

# **Review – For the Earth to Live: The Case for Ecosocialism by Allan Todd**

“For the Earth to Live” is a compelling and essential read for anyone seeking a radical and comprehensive understanding of the interconnected ecological and social crises facing our world. Written by Allan Todd, with a foreword by Professor Julia Steinberger, it emerges as an unapologetic and passionately argued case for ecosocialism.

The book distinguishes itself by its direct and unwavering commitment to ecosocialist principles, boldly asserting the necessity of uniting ecological concerns with socialist solutions. In an era often characterised by cautious and diluted discourse, “For the Earth to Live” offers a bracingly clear analysis and position, advocating for a political direction that is uncompromisingly pro-ecology and pro-socialism. It actively seeks to combine “Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will,” drawing on the wisdom of Antonio Gramsci to provide both a stark awakening to the realities of our situation and a powerful call to action.

A significant strength of this work lies in its well-informed and thoroughly cited analysis. Todd presents a treasure-trove of political, historical, and scientific evidence to contextualise the climate, biodiversity, and health threats we face within our prevailing political and economic systems. The book is structured logically, building from an exposition of ecological dangers to examining political and economic threats, culminating in a powerful argument for revolutionary ecosocialist politics as the necessary response. The extensive referencing provides readers with an excellent foundation for further exploration and independent understanding.

"For the Earth to Live" makes a significant contribution by aiming to articulate a majoritarian perspective for ecosocialism. It moves beyond the notion of ecosocialism as a fringe ideology, presenting it as the potential "political home of the majority of humans on planet earth" and of the rest of life on Earth. This book offers a more accessible pathway for arguing for ecosocialism as a vital project for the 99 percent.

Furthermore, the book actively seeks to counter the understandable despair that can arise when confronting the severity of the ecological and political challenges. By promoting Gramsci's "optimism of the will," it encourages readers to see "horizons even in the darkest night," fostering the determination needed to continue the struggle for a better future. It explicitly states that ecosocialism offers the "best hope for replacing today's 'old order' with a new one".

The author doesn't shy away from highlighting the dire warnings from climate, ecological, and pandemic-health science reports, illustrating the interconnected crises facing our environment and the failures of current political responses. The book also touches upon the historical context of humanity's relationship with nature, including the more harmonious approaches found in Indigenous societies, suggesting important ways forward.

In conclusion, "For the Earth to Live" is a vital and inspiring contribution to the literature on ecosocialism. It combines a rigorous and well-researched analysis with a passionate and hopeful call to action. By directly confronting the crises of our time and offering a clear and compelling alternative, this book will likely be an essential resource for activists, scholars, and anyone seeking a pathway towards an ecologically sustainable and socially just world. It encourages readers to embrace "optimism of the will" grounded in a clear understanding of the challenges, ultimately arguing that our best chance for the Earth to live lies

with ecosocialism.

Reviewed by Duncan Chapel, "For the Earth to Live" is published by Resistance Books and is available [here](#).

**Allan Todd** is an ecosocialist/environmental and anti-fascist activist. He is a member of Anti-Capitalist Resistance and Extinction Rebellion North Lakes (Cumbria), and is the author of *Revolutions 1789-1917* (CUP), *Trotsky: The Passionate Revolutionary* (Pen & Sword), *Ecosocialism Not Extinction* (Resistance Books), and *Che Guevara: The Romantic Revolutionary* (Pen & Sword).

Allan will speaking about the book at a free event in Glasgow at 7pm on 21st May 2025. For further details of the event and to reserve a copy of the book see [Mount Florida Books](#)

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## Rising Clyde Episode 18: Scotland's Circular Economy Bill

The latest issue of Rising Clyde, the Scottish climate justice show hosted by Iain Bruce is now available on YouTube thanks to [Independence Live](#).

The Show looks at the [Circular Economy Bill now under discussion in the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood](#). Iain talks to the Scottish Government's Circular Economy Minister, [Lorna Slater](#), MSP for the [Scottish Green Party](#), as well as Kim Pratt of [Friends of the Earth Scotland \(FOES\)](#) and Franciele Sobierai of [Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council \(ELREC\)](#).

# Rising Clyde Show – the Scottish climate justice show.

**Rising Clyde** examines the key issues and the big challenges facing the struggle for climate justice in Scotland. After the surprisingly big and hugely diverse protests in Glasgow during COP26, how can the breadth of that movement be held together, how can we build on its energy?



- After the suspension of Cambo, can the movement stop any more new oil or gas projects in the North Sea?
- How can we wind down the whole oil and gas industry in Scotland in this decade, while ensuring no layoffs and decent new jobs for all those affected?
- Was the Scotwind auction a major step on the transition to renewable energy, or a sell-off of the family silver?
- How can an independent Scotland tolerate one of the most unequal and damaging systems of land ownership on the planet

For half an hour on the first Monday of each month, we'll be talking to activists and experts about these and many other issues that will shape this country's future.

The host of Rising Clyde, **Iain Bruce**, is a journalist, film maker and writer living in Glasgow. Iain has worked for many

years in Latin America. He has worked at the BBC and Al Jazeera, and was head of news at teleSUR. He has written books about radical politics in Brazil and Venezuela. During COP26, he was the producer and co-presenter of Inside Outside, a daily video briefing for the COP26 Coalition.

**Playlist...** To see previous episodes, start the video below, then click on the top right icon.

<https://youtu.be/0qK7olrAtvk?list=PLxc3IWpJ3vJZLQg9hFjnGWvvfSHdIrnXG>

Main picture: [Friends of the Earth Scotland/Government-wide Programme for a Circular Economy, Netherlands, 2016](#)

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## COP 28- what is at stake?

**Alan Thornett writes:**

COP28 (along with planet Earth) is faced with “an absolutely [gobsmackingly bananas](#) increase in the global temperature”

COP28 – the annual UN global summit on global warming – is taking place from November 30<sup>th</sup> until December 12 – under the auspices of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change that was launched in 1992 to protect the planet against “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”, which now takes place annually. It is the 28<sup>th</sup> UN climate change summit since 1992, and will take place in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

COP28, along with other recent such summits faces a deadly,

and indeed existential, contradiction between the relentless acceleration of global warming i.e. of the average global surface temperature of the planet – and the inability of the COP process to bring it under control, or even hold it to a maximum increase of 1.5°C in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement.

It became clear in August that 2023 would be of a different order of magnitude in terms of temperature when July turned out to be the world's hottest month ever recorded.

The UN Secretary General [António Guterres](#) – the most radical the UN has had on climate change – responded rightly by declaring that this meant that “the era of global warming had ended, and the era of global boiling has arrived”. It meant, he said, that: “Climate change is here, it is terrifying, and it is just the beginning. It is still possible to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C (above pre-industrial levels), and avoid the very worst of climate change, he said, but only with dramatic, immediate climate action.”

The September figure, however, was a whole lot worse. It was a staggering 0.5°C above the previous such record. The Guardian's environmental editor [Damian Carrington](#) quoted climate scientist Zeke Hausfather who had tweeted that: “This month was, in my professional opinion as a climate scientist – absolutely gobsmaekingly bananas. It beat the prior monthly temperature record by over 0.5°C, and was around 1.8°C warmer than preindustrial levels.” He noted that datasets from European and Japanese scientists confirmed the leap.

It's worth noting that the difference in the average global temperature between now and the depths of the last ice age when these islands were under a kilometre of ice is around 5.0°C.

In mid-November [Guterres](#) went further warning that. “Present trends are racing our planet down a dead-end 3C temperature

rise. This is a failure of leadership, a betrayal of the vulnerable, and a massive missed opportunity. Renewables have never been cheaper or more accessible. We know it is still possible to make the 1.5 degree limit a reality. It requires tearing out the poisoned root of the climate crisis: fossil fuels.”

He added: “Leaders must drastically up their game, now, with record ambition, record action, and record emissions reductions. No more greenwashing. No more foot-dragging.”

### **The UK’s sellout**

One member state that has not upped their game – scandalously – is the UK under Sunak’s Tory government – which has gone in exactly the opposite direction. In order to exploit a reactionary backlash from car drivers against Labour in a recent byelection Sunak has delayed the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 to 2035 will deprioritise the transition to electric vehicles. He has also announced that a ban on the sale of fossil-fuel boilers from 2035 would be watered down and extra exemptions introduced.

Most significantly he has issued a new generation of oil and gas licences for the North Sea and given the go-ahead for a new oil and gas field. It is a monumental stab in the back for the whole COP decarbonisation process.

Sunak insists (ludicrously) that none of this will affect the ability of Britain can still reach his 2050 net zero target. The UN has strongly protested.

### **The venue**

The venue of this COP is a major problem of course. Few countries could be less suitable for such a summit than the UEA. It is not only the 7<sup>th</sup> biggest oil producer in the world at 3,250,000 barrels a day. It also holds the 7<sup>th</sup> largest

proven reserves of natural gas in the world at over 215 trillion cubic feet. It is also yet another host nation, following Sharm El-Sheikh, with an appalling history of human rights abuses and an economy based on fossil fuel exports, and the president of the COP will be Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber who is the Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology of the UAE, and managing director and group CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

As a result of this, many campaigners will not travel to Dubai in person but will mount their protests at home or via the global day of action which has already been called for the last day of the summit which is December 12<sup>th</sup>. The problem has been compounded, however, by the astonishing revelation that the UEA has been using COP meetings to sell off oil and gas on the side. Guterres has denounced it as a serious breach of the standards of conduct expected of a COP president.

It would be a mistake, however, to allow the venue problem to dominate our response. It is difficult for the UN to exclude a member state from the presidency when they are seeking to take their 193 member states together towards net zero and when hosting a COP often has a positive effect of the host nation in terms of its own record.

The primary role of a COP summit in any case in pushing the member states to meet their commitment takes place between COP meeting rather than at them when the die has often been cast, also to plan actions and interventions for the following year. In the end the COP process has to be bigger than this since it is dealing with a global existential emergence with a short time line for its conclusion.

The COP conferences, however, urgently need democratising in order to give the climate movement a lot more space and to severely restrict corporate lobbying the access to it given to the petrochemical industry.



The aim of the climate movement should be to maximise mobilisations around every COP summit and where it is not possible at the venue it should be done at the international level. This is important both in order to mobilise the movement and also because it is the best opportunity we have to put demands on the global elites at an international level.

Meanwhile Al Jaber, COP president on behalf of the UAE, has told the Guardian in an exclusive interview on the eve of the conference that he thought that the world could agree a “robust roadmap” of cuts in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 that would meet scientific advice.

We shall see.

### **Key challenges in Dubai**

The principal responsibility of each COP is to conduct a global stocktake of the carbon reduction targets—or “Nationally Determined Contributions”—to which each member state is pledged as a part of the so-called “ratcheting up process” adopted at COP21 in Paris in 2015. This requires each member state to set its own carbon reduction targets and then review and enhance them annually at implementation conferences such as COP27 and now COP28.

In this case every member state must meet the commitments it made at COP27 in in Sharm El-Sheikh and adopt new ones set at a stricter standard – which must be backed by a credible plan for implementation. The stocktake that took place last year at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh revealed a disastrous situation, and this could be even worse.

### **The loss and damage fund**

The other massive issue that will rear its head again – and rightly so – is the matter of a so-called “loss and damage fund”.

This fund was agreed in principal in Sharm El-Sheikh after a long and heated debate. It would provide a mechanism by which the rich countries, that are most responsible for climate change, would be required to pay into a fund that could mitigate the impact of climate change on the poor countries, who are the least responsible for climate change, and help them with a just transition to renewable energy. There was no agreement, however, as to how much money should be paid into it, who should pay it, or on what basis. The UN's International Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) was, therefore, asked to prepare a recommendation, particularly on the size of the fund for the COP28 in Dubai.

The creation of such a fund had been blocked by the rich countries for over 30 years and was only forced onto the agenda this year after heavy pressure from the poor (or developing) countries themselves. Prior to COP27 Guterres had argued strongly for such an agreement, warning that unless there is what he called an "historic pact" between the rich and poor countries on this issue, the planet could already be doomed. In other words without a serious loss and damage fund to provide a socially and economic transition the UN will eventually, and inevitably, fail.

This issue has been given a substantial boost on the eve of the summit when 70 international figures led by Gordon Brown, and including former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, have sent a letter to the COP calling for the massive revenues of oil-producing states to be subject to a \$25bn levy to help pay for the impact of climate disasters on the world's [poorest and most vulnerable people](#).

Brown told the Guardian: "The deadlock on climate finance has to be broken if Cop28 is to succeed. After more than a decade of broken promises, a \$25bn oil and gas levy paid by the petrol states and proposed by the UAE as chair of Cop would kickstart finance for mitigation [reduction of greenhouse gas emissions] and adaptation in the global south".

Such a levy, he said, would shave off only a small fraction of the bonanza that oil-producing countries have made in recent years, but it would help to fill the “loss and damage” to poor countries afflicted by the impacts of the climate crisis.

## **The role of the UN**

The state of the climate struggle today can be seen from the following harsh realities:

- the science remains irrefutable (though often understated by the scientific community)
- the time available to reach net zero is rapidly running out
- the limitations of the COP process become ever more apparent
- Anthropogenic global warming is accelerating at an unprecedented rate and dangerous tipping points are fast approaching – some have already arrived.
- The COP process has to be made to work because there is no alternative.

It is a pivotal moment for the UN since faced with such contradictions its entire carbon reduction project is falling apart leaving the global climate to spin out of control and cause more tipping points to trigger – which would be catastrophic for both the UN and the planet.

Many on the radical left argue that this failure was and is inevitable because the UN it is a capitalist institution, and as such is dedicated to the preservation of the fossil industry and prepared to use as much “greenwash” as necessary in order to do so and it is time for the left (however defined) to go it alone. There have been numerous proposals in recent years for the left to denounce the COP process as a road block and withdraw from it.

This would be a big mistake. The UN is, of course, a capitalist institution. It is comprised of 193 capitalist

countries: how could it be otherwise. To its great credit, however, it recognised the danger of anthropogenic climate change as early as 1992 when the radical left still regarded the environment as a middle class diversion. Since then the COP process it established has been a battleground between the majority who recognise the problem and are prepared to decarbonise at least to some extent, and those who simply defend their own self-interest or who reject the concept of anthropogenic global warming on ideological grounds – i.e. the climate change deniers.

In the event the UN – along with its subdivisions such as the IPCC – were not only successful in defeating the climate deniers – despite the massive backing they received from the fossil fuel producers – but in winning the scientific community over to the climate struggle, without which we would be nowhere today. It has also been instrumental, along with the intensification of the climate crisis its self – in transforming global awareness as to the dangers of climate change.

Today we are facing an existential climate emergency, which only the UN, or something with a comparable global reach and authority can successfully confront.

This is important since although the struggle against climate change must include individual responsibility, in the end it is only governmental action—and ultimately governments that are prepared to go on a war footing to do so—that can make the structural changes necessary to stop global warming in the few years that science is giving us to do it.

### **The role of the radical left**

To the extent that the radical left in particular had or has a strategic approach by which to global warming and climate change it is the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, though how clearly this has been thought through is not always clear.

To be relevant to global warming, however, it would have to happen within this decade since nothing can be built on a dead planet.

The actual task we are faced with today, therefore, is not whether global capitalism can be abolished within 10 years, but whether it can be forced to take action to halt global warming

as a part of a struggle for its eventual overturn and its replacement by an ecosocialism. If we are unable to build the kind of movement capable of forcing major change under capitalism, how are we going to build a movement capable of overturning it. It is what I would call a transitional approach.

It is not true – as some on the left imply – that capitalism cannot be forced to make major changes that are contrary to the logic of its existence. In fact it was already making concessions to this when it agreed under extreme pressure to support a maximum global temperature increase of 1.5°C in Paris and when it agreed to end the use of fossil fuels in Glasgow.

Capitalism would also be prepared, in my view – given the existential implications – involved to carry through decarbonisation its self rather than see societal collapse, since to do so would meet with massive resistance. It would do so completely in its self-interest and with extreme brutality. We cannot assume, in any case, that global warming will be halted incrementally – or indeed peacefully – before runaway climate chaos along with societal and ecological break downs and if so ultra-right and fascist forces will be waiting in the wings.

Mass movements will emerge spontaneously under such conditions, problem however, will be which class interests do they represent. Whether they are led by progressive forces

(including the left) ultra-right populists with a reactionary agenda, that are already flexing their muscles around environmental issues.

A major task of the radical left today – as well as being involved in every aspect of the struggle –implies conscious preparation for such an eventuality, which could already happen at any time.

Meanwhile, the most effective way to cut carbon emissions quickly and democratically is by making fossil fuels much more expensive than renewable energy, by means that are socially just, economically redistributive, and capable of commanding popular support – and in the two or three decades that remain to us.

The UN COP process remains a crucial forum in the struggle for such demands remains. It is the best forum through which the global climate movement can place demands on the global elites and the forum around which we can build the kind of mass movement that can force them to take effective action.

### Key carbon reduction issues

- The global average surface temperature to below a 5°C increase
- Demand net zero by 2030
- All new fossil fuel investment must be stopped
- The polluters must be made to pay
- Global biodiversity must be defended
- There must be a rapid transition to renewables: including solar, on-shore and off-shore wind, tidal and hydro carried out on a 'war footing'. (In UK Labour must maintain its commitment to £28 billion a year on renewables)
- The 2030 deadline for selling fossil fuel cars must be maintained
- SUVs must be banned other than in specialised

circumstances

- Adequate production facilities for EV batteries must be established
- There must be a major extension of public transport and fewer cars
- The national grid must be upgraded

There must be a massive programme of home (and building) insulation. All new homes must meet strict environmental standards

- LTNs and 15 minute cities must be introduced to cut carbon emission and clean up the air we breathe
- Decarbonise agriculture, ban deforestation, a big reduction in meat production and consumption. End the ploughing of fields.
- Stop the pollution of land and sea and rivers
- Protect wetlands
- Far better recycling and the detoxification of waste disposal
- No to nuclear energy

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<https://redgreenlabour.org/2023/11/29/cop-28-what-is-at-stake/>

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## **Rising Clyde: Cumbrian Coal – leave it in the ground**

This month's Rising Clyde programme is about the protest movement against the proposed coal mine in West Cumbria with a discussion with Cumbrian climate justice activist, [Allan Todd](#),

and interviews with Cumbrian activists at the 'speakers' corner' events against the coal mine.

Rising Clyde is the Scottish Climate Show, presented by Iain Bruce, and broadcast on the Independence Live Channel. Previous editions can be found in the embedded video above, Episode 14, by clicking in the three lines in the top right hand corner and choosing from the video list.

*Allan Todd is a climate and anti-fascist activist, and has been active with Greenpeace and XR. He participated in the anti-fracking protests at Preston New Road in Lancashire, where he organised the 'Green Mondays' from 2017 to 2019. Allan is a member of [Anti-Capitalist Resistance](#) and of Left Unity's National Council. He is the author of *Revolutions 1789-1917* (CUP) and *Trotsky: The Passionate Revolutionary* (Pen & Sword). His next book is *Che Guevara: The Romantic Revolutionary*.*

*The host of Rising Clyde, Iain Bruce, is a journalist, film maker and writer living in Glasgow. Iain has worked for many years in Latin America. He has worked at the BBC and Al Jazeera, and was head of news at teleSUR. He has written books about radical politics in Brazil and Venezuela. During COP26, he was the producer and co-presenter of Inside Outside, a daily video briefing for the COP26 Coalition.*

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## **Yes to Life, Yes to Yasuní!**

On 20 August, at the same time they elect a new president and a new National Assembly, Ecuadoreans



will be voting in one of the most important environmental referendums of modern times. They are being asked if the government should leave the oil beneath the [Yasuní national park](#) in the ground, indefinitely.

*As Iain Bruce reports, this was one of the key themes of a recent visit by Leonidas Iza, Ecuador's main Indigenous leader, to Europe to launch the English edition of his book, [Uprising: the October Rebellion in Ecuador](#).*

## Winning support

In a week of meetings and events in Madrid, Brussels, Paris, London, Oxford, Glasgow and Grangemouth, Leonidas Iza and his co-authors, Andres Tapia and Andres Madrid, won support from MEPs, British MPs, trade unionists, peasants, climate justice activists, academics, migrants and many others, for a Yes vote in Ecuador's August referendum.

***Leonidas Iza and fellow authors meet with Scottish trade unionists including STUC Deputy General Secretary Dave Moxham and Unison Scotland Depute Convenor Stephen Smellie in Glasgow during the recent tour to promote "Uprising: the October Rebellion in Ecuador".***



Iza was a central figure in the Indigenous-led uprising of October 2019, triggered by the removal of fuel subsidies and therefore a sharp rise in the cost of living. He was then elected President of [CONAIE, the Confederation of Indigenous](#)

[Nationalities of Ecuador](#), the most powerful movement of its kind in Latin America. In that role, he led the follow-up national stoppage, or *paro*, of June last year. That closed down the country for even longer, 17 days in all, and expanded the list of demands. Alongside opposition to a broader range of neo-liberal policies, mandated by the International Monetary Fund, the Indigenous movement and its allies put at the centre of their struggle the need to halt oil drilling and mining on protected, sensitive and Indigenous land. On both occasions, they forced the government to negotiate and won significant concessions, but not enough.

This August's referendum, which includes the question on stopping oil drilling in three oil fields known as Block 43, in the Yasuni, and another on limiting mining near the capital, Quito, is in effect a continuation of the 2019 and 2022 struggles. It brings together environmental campaigners with the Indigenous communities and other social movements that staged those insurrections, in a National Anti-mining Front. This combination is itself a significant, if tentative, achievement. The relationship of the Indigenous leaders and mass movement that led the insurrections, with the NGO left that has tended to dominate the environmental movement, has sometimes been difficult in recent years.

## **Biodiversity hotspot**

As Iza and his colleagues repeated many times on their European tour, the campaign for Yasuní is not just about saving one of the most biodiverse spots on the planet. Of course, it is that too. The Yasuni National Park comprises 9,823 sq. kms of rainforest (almost half the size of Wales) in the Ecuadorean Amazon, just 200 kms from Quito and bordering the eastern range of the Andes. Perhaps because it was one of the few places that never froze over during the last ice age, it is one of the most biodiverse areas in the world, possibly *the* most biodiverse. Botanists have recorded 685 species of

tree in one hectare of the Yasuni. That is more than in all of the United States and Canada. The same hectare also contains about 100,000 species of insects, again similar to the total number for North America. The Yasuni National Park is also home to Ecuador's two Indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation, the Tagaeri and the Taromenane. The pressure from oil companies operating on the edges of their territory has already resulted in three massacres, putting their survival in jeopardy.

*Climate Justice activists at Climate Camp Scotland in Grangemouth send a message of solidarity "Yes to Life, Yes to Yasuni" July 2023*

<https://www.ecosocialist.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Yes-to-Yasuni-at-Climate-Camp-Scotland.mp4>

## **A novel initiative for mitigation**

At the same time, the campaign for a Yes in the referendum has a broader international significance, because it revives one of the world's most original proposals for mitigating climate change. The Yasuni ITT Initiative was launched by the progressive government of Rafael Correa in 2007, during its early, more radical phase. It was based on proposals coming from Indigenous communities in Ecuadorean Amazonia and some environmental NGOs. It proposed leaving in the ground the 20 percent of Ecuador's oil reserves that had been identified in the Ishpingo, Tambococha and Tiputini oil fields, known as ITT or Block 43, most of which lay beneath the Yasuni National Park. In return, the rich countries would pay Ecuador for *not* exploiting those reserves. US\$3.6 billion over 13 years was what the Correa government was asking for, in public and private sector contributions, when it took the Yasuni ITT initiative to the UN General Assembly in 2007, and to COP15 in Copenhagen two years later, where it formed a central plank of

the proposals put forward by the ALBA alliance led by Bolivia, Cuba and Venezuela. That amount was calculated as 50 percent of the money the country would make if it did exploit those reserves. This was emphatically not conceived as compensation or as any kind of offset, nor was the money to be obtained through any sort of carbon market, as Alberto Acosta, Correa's first energy minister and an architect of the Initiative, repeatedly insisted. The idea was not to leave the oil in the ground beneath the Yasuni National Park in exchange for some northern polluters being allowed to continue their business as usual; on the contrary, the rich countries should pay as part of their responsibility to cut global emissions.

## **Towards a global just transition**

As the ecosocialist theorist, Michael Lowy, suggests in his foreword to the English edition of Iza's *Uprising*, the Yasuni ITT Initiative could have been an unparalleled example to other countries – an inspiration for how the global south and the global north, both producers and consumers of fossil fuels, could have engaged together in a just transition away from the carbon economy, in a way that would be fair for communities across the planet.

In the end, President Rafael Correa abandoned the Yasuni Initiative. By 2013, the international pledges amounted to only US\$336 million, of which less than 4 percent had actually been delivered. At the same time, the right-leaning and often pro-oil developmentalists in his Citizen Revolution movement had gained ground, bolstering Correa's own sympathies with the extractive industries – and his impatience with both the Indigenous and environmental movements, which he liked to refer to as “infantile”. Alberto Acosta and others on the radical left in his government had either left or been marginalised. Blaming “the international community” for failing in its response (quite correctly of course), Correa declared the Yasuni Initiative dead, and ordered the state oil

company, Petroecuador, to press ahead with drilling. In 2016, oil began to flow from the ITT fields, but in lesser quantities than expected, given the slump in world prices. Nonetheless, Correa's retreat from the Initiative sealed the already deep breach between his government and the bulk of the Indigenous and environmental movements.

The latter had argued that the oil should be left in the ground, with or without the international financial contribution. Already by 2014, a campaign called *Yasunidos*, launched by the environmental NGO *Accion Ecolologica*, had collected enough signatures to trigger a referendum. But the electoral authorities refused to recognise hundreds of thousands of them, and for a number of years the Yasuni question all but disappeared from the political agenda.

## The Yasuni returns

It was only in May this year that Ecuador's Constitutional Court ruled, somewhat unexpectedly, that the call for a referendum was valid. It set the vote to coincide with the snap presidential election on 20 August, called by Ecuador's right-wing president, Guillermo Lasso, to avoid his own impeachment. Since then, the Yasuni question has burst back into the centre of Ecuador's political life. In a context that has been changed fundamentally by the two Indigenous-led insurrections of 2019 and 2022, it has unleashed an unprecedented debate on what kind of social and economic development the Ecuadorean people want for their country. It is a debate that cuts through the middle of the electoral options on offer on the same day. It also reveals, once again, the profound contradictions that run through Latin America's diverse experiences with progressive governments, and their complicated relations with powerful social movements, like the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.

For the last decade or more, the left and progressive forces

in Ecuador have been riven by a bitter, debilitating division. The supporters of former president Rafael Correa and his Citizen Revolution movement have been ranged against much of the Indigenous and women's movements (the country's two most important social movements) and most of the trade unions (much weakened from their high point of the 1980s), as well many environmental NGOs and a number of small far-left groups and currents.

## **Yasuni, elections and beyond**

This split is playing out once again in the presidential election on 20 August. But whether as tragedy or as farce, it may be for the last time. On one side, the favourite to become Ecuador's next president, possibly in the first round but more likely in a second round in October, is Luisa Gonzalez, the candidate of the Citizen Revolution movement. She has avoided taking a very explicit position on the Yasuni referendum, and her party has said its members will be free to vote as they choose. But like Correa himself, she has left little doubt about her opposition to leaving the oil in the ground. Both insist the country needs the money to build schools and hospitals. Most of the half a dozen candidates vying to represent a discredited right have maintained a similar ambiguity, and used the same arguments.

On the other side, Yaku Perez, who was the candidate of the Indigenous movement's party, Pachakutik, in the 2021 election and came third, is the only presidential candidate this time to support openly a Yes vote in the Yasuni referendum. He still has the support of the old, right-leaning leadership of Pachakutik and some environmental NGOs, as well as parts of the anti-Correa left and centre-left. But this bloc has lost much of its credibility. In particular, the Pachakutik leaders who engineered his candidacy last time and who led the large group of Pachakutik members in the now-dissolved National Assembly, revealed an extraordinary capacity for opportunism.

Putting their virulent anti-Correa stance above loyalty to any particular ideology or policy, they struck a series of deals with Guillermo Lasso's right-wing government, in exchange for favours and positions. As a result, last April's national conference of Pachakutik voted them out and elected a new leadership aligned with the positions and priorities of CONAIE itself. They appealed against their removal, and since the National Electoral Council had still not ruled on the dispute, Pachakutik was not allowed to give formal endorsement to any candidates at a national level in this election.

7 August 2023



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## **Aberdeen: Occupation of Edinburgh offices in support of Torry community**

**Activists occupy tree outside Edinburgh offices in support of Torry community in Aberdeen.** Press statement from This is Rigged.

Ironside Farrar, Environmental Consultants with offices in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Manchester were commissioned by Energy Transition Zone Ltd (ETZ Ltd) to produce a 'Masterplan' for the industrial development of parts of [St. Fittick's Park](#), Gregness and Doonies Farm in Aberdeen. They were also tasked

with obtaining Planning Permission for this development. Ironside Farrar's plans were presented to the Aberdeen City Council Management Planning Committee yesterday morning (29<sup>th</sup> June). The Council say they will adopt the 'Masterplan' as Planning Guidance.

On the same day, supporters of This Is Rigged went to the Edinburgh offices of Ironside Farrar and met with Julian Farrar, Managing Director of the company, to discuss the issues and request that Ironside Farrar withdraw from further work for ETZ Ltd, and that employees boycott all further work for ETZ Ltd for the following reasons:

St Fittick's park is the last remaining green space in Torry, which is one of the country's most deprived communities, where residents have a life expectancy ten years lower than people living in wealthier parts of Aberdeen. Commenting on the potential loss of the park, local doctors and nurses fighting to improve the health of the Torry community, say that industrialising any part of St. Fittick's Park will be devastating for the health of that community.

In addition to its positive contribution to human health, St. Fittick's Park is an oasis for wildlife, including many species of migrating birds, and Gregness and Doonies Farm support this wildlife as green corridors. In a recent article in the Guardian, journalist Tom wall suggested the park's wetland is "perhaps Aberdeen's most unlikely beauty spot. Reeds flap and bend in blasts of salt-edged wind. Grey and blue light catch in watery beds, where ducks dip and preen. Birds shelter in a young woodland of oak, dark green pine and silvery birch trees."

It therefore makes no sense to destroy this important habitat while Scotland is in the midst of a biodiversity crisis. Furthermore, the wetlands and forest created 10 years ago in St. Fittick's Park are already capturing carbon, and it is increasingly recognised that ecosystems like these even



regulate local climate including rainfall.

The main purposes of the proposed Energy Transition Zone will be to develop carbon capture and hydrogen technologies, both of which are considered by leading scientists to be unproven and dangerous excuses for continued oil extraction and habitat destruction.

In yesterday's meeting, Julian Farrar was warned that being complicit in destroying the wetlands and woodland, both of which are vitally important green spaces and biodiversity sites that have taken years and a tens of thousands of community man-hours to create, would be seen as an act of immeasurable violence.

Ishbel Shand, member of the Friends of St.Fittick's Park campaign said,

"The proposed industrial development is simply a land grab by the oil and gas industry to fill the pockets of their shareholders and directors."

After leaving the meeting with Julian Farrar, This is Rigged activists Mike Downham and Tom Johnson decided to occupy a small tree outside the Ironside Farrar offices, and are there awaiting a response.

Mike Downham, a retired paediatrician and children's DR said,

"There is a high incidence of asthma in children in Torry due to particulate matter air pollution from the nearby incinerator and the South Harbour industrial development. Further industrial development in this community would have a serious negative impact on the health of children in Torry."

Following the meeting, Tom Johnson, a painter-decorator and This is rigged supporter who knows St. Fittick's park well said,

"If Ironside Farrar were to pull out of the project at this

stage, it would have a huge positive effect on the wellbeing and health of the Torry community – disempowered folk who have lost so much already. I mean, Imagine losing an entire bay – your access to the sea. And now forests they planted 10 years ago are to be ripped up and concreted over with “green” factories.”

“Julian Farrar explained to me that Ironside Farrar have reduced the amount of harm to be done in the park, but if they now come out against any destruction WHATSOEVER of these spaces, that will be a really bold statement of solidarity, and an action that shows their real concern for the environment, and people. We understand it’s difficult for a company to do something like that in current economic and political contexts, but to me Julian did seem to be uncomfortable with what’s going on with the ETZ.”

Republished from [ScotE3 -“Employment, Energy and Environment – Campaigning for climate jobs and a just transition”](https://scote3.net/2023/07/01/occupation-in-support-of-torry-community/):  
<https://scote3.net/2023/07/01/occupation-in-support-of-torry-community/>

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## **Statement by ecology movements in Turkey- demands for immediate action**

*Immediately after the February 6 earthquake, one of the biggest in the history of Turkey, a broad meeting of Ecology Organizations in Turkey published this statement:*

*Our urgent demands from the government, which holds all the*

***resources of the state in its hands, and our call for solidarity.***

*After the 7.7 magnitude earthquakes centered in Pazarcık, Kahramanmaraş, at midnight on February 6, followed by the 7.6 magnitude earthquakes centered in Elbistan at noon on the same day, more than ten thousand buildings collapsed and tens of thousands of people were trapped under the rubble. In reality, it is the government, which is trying to turn this disaster into an opportunity for its own survival and has declared a state of emergency in the region to this end. Organization of civil initiatives and rank and file solidarity networks are vital to making emergency interventions in the areas of destruction and rebuilding life. It is imperative that the disaster is not magnified by obstructing the aid and solidarity of civil initiatives under the pretext of the State of Emergency!*

*The state, unable to fulfill its basic duty of organization and coordination, has left the people of Turkey today with the obligation and responsibility to organize themselves.*

*Our most urgent need today is to weave a solidarity that crosses borders in order to keep alive our people who have lost their living spaces and cannot meet their basic needs in the entire geography affected by the earthquake, especially in search and rescue operations.*

*First of all, we would like to observe that an earthquake is a natural phenomenon, that it has been going on for millions of years and that earthquakes occur for nature to realize itself and for the earth to complete itself:*

*The main responsible for the losses of life is this corporatist government, which has left life to freeze under the rubble, and which no longer functions as a social state. Natural phenomena cannot be characterized as disasters, catastrophes or fate to cover up the massacres caused by the*

capitalist system based on the greed for profit. Humanity has lived in peace with nature for thousands of years, and has built its social life in harmony with nature, taking into account natural phenomena. Houses were built in harmony with the behavior of nature. Now, the governments that nourish the concrete-oriented urban policies imposed by capitalist modernism with multi-storey buildings, thus paving the way for capital to increase its earnings, bear the main responsibility for these losses.

In the last two hundred years, policies that increase the exploitation of nature and labor have been followed. As a result of these policies, we are facing an ecocide caused by the brutal face of capitalism, which causes destruction and collapse by destroying human and non-human life. The region where the earthquake occurred is a region where many ecological crimes have been committed, such as the construction of hydroelectric dams, thermal power plants, nuclear power plants and airports on fault lines and, as a result, lives have been endangered. The only way to defend life against this destruction is not in spite of nature, but in a reciprocal relationship with nature, in peace with nature, and in solidarity with nature.

We know that there are many things we need to do to build the life we dream of, but today we are faced with an urgent, vital situation that requires us to act without waiting. As you read this, there are still lives under the rubble waiting to be rescued if they are not frozen. While they are fighting for their lives, the construction and mining companies who caused the collapses continue to count their money.

This is our warning to the government, which controls all the resources of the state, about what needs to be done urgently and our public call for solidarity:

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE URGENTLY:

1. Mining and construction activities, especially in the region and neighboring regions, should be stopped immediately, and construction machinery and equipment belonging to public and private companies should be sent to earthquake zones for search and rescue operations together with technical personnel.

2. Civilian and military infrastructure and personnel, and private sector airline infrastructure and search and rescue and relief teams should be rapidly deployed to earthquake areas that cannot be reached by road.

3. Buildings such as second residences, hotels, places of worship, including those in neighboring regions, especially reliable buildings in the region, should be put into service free of charge or by using public resources to be used in solving the shelter problem.

4. In order to provide vital needs such as clean drinking water, food, clothing and hygiene products, the mechanisms created by civil society for solidarity should be fully and completely coordinated with public services.

5. Rescue teams should be formed to include living beings other than humans. The work of civilian teams taking initiative in this regard should be facilitated and supported.

6. Since the earthquake occurred in a region with a high concentration of migrants, search and rescue and basic needs should be carried out with full inclusiveness, free from discrimination.

#### **ECOLOGICAL DEMANDS:**

1. Information should be provided on the causes of the natural gas explosions and the fire at Iskenderun Port, which materials were burned, and the chemical and nuclear materials, if any, involved in the fire.

2. An inventory of hazardous, flammable and explosive materials in the industrial facilities in the region should be made; preventive measures should be taken without delay for possible disasters as a result of aftershocks or new earthquakes.

3. More than ten thousand buildings are thought to have collapsed. Work on asbestos, radon and other harmful gases emitted from these buildings should begin as soon as possible to ensure the safety of the people in the region, especially search and rescue teams.

4. Damage assessments should begin on the dams, which control water and are an extension of the commodification work, and necessary measures should be taken to prevent a secondary disaster.

5. It must be determined whether the chemicals in the mines are mixed with water aquifers; necessary measures must be taken.

6. The problems of non-human creatures living in cities and their peripheries, whose habitats we have usurped, regarding nutrition, access to clean and healthy water and shelter must be solved as soon as possible.

7. Damage to electricity and natural gas transmission lines in the earthquake zone, explosions in natural gas lines, security dams in the region, thermal power plants in Maraş and Adana poses great risks.

8. Large energy investments, security policies and fossil fuels that put life at risk must be abandoned.

Our condolences to everyone who is suffering. We are very saddened by our losses, but our sadness does not prevent us from ignoring the cause of the destruction, the slowness of the search and rescue efforts, and the measures that need to be taken to prevent possible further disasters. The state of

*emergency cannot hide this situation, nor will we allow it to.*

*In solidarity.*

*Climate Justice Coalition*

*Assembly for Unity of Ecology*

*Republished from International Standpoint 10 February 2023*

<https://www.internationaliststandpoint.org/statement-by-ecology-movements-in-turkey-demands-for-immediate-action/>

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# **Power to the People! Scottish Socialist Energy Summit – Glasgow 21 May 2022**

POWER TO THE PEOPLE! SOCIALIST ENERGY SUMMIT: SATURDAY 21ST MAY – GET YOUR TICKETS BOOKED NOW!

12noon-5pm [The Renfield Centre](#), 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP ([Directions](#))

This important event is being held by [Socialists For Independence \(SFI\)](#) in conjunction with [European Left](#) and [Democratic Left Scotland](#).

It will be an opportunity to talk and most importantly, organise around how we can fight back against the huge energy prices rises that increases fuel poverty and the next stage for the COP26 demands to fight climate change. The recent

ScotWind sale by the Scottish Government has provoked [important debate](#) about what sort of energy system we need in Scotland, both before and after independence, and how it can benefit the entire population especially the poorest.

We can't go on like this. Global warming is threatening the planet and energy prices are going into the stratosphere.

We need a drastic root and branch change. To do that we have to understand how we create energy in Scotland and who owns our energy. This summit is the first step in developing an energy plan where the people in Scotland own and control energy production and consumption for the benefit of the people who live here.

Speakers include:

- [Maggie Chapman](#) – [Scottish Green Party](#) MSP
- [Stephen Smellie](#) – [UNISON Scotland](#) Depute Convenor
- [Roland Kulke](#) – [Transform](#), [European Left](#)
- Stuart Fairweather – [Dundee Trades Council](#) & [Democratic Left Scotland](#)
- [Alan McCombes](#)

The event is open to anyone who has an interest in environmental issues and is concerned about how we in Scotland can effect positive change for both people and planet.

Tickets for the event are free and can be booked via Eventbrite – see link below:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/socialist-summit-on-energy-tickets-318976165297>

The Facebook event is here:  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/379869394006488?ref=newsfeed>

Come along and have your say!

You can follow **Socialists for Independence** on social media:  
[Twitter: @socialists4indy](#)      [Facebook](#)      Web:



<https://socialistsforindependence.scot/> (Members also have a Slack channel for discussion and regular fortnightly meetings)

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# Defend Ukraine, defend the planet

## *Red-Green Labour Editorial Board* response to the war in *Ukraine*.

We stand with the Ukrainian people in their remarkable resistance to Putin's brutal invasion of their country driven by Great Russian chauvinism and imperialist ambition. They are facing tanks, artillery, cruise missiles launched from ships in the Black Sea and aerial assaults by Russian paratroopers. Cluster bombs have been used against civilian districts of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second city. A 24 mile column of Russian armour is heading towards Ukraine's capital city with the aim (we can assume) of blasting the Ukrainian government out of office and instituting regime change by force.

We strongly support Ukraine's right of self-determination: i.e. its right to determine its own future free from interference or intimidation from East or West.

We also support Ukrainian demands for arms and military assistance from the international community and for economic measures to be taken against Putin's regime and its billionaire backers. Demands that are echoed by sections of the socialist and progressive opposition within Russia.

We are in awe at the mobilisation of popular resistance which appears to have slowed down the Russian advance. Weapons have been distributed on the streets and volunteers are joining the resistance in large numbers. The government website is not only urging people to join the resistance but is giving instructions on how to make petrol bombs for use in street fighting. New recruits are going straight to the front lines with no military equipment other than a rifle a machine gun or a grenade launcher in their hands.

We welcome the decision of the EU countries to open their borders and to provide safe haven for refugees and we demand that the racist Johnson government in Britain follows suit – which it is still refusing to do. Also that it drops its racist *Immigration and Nationalities Bill*, which would impose further and draconian restriction on refugees trying to enter the UK.

We stand in solidarity with the remarkable demonstrations that have been taking place around the world – not least in Russia itself where thousands have been thrown into jail – in support of the Ukrainian resistance. A victory for Putin in this war would not only strengthen right-wing forces globally, but would strengthen imperialism both East and West.

The driving force behind Putin's invasion of Ukraine, we should be clear, has little to do with NATO's ambitions, which he hides behind, but his long-held ambition to promote Great Russian chauvinism with its own spheres of influence – including Ukraine.

We demand the withdrawal of all Russian and Byelorussian troops all the regions of Ukraine including from the Donbass region and Crimea.

# The ecological dimension

The Russian invasion of Ukraine took place a few days before the publication of the IPCC's *Sixth Assessment on Climate Change* which has issued its starkest warning yet on the future of the planet. Catastrophic climate change, it says, is now "widespread, rapid, and intensifying".

This reminds us that a Putin victory against Ukraine would not just have a reactionary impact on world politics, but would dislocate the struggle against global warming and climate change making the future of life on the planet even more precarious.

The struggle against Russian aggression and the struggle to save the planet from catastrophic climate change are now indivisible. The dangers posed by the petrochemical industry are not 'just' about carbon emissions – catastrophic as they are. They are also about the role of the petrochemical industry in geo-politics, and the drive it generates towards resource conflict and wars. Many of the wars that have taken place since WW2 have had this behind them.

In fact Putin sees Russian oil and gas reserves, and the vast profits that they generate for him, as his trump card in his invasion of Ukraine and his ongoing imperialist ambitions. The reliance of much of Europe, Germany in particular, on Putins oil and gas, has meant that the most effective measure against him, which would be to close down his oil and gas market, is very difficult to take.

The rapid transition to renewable energy that we need, therefore, is not 'just' to reduce carbon emissions and curb global warming, but to protect life on the planet by breaking the strangle-hold of the petrochemical industry and the conflicts and wars it generates. Renewables on the other hand can be developed anywhere in the world and offer a more equitable access to energy resources than the lottery of oil

and gas deposits.

Nuclear power should also be rejected since it also locks us into the military industrial war machine since the existence of a nuclear power industry is an integral part of the manufacture of nuclear weapons. In Ukraine we have the nightmare of 15 soviet-era nuclear reactors in all (as well as the Chernobyl disaster site) now being contested in a war zone where anything could happen to them, either by accident or design.

Our immediate task, however, is to stop Putin destroying the fragile gains made in Glasgow in November and to start the fight for better outcomes from COP27 to be held in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt later this year. To do that we have to stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

3 March 2022

Republished from Red Green Labour website:  
<https://redgreenlabour.org/2022/03/03/defend-ukraine-defend-the-planet/>

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## **Impacts of warming: faster and more severe than expected, says IPCC**

*Daniel Tanuro writes on the latest UN climate report.*

The [report of the IPCC's Working Group II on impacts and adaptation to climate change](#) sends out a strident cry of alarm: the disaster is more serious than projected by the models, its effects manifest themselves more quickly and all

the risks increase. The poor, indigenous peoples, women, children and the elderly are increasingly at risk, especially in countries of the Global South. The policies followed to limit the damage are inadequate, run counter to sustainability and deepen social inequalities. The authors call for an inclusive approach to transform society at all levels.

## The findings

Ecosystems everywhere are altered by climate change. For some of them, the limits of adaptation are exceeded (especially in polar and equatorial regions) – they will not be able to regenerate naturally. Some extreme events exceed the averages projected for the end of the century. Species are already disappearing due to global warming.

The human consequences are worrying. Forest and peatland fires, drainage of wetlands and deforestation result in some carbon sinks becoming sources (the Amazon rainforest, in particular). The productivity of agriculture, forestry and fisheries is declining, posing a threat to food security. The verdict of the scientists is categorical: the global food system is failing to meet the challenge of food insecurity and malnutrition in a sustainable way.

Water issues are particularly worrying. While half of the world's population experiences severe water scarcity at least one month a year, half a billion people live in areas where average precipitation is now at the level of rainfall that previously only occurred every six years. Melting mountain glaciers cause flooding or shortages downstream, and water-borne diseases affect millions more people in Asia, Africa and Central America.

In general, the health consequences of global warming are serious, and increase inequalities. In countries highly vulnerable to global warming (where 3.3 billion people live), mortality due to floods, droughts and storms is fifteen times

higher than elsewhere on Earth. Some regions of the globe are approaching or already experiencing a level of heat stress incompatible with work. Several phenomena related to global warming (heat, cold, dust, tropospheric ozone, fine particles, allergens) promote chronic diseases of the respiratory tract. The destruction of natural habitats and the migration of species promote zoonoses.

Climate change has become a major driver of migration and displacement of human populations. Since 2008, twenty million people have been forced to move every year due to extreme weather events (especially storms and floods). These human tragedies mainly affect South and Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and small island states. Other populations are unable to leave regions that have become inhospitable, because they lack the means or for other reasons.

Large urban concentrations in the Global South are particularly exposed to the combined impacts of climate change and the social determinants of vulnerability. This is especially the case in the informal peripheries – without water supply or sewers, often established on slopes exposed to landslides – (where women and children are in the majority). In sub-Saharan Africa, 60% of the urban population lives in the informal extensions of cities; 529 million Asians live in the same precarious conditions.

## Projections

The projections are even more worrying than the findings, and can be summed up in a few words: escalation of threats.

According to the authors, any additional short-term warming increases the risks to ecosystems in all regions. The projected percentage of species at high risk of extinction at 1.5°C, 2°C and 3°C is 9% [see Footnote 1], 10% and 12% respectively (NB: the range of uncertainty is wide, the reality could be more serious), with a qualitative leap

between +1°C and +3°C. Extreme weather events and other stressors will increase in magnitude and frequency, accelerating ecosystem degradation and loss of ecosystem services. At 4°C of warming, the frequency of fires will increase, for example, by 50 to 70%. Changes in ocean water stratification will reduce nutrient fluxes. Time lags in the development of phytoplankton may reduce fish resources.

Extra warming will also increase pressure on the food system and on food security. The negative impacts of global warming will become prevalent for all food systems and regional inequalities in food security will increase, researchers say. Depending on the scenarios, the global biomass of the oceans will decrease by 5.7% to 15.5% in 2080-2099 relative to 1995-2014, and the number of undernourished humans will increase by tens of millions by 2050.

The water issue will become acute in terms of sustainability. Under the median scenarios, by 2100, high mountain glaciers will disappear by 50% in Asia. At 1.6°C warming, the number of people displaced in Africa by floods will increase by 200% (and by 600% at 2.6°C). At 2°C of warming, extreme agricultural droughts will increase by 150 to 200% in the Mediterranean basin, western China and high latitudes of North America and Eurasia. At 2.5°C, 55% to 68% of commercially exploited freshwater fish species in Africa will be at risk of extinction.

Rising sea levels will become increasingly threatening: risks in coastal regions will increase particularly beyond 2050 and will continue to increase thereafter, even if warming stops. The risk will increase by 20% for a rise of 15cm, will double for a rise of 75cm and will triple for a rise of 1.4 meters (NB: such a rise is likely during this century). Africa is also very threatened here: from 108 to 116 million people affected by 2030, and up to 245 million in 2060. Developed countries are not immune: the risk will be multiplied by ten in Europe. 2100, and even faster and more with a constant

policy.

The consequences for health are in tune, and sharpened by “the degradation and destruction of health systems”. A high emissions scenario would increase the annual number of climate deaths by 9 million in 2100. In a medium scenario, this number would increase by 250,000/year in 2050. The ranks of victims of malnutrition will swell, especially in Africa, South Asia and Central America. In all scenarios, parts of the globe that are densely populated today will become unsafe or uninhabitable.

If inegalitarian policies continue, the number of people living in extreme poverty will increase from 700 million to one billion by 2030. The authors refer to this as crossing “social tipping points”.

## Major Concerns

As in previous reports, the WGII identifies five “major Reasons for Concern” (RFC): unique ecosystems under threat, such as coral reefs and mountain environments (RFC1); extreme weather events (RFC2); social distribution of impacts (RFC3); some aggregate global effects, such as the number of climate deaths (RFC4); single large-scale events, such as the dislocation of ice caps (RFC5).

For each of these RFCs, the authors compare the current level of risk to the level of risk assessed in their previous report (IPCC 5th Assessment Report, 2014). The level of risk refers to the objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted in Rio (1992): “to avoid dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”. The conclusion of the comparison should sound like an alarm siren: the risk has become high to very high for the five RFCs in all scenarios (even if the level of warming remains low). Staying below 1.5°C would allow the risk to remain “moderate” for RFC 3 , 4, and 5, but it’s already high for RFC 2, and



it's going from high to very high for RFC1.

We know that some emission mitigation scenarios rely on a "temporary overshoot" of 1.5°C, while remaining "well below 2°C" (Paris agreement). The scientists say this would entail severe risks and irreversible impacts. In addition, it would increase the risk that large quantities of carbon stored in ecosystems would be released (as a result of fires, melting permafrost, etc.), which would accelerate climate catastrophe.

## **Limits to adaptation, unfair policies**

Governments say they have a policy of adaptation to the inevitable part of climate change, as provided for in international agreements. The GTII report takes stock of this approach: 1°) it is unfair and inefficient, and benefits more well-off incomes than the poorest; 2°) instead of complementing the essential drastic and rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, it serves as a substitute, so that global warming worsens, which reduces the possibilities of adaptation, to the detriment of the poor ; 3°) the room for maneuver is further reduced due to the deployment of measures aimed at circumventing the reduction of emissions (for example: carbon capture and storage, tree plantations, large hydroelectric dams) to the detriment of indigenous peoples, poor communities and women.

The report clearly states that "dominant development strategies run counter to climate-sustainable development". Several reasons are put forward: the widening of income inequalities, unplanned urbanization, forced migration and displacement, continuously rising greenhouse gas emissions, the continuation of changes in land use, reversal of the long-term trend towards longer life expectancy.

According to the authors, it is crucial to develop an

inclusive, fair and just policy, particularly with regard to indigenous peoples whose knowledge must be valued. The empowerment of marginalized communities is decisive for the co-production of a sustainable climate policy. Governments' lack of social justice is singled out as the greatest obstacle, particularly in the face of the challenges of the food-energy-water nexus.

Health, education and basic social services are vital to increasing the well-being of populations and the sustainability of development, the report reads. It is therefore a priority to increase the financial means of the global South, where the cost of adapting to global warming will very quickly exceed the 100 billion dollars a year that the North has promised to pay (but has not paid) to the Green Fund for the climate. The report cites amounts of 127 to 290 billion dollars/year in 2030-2050, which could go up to 1000 billion.

The IPCC WGII report obviously does not provide a social strategy for dealing with capitalist climate catastrophe: the general tone is one of good intentions and pious wishes for the inclusion of all social actors. But social movement activists will find here two things that are useful in their fight: a scientific confirmation of the extreme gravity of the impacts of global warming, and a rigorous demonstration of the systemic injustice of climate policies.

28 February 2022

Footnote 1: 9% extinction is more than a thousand times the natural rate of species extinction

*Daniel Tanuro, a certified agriculturalist and ecosocialist environmentalist, writes for [Gauche-Anticapitaliste-SAP](#), Belgian section of the [Fourth International](#). He is also the author of [Green Capitalism: why it can't work](#) (Resistance*

*Books, Merlin and IIRE, 2010) and Le moment Trump (Demopolis, 2018).*

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# Rising Clyde – new Scottish Environment Show, starts 7 March

Following the success of the daily '[Inside, Outside' Climate Shows](#) from Glasgow on YouTube during COP26 last November, Iain Bruce is presenting **Rising Clyde**, a new monthly Scottish Climate Show with interviews and discussion.

Here is a preview:

It is being hosted on the first Monday of each month on the [Independence Live YouTube channel](#) and [Scottish Independence Podcasts](#).

The first episode begins Monday 7 March at 7pm and is titled '**After COP26: What Next for Scotland?**'.



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# From land grabbing to the housing crisis: Nid yw Cymru ar werth (“Wales is Not for Sale!”)

Real Wild Estates Company and the French mega-corporation L’Oreal Groupe, recently met to discuss plans to buy up land to rewild, *writes Alex Heffon on the Welsh socialist blog of Undod*. They are explicitly looking to [profit](#) from forms of landlordism such as the private housing market and holiday lets while benefiting from public subsidies for activities such as tree planting.

They also aim to profit from new carbon markets, whereby carbon sequestered in the form of trees, pastures and peatland, will be exchanged for carbon credits, so that heavy emitting companies may “offset” their carbon emissions. This is how countries like the UK will reach “net zero” despite the practice being called dangerous by a [group of climate scientists](#). A form of greenwashing that will do nothing to halt catastrophic climate change – but will enable the status quo to continue a little longer.

The UK is aiming to make itself the global financial capital of “green growth”, which in practice means the continuation of neocolonialism (the practice of continuing to economically exploit former colonies) whilst the Global North continues to evade its responsibility for causing climate change. As Tom Goldtooth, leader of the Indigenous Environmental Network [put it at COP26](#) it’s a “new form of colonialism”.

“Natural capital” is the ideology that underpins this fantasy that says you can financially value so-called “natural assets”. This is supposed to facilitate “payments for ecosystem services” (PES) whereby you pay for good practice and financially punish bad practice. Over time their aim is to improve the financial valuation of nature, which is supposed to indicate an improving state of ecosystems. It is argued that pricing ecosystems will lead to more rational and efficient management of natural resources and halt their destruction.

It’s easy to see why this appeals to the Tories. But the complexity of ecosystems, along with the myriad ecological demands of human and non-human life, makes a mockery of this simplistic concept that privileges profit above all else.

For example, you might pay a landowner in Wales to sequester carbon in the form of tree-planting (itself more complex than is oft-realised), and in the process offset food production to the other side of the world, contributing to deforestation and Indigenous land dispossession elsewhere. In theory, so long as that destruction and death is made up for financially elsewhere, then it’s possible to attribute a net benefit. This is clearly absurd.

A form of “biodiversity offsetting” that allows financial markets and corporations ever more control in managing the planet’s ecology in a process dubbed land grabbing or “[green grabbing](#)”. This flawed model of natural capital however, is the very logic that underlies the upcoming Sustainable Farming Scheme in Wales. As Calvin Jones [warned](#), “rural Wales is in trouble.”

Further commodification and financialisation of ecosystems is no answer to ecological breakdown and climate chaos which is already driven by capital accumulation in the first place. This is why hedge-funds are looking to “invest” in land. It’s an easy way to profit from asset appreciation, rentier income

and looming carbon exchange payments and subsidies.

## **‘Carbon Rush’ in Wales**

Mark Redfern, of Voice.Wales, has [uncovered](#) how Foresight Group, an investment fund, has specifically set up [Foresight Forestry Company PLC](#) with the sole aim of profiting from this new carbon rush. They are looking to float on the London Stock Exchange for an initial offering of £200 million and are behind some of the [recent land buyouts](#) across Powys. There’s clearly money to be made for a small handful, but of what value will that be to rural Welsh communities and Wales as a whole?

There’s nothing to stop these companies from establishing conifer plantations that are of little ecological value, and the carbon credits they’ll accumulate will likely be used to offset fossil fuel emissions. So local communities, the wider ecology and the climate all lose, whilst private investment funds win. And what’s to stop them “[asset stripping](#)” these newly acquired ecosystems once they’ve served their purpose of capital accumulation and carbon offsetting?

Land in Wales is relatively cheaper than other parts of the UK, making it ripe for such profiteering. This is land that would’ve once been part of a small farm, but as farming becomes increasingly less viable, due to the capitalist food economy that pits farmers across the globe against each other in a race to the bottom, it becomes ever more difficult for small farms to survive. Land is either bought up by bigger farms, consolidating land, in order to compete in commodity production, or is now increasingly bought up by investment funds looking to extract financial value, all greenwashed in the vocabulary of ecosystem services. These groups, like Real Wild Estates Group, will espouse the lingo of community regeneration but in reality they will bring little of the sort.

# Empower local people in ecological restoration

There is a need for ecological restoration across Wales, that few deny, but it must be led by, and for, Welsh communities. Land needs further democratisation, not further concentration that benefits capitalists and elites fortunate to be born into family dynasties that extend back to the Normans. These new public school-educated white knights, cloaked in Barbour, tweed and Le Chateau wellingtons, will not rescue our communities, even if the idea of being “rescued” itself wasn’t misplaced and condescending enough.

True ecological restoration requires decommodification of food, land and labour. It requires us to direct human effort towards what urgently needs doing in the face of ecological and climate breakdown. The desire and knowledge is already there, but it’s exceptionally hard to direct that energy to the tasks required when most people have to work hard enough as it is to maintain a living.

[Project Skyline](#), in the Valleys, is one such attempt to reimagine land use in post-industrial regions, in a manner that re-empowers local people in the project of ecological restoration. Surely this is better than another Amazon warehouse or a faceless, pin-striped suit in London managing Welsh affairs yet again. Instead of being sold off to the highest bidder, in an independent Wales, land could be bought up by our own central bank and used to expand the county farm estate. Community land trusts, funded by low-cost, long-term loans provide another option, as does the new concept of “[Public-Common Partnerships](#)”. But Wales can’t do this without increased fiscal powers and it can’t do this if it stays in thrall to capital. As Laurie Macfarlane points out, Scotland is also seeing a new round of land grabbing in the form of the “[green lairds](#)” – but Scotland does at least have the option of community land buyouts, unlike Wales. As it stands,

the Welsh Government will be actively subsidising these hedge-funds, through Glastir payments, to the tune of millions of pounds of taxpayer money. Money that instead could be used to expand the county farm estate –instead of [running it down and selling it off](#).

All across Wales communities are under attack from the profit-driven, capitalist housing and land market. From decades of gentrification that is driving up rent and living costs for Cardiff's working class, to rural homes being bought as second houses or holiday lets, to the land being acquired by hedge-funds. It's something that unites everyone, except those that profit. All of this works to drive up the cost of living, drives people away from their home towns, villages and neighbourhoods, and turns Wales into the extensive leisure grounds of the wealthy.

We can see the detrimental effects this has on the Welsh language with the tragic closure of [Ysgol Abersoch](#). As an act of triage to prevent further damage Welsh Government needs to, for example; enact rent controls, prevent buying of homes for holiday lets and second homes and regulate AirBnB, as [Mabli Siriol](#) called for at the recent Nid Yw Cymru Ar Werth rally in Caerdydd. They must also prevent so-called investors buying land and instead instigate land reform, as [Robat Idris](#) proposed last year. The new [Plaid-Labour agreement](#) hints that some of these demands might be met, though time will tell.

## How long for Welsh Government action?

How long must we wait for Welsh Government to take action? In her article for Undod [Angharad Tomos](#) succinctly highlights that this damage is decades old. In some coastal parts of Pembrokeshire, [40%](#) of houses are holiday homes, and in Abersoch, Gwynedd, it's [46%](#). Welsh Government recently



published a [report](#) looking into new policies to solve the second homes crisis but most importantly we need actions now before it's too late. Perhaps one stumbling block to Welsh Government taking effective action is the fact that 28% of MS' are landlords themselves? The wellbeing of future generations depends on it, and they require us to channel the spirit of [Rebecca](#). Inspiration can be taken from the continued resistance shown by the [Save the Northern Meadows](#) campaign.

As [Cian Ireland](#) put it in his speech earlier this year, for the Nid Yw Cymru Ar Werth rally at Tryweryn:

*"Instead of facing drowning by water, we face being drowned by a flood of wealthy buyers who can outcompete local people on the private market, which prioritises wealth before the needs of our people. This is an attack from the capitalist housing market on our communities."*

*This article was originally published on the blog of Undod, the Welsh socialist organisation and is reproduced here with the kind permission of Undod. The original can be found here in English: <https://undod.cymru/en/2022/02/04/cipio-tir-argyfwng-tai/> and here in the Welsh Language: [O gipio tir i'r argyfwng tai: Nid yw Cymru ar werth – undod](#)*

**'Undod' (Welsh for union or struggle) is a democratic, socialist republican, green and anti-hierarchical organisation set up to ensure radical independence for Wales. Readers in Scotland and elsewhere can support Undod and sign up for mailings on**

its website – <https://undod.cymru/>. All material is bi-lingual.



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## Scotland's renewables sell-off – right direction, wrong road!

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was over the moon when she reacted to the outcome of last week's sale of rights to develop wind farms off the coasts of Scotland, *writes Iain Bruce for [ecosocialist.scot](https://ecosocialist.scot)*.

The [ScotWind](#) auction of licenses to 17 projects covering 7,000 km<sup>2</sup> of seabed could lead to the generation of another 24.8GW of clean energy in the next ten years or so. That's two-and-a-half times the amount the Scottish government had expected, and two-and-a-half times the offshore wind capacity that Scotland currently has operating or soon to come online. It would effectively double the entire installed wind energy capacity of the UK, including offshore and onshore – providing, in theory, enough electricity to power more than half, possibly three quarters, of all the homes in Britain. Obviously, this could be a significant step towards decarbonising the energy supply this decade, which is essential to keep global warming increases below the critical level of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

On the main BBC Scotland news that night, Sturgeon said the nearly £700 million due to her government in option fees was just the start. As the projects were implemented, she expected £1 billion in supply chain investment for every 1GW of power generated. She called it “truly historic” in terms of the scale of the opportunity. An industry representative was even more fulsome. For Scotland this was a moment akin to the beginning of North Sea Oil in the 1970s. Two days later, the First Minister tweeted a screenshot of a Zoom meeting she'd just held with executives from the multinational energy companies that had won the rights. They include BP, SSE and Shell, from the UK and the Netherlands, Iberdrola, the Spanish parent company of Scottish Power, as well as Vattenfall of Sweden, Falcke Renewables of Italy, Baywa of Germany and Deme of Belgium. Nicola Sturgeon said they'd told her how they would help to put Scotland at the forefront of offshore wind power globally.

## **ScotWind auction slammed**

The ScotWind auction was immediately slammed by some on the left of the pro-independence movement. Their criticism centred

on the fact that the licences had gone to foreign companies with little guarantee that future benefits, or jobs, would come to Scotland. Robin McAlpine, the former director of Common Weal, pointed out that the amount those companies paid for their licences was a pittance compared with what they can expect to make from selling the electricity they generate – they could pay it off with a couple of days’ wind, he claimed. He also calculated that, per Gigawatt, it was barely a third of what the Scottish government had said it hoped to bring in.

These are serious arguments, and in the week since the auction results were announced they have gained traction in some expected, and unexpected quarters. [Conter](#) used a simplified version to denounce an alleged irrevocable turn to the right by the Scottish Green Party – a misplaced and somewhat sectarian criticism towards the base of the Scottish Green Party in our view. Anas Sarwar, the leader of the Scottish Labour Party, attacked the Scottish government at First Minister’s questions in the Holyrood Parliament for selling out Scottish jobs and selling off Scottish assets “*to foreign multinationals with woeful human rights records*” (sic). He echoed the Common Weal argument that the Scottish National Party (SNP) administration’s failure to deliver on its promise to set up a state-owned energy company had led to this new “*privatisation*”. Neil Mackay went over the top in The Herald and accused the SNP of “Thatcherism-lite”. Common Weal has now developed its case in more detail in a 14 page report just published, entitled “[ScotWind: Privatising Scotland’s Future Again](#)”. The left-wing Labour MSP, Mercedes Villalba, retweeted the report approvingly, demanding “*socialist ambition*” and a “*people’s government*” that would “*advance democratic worker ownership of the economy*”.

## Sovereignty

The counter argument, not only from the SNP but from some on the radical left of the pro-independence movement, points to

the ever-present issue of sovereignty.

It questions some of the basic premises of the Common Weal argument, in particular the possibility of a devolved Scottish government, given the current limitations on its legal and fiscal powers, establishing a public energy company capable of taking on an electricity generation project of the kind and scale of ScotWind. It points out that these limitations are precisely one of the strongest arguments for independence. The reasoning runs something like this:

After the 2014 Independence Referendum, one concession from the government in Westminster was to transfer to Holyrood complete control over Crown Estate Scotland, the body that granted the ScotWind licences. That means the Scottish government is now, effectively, the landlord of the seabed up to 200 miles off Scotland's very large foreshore. As landlord, it can charge for the licences to exploit the resources, as it just has done, and when production begins it will be able to charge rent.

This is also the means by which onshore wind farms have already been bringing in a tidy sum for some of Scotland's big private landowners. Although such deals are shrouded in secrecy, as far back as 2012 the Earl of Moray was reckoned to be making £2 million a year from the 49-turbine farm on his Doune estate in Perthshire, and the Duke of Roxburghe just a bit less from a slightly smaller development in Lammermuir Hills. On a similar basis, the Scottish government might be able to charge as much as £400 million a year in rent, according to some calculations, as and when all the ScotWind projects start to generate electricity, although the Common Weal report estimates this income at between £50 and 90 million a year. In either case, it is still a pittance compared with what the companies stand to make.

# Reserved power

However, the argument continues, energy policy itself, including taxation, regulation and ownership, remains a legal power reserved for the UK government. That means firstly that the tax paid by the corporations on their profits from wind power will go into the coffers of the Westminster government, not Holyrood. Nor would Holyrood benefit from the substantial fees for connection paid to the national grid.

Secondly, it remains very unclear what levers the Scottish government could use to ensure the companies keep their promises – for example to create supply chain jobs in Scotland – or even to control where the energy goes. There is currently nothing like the capacity to bring ashore and distribute an extra 25GW of clean energy, and apparently no plan to install the connections required, so it is likely that the companies will choose immediately to re-export a large part of the wind energy to Europe.

Thirdly, and perhaps most decisively, under the existing constitutional settlement, the Scottish government cannot nationalise all or part of the industry in order to ensure its aims are met. The National Energy Company mooted by the Scottish government in 2017 was an electricity **distribution** company. The idea seems to have fallen victim to the pandemic and the more recent crisis in the UK's gas retail sector that has led to the collapse of over 20 energy distribution companies. There appears to be some doubt about whether the Scottish government with its current powers could set up an electricity generating company, but even if it could, it seems certain that the fiscal limits on Holyrood's ability to borrow would mean it could never raise anything approaching the amount of investment required to develop offshore projects on the scale of the ScotWind ones.

# Alternative – towards radical independence

Whichever side of this argument you come down on, the issues of revenue and control, ownership and sovereignty, must be an important part of the alternative we need to develop as Scotland moves towards independence. The experience of other small, resource-rich countries, combining measures of nationalisation, raising royalties and rewriting the service contracts on offer to multinationals, may have useful lessons here, both positive and negative. And the efforts of Bolivia or Venezuela in the first decade of this century, to assert sovereignty over their natural resources **and** redirect revenue towards social spending, may have a lot more to teach us in this respect than Norway.

But these aspects are not enough. On their own they risk leaving us with a narrow nationalist, technocratic response, which will certainly be insufficient to address the gravity of the global climate crisis we face, and the depth of the changes we need in the ways we live. They have to be integrated into a wider, deeper, more ambitious and more urgent vision of the transition ahead, one that is inspired by the principles of climate justice that were expressed so impressively on the streets of Glasgow in November. If there is one thing that we should have learned from the breadth and diversity of the protests during COP26, it is that such climate justice is inseparable from social justice, in all its dimensions. That means bringing together the rights of workers and working-class communities in the global north, including those who are affected by the dismantling of fossil industries, with the rights of those in the global south who are most affected by climate change, especially women, Indigenous communities and the migrants who will be forced to move on an ever vaster scale (including to Scotland), and with the rights of nature itself (something a future Scottish state



should write into its constitution, following the example first set by Ecuador back in 2008).

*the gravity of the global climate crisis we face, and the depth of the changes we need in the ways we live ... have to be integrated into a wider, deeper, more ambitious and more urgent vision of the transition ahead, one that is inspired by the principles of climate justice that were expressed so impressively on the streets of Glasgow in November.*



GMB trade union members, including striking bin workers, turned out for the Fridays For the Future demonstration in Glasgow on 5 Nov 2021 (Photo: M Picken)

## Building a Vision

That vision needs to build out from three main pillars.

Firstly, we need **a transition that is just** – in the full sense of the word. Of course everyone, including the Scottish government, *talks* about a just transition. But it is not enough just to mention, or hope, that wind farms and other renewables will create thousands of jobs for those whose jobs



must go in oil and gas. We need a planned transition which includes both, and many other kinds of job too, where the workers and the communities involved are not just consulted, but play a leading, decision-making role, so that they can choose and exert control over their own futures. We need not just some “green jobs” but a complete refocus and massive change to develop what has been called “green, purple and red jobs”.

Secondly, we need a profoundly different grasp of **what we are transitioning from and to**, and a much more creative vision of how to do it. We must not think of renewable energy simply replacing fossil fuel energy, so that electric cars can replace petrol ones while everything else goes on more or less as is. We need to reduce sharply the amount of energy we use, and that means radical changes to the ways we travel, where we live and where we work, how we heat our homes or obtain our food, and indeed profound changes to what we value for a good life, over and above the consumption of more and more stuff – stuff that too often has been hauled backwards and forwards across the globe before it gets to us. This means we also need a wider rethink of how we produce our energy. Obviously, nobody wants just to switch off the lights, so we may still need some large-scale clean energy generation projects like ScotWind. And the complexities of technology, supply chains and finance may leave us with no choice but to do some business with big energy companies, for a limited period and on strictly regulated conditions. But all this needs to be put alongside, and subordinated to, a new emphasis on the local generation and consumption of clean energy – local energy that is publicly owned and controlled by the community.

*all this needs to be put alongside, and subordinated to, a new emphasis on the local generation and consumption of clean energy – local energy that is publicly owned and controlled by the community.*

Thirdly, we need to make absolutely sure that **whatever we do to achieve this transition is not trashing the environment, living conditions or rights of other communities in other parts of the world, especially in the Global South**. Exactly how much balsa wood went into the wood resin sandwiched between fibre glass in those wind turbine blades? Which tropical forest was that balsa wood dragged out of? How much say did the people living there have, and how much benefit or destruction did it bring them? The same goes for the lithium in the batteries that will store all that clean energy. We can only ensure positive answers to these questions if we build on the close relations and solidarity with movements and communities in the South that flourished on the streets of Glasgow last November.

The transition to zero carbon has to be a shared and collaborative project across the world – part of a Radical Global Green New Deal – not a privilege for the North at the expense of the South.

*The transition to zero carbon has to be a shared and collaborative project across the world – part of a Radical Global Green New Deal – not a privilege for the North at the expense of the South.*

## **The Urgency of Independence**

Here in Scotland, these three pillars are yet more arguments for the urgency of independence. They obviously cannot be achieved within the confines of the current devolution settlement. But this is also where the real weakness of the current Scottish government approach becomes clear. It is a weakness that runs much deeper than an alleged dispute over whether or not it could have set up a publicly owned generation company to take advantage of the ScotWind licences – important though that issue is.

The SNP-led administration likes to broadcast its green commitments, not totally without justification. Scotland's legally-enshrined target of zero carbon by 2045 is not nearly soon enough, but in Europe it is equalled only by Germany and Sweden. Scotland was the first and only country of the Global North to respond to the demands of governments in the South and make a symbolic pledge during COP26 – albeit a paltry £2 million – to a fund to pay for the loss and damage already suffered by those countries as a result of climate change. The latest ScotWind auction shows the government is taking seriously the need for big and rapid increases in renewable energy. Given the gravity of the climate crisis, these have to be good things, even if they are by a long way insufficient.

## **False Narrative of 'Net Zero'**

The problem is that all of this is underpinned, and ultimately undermined, by the fact that Scottish government policy remains wedded, apparently unquestioningly, to the false narrative of *net zero* by 2045, with all its accompanying false solutions of negative emissions technologies and offsets, including carbon capture and storage (CCS), hydrogen, Bio Energy with CCS (BECCS) and nature based solutions to be used as offsets. This is the same narrative that the UK government as COP26 President worked hard to impose in Glasgow in November; the same narrative that many fossil fuel companies are using to justify their continuing extraction of oil and gas through to the mid century and beyond; the same narrative that other core sectors of international capital, especially in finance, are using to back up their green capitalist revolution; and the same narrative that was called "The Big Con" by Friends of the Earth.

It is also the same narrative that was massively rejected by protesters on the massive demonstration in Glasgow on 6 November and throughout the COP.



Global Climate Justice campaigners march in Glasgow Nov 2021 (Photo: M Picken)

For core sections of the SNP leadership, this is a weakness that is embedded in their fundamental social democratic vision of society and economy, in their basic belief that, with a bit of a tweak and a bit more regulation, the free market can solve the greatest existential threat that humanity has ever faced. Well, it cannot! Many of the 100,000+ members of the SNP surely know that. So does the membership of their governmental partners in the Scottish Green Party. Even many Labour members and supporters know the free market does not work. That is why one of the greatest challenges now for climate activists in Scotland is to work with those people and with others, in the Indy movement, in the trade unions, on the left, to *shift this narrative*, to dismantle the myth of net zero and encourage the movement onto a much more inspiring path – that of climate justice, which also means social justice and national justice.

26 January 2022

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# Beyond Glasgow – what happened at COP26 and where we go next

It is a month since Alok Sharma as president, fighting back some tears, brought down the gavel on the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties – the United Nations climate summit in Glasgow. The initial flurry of reactions and comments has subsided. Here in Scotland we have already seen some early signs of the impact – with the beginnings of a victory against the development of a new offshore oil field at Cambo. On Saturday, 4 December, activists in Glasgow held a first gathering to take stock and plan future steps.

So this is intended as a contribution to that process of weighing up what happened, both inside the official talks, and outside in the struggle for climate justice. We need to do this as fully and accurately as we can, to provide a guide for what we do next.

This is perhaps most urgent in Scotland, where the huge protests on the streets of Glasgow on the 5 and 6 November have had a major impact on the political and ideological landscape, and could have a lot more in the years to come if we are able to learn the most useful lessons, and build on them. But it is also important for the climate movement in England and the rest of the UK, which faces a possible moment of refoundation.

And it is not without significance at a global level, where, as a representative of one Indigenous organisation who made it to Glasgow argued, it is time to be thinking about a new kind and scale of international coordination.

## Three outcomes

We can divide the main conclusions from COP26 into three. The most important has to do with the success of those mobilisations outside the official talks, and we'll come back to that.

The second was also immediately obvious to many, and relates to the spectacular failure of the official summit, when measured against its own stated objectives. World leaders definitively did not “embrace their responsibilities” to “act now”, as the UK presidency had asked them to six months earlier, when Alok Sharma stood in front of the huge, commercial Whitelee wind farm, 15 kilometres south of the COP26 venue on the Clyde, and called on them to “pick the planet”.

They did not bring to Glasgow the commitments that would keep global warming at less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century. Those were not tears of joy on Alok Sharma's face as he had to close the summit ~~summit~~ with a watered-down target on “phasing down” coal power. The concluding statement by the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, used diplomatic language but left little room for doubt: “unfortunately the collective political will was not enough to overcome some deep contradictions. ...We are still knocking on the door of climate catastrophe. ...We did not achieve these (*ie. the main*) goals at this conference.”

The third kind of conclusion is less obvious. It got little mention in the mainstream media coverage, and for the most part lies buried in the detail of the deliberately opaque discussions on wrapping up the rulebook for the Paris Agreement and related “technical” aspects. Here we find the moves made by governments and the private sector, including fossil fuel companies and big banks, to put in place the procedures and organisational infrastructure to secure the

still evolving, and still contradictory, ruling class response to the climate emergency.

It was not an accident that the largest single delegation at COP26, bigger than any single government, was constituted by lobbyists from the fossil fuel industry. There were at least 503 of them and there have been no reports of tears on their faces.

The second biggest delegation was the Brazilian one. It had 480 members, including many lobbyists from the agribusiness, mining and forestry sectors, all with a special interest in resolving the rules around carbon markets, for example. Their moves made significant progress in Glasgow. But they did not have it all their own way.

They were thwarted, or maybe just delayed, on several key questions by the pressure of civil society on the inside of COP26 – for example the inclusion of forests as tradable carbon credits under Article 6, or the use of nature based solutions as offsets (see below).

It is at the intersection between these three levels that the future of the climate movement, and indeed of humanity, will be decided. So let us look more closely at the last two, before returning to the movement itself.

## **The Glasgow Get-out**

The final “agreement”, officially called the Glasgow Climate Pact, but dubbed by some in the climate movement as the Glasgow Get-out, is a laboriously constructed work of smoke and mirrors. In some ways, it is ambitious. It is certainly longer and more wide-ranging than such “cover decisions” (the technical term for these interim negotiated texts) usually are. In line with the latest scientific reports from the IPCC, it focuses much more sharply than the 2015 Paris Agreement itself on 1.5 degrees maximum warming as the key goal. It

stresses the need for “accelerated action in this critical decade”. It even has a few seemingly specific promises, like developed countries doubling by 2025 their financial contributions to the Adaptation Fund, to help countries in the global south adjust to the climate change that is already on the way [[This was seen as a gain for developing countries made during the talks. No such provision had been on the formal agenda, and when it first appeared in the draft texts the language had been much vaguer. The final text takes 2019 as the baseline, meaning that developed countries are *urged* to come up with an additional US\$40 billion a year for adaptation by 2025. However, this is still well short of what is needed. The UN Environment Programme estimates the current annual need at US\$70 billion, and suggests this is likely to quadruple by 2030. It also remains unclear that developing countries accept this is not part of the US\$100 billion a year that they promised back in 2009 and have still failed to deliver.]]

Some of this sharper language is the result of hard-fought battles by poorer countries and civil society delegates, over the position of commas and this or that adjective. But more than anything it reflects the understanding by most imperialist governments that, at the very least, they have to be seen to be taking the climate crisis seriously. They know that the level of concern among their citizens has increased very significantly in just the last few years, even the last few months, as floods and fires have ravaged Europe and North America as well as India, China or Bolivia. People expect their governments to act. And these governments in turn fear that public concern will deepen. When their discourse of vandalism or even terrorism leveled at direct action groups largely falls flat; when very large numbers of people actually sympathise with people gluing themselves to motorways, or Indigenous communities occupying oil wells and blocking mines, the authorities know the situation is serious.

The gaping hole in the Glasgow Climate Pact is the almost



total absence of detail. There is virtually nothing specified about who will do exactly what by when, and how anyone will be able to verify it, much less enforce it. In the English language, a pact usually means an agreement to do something. In that sense, this is not a pact at all – more of a political statement about a series of things the parties agree (more or less) that they would like to see happen.

The two main, overlapping, texts of the Glasgow Climate Pact have 71 and 97 points respectively. [[In characteristically confusing fashion, there are three versions of the main cover decision text, one for each of the three meetings that officially took place in parallel under the ~~the~~ umbrella of COP – firstly the COP26 itself, that is the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; secondly the CMP16, the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, which is largely irrelevant and whose texts say very little: and the CMA3, or the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, which actually has most detail in relation to the implementation of the Paris Agreement.]] Almost all of them begin with words like *recognizes*, *expresses*, *notes*, *stresses*, *emphasizes*, *urges*, *invites*, *calls upon*. Only one point in the COP.26 version of the Pact begins with *resolves*, while the longer, CMA.3 text has 6 points that begin with *decides* and 3 with *resolves*. These very few “decisions” all refer to organisational questions of arranging future meetings and work processes and mechanisms. None of them refer directly to the substantive issues of emissions cuts or climate finance.

## From Binding to Voluntary to Proclamation

This illustrates one of the two overarching developments in

the UN climate negotiations that we need to note if we are to make sense of what happened in Glasgow. This is how the process has moved away from any kind of binding commitments, of the sort contained in the Kyoto Protocol that came into force in 2005. During and after COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, the U.S. and the EU systematically assaulted this approach. This meant that the Paris Agreement in 2015, while achieving advances in some respects, contained only voluntary commitments to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. These were the core of the famous NDCs, or nationally determined contributions. The whole point of COP26 – the reason it was hailed as a make or break moment – was that this was the time, five years on from the Paris Agreement, by which the 193 signatories were meant to have come up with their enhanced NDCs, their plans to make the bigger cuts and provide the greater finance, that would allow global warming to be kept below 2 degrees Celsius, and preferably below 1.5 degrees. But it was entirely up to each party to announce whatever it wanted, whenever it wanted. There was never going to be, and never could be, given the nature of the Paris Agreement, a deal negotiated in Glasgow to ensure this outcome.

The scale of the shortfall left by these voluntary contributions on the core issue of emissions cuts, or mitigation as it is called in the language of the UNFCCC, is tucked away in paragraphs 22 and 25 of the CMA.3 version of the final text. The first *recognises*, what the IPCC Report on 1.5 Degrees had brought to the fore of the climate change agenda in 2018, that “limiting global warming to 1.5 °C requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing global carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around midcentury, as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases”. Now the climate justice movement centred around the COP26 Coalition has questioned, at length and in depth, the scale, timing and distribution of these IPCC targets, including especially the new and very

unscientific mantra of net zero by 2050. And not of course because they are too ambitious.

However, even against these inadequate targets, paragraph 25 "*Notes with serious concern* the findings of the synthesis report on nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, according to which the aggregate greenhouse gas emission level, taking into account implementation of all submitted nationally determined contributions, is estimated to be 13.7 per cent above the 2010 level in 2030". The failure of COP26 to achieve its main objective could hardly be clearer. If you add up all the new, more ambitious plans (enhanced NDCs) submitted by 151 parties up to day 3 of the COP (2 November, 2021), they project not a cut of 45% in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030, but an increase of 13.7%.

This is not a small discrepancy that we can make up later. It is a colossal move in the wrong direction.

Carbon Action Tracker, a well-respected research body, calculated that these pledges would, at best, keep warming to 2.4 degrees Celsius by 2100. More probably, given the recurring failure to meet even inadequate promises, we would end up with 2.7 degrees. Others regard even this as over optimistic.

The fact that the Glasgow Pact does call on countries to submit new, more ambitious NDCs by COP27, in Egypt next year, and on a yearly basis after that, was held up as evidence of greater ambition. It is certainly an improvement on the 5-year cycle agreed in Paris. But the fact this call was made at all only highlights the spectacular failure to meet the targets needed by COP26.

The UK presidency knew well in advance the dimension of this failure. Its strategy was to seek to bury it in a welter of rhetoric about keeping 1.5 alive. That is the function of the more ambitious language in the final text. The same concern,

to be seen to be taking action, characterised the flurry of announcements made during the World Leaders Summit, which took up the Monday and Tuesday of the first week of the COP.

First there was the pledge by 130 countries to “halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030”. Then it was 109 countries promising to cut 30% of methane emissions by 2030, 190 countries announcing commitments to phase out coal power, and 30 countries and financial institutions to stop financing fossil fuel development overseas. Beyond the headlines, it was never perfectly clear who had agreed to do quite what.

And some of the announcements began to unravel as soon as they were made. For example, critics immediately pointed out that most of the deforestation pledge was the same as the 2014 New York Declaration on Forests, which had produced no results at all. The environment minister of Indonesia, which had been touted as one of the key signatories, took to twitter to call the pledge “clearly inappropriate and unfair”. Bolivia, one of very few countries taking a firm climate justice stance inside the COP26, was also listed as a signatory; but when we interviewed the Bolivian president, Luis Arce, on the day of the announcement, he told us his country had not signed and was still evaluating the pledge.

As Alex Rafalowicz from Colombia told one of the daily Movement Assemblies in Glasgow that week, the COP process has moved from binding agreements through voluntary targets to the rhetoric of grandiose but unverifiable announcements.

## Forget Equity

This shift in the shape of the UN climate talks – to abandon binding agreements – goes hand in hand with another – the shift away from the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. (CBDR) This principle of CBDR was enshrined in the UNFCCC by the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. It means that

those countries who historically have been most responsible for putting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere since the beginning of the industrial revolution, the industrialised countries of the global north, the Annex 1 countries, in the terminology of the Convention, should take the major responsibility to address the climate change that has resulted. It became an important part of the movement to demand climate justice.

During the discussions on a new treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol, at Copenhagen and the COPs that followed, the U.S. and its allies attacked the principle of CBDR on the grounds that *all* countries needed to do their bit, just as it sought to overturn the practice of binding agreements. In part this opposition was due to the predictable reluctance of imperialist countries to pay for the harm they have done. But it also had to do with the growing obsession in Washington, under Obama and since, with the threat posed to U.S. hegemony by China.

The Paris Agreement retained some of the language about CBDR. But the practice had already moved on. And without any mechanism to enforce commitments, any differentiation between the amount done by rich countries and poor countries would also be entirely voluntary.

This accentuated move away from equity was a hallmark of the Glasgow COP, in every area and at every step, even if developing country delegations did manage to get a few references to CBDR re-inserted into the Glasgow Climate Pact. It is inscribed in the dominant narrative of “net zero by 2050”, which the UK presidency tried so hard to impose. Many global south delegates described this as carbon colonialism. That is because it completely contradicts any idea that there is a finite carbon budget, an amount of carbon dioxide and equivalent gases that the human race can still afford to emit while keeping warming to 1.5 degrees, and that the rich countries *have already spent all of their share* of that

budget. What is left, about 600Gt of CO2 equivalent, should therefore be reserved, as far as possible, for countries of the south so that they can combat extreme poverty.

Net zero is centred on the notion that rich countries and major corporations can continue to emit greenhouse gases, either because they will pay someone else not to (offsets), or because they will use some untried or non-existent technology to remove those gases from the atmosphere in the future. So in addition to these two bogus premises (that offsets can lead to real cuts in emissions, and that we will eventually be able to count on negative emissions technology), the net zero narrative depends on jettisoning any pretence of justice for those in the global south who are the main victims of climate change. It calls on all countries to pursue this common goal of net zero by the middle of the century, while glossing over the fact that the route envisaged to get there is conceived entirely with the financial and technological capacities of rich countries in mind.

It was this sleight of hand that allowed the UK presidency, and the mainstream, northern media to blame India, and indirectly China, for that last minute watering down of the wording on “phasing down” instead of “phasing out” unabated coal power. Of course, India, like China, does want to get off the hook of its own dependence on coal. But the point it was making was that it is not fair – and it is not in line with the CBDR principles of the UNFCCC – to expect developing countries with high levels of poverty to implement the same scale of mitigation at the same speed as rich countries. In fact earlier in the week, India had proposed language suggesting that all fossil fuels should be phased down, not just coal. But the ~~the~~ U.S. and Europe were having none of that.

The other side of this shift away from equity was clear in the attitude displayed by rich countries in Glasgow to climate finance. After shuffling numbers and dates backwards and

forwards, they still ended up with ~~still~~ no commitment on when they would come up with the US\$100 billion a year they had promised back in 2009 to provide by 2020 to help developing countries transition to clean energy and green technologies – a figure that had been pulled out of a hat at Copenhagen to placate governments in the South incensed by the assault on CBDR, and which had been woefully adequate even then. Another UN report recently suggested the amount needed would be more like US\$6 trillion. The important thing to understand here is that such significant sums of climate finance are an absolute prerequisite for a just transition at a global level. Without such support, most countries in the South would have no way of moving towards zero carbon by investing in renewable energy, recycling, clean public transport, electric vehicles and so on.

Even worse, rich countries steadfastly resisted the attempts by developing countries to agree a common definition of climate finance. That may sound bureaucratic, but governments in the South wanted to make it clear that to qualify as climate finance it should be new money, given in the form of grants or other kinds of concessional finance (eg. loans at below market level interest rates). By rejecting a common definition, rich countries signaled their intention to continue fudging their already paltry commitments, by re-labelling existing development aid as climate finance and including commercial loans that will only increase the debt burden of the south and the profits of northern banks.

Led by the U.S. and the EU, they also refused to apply a 5% levy on the buying and selling of carbon credits between governments, which developing countries wanted as a reliable source of finance for the Adaptation Fund.

Perhaps most tellingly, the U.S. flatly refused to countenance a separate stream of funding to pay for Loss and Damage, which has been one of the most pressing demands of many southern countries for the last several COPs. This means money to pay

for the damage already caused by climate change, including extreme weather events like hurricanes and floods. The prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne, told leaders on the second day of the COP that countries like his may be forced to seek redress in the international courts, if no loss and damage funding were agreed. The country's second island of Barbuda was rendered uninhabitable by Hurricane Irma in 2017. The U.S., however, terrified of admitting liability for such costs, would only accept a minimal move of funding the operations of the Santiago Network, set up at COP25 but not activated, to advise and give technical support to nations facing such losses. As another southern delegate wryly commented, what we don't need is more consultants flying around the world to tell us what loss and damage is.

## Article 6 – the architecture of climate capital

These apparently obscure details all feed into that third kind of conclusion we mentioned above. Somewhere just below the radar of the mainstream media, COP26 made significant advances towards putting in place the structures and procedures by which a significant section of international capital is seeking to put the climate crisis at the centre of its business model for the decades to come. The centrepiece of this project is Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

Article 6 deals with three kinds of what is called, euphemistically and misleadingly, “voluntary cooperation” between countries aimed at allowing “higher ambition in their mitigation and adaptation actions”. Essentially, this means offsets and carbon markets. In other words, Article 6 establishes the mechanisms by which high-emitting countries (mainly in the global north) can massage their promises to cut emissions (their NDCs), by continuing with some of those emissions (or even most of them), if they pay someone else



(mainly countries in the global south) *not* to emit (or to absorb) an equivalent amount. Paragraph 6.2 refers to such “cooperation”, or trade in carbon credits, bilaterally between parties or countries. Paragraph 6.4 refers to such carbon trades on a wider basis between public and private entities, in other words to carbon markets as such. Paragraph 6.8 refers to “non-market” approaches to such exchanges, mainly involving the aid programmes of rich countries.

These mechanisms are absolutely central to how imperialist countries have approached the climate crisis and the need to cut greenhouse gas emissions. They are what makes it possible for them to “commit to” the goals of “net zero by 2050” and the like, because they make it possible, in theory, for capitalism to look like it is taking bold steps to confront the crisis, while in fact only making comparatively modest changes to how it operates in the foreseeable future. That is, they seem to offer the possibility of pushing off into the future the existential contradiction that confronts capitalism, between its inherent obligation to grow and the environmental imperative that we consume less.

In the mean time, they also hold out the offer of a major new area of accumulation to a sector of global capital, especially finance capital. This is what David Harvey would call accumulation by dispossession – in this case the dispossession is of vast swathes of “nature” in the global south, bought up (or seized) from local, sometimes Indigenous communities, by northern governments and companies to offset their failure to cut emissions at home.

Not surprisingly, discussion of the precise rules that would govern how this vital piece of the jigsaw operates have been complicated and fractious. The battles have been shrouded by impenetrable jargon, but mostly they had to do with accountancy – with who would be able to include what, and when, as part of these carbon trades, and consequently who would benefit most. Successive COPs following Paris failed to

reach an agreement. Civil society groups argued that no agreement would be better than a bad one, and almost any agreement on these terms would be a bad one. At Madrid they staged a last-minute protest that helped to block a deal. The problem was kicked down the road to Glasgow.

In Glasgow, there was an agreement on the rules for Article 6. The logjam seems to have been broken by a clever accounting suggestion from Japan. This is undoubtedly a significant victory for those banking on the future of offsets and carbon markets. Alongside the agreements reached on the timeframes for reporting emission cuts and standards of transparency, it means the rule book governing the Paris Agreement is now, in general terms, complete. However, not all the details are resolved. The example of forests illustrates how battles will continue to be fought over this market-driven agenda for the climate crisis.

Contrary to what some climate activists assume, forests have not so far been part of the UNFCCC's carbon trading regime. In the Paris Agreement they come under Article 5, not Article 6. So there have indeed been programmes like REDD+, which provide for what are called "results-based payments" to countries that reduce their emissions from deforestation and conserve forests as carbon sinks. But such forest protection has not been able to generate carbon credits that could be traded on carbon markets, and which could therefore be bought by other governments or companies to offset their continued emissions and therefore help those countries meet their NDCs. Of course, many forest communities and others in the global south thought this was clearly the direction of travel, and feared the aim of many northern delegations was to turn the world's forests into one more thing that could be bought and sold so that they could avoid making the emissions cuts that are needed.

In the run-up to Glasgow, a concerted campaign in this direction was mounted by the ill-named Coalition for Rainforest Nations (CfRN), supposedly represented at COP26 by

Papua New Guinea. The CfRN claims to include 50 rainforest nations. However, the give-away is in the preposition. Because this is not an alliance *of* countries, but a “not-for-profit”, set up “*for* rainforest” nations by two graduates of Columbia Business School, from the U.S. and Italy, one of whom was brought up in Papua New Guinea. Its offices are in Manhattan, its board and staff are almost all investment bankers, and since 2005 it has been *the* main proponent of putting a price on the world’s rainforests, in theory as a way of compensating countries for conserving them. Since then it has led the promotion of RED, REDD and REDD+, each of which took a step closer to making forests one of the most important offsets on sale in the world’s carbon markets.

The CfRN, supported by several northern country delegations, pushed hard for COP26 to include emissions reductions from REDD+ to be included as carbon credits under Paragraph 6.2. This would cover both past REDD+ reductions, from 2015 to 2021, and a fast track for such reductions in the future from 2021, thus for the first time allowing the governments of high-emitting countries to buy up such “forest credits” as a way of achieving their NDCs. They also supported draft wording for Para 6.4 that would define carbon “removals” as relating specifically to the agriculture, forestry and land-use sector, thus putting forests directly into the carbon markets for the first time. Environmental campaigners from Brazil and elsewhere argued strongly that these moves would be disastrous for forest communities in Amazonia and elsewhere, and for the forests themselves, because they would unleash an even more intense wave of land grabs and commercial pressure on their territories, as rich countries and big corporations scrambled to buy up the rights to keep on polluting.

In the end, these campaigners won a small victory. REDD+ reductions were not mentioned in relation to 6.2, and the reference to forestry in 6.4 was replaced by a more generic definition of removals. However, these may be temporary stays

of execution. Forests are not excluded under either mechanism, and there will surely be new attempts to include them explicitly when some of the further definitions come up for discussion.

## Some initial conclusions for the movement

These three kinds of outcome from COP26 point to three kinds of conclusion that may help to orient our future action.

1. It is increasingly unlikely – one could say it is increasingly close to excluded – that the 197 parties to the UNFCCC will ~~not~~ take the action needed in the current decade – either ~~neither~~ in terms of emissions cuts or ~~nor~~ in terms of climate finance for the global south – to ensure that global warming will remain below 1.5 degrees Celsius. At least not unless there is a dramatic shift in the political balance of power that forces their hand.
2. There will continue to be mass pressure, from public opinion and from protests on the streets and in communities, to demand that those governments do take such action.

This is not because most of these people trust their governments to do what is needed. Most of the 100 or 150 thousand on the streets of Glasgow certainly don't. The same goes for many of the millions more who watched with sympathy. Almost certainly, most of those protesters already think "system change" is needed, although they may not be clear what that might involve.

But for the moment, they still see putting pressure on governments as the best available option. The more those governments don't take such action, and the more the impact of

extreme weather events is felt in major population centres, the more the movement may radicalise.

There is already widespread sympathy for others taking direct action. That sympathy may increase. In some specific circumstances, the mass movement itself may resort more to direct action to block mines, power plants or whatever.

But overall, and unless there is a dramatic shift in the political balance of power, the mass movement will not take upon itself the task of shutting down the fossil fuel industry, as some are suggesting it should.

3. While governments in the global north will continue to claim they are working to keep 1.5 alive, the most coherent sectors of the capitalist class, especially in the financial sector, will be working hard and fast to put in place the mechanisms that can turn the climate and biodiversity crises into a new, core domain for capital accumulation. Of course, much of the ruling class in the global south is already well integrated into this project. Governments and civil society organisations that are not will continue to fight their corner within the framework of the UN climate talks. They don't have much choice. There may be increasingly sharp contradictions between some of them and the way the governments of the global north are driving the process forward at their expense. But there will also be many occasions where these representatives of the global south, both governments and sometimes movements, buy into the short term benefits apparently on offer from global capital and its market mechanisms for addressing the climate crisis. One example of this is how even some radical sections of the Indigenous movement in Brazil have been tempted to sign up to aspects of the commodification of forests, as a way of getting much-needed cash to their communities.

It is understandable that point one above will lead to, indeed has already produced, calls to radicalise the movement. In part those calls are right. But it would be a bad mistake to misinterpret this. The temptation to “disengage from the COP” altogether and “set our own agenda” risks driving a wedge between some of the more radical sections of the climate justice movement, still a relatively small minority, and those much bigger forces that were both on the streets in Glasgow and were represented, in a mediated form, by some of the governments of the global south and many of the civil society groups that operate and fight within the UNFCCC process. Many Latin American Indigenous organisations, to take that prominent example again, were very active both on the streets of Glasgow, and inside the Blue Zone.

When 1000 delegates walked out of the Blue Zone on the final Friday, it was the biggest such revolt in the history of the COPs, at least since the Alba countries banged the table and rejected Obama’s stitch-up in Copenhagen. 750 civil society delegates packed out one of the main halls for an impromptu People’s Plenary, which ended with them singing “power to the people”. Then they were joined by several hundred more who couldn’t get in, to march through the Scottish Events Campus venue singing “the people are going to rise like the water... I hear the voice of my great grand daughter, calling climate justice now”, and finally to exit the blue zone and link up with the movements protesting outside the gates. It was a powerful and moving illustration of the kind of links that are possible, and necessary.

What we need to find, in Scotland as in other parts of the UK and around the world, are the particular organisational forms that can bring these different component parts together – into a more lasting, consistent and potent force – not to drive them apart.

# Climate Justice, Social Justice and Independence in Scotland

Here in Scotland, the aftermath of COP26 presents us with a special opportunity. This can be illustrated with one short story, told backwards.

At the time of writing, the private equity-backed oil exploration company, Siccarr Point Energy, has just announced it is “pausing” its project to develop the Cambo oil field, located 1,000 metres below the North Sea to the west of the Shetland Islands. Although not a big field, and economically a marginal one, for campaigners and the UK government alike, Cambo had become symbolic of the confrontation between an official strategy of maximum fossil fuel extraction on the road to a low carbon future, and the demand to leave it in the ground, now. For the campaigners, Siccarr’s announcement feels like a big victory.

Siccarr’s decision came 8 days after Shell pulled out of its 30 percent stake in the project, saying “the economic case... is not strong enough at this time”.

Just over two weeks earlier, on 16 November, Scotland’s First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, for the first time expressed open opposition to the new oil field, saying it should not get the green light and was incompatible with targets for “net zero”. Previously she had only called for a reassessment of the project by the UK government, which has the power to approve oil exploration licenses.

Ten days before that, Glasgow hosted the biggest climate demonstration ever seen in the UK, and one of the biggest protests of any kind ever held in Scotland.

When Shell announced its decision to pull out, Friends of the Earth Scotland quite rightly commented that “People power has made the climate-wrecking Cambo development so toxic that even

oil giant Shell doesn't want to be associated with it any more." That was true. But there was a step in between as well. Two steps in fact: government, and the national question.

The fact that so many people demonstrated in Glasgow, and that "Stop Cambo" was one of their most visible demands, no doubt had an impact on Shell. The oil giant can do without this or that new oil field the size of Cambo (170 million barrels over 25 years, about the same as Saudi Arabia produces in three and a half weeks). And it is concerned about its image, especially that it is now publicly committed to becoming "net zero" by mid century. But those demonstrations were probably not the decisive factor in its decision. The threat of climate campaigners waging legal warfare and dragging the project through endless appeals and court delays probably weighed heavier.

However, that huge protest in Glasgow surely did weigh large in Nicola Sturgeon's shift to opposing Cambo. And Nicola Sturgeon's change of heart probably had an even greater bearing on Shell's economic calculations. The Scottish government may not have the power to say yes or no to new oil fields, but it could make the practicalities of access and operations a lot more difficult. And even Shell can probably see that well before the end of the 25-year life span of the oil field and its economic viability, there is a realistic possibility of Scotland becoming an independent country, with a government that may now want to get rid of all such oil fields.

This is one concrete example of how the national question is sharpening the climate question in Scotland, and vice versa.

The combination between the insulting exclusion of Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP government by the Johnson-Sharma UK unionist presidency of COP26, and the historic scale of the mobilisation on Scottish streets, has increased the pressure on an ambiguous SNP government, and already brought some



modest results, like that over Cambo. The Scottish government budget, revealed last week, also makes some partial steps in a positive direction, with addressing the climate crisis made one of its three top priorities. This of course has coincided with the incorporation into government of the Scottish Green Party – significantly to the left of the Greens in England, Germany, or probably anywhere else in the EU. The Scottish government took another very small but symbolic step in the first week of COP26, when it became the first administration in the global north to make a concrete offer, of just £1 million, later increased to £2 million, to a fund for loss and damage in the Global South – an initiative which was promptly trashed by the Biden administration.

In the other direction, the climate question is itself beginning to bisect, and polarise, the national struggle. It may be little more than a footnote, of some interest in Scotland but not much elsewhere, but this has become clear in the attitude of the former First Minister, Alex Salmond. Salmond broke with Sturgeon and formed last year **Alba**, a supposedly more radical nationalist party, backed by a strange amalgam of anti-trans “feminists” and misogynist leftists. After Sturgeon came out against Cambo, he promptly attacked her for selling out Scotland’s right to its own oil and putting jobs at risk.

In other words, the issues of climate justice and climate action now traverse the national struggle in Scotland, just as the issue of closing down North Sea oil and the need for a just transition led by workers in the sector cuts across and polarises the trade union movement in Scotland.

These are potentially explosive combinations. Climate struggles are already stoking national demands, and they could add a whole new dimension to the struggle for independence. At the same time, any advance towards an independent Scotland is necessarily going to pose the issues of climate justice much more sharply. The SNP government has taken some modest,

positive steps, just as it has in various areas of social policy. But its overall “social liberal” orientation and its attachment to market-led policies means it is still wedded to the vision of net zero (by 2045) and illusions about carbon capture and storage, about Scotland as a powerhouse and exporter of renewable energy and so on. Dismantling the net zero narrative and its attendant false solutions therefore takes on a particular importance here in Scotland, both for the climate movement and for the radical wing of the pro-independence movement.

The big challenge in the coming months – and it is a challenge that needs to be embraced swiftly, or the moment will have passed – is to find the organisational forms and the political initiatives that can capture, consolidate and develop the energy, the diversity and the political radicalisation that burst onto the streets of Glasgow in November. This will need some sort of specific initiative here in Scotland, but an initiative that is articulated with similar, appropriate moves in other parts of the UK and internationally.

**Iain Bruce, 11 December 2021**

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