once captured, cannot be reclaimed. There is only organisation — or the absence of it.

Let us be clear: this is not a story of inevitable decline. It is not the story of a country lost beyond recall. It is the story of one side that understood a simple truth — that

power belongs to those who organise — and another that has not yet fully acted upon it.

The British right is not a fringe. It is not a curiosity. It is not a dwindling tribe clinging to nostalgia. It is a vast, dispersed, unorganised majority that has not yet chosen to act with the seriousness its convictions deserve.

And that is the great opportunity of our time.

For what has been built by patient hands can be matched by patient hands. What has been organised can be reorganised. What has been institutionalised can be counter-institutionalised. This is not a call to anger. It is a call to endurance.

We are not short of talent. We are not short of resources. We are not short of voters. We have been short only of structure.

Imagine what ten years of deliberate construction would produce. A generation of trained local leaders rising from parish halls through council chambers to Parliament. Charities that command moral authority rather than cede it. Professional bodies contested rather than surrendered. Academics who know they are not alone. Media that connects investigation to campaign to institutional outcome. Donors who think in decades, not news cycles. An organised right that no longer depends on a single election to change things — because it has been changing them, quietly and cumulatively, every day. This is not fantasy. It is logistics.

History does not turn on sentiment. It turns on institutions. It bends toward those who show up, organise, and remain standing long after enthusiasm has faded. The great political settlements of this country were not conjured by viral moments. They were built by people who understood that power accumulates quietly — then all at once.

The task before us is not to shout louder. It is to build deeper. Let others chase applause. Let others trend for a day. We will build for decades.

The future is not decided by those who complain about the terrain. It belongs to those who cultivate it. This is not the end of a campaign. It is the beginning of a construction project.

And if we are equal to it — if we exchange commentary for coordination, rivalry for structure, impulse for discipline — then the story of Britain in the twenty-first century will not be one of managed decline or permanent opposition.

It will be one of renewal.

The tools are before us. The numbers are with us. The opportunity is ours.

***All that remains is the will to build.***