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The making of anti-nuclear Scotland: activism, coalition building, energy politics and nationhood, c.1954-2008

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ABSTRACT

This article contributes to understanding how civil nuclear power shaped post-war British history through studying opposition to nuclear energy in Scotland. Over the second half of the twentieth century, pessimistic assessments challenged the optimism that had developed during the 1950s. Under devolution, Scottish administrations have used planning policies to block future nuclear generating plants, institutionalising a marked distinction with the rest of the UK. The origins of these differences are traced to anti-nuclear protests and the growth of a social movement coalition that linked anti-nuclear activism with growing public sentiment and electoral politics, particularly through the Scottish National Party (SNP). Reflections from oral history interviews are used to examine diverse local protest contexts supplemented by archives from the anti-nuclear movement and the SNP. During the 1970s, protests against Torness power station in East Lothian and the drilling of test bores for waste disposal in South Ayrshire were given a national orientation by SNP politicians. Over the course of the 1980s, the anti-nuclear coalition broadened through growing opposition to Torness and in response to the Chernobyl disaster. These changes encouraged a lasting symbiosis between pro-devolution and anti-nuclear sentiments which were subsequently embodied in policies pursued by devolved administrations during the 2000s.

KEYWORDS

Scotland; protest; nuclear; activism; nationalism; energy

Introduction

In the late 1950s, Scotland was at the forefront of civil nuclear experimentation; over sixty years later, the focus, however, has shifted from development to decommissioning, something which has occurred comfortably within a single human lifespan. Reactors no longer offer the 'nuclear fission and social fusion' of the expansion years; and waste leaves a toxic legacy with complex management requirements.¹ The Scottish Parliament has used the devolution of planning powers, as opposed to energy policy, which remains largely reserved to the UK Parliament, to enact barriers to further nuclear plants. Jim Mather successfully moved a motion of opposition to the building of additional nuclear power stations

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in the Scottish Parliament during January 2008. Mather, the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism, asserted that 'Scotland does not want or need new nuclear power'.² As a minister in Scotland's first Scottish National Party (SNP) administration, Mather was signalling the fulfilment of a policy which had been significant in the previous year's Holyrood election. Divergences over nuclear power have established a major policy distinction between Scotland and the rest of the UK which have now persisted for a decade and a half.³

Scholarly interest in British civil nuclear power has increased in recent years. Analysis has focused largely on technical—or, more recently—social and cultural aspects of the nuclear programme.⁴ In their special issue of *Contemporary British History*, guest editors Jonathan Hogg and Kate Brown acknowledge the place of nuclear mobilisation—the deployment of resources by post-war British governments to create an independent nuclear deterrent and civil reactor programme—at the periphery of historiography: a position they find astonishing considering the role it played in 'fundamentally' shaping 'government, military and political thinking' whilst absorbing a 'sizeable portion of public funds', and creating 'contested public discourse across decades'.⁵ They advocate for research that emphasises how Britain's atomic development reveals more than what could be considered straightforward nuclear history. Through linking the development of technology with activism and a shifting consensus on nuclear energy and the constitution in late twentieth century Scotland, this article demonstrates that nuclear history is 'embedded within, rather than distinctive from, broader historical narratives of modern Britain'.⁶

Nuclear developments between the 1950s and 1980s received vastly different responses as optimism turned to pessimism and anti-nuclear activism fused with constitutional and party politics. By focusing on the 1970s and 1980s, this article demonstrates that contemporary divisions in nuclear energy policy between Scotland and the rest of the UK are nuanced and longstanding. It assesses the role of anti-nuclear activists in shaping the political consensus in Scotland. More than overt anti-nuclear sentiment informed these changes, with alternative energy policies and advocacy for renewable energy adding to the complexity of a situation which spans industries and the class structure. Anti-nuclear politics connects the Scottish Conservation Society (SCS) with the SNP; and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) with the National Union of Mineworkers Scottish Area (NUMSA) and the Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace (SCRAM). Exploring these relationships reveals how the growth of anti-nuclear energy feeling was bound up with interlinked progressive concerns about deindustrialisation, increasing environmentalist sentiment, awareness of nuclear risk, the problems of waste disposal, and the ongoing association of civil nuclear energy with the weapons programme.

The next section of this article outlines the development of nuclear power in Scotland and then explores the role of such facilities as triggers for opposition, which peaked during the 1970s and 1980s. Three further sections explore the foundations of anti-nuclear activism, the influence of local campaigning organisations and international trends and the forming of an anti-nuclear power Scottish consensus in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Vignettes from eight key activists along with archival records from SCRAM are supplemented with material from organisations it cooperated with, such as CND and trade unions. Combined with reflections on anti-nuclear activism from within the UK government's Atomic Energy Agency (UKAEA), these reveal the foundations of Scottish anti-nuclear culture. A core of young, middle-class graduates who worked in professional occupations

before, during and after their spells of anti-nuclear activism were central to sustaining SCRAM. They built more heterogeneous cross-class and cross-occupation networks which were episodically able to mobilise thousands and tens of thousands to articulate opposition to civil nuclear energy in local, and increasingly Scottish national, terms by the 1980s.

These interviews provided opportunities for now middle-aged and elderly participants to recall their involvement in anti-nuclear activism between three and six decades prior to the recordings, which were made during the early 2020s. The dialogue was an opportunity for participants to make connections between their past and present, linking their former activism with current sentiments. They were able to locate their anti-nuclear activism within life stories of maturing through experiencing formative political, social and economic changes.⁷ Interviewees spoke from the position of success, in the sense that they were narrating the eventual blocking of further civil nuclear developments in Scotland during the 2000s. Furthermore, they also spoke from a position of reflection which integrated anti-nuclear activism with subsequent careers that included journalism and involvement in party politics and civil society, alongside related concerns such as land activism. The anti-nuclear movement had helped them hone skills and connections that remained important, as well as founding worldviews of commitments to sustainability and democracy that were regarded as highly relevant in the context of interviews recorded during a period of growing concern about Scottish, British and global responses to climate change.

Dialogue in the interviews revealed links to international anti-nuclear activism and thinking, as well as the place of anti-nuclear mobilisations within a broader progressive taxonomy of organisations in Scotland. These gained significance through the increasingly close relationship between the opposition to civil nuclear power and arguments for Scottish devolution in the 1980s and 1990s. Both the oral testimonies and archival research reveal the Scottish national political context, setting the rise of anti-nuclear sentiment against the maelstrom of a distinctive political party and civil society setting. Whilst the SNP and the Scottish Ecological Party—predecessor to the Scottish Green Party—were overtly anti-nuclear, activists within the Scottish Labour Party were also important for bringing anti-nuclear perspectives into national debate and local government: all contributed to a distinctive national framing which sets the Scottish context apart.

Nuclear Scotland

Britain's civil nuclear energy programme was in its infancy when the government opted to site its experimental reactor establishment in Caithness in 1954. This was part of a wider agenda which saw the development of different reactor types as Britain expanded its civil nuclear programme.⁸ As an experimental facility operated by the UKAEA, which was responsible for the research and development of effective and efficient reactor types, Dounreay was not a conventional nuclear power station. Its construction is consistent with the optimism of the period which sociologist Ian Welsh identifies as 'peak modernity', during which scientists entered the political sphere and Britain strived to maintain its global significance.⁹ Britain's civil nuclear energy programme offered 'the prospect of economic and political renewal'.¹⁰ Reflecting this, as Linda M. Ross writes, 'the modernity inherent in nuclear development extended beyond the technological'.¹¹ This, she argues, was one of the distinctive impacts of the government's decision to situate its fast breeder

reactor establishment in Britain's most northerly mainland county. Here, an area considered rural was able to adapt and accommodate a population influx resulting from 'the bustling modern world' being brought into 'a quiet corner of Caithness with something of a rush'.¹² The urgency of the nuclear energy programme meant that a great deal of associated change occurred within a short timeframe as construction onsite for the nuclear facility and offsite for a new architecture for a new community boosted the local economy. Far from being overwhelmed, clear planning and communication ensured that the local community embraced the opportunities of an innovative industry which brought with it the promise of jobs alongside a revitalised and expanded Thurso society.

Ross' study prioritises the 'optimism and transformation of Dounreay's early development', during which, she notes, it was difficult to find recorded dissent to the arrival of nuclear science in Caithness.¹³ Significantly, under the terms of the Atomic Energy Act 1954, the UKAEA was exempt from submitting planning details to local authorities, meaning that the reactor establishment was sited without consultation or the subsequent potential triggering of a public inquiry.¹⁴ Dounreay was met with public approval. Residents, local government and members of parliament welcomed the social and economic opportunities of the nuclear.¹⁵ Within a few years of operation, the nearby town of Thurso's population had almost tripled as it revelled in its new status of 'Atom Town', which was celebrated in a 1966 information film. *Atom Town* presents Dounreay as a harbinger of economic prosperity. It includes an interview with a young man from the North-East of England who had moved to Northern Scotland so that his father could take up a job at the plant, leaving the deindustrialising coal and steel region behind. He wishes to follow his father into becoming a nuclear technician.¹⁶

Although positivity prevailed, a lone voice spoke out against Dounreay as early as 1953, with artist and campaigner Wendy Wood expressing her alarm over the potential hazards of establishing such a site in a public letter addressed to Thurso's provost.¹⁷ Her apprehension was swiftly dismissed, but her stance is notable given her political involvement in the 1928 founding of the National Party of Scotland, which six years later amalgamated with the Scottish Party to form the SNP. Wood remained active in anti-nuclear circles throughout the period of study, appearing at rallies during the campaign to oppose nuclear dumping at Mullwharchar in the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹⁸

Whilst Ross' article outlines an instance where early nuclear development was predominantly well-received, work by Ian Welsh, Elizabeth Rough and Christine Wall reveals a burgeoning conflict of opinions during these formative years.¹⁹ With Dounreay, there was no option for public inquiry. Three years later the South of Scotland Electricity Board's (SSEB) Hunterston A Magnox station received forty-two objections and a petition of 208 signatories was presented, with its proposed location on an unspoilt area of North Ayrshire coastline and the lack of information about other sites considered proving a source of discontent.²⁰ An emergent counter-hegemonic perspective was being articulated at an early stage that has largely been assumed to have been characterised by the dominance of nuclear triumphalism. Welsh recognises these instances of opposition as being 'relatively organised and sophisticated' and prefiguring the significant anti-nuclear campaigning in the 1970s and 1980s.²¹ Scepticism brewed for over a decade, moulding the arguments made

by the emergent environmental movement and anti-nuclear power politics during the 1970s.

Similarly, Christine Wall details emerging opposition in her study of the siting and construction of another of the first generation of Magnox reactors, Sizewell A in Suffolk in the East of England. As Ross notes with Dounreay, discontent was vocalised by farmers and landowners who were concerned that agricultural employees would be 'lured from the land' by better pay in construction.²² As is discussed below, farming and fishing interests remained important to framing Scottish objections to nuclear power as opposition was popularised in later decades. Wall's research, however, reveals a different dimension through 'an extant and organized nucleus of politically informed and active residents' which expressed 'resistance and criticism' through the Communist broadsheet *The Leiston Leader*.²³ This influential group provides a precedent for local political challenges to state decisions, indicating that, despite its small scale, anti-nuclear politics was present from the programme's early years. In its political focus, this article will chart an increasing concern for democracy in nuclear decision-making with the strengthening of related activism.

The shift against nuclear power in Scotland can be best illustrated by the change in the activist landscape which occurred between 1954 and 1980: in 1954 – the beginning of what could be described as 'nuclear Scotland' with the first atomic energy experimentation at Dounreay—there were no recorded groups campaigning against nuclear matters. By March 1980, however, there were at least 104.²⁴ Some of these were individual stand-alone groups, such as the Highland Anti Nuclear Group; others were factions of larger organisations, such as branches of CND or Friends of the Earth. Countryside conservation organisations feature, as do peace councils, heritage societies, spiritual groups, consumer rights campaigners, and political parties—particularly the SNP and certain Labour representatives. What is clear is the range of people opposed to nuclear matters, both in terms of weapons and energy: in many ways, anti-nuclear energy activists saw them as two sides of the same coin. As environmental journalist Rob Edwards revealed, the fact that 'nuclear power was the twin of nuclear weapons' was probably his 'main motivating factor' in opposing nuclear energy generation when he worked for SCRAM during the 1970s and 1980s.²⁵

Announced twenty years apart—within different sociopolitical contexts—Dounreay Experimental Research Establishment and Torness Nuclear Power Station were the first and last civil nuclear facilities to be built in Scotland. The memories of Clare Simpson, who also left Tyneside around a decade after the *Atom Town* film was made, provide a helpful comparison which illuminates increasing public opposition to nuclear power. Simpson moved from her family home in Newcastle to study at Dundee University in 1976. As a student, she became active in Students Against Nuclear Energy (SANE) and spent time preparing for her final exams 'in the caravan that was parked by the A1' which SCRAM activists were living in adjacent to the Torness construction site on the East Lothian coast.²⁶ For Clare Simpson, anti-nuclear activism was part of maturing and a generational cohort forming experience. She remembered that upon first encountering opponents of nuclear power as a student at Dundee University, 'I kind of thought they were a bit of a hippy lot if I'm honest and then I became a bit of a hippy!' After this, Simpson joined other young activists who were deeply embedded in SCRAM, and related organisations. She subsequently travelled to join women protesting against the stationing

of American cruise missiles at Greenham Common during 1982 and chained herself to the gates of the Torness construction site to disrupt building work.²⁷

By the late 1970s, hopes for economic prosperity had been replaced with an acute awareness of nuclear risk as oppositional sentiment grew towards nuclear accidents and waste dumping. Anti-nuclear perspectives gained momentum through the campaign against the SSEB's plans to build a nuclear power station at Torness. Here, SCRAM and the Torness Alliance organised mass protests. Organisers claimed that the largest of these in May 1979 saw 10,000 people gather on the construction site in one of the UK's largest acts of civil disobedience.²⁸ As well as objecting to what they understood to be the inherent dangers of nuclear power, campaigners argued that the electricity which Torness would produce would be surplus to Scotland's energy requirements. Despite widespread criticism and continued protest, Torness was officially opened by Margaret Thatcher in 1989: a politically significant moment that marked a decade of commitment to developing a nuclear power station in East Lothian by a Conservative government which was increasingly unpopular in Scotland.²⁹ One of the first major decisions of the Thatcher government had been to review the Torness case and give it approval. By this time, anti-Dounreay sentiment had also built up as advanced plans for both a waste disposal site and a European Demonstration Reprocessing Plant (EDRP) attracted criticism from as far afield as Scandinavia.³⁰

Anti-nuclear feeling was compounded by the increasingly pressing necessity for the UKAEA to find a suitable site for the geological disposal of high-level nuclear waste, which, as SCRAM elucidated in 1980, 'was inextricably linked with the nuclear power programme'.³¹ This was prompted both by pan-European investigations and 'Nuclear Power and the Environment', the sixth report of the UK Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. It critically commented that the UKAEA had paid 'inadequate attention' to the question of nuclear waste disposal; which it found all the more surprising given the large nuclear power programme which was expected to ensue.³² Between 1976 and the 1980s, the UKAEA aimed to rectify this, scouring the UK for a site which met the strict geological requirements of safe waste disposal. Having commissioned the Institute of Geological Sciences (IGS) to conduct a desk study in 1975, it spent several years appraising the options and experiencing local resistance to plans which rarely progressed beyond their formative stages. Many of the proposed sites were in Scotland, with most progress being made at Mullwharchar, one of the Galloway hills near Loch Doon in Ayrshire.³³ This was eventually ruled out following a failed appeal against a public inquiry ruling in 1981. These three cases—Dounreay, Torness and Mullwharchar—represent a period in which intensely local feeling combined with central government directives in the development of technological projects with enduring social, political, economic and environmental consequences. Although the outcomes in each were different, taken together for the first time they allow us to chart processes of collective action in relation to the development of anti-nuclear politics in Scotland.

Foundations of anti-nuclear activism

The anti-nuclear power movement can be viewed as an archetypal example of the 'new social movements' that formed in the post-war decades. These were synonymous with single issue campaigning on matters which were motivated by values-based political

agendas, including increased concern for the welfare of the environment in industrialised societies. Typically, loose affinities drew comparatively broad coalitions around a particular cause. New social movements are associated with university-educated professional middle-class constituencies who have often been distrustful of more durable but grinding and compromising forms of traditional party or trade union politics. Crucially, they were organisations that geared to pressurise but not hold state power.³⁴ Social movements in the 1970s and 1980s were nevertheless marked by a commitment to cohesion and formal membership organisations.

Frank Parkin's formative late 1960s study of 'middle-class radicalism' focused on CND members, emphasising their commitment to 'moral of humanitarian' ends of graduate professionals as opposed to the traditionally 'material' agenda of manual working-class politics. Parkin collected his survey data by distributing questionnaires at protests and through CND branch meetings, demonstrating the endurance of the relatively stable structures and organisations of anti-nuclear social movements and their reliance on the commitment of persistent activists.³⁵ These tendencies spilled over from opposition to nuclear weapons to opposition to nuclear energy. Cotgrove and Duff's later study of environmentalists was published in 1980, during the period of anti-Torness protests. It emphasised that environmental protesters, including anti-nuclear activists, were clustered in 'the non-productive-service sector', broadly university graduates working in professional, public sector or creative arts roles. They underlined that anti-nuclear protests enthused moral and environmental values. Activists were marked by having 'less confidence in science' than older generations of socialists or those from trade union backgrounds. Nuclear power stations became a prime site for objections due to 'a deep symbolic significance: centralised, technologically complex and hazardous . . . totalitarian tendencies'.³⁶

Charles Tilly's authoritative definition of social movements underlined the importance of objectives of protest: social movements are enthused by 'organised public effort making collective claims on target authorities' through combining appeals to the worthiness of a cause, the unity and numbers it can mobilise and the commitment its partisans demonstrate.³⁷ These forms of targeting rest on some form of 'contentious politics' through confrontations between claim makers and authorities.³⁸ Contentious politics varies across time and place, but the forms of activist repertoires available to a social movement at any one time is limited and historically conditioned by the 'opportunity-cost structure' of a given political conjuncture.³⁹ Social movements evolve in the context of an ecosystem of linked causes and protest mobilisations.⁴⁰ Forms of contentious politics are learned and diffused through activist affinity networks which creates milieus that grow within but also extend beyond the boundaries of formally constituted organisations.⁴¹ In Scotland during 1970s and 1980s, a commitment to non-violence, the occupation of spaces marked for nuclear purposes, and the development of alternative energy agendas to nuclear power were dominant features of anti-nuclear activism. Involvement in anti-nuclear activism entailed building the campaigning organisations which engaged in the contentious politics of occupying sites and disrupting the nuclear industry. It also meant developing alternative energy agendas. Both of these undertakings involved popularising anti-nuclear arguments at a local and national level, lobbying within political parties and maintaining and growing the infrastructure of anti-nuclear organisations and their publications.

Anti-nuclear power protests built on the back of opposition to nuclear weapons in Scotland, with a crossover of activists and political contexts. Christopher R. Hill emphasises that CND protests took on a strongly nationalist tone in both Wales and Scotland.⁴² One figure who Hill discusses is Isobel Lindsay, a leading anti-nuclear weapons activist whose political evolution marked a significant division between older left-wing politics and a New Left orientation enthused by opposition to a bureaucratised society. During an oral history interview in 2021, Lindsay explained that she left the Labour Party and joined the SNP during the 1960s. Between 1968 and 1978, Lindsay went on to be elected as a Glasgow local councillor, serve as a vice-chair of the party, and stand as a by-election candidate in East Lothian.⁴³ Tom McAlpine, Lindsay's husband, made the same party political journey she had over the 1960s and 1970s, also becoming a councillor, a parliamentary candidate and a vice-chair. Additionally, he was a colleague of SNP Chairman Billy Wolfe at the Chieftain Industries engineering cooperative. In 2021, Isobel Lindsay recalled that these connections with Wolfe, who was the SNP's leader from 1969 to 1979, had been fostered through shared commitments to the radical Christian Iona Community, evidencing how religious-enthused peace activism of the early 1960s shaped a more secular facing form of nationalist-enthused radicalism a decade later.⁴⁴ Lindsay underlined that commitments to egalitarian enterprises was informed by and reinforced a commitment to 'proper democratic debate' which contrasted sharply with the more stifling political culture that she had left behind in the Labour Party. She felt subjects like opposing nuclear weapons or nuclear energy were not given a just hearing despite enjoying support from party members.⁴⁵

These political evolutions highlight the distinction between the initially broadly pro-nuclear power trade union movement and the social movement coalition that emerged in opposition to nuclear power with a primarily university-educated middle-class base. George Kerevan, who was a young socialist political activist, university student and then college lecturer during the 1960s and 1970s, discussed the growth of 'an independent left in Scotland' during an interview recorded in 2020. He emphasised that this was propelled by a societal 'shift, towards kind of trained technocrats, [a] managerial class emerges and initially it's actually quite radical because young people in their twenties, the universities were expanding'.⁴⁶ Isobel Lindsay, who was a lecturer at Strathclyde University, can be viewed as emblematic of this new self-aware social force. An article she wrote for the SNP members' bulletin in 1971 channelled the sociological perspective of intellectuals such as C. Wright Mills, who condemned the anomie conditioned by the dominance of unaccountable structures in economic and political life: the SNP's task was to respond to 'modern social problems—the great inequality in the distribution of power, the growing bureaucratisation of society, the devaluation of community, the loss of identity in a mass society, the demoralisation that comes with powerlessness, the dangers of centralised international power blocks and of course, the sheer inefficiency of centralism'.⁴⁷ These sources of discontent were part of broader international trends which Lindsay thought the SNP could tap into with a distinctive national vernacular. Protests against nuclear energy were shaped by these dimensions, with activists in dialogue with international ideas and movements.

A complex associational patchwork constituted the Scottish anti-nuclear movement. The closest thing it had to a national organisation was SCRAM, which provided leadership to the campaign against the building of the Torness close to

Scotland's capital city, Edinburgh. In his insider sociological account of opposition to nuclear power in the UK, Ian Welsh describes SCRAM in terms synonymous with a new social movement, defining it as a pluralistic organisation unified around a single issue. Welsh underlines that, 'at its heart SCRAM had a sophisticated and hardened group of middle-class young professionals with very high levels of cultural capital and capacity to organise'.⁴⁸ This was born out in oral history with former SCRAM activists. Linda Hendry referred to the organisation as primarily being made up of 'educated people from Edinburgh, you know, ex-university types'.⁴⁹

Personal journeys framed the recollections of anti-nuclear activists, who located their commitment to anti-nuclear activism within a larger life arc of maturing and rejecting the promises of abundance and materialist values of both industrial society and the early nuclear era. Linda, who worked for SCRAM during the 1980s, was first introduced to nuclear power after her father attended the opening of Chapelcross nuclear power station, Dumfriesshire, in 1959. During an interview in 2021, she recalled nuclear electricity being described as 'too cheap to meter', something which she quickly recognised as 'nonsense'.⁵⁰ Later, Hendry attended Torness protests with her mother and young child, having read and been convinced by the arguments put forward in two iconic books of the environmental movement as it developed over the 1960s and 1970s: Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, a formative text on the dangers of pesticides, and E.F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful*, which made the case for a decentralised human-centred economic model.⁵¹ Together, these convinced Henry that large-scale industrial processes were both polluting and socially harmful. By contrast, she attended the Torness protest as part of a multi-generation feminist action. The protesters were purposefully organised around small interpersonal affinity groups. These underlined the overlapping nature of the anti-nuclear protest, with Hendry in 2021 insisting that it was 'more of a movement than just a campaign', but also that she felt connected to a larger 'world movement' through her activism in the Lothians.⁵²

Clare Simpson's recollections of becoming a student anti-nuclear activist at Dundee University indicates a similar trajectory. There were close connections between activist groups such as SCRAM and the UK-wide organisations, SANE and Youth CND. To Simpson, 'They all seemed quite interlinked. I ended up quite pally with them and we'd do a lot of things together'.⁵³ Strong countercultural trends characterise Simpson's memories of the anti-nuclear movement during the 1970s and 1980s. She enthused that the anti-nuclear movement and its broader milieu were a rejection of the conservatism that she had grown up with in a working-class family in Newcastle: 'It was probably a fair amount of experimentation for me. Coming from this very strict very straight Catholic family and trying and experimenting with this kind of life I wanted. Partly political partly not'.⁵⁴ Countercultural dimensions in anti-nuclear circles included 'experimenting with relationships' and the rejection of marriage as well as engaging in vegetarianism and veganism. These dimensions differentiated the hardcore of 'real activists' from the thousands of people who attended SCRAM's larger protests but were not involved in organising its activities. SANE was also able to cultivate support by tapping into favourable cultural mediums. Simpson helped organise fundraising benefit gigs in Edinburgh, with folk and punk rock music helping to spread the anti-nuclear message and provide common reference points for activists.⁵⁵

Other SCRAM interviewees also had backgrounds in higher education. In some cases though, their opposition to nuclear power was additionally informed by relationships to the South East of Scotland and its traditional industries. Dorothy Aitchison was an art college graduate but also the daughter of a fisherman from Burnmouth, less than twenty miles along the coast from Torness Point. Her motivations for opposing nuclear power were grounded by local concerns and worries over the future of her father's way of life given the threat she saw posed to the area by nuclear contamination. One of Aitchison's contributions to SCRAM was hosting an anti-nuclear exhibition in Eyemouth, not far from Burnmouth, and building a local SCRAM group.⁵⁶ A Scottish Television programme from 1980 profiled Torness as 'Scotland's most unexpected industrial frontier', underlining that the farming and fishing area around the town of Dunbar now faced 'social dislocations because of a drift away from the traditional ways of income getting'. The programme included two farmers, Stuart Ritchie and his son Andrew, who expressed concern for the future of 'the garden of Scotland'.⁵⁷

Recollections from around forty years later emphasised the goodwill SCRAM received from local farmers. Pete Roche, who like Linda Hendry worked for SCRAM and had a background in environmental activism before he attended Edinburgh University, recalled building common cause with farmers during an interview in 2021. A cavalcade of tractors formed a highly visible protest on Princes Street in the centre of Edinburgh during June 1978 whilst later, when SCRAM members were occupying the Torness site and renovating the Half Moon cottage, farmers assisted by providing a truck which was essential for moving stone slabs.⁵⁸ Roche remains a committed anti-nuclear activist, still running the *No 2 Nuclear* website. His testimony emphasised the importance of a generation of university graduates such as himself in engaging with environmental perspectives during the 1970s, but also their later success in building support among constituencies such as the East Lothian farmers. Aged fifteen, Roche had attended a Friends of the Earth protest against waste at Schweppes' bottling plant in Birmingham, which was a founding moment for him and for British environmental activism.⁵⁹ He later also attached importance to winning over industrial workers to the anti-nuclear case.

These episodes of cross-class coalition building were recalled through managing tensions in humorous terms: Eric Clarke, the Secretary of the NUMSA joined SCRAM activists in a vegetarian café in Edinburgh following a rally during the mid-1980s. He reluctantly ordered an Earl Gray tea in the absence of his preferred option of breakfast tea and quipped 'I hope it's not going to raise my consciousness'.⁶⁰ There was a more long-lasting foundation to these interactions. In 1978, Tony Webb of the Socialist Environmental Resources Association, an environmental organisation affiliated to the Labour Party, reported enthusiastically on the Trade Unions Against Torness conference SCRAM had organised with the support of thirteen trade unions. The NUMSA was singled out for the backing it had given SCRAM, with Webb emphasising 'strong opposition to the proposed construction from the Scottish Office of the NUM in spite of the general support for the NUM for both coal and nuclear as policy'.⁶¹ Debates over policy at the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) union confederation's annual congresses recorded similar sentiments being expressed by mining representatives, especially where they related to proposed nuclear developments in the Scottish coalfields. At the 1978 congress, T. Gilmour of the Scottish Colliery Enginemen, Boilermen and Tradesmen

Association, an NUM affiliate, moved a motion against proposed nuclear waste dumping around Loch Doon. Gilmour, who lived in nearby Dalmellington, criticised the risks of transporting and storing waste the proposals entailed as well as the ‘curtain of traditional secrecy within the nuclear industry’.⁶² The next year a delegate from the neighbouring Dumfries and Galloway Trades Council, made similar criticisms and called for the STUC to hold a conference that would invite SCRAM as acknowledged voices of the anti-nuclear movement who enjoyed respect and recognition from trade unionists.⁶³

Connections between SCRAM and the NUMSA reinforced ambitions towards building a Scottish anti-nuclear consensus. These built on earlier links forged during peace campaigning. Isobel Lindsay recalled that her support for coal and opposition to nuclear when she stood as a by-election candidate in East Lothian during 1978 rekindled connections she had first made when NUM officials supported protestors marching against nuclear missiles stationed at the Holy Loch more than fifteen years before.⁶⁴

International influences and local transmission: developing a counter-expertise

Scottish anti-nuclear activism centred on tactics that sought to disrupt undemocratic technocratic decision making by mobilising and informing public opinion on a pacifistic ethical basis, a stance it inherited from anti-nuclear weapons campaigns. Activists broadly shared an overwhelming commitment to non-violence, which was held to be a matter of principle as well as tactical expedience. Rob Edwards, who was among SCRAM’s founding members, underlined during an oral history interview in 2021 that whilst the campaign organised mass civil disobedience it promoted ‘non-violent direct action, of course’.⁶⁵ Linda Hendry explained that for her, non-violence was a principled philosophical position that came from studying the ideas of Gandhi, a figure whose strategy was also widely admired in CND.⁶⁶ The anti-imperialist origins of Gandhi’s politics made him a figure who had been popular among campaigners for Scottish independence as well as opponents of nuclear power. Wendy Wood discussed being inspired by the struggle for Indian independence from Britain in her 1970 autobiography.⁶⁷ Deliberations on non-violence were also highly visible in the pages of *Aether*, an ecological magazine published in Aberdeen between the early 1970s and early 1980s. *Aether* began life as a magazine of the Aberdeen University Environmental Protection Society, but its editors subsequently lived on an agricultural commune and also published articles from other activists in the North-East of Scotland.⁶⁸

The magazine’s pages regularly featured deliberations on ideological distinctions between lifestyle and activist orientations and debated appropriate tactics for the Aberdeenshire and Scottish ecological movements. These discussions demonstrated the influence of international anti-nuclear movements, as well as more localised distinctions between activists based around Scotland. A letter in the magazine’s winter 1977–8 edition underlined the need for the anti-nuclear movement not only to have a policy of ‘non-violence’, but to explicitly endorse ‘nonviolence’, redolent of Linda Hendry’s invoking of Gandhi.⁶⁹ Around two years later, Dave Smith, an anti-nuclear activist who was originally from the North-East of Scotland, reported from the attempted occupation of Seabrooke nuclear power station in New Hampshire. He joined an affinity group from Philadelphia

but was perturbed by a debate over the potential for demonstrators to use more combative tactics, glibly underlining that: 'people here and in Scotland involved in anti-nuclear movements don't have much of a background of violence and I don't think that they would be very good at it. I think it would be helpful to realise this before the rhetoric of violence gets too strong'.⁷⁰

Smith was speaking to debates within the Scottish anti-nuclear movement. Linda Hendry recalled that the occupation of the Torness site in 1979 was accompanied by a division over tactics between a non-violent majority and a small anarchist minority who committed property destruction, disturbing an act of orderly trespass completed:

By making a set of steps out of straw bales, so that nobody needed to break down the fence to get in, and even the most infirm, practically, could get up and over. But sadly, once we got on site, some bloody anarchists destroyed the toilets. So, you know, when I discovered that, I thought, well we're not occupying if there's no toilets. Because they were, you know, proper china toilets, but they'd just gone straight through them.

Well, I don't know for sure that they were anarchists. Whether they were anarchists or just the sort of people that loved breaking things. It just, I just thought, well it's not going to be a long occupation, not for people who like a bit of toilet roll, and a door.⁷¹

On Site Torness, Alistair Scott and Mike Sharples' documentary on the 1979 occupation, includes footage of a conflict between the Torness Alliance and a small number of anarchist protestors who took down a fence and sat on building machinery. Whilst both sides claimed to be acting according to peaceful principles, the Alliance felt this went against their agreed procedure.⁷² In Linda's memories, this incident serves to underline the distinction between a minority of uncaring primarily male activists and a more inclusive majority including herself who had attended the protest with her mother and young children. Infirm protesters climbing over straw bales provided by local farmers who had built a rapport with SCRAM affirmed the effectiveness of the broad coalition being consciously built by anti-nuclear activists.⁷³

Dorothy Aitchison had fewer memories of conflicts over tactics but recalled attending non-violent direct action training.⁷⁴ SCRAM's records indicate the importance of non-violence in its activism during its most active period in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In January 1979, Colin Holden, SCRAM's Secretary, thanked the officers of Lothian and Borders Police for facilitating the Torness occupation the previous November and explained non-violence as both an ethical and practicable necessity for his organisation:

To make our point as people, to reflect our hopes for a peaceful future, and to show that our fight is not with the police, we will maintain our non-violent protest, using reason and not personal abuse as our weapon.⁷⁵

The events of May 1979 reinforced commitments to peaceful protests. Minutes of a planning meeting for a Torness demonstration from January 1981 include several comments from SCRAM members alluding to concerns to avoid any association with violence and fears of resultant low attendances or diminishing local support.⁷⁶

Further reverberations from the United States were felt strongly in Scotland after the Three Mile Island partial nuclear meltdown in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on 28 March 1979. SCRAM literature pointed to the British nuclear lobby's preference for building Pressurised Water Reactors (PWR), which they claimed closely resembled the Three Mile Island plant.⁷⁷

The impact Three Mile Island had on public perceptions of nuclear power is also demonstrated in material the SSEB distributed to reassure the public about the safety of Torness. Underlining that disaster was averted at Harrisburg, the Electricity Board stated, 'the major accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power station near Harrisburg really demonstrates the effectiveness of the "in-depth" protection philosophy'.⁷⁸ These developments anticipated the later more marked public disquiet over the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in the Soviet Union, which helped to solidify shifts towards a Scottish anti-nuclear consensus.

Links between the US and British nuclear debate also extended to forms of activism. Smith drew parallels between the experience in Seabrooke and SCRAM's occupation of the Torness site in 1978 and 1979.⁷⁹ Cumulatively, these protests mobilised tens of thousands of demonstrators in East Lothian but like at Seabrooke failed to stop the building of a nuclear power station. Activists from the North-East of Scotland were part of those occupations which enjoyed support from across Scotland and further afield. Robin Callander, an Aberdeenshire based activist involved in publishing *Aether*, recalled around forty-five years later that he joined the first occupation of the Torness site in 1976 with a group from Aberdeen: 'football was played, kites were flown, ceilidhs were had'.⁸⁰ In characterising an enduring dialogue between anti-nuclear activists in Scotland, Callander emphasised that he had encouraged SCRAM to consider occupying the Torness site during the mid-1970s. Callander was keen to underline the distinctive nature of anti-nuclear activism in North-East Scotland, and its radicalism. Following on from this experience, he was involved in arranging for a one-day demonstration at Stake Ness Point in Banff where the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board had planned to build a Steam-Generating Heavy Water Reactor (SGHWR) in the early 1970s but were ultimately refused permission by the British government.⁸¹

In telling the story of his activism, Robin Callander underlined the rationale for the occupation by drawing attention to the importance of local mobilisation: 'Not everybody is going to have the time to travel to Torness from the North-East. And so it was a question of, in a sense, raising awareness by having a more regional focus'.⁸² These insights also helped to place anti-nuclear activism within a larger Aberdeenshire ecosystem of radical environmentalism. Callander emphasised the links between anti-nuclear activism, *Aether* and the alternative bookshops and wholefood shops which distributed it in Aberdeen. Those links also created a coherence between opposition to nuclear power, support for renewable energy and activism around land ownership in rural Scotland which he has since been strongly committed to.⁸³

Developing strategies for alternative forms of energy generation and articulating knowledge and expertise was also central to Scottish anti-nuclear campaigning. When SCRAM activists launched their most prolonged occupation at the Torness site during summer and autumn 1978, they set up a windmill to demonstrate the potential of renewable energy. The windmill was destroyed by contractors using a bulldozer, along with the Half Moon Cottage which the occupiers had been lodging in.⁸⁴ In the eyes of their opponents, the destruction of the windmill to pave the way for a reactor was symbolic of the SSEB's determination to pursue nuclear power despite the economic or environmental costs, as well as their preparedness to resort to undemocratic means to achieve these ends.

Publications such as *Aether* and SCRAM's *Energy Bulletin* were presented as counter-expertise to the nuclear industry and as informed by technically proficient dispassionate

argument. The coalitions formed around opposing nuclear power demonstrated the advantages of single-issue campaigning when it came to imagining alternatives. Linda Hendry recalled that in the 1970s she had already become convinced that Scotland could prosper through its abundant renewable resources and that she 'was very doubtful about the SNP's "It's Scotland's Oil", because I was green enough to think that the oil should stay under the sea'.⁸⁵ By contrast, an SNP energy policy document from the late 1970s referred to Scotland's 'huge off-shore oil fields' in building an argument against nuclear power.⁸⁶

During 1978, Isobel Lindsay stood as the SNP's candidate at the East Lothian by-election and profiled herself as an opponent of Torness. She visited the SCRAM camp and issued a press statement which asserted that the new power station was an irrational imposition on Scotland by the UK's Labour government, summarising that: 'Scotland needs another nuclear power station like a hole in the head'.⁸⁷ Lindsay styled herself as a champion of 'using Scotland's coal and oil resources' when she visited the coal-fired Cockenzie power station which was also within the constituency.⁸⁸ Around the same time, SCRAM published an edition of their *Energy Bulletin* on the case for using Scotland's plentiful coal reserves to sustain a long-term transition to renewable energy, citing the potential to produce town gas or synthetic oil from coal as other fossil fuels were exhausted.⁸⁹ The thirty-sixth edition of the *Bulletin*, published in 1983, included a front cover that depicted a funeral for the mining industry and an article accompanied by an illustration of a miner replete with a hard hat and cap lamp hanging from the cranes building the Torness reactor.⁹⁰

Whilst *Aether* included articles that advocated 'communionism' and condemned the reformist objectives of mainstream environmentalism and labour movement politics as wedded to oppressive social relations and fossil fuel production, its contributors were also preoccupied with practically reaching the public.⁹¹ During 1979, Dave Smith wrote an approving review of SCRAM's recent publication of 'positive information probably stressing what most people see as real alternatives, coal, conservation, saving, hydro—rather than what I think most people find harder to accept, the more "exotic" alternatives' of then experimental renewable energy forms such as wind, wave, tidal or solar.⁹²

In seeking to affirm their legitimacy, anti-nuclear activists mimicked official deliberative processes. These served to cultivate a form of counter-legitimacy, especially where democracy was seen to have been flouted by the state. They emerged in the context of constitutional debates over Scotland's future during the 1970s and 1980s which underlined the perceived illegitimacy of a centralising British state and its bureaucratic functions whilst support for more 'direct' forms of democracy increased.⁹³ The most developed instance was the enacting of a 'People's Planning Inquiry' into the UKAEA's proposal to dump waste at Mullwharchar, which was initiated by the SCS during 1980. This development followed on from Kyle and Carrick District Council rejecting a UKAEA application and the calling of a limited public inquiry at which:

Only the mechanical aspects of the boring, and the siting of workmen's premises were to be discussed. Specifically excluded was the subject of waste disposal which, obviously, lies at the very heart of the debate. Consequently, it was decided to run in tandem with this truncated inquiry a properly constituted Planning Inquiry Commission, at which evidence from all interested parties (including the AEA) on all relevant and related subjects would be admissible.⁹⁴

The People's Inquiry demonstrated the growing influence of the anti-nuclear social movement. It was chaired by Sir Patrick McCall, a former European Economic Community advisor and senior official with Lanarkshire County Council.⁹⁵ McCall helped to grant the inquiry an air of quasi-official legitimacy and expertise as well as a claim to democratic authenticity which was encouraged by the support of a broad coalition of cross-party local politicians and campaigners. Over the decade that followed these forces increasingly came to represent a growing national opposition to nuclear power.

Anti-nuclear Scotland

Anti-nuclear politics in Scotland drew on a broad array of supporters who were varied in their motivations. They were united by distrust of nuclear secrecy, by doubts over the health and safety impact of nuclear power stations, transporting nuclear material and the storage of nuclear waste as well as scepticism over the economic case for nuclear power. Important developments included local campaigns against nuclear power stations and waste dumping, led by SCRAM as well as other environmental non-governmental organisations such as the SCS and Friends of the Earth. Activists within the SNP and the Scottish Labour Party brought anti-nuclear perspectives into national debate and local government through the declaration of 'Nuclear Free Zones'. These activities indicate different emphases but also important links between opposition to nuclear weapons and energy.⁹⁶

There were porous boundaries between organisations which overlapped in sustaining anti-nuclear activism, bringing single-issue campaigns into broader political perspectives. Kathleen Miller, for example, was a prominent figure in the SCS in the south of Scotland, where she led the campaign against nuclear waste dumping at Mullwharchar in the Galloway hills. She was also a member of the SNP and her campaign received support from the party. George Thompson, the SNP MP for Galloway, spoke at a public hearing held by the Kyle and Carrick District Council's Planning Committee during August 1978 which addressed the AEA's application for test drilling.⁹⁷ Support from the SNP on a national basis was provided during 1980 when the SNP held a rally in Ayr to champion the anti-nuclear dumping campaign. Correspondence between Miller and the SNP's party leader, Gordon Wilson, who was the MP for Dundee East, reveal that he was anxious to avoid being seen to make a cross-party campaign a narrowly partisan issue.⁹⁸ Miller and the SCS also received backing from Wendy Wood, the leader of The Scottish Patriots who was a longstanding supporter of Scottish independence and opponent of nuclear power.⁹⁹

Within SCRAM, overlaps with political party affiliations and activist networks were also strongly present. Both Rob Edwards and Pete Roche were active in SCRAM as young English university graduates.¹⁰⁰ They each worked for SCRAM as full-time organisers and were members of the Labour Party in Edinburgh. These were important links given Edinburgh Central Labour MP Robin Cook's public support for the campaign against the building of a nuclear reactor at Torness following his election as MP for Edinburgh in 1974. Cook served as SCRAM's honorary secretary, and like Roche he was a relatively young recent graduate who was also sceptical of the health and economic benefits of nuclear power. He disputed the need for further power station capacity in Scotland and had doubts about the democratic legitimacy of a highly secretive 'nuclear state'. During an

oral history interview in 2021, Pete Roche recalled that Cook was among the early public sceptics of nuclear power within the Parliamentary Labour Party, but felt his stance was supported within the Edinburgh Central constituency party:

Whenever I put forward anything to do with nuclear power as a branch motion, it was just nodded through automatically. We didn't even have to have a vote on it most of the time. ... I think it's probably, there's still that split between the sort of libertarian socialist idea which is much more decentralised and democratic to my mind than the sort of the old Communist centralised way of looking at things.¹⁰¹

Pete Roche's memories affirm that anti-nuclear politics tended to gather younger activists such as himself, who were marked by distrust of the centralising state which older socialists had supported. In their recalling, anti-nuclear activists place themselves within what was then a rising young generation of the Scottish left in the 1970s and are now looking back from a position of having largely won progressive opinion to their side in the following two decades. The Labour Party was central to conflict between pro- and anti-nuclear perspectives. Rob Edwards recalled that when he began working for SCRAM during the late 1970s it was in the context of opposition to the Labour government and specifically Tony Benn, who was then Secretary of State for Energy and had previously promoted nuclear as Minister for Technology during the late 1960s.¹⁰² Exemplifying a larger political shift, Benn later emerged as a leading opponent of nuclear power. He was introduced as a witness at the public inquiry into building a Pressurised Water Reactor at Sizewell in 1983 by the NUM President, Arthur Scargill. Noting he had been a minister responsible for Britain's civil nuclear project for a combined total of eight years over the 1960s and 1970s, Benn explained that he had become convinced that nuclear was economically unviable and ecologically and politically damaging, arguing instead that 'public investment should be shifted towards coal and conservation and alternative energy sources to the cut the delays that would occur if these investments were held back so that nuclear power could go ahead'.¹⁰³

Whilst Scottish anti-nuclear activists often shared Benn's sentiments, a distinctive political context enthused objections to nuclear power in Scotland. Denis George of the UKAEA's Industrial Chemical Group reported on a meeting held in New Galloway in connection to the Mullwharchar test drilling application during 1979. The theme of 'self-government for Scotland ... came up frequently throughout the meeting' whose main speaker was Sir Denys Wilkinson, a nuclear physicist who had aimed to explain that nuclear waste storage was necessary and safe.¹⁰⁴ Two years earlier, an SNP Parliamentary Press Release publicising a SCRAM meeting addressed by George Thompson in Castle Douglas, Dumfries and Galloway, referred to the 'contempt' with which the UK government treated Scotland becoming dangerous in the context of nuclear waste. Using the Scots term 'coup', meaning rubbish dump, the statement began by asserting that 'Scotland will no longer tolerate being treated as the coup of Western Europe'. Nuclear waste was 'the most dangerous garbage ever', and this explained why it was transferred to Scotland rather than being stored 'south of Watford'.¹⁰⁵ These comments belay the environmental underpinnings of anti-nuclear sentiment and their connection to local and national understandings of Scotland's landscape. Furthermore, they were concurrent with Dorothy Aitchison's concerns about the

impact of Torness upon fisheries discussed above, demonstrating a strong sense that Britain's nuclear project was also a threat to natural resources.¹⁰⁶

Opposition to nuclear power and support for devolution were endorsed across partisan divisions during the 1980s. A UKAEA report from 1978 singled out Jim Sillars' contribution to another divided public meeting, underlining that the MP for South Ayrshire 'made a vitriolic attack on the nuclear industry in general, much of which had little to do with the subject of the [planning] application'.¹⁰⁷ Four years later, Sillars, who was then the SNP's vice-chair for policy, had claimed in relation to Torness that 'the government is building, not an electricity-generating power station but a nuclear bomb factory'.¹⁰⁸ Sillars' journey parallels Isobel Lindsay's from around a decade before. He resigned from the Labour Party in the mid-1970s whilst MP for South Ayrshire out of discontent with what he saw as the UK party backtracking on its commitment to devolution. After this, Sillars formed the breakaway Scottish Labour Party before joining the SNP after losing his seat at the 1979 general election. Sillars' shifting view of nuclear power was part of a larger loss of hope in a unitary British political perspective. During an interview in 2021, Sillars explained that in the early 1960s, the Labour Party in Ayrshire had 'accepted' nuclear as a progressive form of energy, and therefore did not 'put any obstacles' in the way of building two nuclear power stations at Hunterston.¹⁰⁹

However, George Foulkes, who beat Sillars to win South Ayrshire as the Labour Party candidate at the 1979 general election, shared his opponents' critical view of 'the nuclear industry' which he referred to as having undemocratic underpinnings and 'vested interests'.¹¹⁰ Foulkes also articulated the case for Scottish self-government. Rory Scothorne's doctoral thesis describes the beginning of 'the cautious development of a deep and lasting consensus behind constitutional reform across Scottish society and politics' during the early 1980s. It identifies both Sillars and Foulkes as significant figures who played a role in building the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly at this time.¹¹¹ The fact both men worked as part of a broad coalition across party and constitutional stances to oppose the UKAEA's plans for nuclear waste dumping in the Galloway Hills demonstrates that nuclear power contributed to the growing sense of 'democratic deficit' and UK government unaccountability in 1980s Scotland.

Writing in 1994, half a decade before the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, Rob Edwards hailed 'massive victories' won by the anti-nuclear movement in the previous few years. Edwards highlighted that 'there have been no more whispers about any more nuclear power stations in Scotland' since Torness was finally commissioned five years earlier.¹¹² The SSEB's success in East Lothian proved to be a pyrrhic victory. Edwards argued that SCRAM had played a major role in making nuclear power politically unviable.¹¹³ Reflecting in 2021, more than twenty years after the election of the first Scottish Parliament, Edwards concluded more definitively that 'in a Scottish context, you know, we and many others won the argument because it's now pretty inconceivable that a new nuclear power station is going to be built in Scotland'.¹¹⁴

These conclusions indicate the importance of SCRAM's role in building an anti-nuclear Scottish consensus and the value its activists placed in expanding a coalition of opposition to further nuclear developments. During the late 1980s, SCRAM had allied with the Scottish Steering Committee of Nuclear Free Zone Local Authorities to campaign against both the building of Torness and expansion of Dounreay by emphasising the dangers evidenced by Chernobyl.¹¹⁵ These developments built on visceral experiences of the

environmental and political fallout. Dorothy Aitchison recalled that she was personally horrified given the exposure of the East coast of Scotland to the radiation. She stopped collecting and eating seaweed from the beaches around Eyemouth. Symbolically, Dorothy remembered that she 'went to a meeting in Dunbar and the Chernobyl cloud was over Torness, right over Torness, and pouring with rain'. At the meeting, Aitchison urged pregnant women to drink bottled water and stop drinking milk, sensing that 'I think I got through to some people'.¹¹⁶ Dorothy Aitchison's memories exemplify the construction of a narrative of how in Rob Edwards' terms SCRAM 'won the argument' and the role of anti-nuclear activists in achieving this. For Aitchison, this was both a highly localised experience of persuading other East Lothian residents of the risks inherent in nuclear power but also one that connected her own personal experiences of activism with the global shock created by Chernobyl and the move towards anti-nuclear positions within Scottish civil society.

These fears were not confined to convinced opponents of nuclear power. In the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster, the *Lennox Herald* reported that police had seized supplies of iodine pills from a Boots chemist in West Dunbartonshire to prevent panic buying, which caused alarm among residents.¹¹⁷ Confirmation of an important shift in opinion was communicated when the hitherto pro-nuclear power STUC voted for a moratorium on nuclear plant construction at the union confederation's annual congress in 1987. Robert Amos, a Midlothian miner, spoke in favour of this change, emphasising the distinctive dangers posed by nuclear reactors: 'I hope that that disaster at Chernobyl has laid to rest the parallels that some put forward on the dangers and development of the steam engine and the development of nuclear energy, because neither of the two are comparable'.¹¹⁸

Notably, this vote took place less than two months before the 1987 general election when Scotland's electoral divergence from England magnified as Conservative representation fell from twenty-one to ten MPs. These losses accounted for more than half of the seats the Conservatives lost on aggregate across Britain as Margaret Thatcher's government retained a crushing majority. It confirmed the electoral divergence that had grown between Scotland and England, reinforcing support for a devolved Scottish Parliament which was delivered following the election of a Labour government in 1997.¹¹⁹ Pete Roche's memories underlined the significance of devolution in confirming a distinction in Scottish nuclear policy from England, emphasising the importance of Scottish distinctiveness but also demonstrating the value of oral testimonies in pointing to fine grain knowledge and understanding. This trend began under the Labour-led administrations which governed in coalition with the Liberal Democrats from 1999 to 2007, before the SNP reinforced anti-nuclear power policies following the 2007 Scottish Parliamentary election:

People have got the impression that that was because of the Lib Dems, but the Labour Party had a good, strong anti-nuclear wing as well. And I've heard stories about the ministers, the Labour ministers getting submissions that were going to go down to Westminster about energy policy written by the civil servants on their desk, basically supporting what Westminster wanted to do. And they would go through it with a red pen and sent it back.

So, the submissions from the Labour ministers in those days, going back to Westminster, were pretty anti-nuclear as well.¹²⁰

Jack McConnell, who was a student activist at Stirling University in the 1970s and 1980s before becoming a Labour Party politician, was the Scottish First Minister between 2001 and 2007. He spoke out against nuclear power in 2006, as the Labour British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, began to move UK policy towards building more nuclear power stations. McConnell's opposition was two-pronged and bore the imprints of earlier arguments made by anti-nuclear campaigners of his generation. He primarily rejected nuclear energy on safety grounds, specifically citing the threat of radioactive waste, which he referred to as 'virtually permanent and potentially very, very lethal'. Furthermore, McConnell also underlined Scotland's potential to achieve economic success through other energy sectors, arguing that renewables provided better hopes for employment.¹²¹ Under the new SNP administration elected in 2007, Holyrood voted against nuclear power, confirming a significant divergence in policy between the Scottish and UK government. As this article demonstrates, these divisions were long in the making.

Conclusion

Over the second half of the twentieth century, Scottish optimism regarding nuclear energy gave way to increasingly pessimistic assessments. These changes can be located within an international context of growing distrust towards nuclear power, with question marks over its safety and a clouding of mid-century hopes for its potential to deliver safe, clean and nearly limitless supplies of cheap energy. Doubts were stimulated both by nuclear accidents such as Three Mile Island and Chernobyl but also by the mounting concerns over the efficacy of waste storage. In the Scottish context, an anti-nuclear movement centred on university-educated middle-class activists mirrored other ecological movements in developed economies. Yet the anti-nuclear coalition that emerged in Scotland, and its political impact, were also shaped by more specific territorial politics. Distinctive groups of activists around SCRAM in the Lothians primarily focused on opposing the building of Torness power station. Ayrshire campaigners opposed waste dumping in the Mullwharchar hills. In Aberdeenshire, ecologists focused on building opposition to sites for possible nuclear developments. Cumulatively, a broad-based anti-nuclear coalition came to encompass coal miners and farmers and was motivated by concerns over the future of Scotland's fishing fleet. Local, national and global factors converged to shape varieties of anti-nuclear politics. Nationhood gave a coherence and sense of common purpose to otherwise potentially disparate localised protests and provided an opportunity to develop a sensibility grounded in presenting Scotland as an anti-nuclear nation, disrupting the claim of successive UK governments that the nuclear programme served the British national interest.

The peak of Scottish nuclear optimism came roughly concurrently with the peak of support for the Conservative Party at the 1955 general election, who were known as the Unionists at the time, and more largely concurred with a period where Scottish party politics was dominated by the Unionists and the Labour Party. A distinctive and more consistently anti-nuclear voice in electoral politics became increasingly established through SNP breakthroughs in the 1960s and 1970s. Nationalism had developed in tandem with opposition to atomic weapons in the 1960s, attracting interest from young middle-class radicals. Unlike the Unionists and the Labour Party, the SNP had no

longstanding connections to the British state or strong attachments to the nuclear industry. SNP parliamentarians gave a Scottish national platform and orientation, as well as electoral significance, to nuclear protests. During the 1970s and 1980s Torness became increasingly viewed as an unwanted project which was being imposed on Scotland by a centralising London government with the intent of endangering jobs in the coal industry. The proposal to dump waste in the Galloway hills was viewed as the latest and most dangerous example of Scotland being used as a 'midden' by British governments.

Over the course of the 1980s, coinciding with the Conservative electoral setbacks in Scotland, a symbiosis between support for constitutional reform and anti-nuclear politics was consolidated. Torness became increasingly unpopular in an international context of growing scepticism towards nuclear energy: Margaret Thatcher personally opened the long-delayed power station just three years after the Chernobyl disaster of 1986. These developments encouraged organisations such as the STUC which had previously supported the nuclear programme to call for a halt to further construction. By the 1990s, the principal advocates of devolution in Scotland, including the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and the SNP, were united in opposition to further nuclear power. When the Blair government adopted a pro-nuclear policy during the mid-2000s, devolution gave substantial policy significance to distinctions between the outlooks of political elites at a Scottish and UK level. First under a Labour-Liberal coalition and then under SNP-led administrations, Scotland has adopted a lasting approach of phasing out existing nuclear stations and not building any further new capacity. The justifications for this policy - including arguments over the safety of nuclear generation and the long-term requirements of waste storage as well as the economic case for utilising alternative energy employing Scotland's abundant natural resources, - all heavily bear the imprints of the case against civil nuclear energy which was popularised by anti-nuclear protest movements in the 1970s and 1980s.

Notes

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3. Brown, 'Introduction', 12–13; Grant, "UK Government will not 'impose' new nuclear power stations on Scotland, says minister." *Scotsman*, 7 April 2022. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/uk-government-will-not-impose-new-nuclear-power-stations-on-scotland-says-minister-3644098> (accessed 9 September 2022).
4. For technical histories see Hammond, *British Nuclear Power Stations*, 144–160; Hill, *An Atomic Empire*, 140–156; Jay, *Nuclear Power: Today and Tomorrow*, 164–175; Pocock, *Nuclear Power: Its Development*, 76–78. For social and cultural aspects see Hogg, *British Nuclear Culture*; Hogg and Laucht, *British Journal of Historical Science* 45, no. 4; Ross, 'Dounreay'; and Ross 'Nuclear Fission'.
5. Hogg and Brown, "Introduction," 161.
6. *Ibid.*, 163.
7. Portelli, "What Makes Oral History," 73.
8. HMSO, *Future Organisation*; HMSO, *A Programme of Nuclear Power*.
9. Welsh, *Mobilising Modernity*, 17–18; Welsh, "The NIMBY Syndrome," 21.
10. Welsh, "The NIMBY Syndrome," 21.

11. Ross, 'Dounreay', 84.
12. *The Scotsman*, 16 October 1962, 7.
13. Ross, "Dounreay," 108; 94.
14. Atomic Energy Authority Act 1954, 5 (6). <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/2-3/32> (accessed September 9, 2022).
15. For a detailed study of Dounreay's early impact see Ross, "Dounreay"; and Ross, "Nuclear Fission".
16. National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Moving Image Archive, T1126, *Atom Town*, 1966.
17. Ross, "Nuclear Narratives," 13–14.
18. GWL, box KM/1/1–2, letter from Wendy Wood to Kathleen Miller, 30 July 1978; box KM/2/1–3, folder KM/2/1/2, letter from Wendy Wood, The Scottish Patriots (Leader), no date c. January 1980.
19. Welsh, "NIMBY," 22.
20. Rough, "Policy Learning," 32.
21. Welsh, "NIMBY," 22.
22. Ross, "Dounreay," 94; Wall, "Nuclear prospects," 255.
23. Wall, "Nuclear prospects," 253; 266.
24. Glasgow Women's Library (hereafter GWL), Kathleen Miller collection (hereafter KM), box KM/2/1–3, folder KM 2/2/1, Scottish anti-nuclear groups contact list March, 1980.
25. Rob Edwards, remote interview with author 2, 2021.
26. Clare Simpson, interview with author 2, Glasgow, 2022.
27. *Ibid.*
28. "Scottish anti-nuclear power campaign in Torness," *Global Nonviolent Action Database*. <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/scottish-anti-nuclear-power-campaign-torness-1977> (accessed 9 September 2022).
29. "Remarks opening Torness nuclear power station," 15 May 1989, *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*. <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107476> (accessed 9 September 2022).
30. GWL, box KM/3/1–2, folder KM 3/1/2, *CADE News*, Autumn, 1987, 2.
31. SCRAM, *Poison in Our Hills*, 7.
32. Flowers, *Nuclear Power*, 149.
33. The UK government, via Nuclear Waste Services, continues to work towards securing a location for the geological disposal of the country's higher activity waste. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gdf-geological-disposal-facility> (accessed 9 September 2022).
34. Haywood, *Global Politics*, 83–4.
35. Parkin *Middle Class Radicalism*, 41.
36. Cotgrove and Duff, "Environmentalism," 338.
37. Tilly, *Social Movements*, 3–4.
38. Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 7.
39. Crossley, *Making Sense*, 11.
40. Karatzogianni and Robinson, *Power, Resistance and Conflict*, 127.
41. Wang, 'Social Movement Organizational Collaboration', 1674.
42. Hill, 'Nations of Peace', 31–2.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*; Harvie, 'William Wolfe', 247–8.
45. *Ibid.*
46. George Kerevan, remote interview with author 2, 2020.
47. Lindsay, "Long-Term Strategy," 1–2; Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*.
48. Welsh, *Mobilising Modernity*, 159.
49. Linda Hendry, interview with author 2, Stirling, 2021.
50. *Ibid.*
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