The REA Quarterly

QUARTER 1 - JAN-MAR 2026

Expert insight and industry perspectives from the REA

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The REA Quarterly - is the REA's new flagship publication, delivering authoritative thought leadership and timely analysis from experts across the renewable energy and clean tech sector.

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To secure your place in the next edition or find out more, email Aisha Afeef, REA Comms Exec, on aafeef@r-e-a.net.

QUARTER 1 | 5 EXPERT ARTICLES

The REA Quarterly
Expert Insights

QUARTER 1 - JAN-MAR 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The REA Quarterly

Iran war is proof that energy security is impossible without renewables

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ARTICLE 1

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Iran war is proof that energy security is impossible without renewables - Trevor Hutchings, REA CEO

The conflict in the Middle East is fuelling a dangerous rhetoric closer to home

To say the Iran conflict has accelerated an already uncertain geopolitical landscape is an understatement. The skyrocketing oil and gas prices we're now seeing mirror the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine four years ago and will undoubtably have consumers reflecting with worry on how significantly that crisis impacted their cost of living.

There is no one, of any political persuasion, that wants to see energy bills rise. Politicians from across the spectrum, rarely willing to agree on anything, are united in their conviction that we must secure our energy supply and reduce the cost of living by generating as much as we can domestically.

But this is where the consensus ends.

There is no doubt that sourcing the electricity that we use in our homes and businesses from energy we generate here in the UK will help bring down bills and insulate us from price shocks like those we're seeing in the wake of the conflict in the Middle East. But the truth is that some of the rhetoric we're hearing on this topic, far from furthering this goal, is chipping away at our ability to maximise our own energy generation and weakening our case for energy sovereignty.

Reform UK has made ending government support for clean energy a core part of their proposed policies, and in their planned 'Great Repeal Bill' they reiterate their intention to eliminate Net Zero emissions targets. Kemi Badenoch's Conservatives have signalled they would end the UK's global climate leadership by repealing the Climate Change Act. Both have been clear that they would rather meet Britain's energy needs by reopening North Sea oil and gas fields than through renewable generation.

Enacting these policies would be nothing short of a huge act of energy sovereignty self-harm.

More than 50% of the UK's electricity is generated by renewable energy

More than 50% of the UK's electricity is generated by renewable energy, a figure that is increasing year on year. We're a global leader in clean power, with all of the talent and improved supply chain access that position affords. The renewable energy sector is an engine of growth within the wider net zero economy, which is itself expanding at pace - growing 10% in 2024 compared to just 1.1% for the UK as a whole.

The renewable energy sector is an engine of growth within the wider net zero economy - growing 10% in 2024 compared to just 1.1% for the UK as a whole.

Energy from the North Sea has been vital to the UK's growth over the last several decades, but these are now mature, finite fields with a declining workforce and economic yield. Suggesting that a return to extracting North Sea fossil fuels is an easy or even viable solution to the issue we're facing is, at best, naïve.

Even if we generated all of the electricity we need from new North Sea gas, something that would require building a number of new gas plants at significant cost, there would be no downward impact on energy bills. Both gas and electricity bills are driven by the wholesale price of gas, something that is impacted greatly by geopolitical events, and not at all by whether it comes from the North Sea.

While we will continue to use some of its gas to support our overall energy mix in the short term, the North Sea's real future lies in technologies like offshore wind, carbon capture and storage, and geothermal exploration, all of which will provide richer and more stable opportunities than a return to extracting fossil fuels from declining fields.

The hundreds of ships trapped in the Strait of Hormuz as crisis grips the Middle East are a perfect example of just how vulnerable the global fossil fuel supply chain is to conflict, and how quickly the situation can change from business as usual to utter chaos. It's clear we simply do not have the luxury of time when it comes to ensuring the UK's energy security.

The suggestion of a full return to fossil fuels - whether from the North Sea or elsewhere - is nothing less than a dangerous distraction.

Our renewable energy industry is growing at pace and is the bedrock of our energy future, adding thousands of future-proofed jobs a year. The pipeline of clean power generation is oven-ready, while turning our fossil fuel infrastructure back on - or relying exclusively on new nuclear power - has a multi-year lead time and additional cost.

The geopolitical landscape is only becoming more volatile. If this new conflict teaches us anything, it should be that if we are ever going to stop foreign wars from dictating how much it costs to keep our lights on, we must double down on renewables.

Delink gas and electricity prices to mitigate the impacts of the Middle East conflict

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The 2028 Tipping Point: When Clean Power Becomes Britain's Economic Advantage

MATT PARRY
HEAD OF ENERGY DEMAND & POWER
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ARTICLE 2

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The 2028 Tipping Point: When Clean Power Becomes Britain's Economic Advantage

Britain has an uncomfortable distinction: some of the highest electricity prices in Europe. While it is easy to blame renewable energy, that diagnosis is wrong.

The structure of Britain's power market means wholesale gas prices set the electricity price for much of the day. When gas spikes, as it did after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and during recent geopolitical tensions, household and industrial bills rise with it. The £44b Treasury spent shielding consumers during the energy crisis was the fault of overexposure to volatile gas markets. Meanwhile, over half of the UK's electricity now comes from renewable energy. Globally, capital flows into clean power at an estimate twice the rate of fossil fuels. Two recent developments bring this into focus.

When gas spikes . . . household and industrial bills rise with it.

Firstly, the latest round of the UK's Contracts for Difference scheme has delivered more than 6GW of new onshore wind, solar and tidal capacity across Great Britain. These numbers matter for policymakers and corporate buyers alike; they provide long-term price certainty, lowering the cost of capital and insulating generators from wholesale volatility. Secondly, GB Energy and ministers have proposed the Local Power Plan, a £1 Billion public investment designed to fund community owned clean projects - a practical intervention to anchor value locally and reduce bills.

It costs more to build any form of new energy capacity in today's world for a number of reasons: rising cost of capital, tight supply chains, geopolitical risk and the fact that new gas plants cost far more than those built five years ago.

That is precisely why the quality of analysis now matters more than ever. Much of the public conversation still leans on levelised cost of energy (LCOE) comparisons. LCOE has value and the most recent CfD results made clear that new wind and solar are half the price of new gas plants.

However, LCOE also does not capture the full system costs associated with integrating any energy source: grid reinforcement, storage, balancing services and transmission upgrades. Nor does it account for the macroeconomic impact of fossil fuel imports, the negative health impacts of burning them, or the labour market effects of domestic supply chains.

When those wider factors are included, the picture changes. Analysis from the Renewable Energy Association compares two plausible futures: one aligned with Clean Power 2030, and one where no new renewables are built and gas fills the gap. The modelling points to a clear inflection point around 2028 to 2029. From that point onwards, renewables become the net economic winner, even before factoring in the strategic value of reduced gas exposure or cleaner air.

In the Clean Power scenario, annual investment of around £40 billion through 2030 scales up wind, solar, storage and grid infrastructure while pushing unabated gas to a marginal role.

The alternative appears cheaper upfront but locks the UK into higher ongoing costs through additional LNG imports and continued exposure to international markets.

Crucially, the renewables pathway is also a jobs strategy.

Crucially, the renewables pathway is also a jobs strategy. Modelling suggests nearly 145,000 new roles between 2024 and 2030 under a Clean Power trajectory, spanning engineering, electrical work, operations and maintenance.

There's no pretending bills aren't too high. They are. And stacking policy costs onto electricity rather than spreading them through general taxation has only added to the strain. Rebalancing levies on to general taxation would make decarbonising fairer for all while we finish upgrading the system.

It's also reasonable to ask whether the CfD framework, while very successful and a brake on consumer bill impacts, is incentivising the full mix of renewable technologies, including firm low-carbon bioenergy power, geothermal and marine technologies. But the bigger point is straightforward: we cannot control global gas prices but we can reduce their grip on our market. If we succeed, the debate over whether renewables push bills up will fade. The real question will be why we clung to imported gas for so long.

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The REA Quarterly

About to Bin Your Food Waste . . . Read This First

When gas spikes . . . household and industrial bills rise with it.

JENNY GRANT
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ARTICLE 3

About to Bin Your Food Waste . . . Read This First

For households, using your food collection is an easy method to care for the environment.

What looks like everyday rubbish such as fruit and vegetable peelings, leftover meals (even meat), tea bags, eggshells, or slices of mouldy bread, can all be given a second life. When food waste is mixed in with general rubbish, it is typically incinerated or buried in landfill, where it decomposes without enough oxygen, releasing methane - a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to the climate crisis.

But there is another path.

When placed in a dedicated food waste collection, the very same scraps can be transformed into renewable energy and nutrient-rich fertiliser - turning what we throw away into something genuinely valuable.

What Happens to Food Waste After It's Collected?

Once collected, food waste is taken to a specialist treatment facility, often an anaerobic digestion plant. Here, naturally occurring microbes break down the food in sealed tanks without oxygen.

This process produces:

- Biogas, which can be used as a replacement for natural gas or used to generate electricity, heat, or even fuel (biomethane).
- Digestate, a nutrient-rich material that can be used as fertiliser on farmland as a replacement for mineral fertilisers.

This helps us in securing a homegrown supply of energy and fertilisers – a critical mission given the current geopolitical climate. In some cases, food waste can be converted into compost in order to improve soil health. Instead of going to waste, your leftovers can help produce renewable energy and support food production.

Top tips to make it work:

Using your food waste caddy can quickly become a simple daily habit.

1. **Keep your caddy somewhere handy:** place it on the kitchen counter, under the sink or where you prepare food.
2. **Use it regularly:** emptying small amounts regularly is easier, keeps it clean and reduces odours.
3. **Line your caddy if allowed:** use compostable liners or old newspaper - this keeps it clean and makes emptying easier. Do check with your council which liners are accepted in your area.
4. **Don't forget the small stuff:** tea bags, coffee grounds, eggshells, peelings, crusts and plate scrapings, all count.
5. **Keep the lid closed:** this reduces odours and deters flies, especially in warmer weather.
6. **Rinse your caddy every now and then:** A quick rinse, wipe, or pop in the dishwasher every so often can freshen it up. A sprinkle of bicarbonate of soda can help absorb smells.
7. **Freeze smelly items until collection day:** If you're worried about smells, keep things like meat, fish or food scraps in a sealed container in the freezer and add them to your outside caddy closer to collection day.
8. **Check what goes in:** Different councils accept slightly different things, so it's always worth checking your local guidance. If in doubt, look it up before you throw it in.

Small Habit, Big Difference

Using your food waste caddy is a small change that can make a big impact. It helps reduce the amount of waste in black bins, cuts harmful emissions, and makes better use of resources we'd otherwise lose. In short, next time you're about to throw food away, putting it in the right bin can make a real difference.

From 31st March 2026, all households in England are required to have weekly food waste collections under the Government's Simpler Recycling reforms.

Overview of the Policy

The Environment Act 2021 and the Simpler Recycling reforms mandate that local authorities in England provide weekly food waste collections to all households, including flats and communal properties, from 31st March 2026 onwards. The aim is to divert food waste from landfill and increase recycling rates, supporting the UK's target of sending no food waste to landfill by 2030.

The REA Quarterly

Digging for Victory 2.0 - Urban Soil Health and Local Food Production

MEGAN MULLER-GIRARD
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ARTICLE 4

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Digging for Victory 2.0 - Urban Soil Health and Local Food Production

Defra and the MHCLG must collaborate to deliver a robust policy and planning framework to capture the true value of urban soils, unlocking untapped benefits to urban health and wellbeing.

In built-up cities and suburban towns, it's easy to feel completely separate from the living world of soils beneath our feet. Nearly 85% of the UK's population lives in urban areas, creating densely populated areas where land use must meet competing demands. Despite such heavy urbanisation in the UK, we tend to focus on the crucial role of agricultural and rural lands and soils, often undervaluing the role of urban soils in societal wellbeing.

Of the UK's approximately 2 million hectares of urban land (8% of total UK land area), less than 85,000 hectares of land are comprised of publicly accessible functional green spaces (e.g. public parks and fields), and just over 7,000 hectares are comprised of allotments and community growing spaces.

Today, 11.3% of households in the UK are food insecure, with food deserts (areas where access to affordable fruit and vegetables severely is limited) disproportionately located in deprived urban areas. Improved access to locally produced fruit and vegetables is one easy win to make cities healthier - and this starts with healthy soils in allotments and urban agricultural areas.

In Great Britain, over one hundred million kilos of food were grown in allotments in 2020, with research showing that city allotments have the potential to rival the productivity of conventional farms. Soils in urban allotments are typically replenished through composted waste food or plant matter, creating a self-sustaining, robust, and highly productive system. Urban allotments and the soils that support them are a hugely untapped resource, providing improved food security, urban resilience, and community care.

Despite these benefits and the four-fold increase in demand for allotments from 2006 to 2020, they are disappearing at triple the rate they were about a decade ago, due to increasing land value coupled with restricted local authority finances.

In Great Britain, over one hundred million kilos of food were grown in allotments in 2020.

Local authorities and policymakers generally recognise that a lack of spatial and financial resources is the key driver underpinning limited supply of allotments. Therefore, exploiting the full potential of urban allotments will require collaboration between Defra and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to create a policy framework that prioritises soils and urban farming in urban spatial planning. As the government endeavours to build 1.5 million houses this parliament, it is crucial to prioritise the healthy soils that sustain us. In pursuit of this commitment, the government is actively working to reform the planning system. To realise the full potential of urban farming, these reforms must also look at easing planning barriers for urban food production and even consider mandating the inclusion of urban agricultural areas in new urban planning and development.

Once planning and policy frameworks are in place, the government must provide adequate resourcing to support local authorities and community groups to implement and maintain the physical and social infrastructure required to make allotments accessible. Additional funding could be supplied through Defra grants similar to those available for conventional farms, to cover the costs of starting a local allotment, followed by sustained Local

Authority resourcing to maintain these crucial resources.

Furthermore, healthy urban soils are not only valuable from a local food supply perspective, but are also crucial to support city parks and other urban green spaces, which are closely linked to improved physical fitness and mental health outcomes.

Finally, the practice of sealing soils (i.e. covering them with concrete) in urban areas also carries other concerns for wider health and wellbeing outcomes which are likely to be compounded by the impacts of a changing climate. Sealing soil prevents natural infiltration of rainwater into soils, instead channelling water into fast-moving runoff.

In a country subject to increasing extremes in rainfall, and regularly contending with both flooding and water shortages, the permeability of soils is crucial and must be factored into future land-use and planning decisions.

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Similarly, the prevalence of urban heat islands–densely populated city areas that get significantly warmer than the surrounding countryside - are caused by high densities of urban construction which absorb solar radiation more than green spaces do. Urban heat islands can be mitigated through urban greening, again reinforcing the importance of planning decisions and urban soil protection for broader health and wellbeing outcomes.

This World Soils Day, I urge our government leaders to have the foresight and imagination to take the difficult but essential actions to value and support the soils that sustain life in the UK and beyond - actions that will benefit citizens now and for future generations.

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Solar PV and how it can help solve the current energy crisis

FRANK GORDON
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ARTICLE 5

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Solar PV and how it can help solve the current energy crisis

We all know the headlines by now -

huge rises in petrol and heating oil prices, upcoming spikes in energy bills, rumours of (fossil) fuel shortages, and the feeling of deja vu as our fossil fuel-based system drags down the entire economy for the second time in four years. As the REA are clear on, renewables provide the only long-term route out of this situation as they remove the need for imported fossil fuel and dependence on volatile overseas markets.

As part of a regular new series in response to the crisis, the REA will be highlighting a specific renewable or clean technology and how it can help address the current situation and take us away from our dependency on volatile, polluting, imported fossil fuels. Kicking off with solar.

Solar has been in the news recently as the Government look to accelerate the availability of 'Balcony' or 'Plug-in' Solar and confirmed that almost all new homes will have solar installed as standard. So solar has been and can be very much linked to a solution to household energy bills rising - the average plug in solar system is forecast to pay for itself in 4-5 years (at today's prices) and save around £110 per year. REA look forward to working with the Government and industry to address regulatory barriers to these systems as they must be installed safely.

Meanwhile new homes fitted with solar, heat pumps and built to very energy efficient standards, should save households up to £800 per year. Octopus Energy however has its 'Zero Bills Homes' initiative - a landmark for new builds that promise no bills at all for the first 10 years of living there - this shows that solar, renewables and clean tech can and do save people money.

We also know that consumers increasingly recognise solar (and storage) as one of the steps they can take to save money - enquiries to Octopus and EON have reportedly doubled in recent weeks and we have seen a record number of small-scale installations of these systems. Of course the less written about area is of businesses energy costs - these are not protected by the energy price cap shielding consumers but we all ultimately end up paying the cost if employers go out of business and prices increase as a result. These price increases - caused by fossil gas price rises - have been neglected for too long but increasing numbers of businesses are now realising that solar, storage and other forms of renewables are the long term way out of these sky high costs and installs have hit record highs. Solar can of course, space allowing, also help charge a business's EV fleets, saving vehicle costs too.

Government must also extend the current temporary VAT relief on solar panel and energy storage installs

Moving forwards, Government must enable even more people and businesses to benefit from solar, by enabling financial measures which remove the upfront cost - such as Salary Sacrifice which has been highly successful in driving EV adoption. This removes the upfront cost by spreading it onto deductions from monthly wages, therefore increasing adoption. Government must also extend the current temporary VAT relief on solar panel and energy storage installs and introduce zero interest loans for such installs, for those not in a salaried role.

So solar (and renewables) are one of the main practical steps households and businesses can take to shield themselves from energy price rises and the Government are taking welcome steps to enable this but can go further.

The REA Quarterly

Expert insight and industry perspectives from the REA

The REA Quarterly is a new publication from the REA offering thought pieces and timely articles on the renewable energy and associated clean tech industry.

We are now inviting participation from members and partners who are business leaders and experts.

Opportunities include:

- Sponsored content and brand placement
- Thought leadership articles and expert commentary
- Advertising packages tailored to your objectives

If you're looking to build credibility, increase visibility, and drive commercial impact, we'd be pleased to develop a tailored package that meets your goals.

To secure your place in the next edition or find out more, email Aisha Afeef, REA Comms Exec, on aafeef@r-e-a.net.

DECARBONISING THE ECONOMY

REA - STRONGER TOGETHER

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REA MEMBERSHIP RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Policy advocacy: We press government to ensure there is a progressive policy and regulatory landscape. By doing so we create new markets, scale existing markets and address barriers to investment. This means members can have the confidence to invest and grow. We are also there to head-off unnecessary policy and regulatory burdens thereby avoiding costs to members.

Networking opportunities: We connect REA members with industry leaders, experts, and like-minded professionals at exclusive events. This supports your business development and sales activity.

Resources: Members receive a wealth of tools, including research reports, market insights and best practice designed to enhance capabilities and stay ahead of the competition.

Professional development: Our workshops and educational programmes equip your teams with the skills necessary to excel in an evolving industry landscape.

Recognition and support: We increase our members' brand visibility through our promotional channels, and members benefit from dedicated support designed to help achieve organisational goals.

International: Access to international conferences and events, notably Climate Change COPs where the REA is an official partner to the UNFCCC, hosting a pavilion inside the exclusive Blue Zone.

Market entry: For businesses wishing to enter the UK renewables market, whether already based in the UK or abroad, we help with market analysis, regulatory compliance and brand awareness.

Market assurance: Through our subsidiary company REAL, we deliver certification and consumer protection schemes enabling a well functioning market.

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