

# Cutting carbon, growing skills – green skills for a just transition





# Contents

Introduction	03
Background to the climate crisis	04
What is just transition and why is it a trade union issue?	08
The role of the green or environmental rep	15
What skills will workers need for a low-carbon economy?	22
Transferring existing skills	36
Next steps	42
Sources of information	46
<b>Appendix 1:</b> International agreements on climate change and just transition	47
<b>Appendix 2:</b> International agreements related to skills policy	48
<b>Appendix 3:</b> TUC skills policy	49
<b>Appendix 4:</b> Transferable skills in the oil and gas sector	50



# Introduction



Climate change and environmental issues at work are increasingly moving up the trade union agenda. Unions are working together and forming partnerships to tackle what is seen by many as the biggest issue of the twenty-first century. And one aspect of this is the way that unions will work to ensure workers have an opportunity to develop the new skills needed for a low-carbon economy.

Developing green skills at work has the potential to offer a wide range of exciting opportunities to workers across the UK, and the trade union movement will be leading the way in supporting the fight against climate change and helping workers build the skills that will be part of the solution.

The TUC is calling for a just transition for workers and this new publication from unionlearn explains the facts around what just transition is and what unions are doing to ensure their members are not left behind. It also explores the role of the trade union green or environmental rep, the training available and the skills that will be needed in the future.

Through information and case studies, along with signposting to courses and resources, this booklet aims to be a practical guide to union reps and members that will give them the tools needed to be part of the solution, as the world faces up to the climate crisis.

Throughout *Cutting Carbon, Growing Skills*, there are stories of initiatives run by unions and reps that show what can be done, and this will encourage others to follow their lead by organising activities and projects or develop skills of their own.

I hope this booklet will inspire a new generation of reps to get involved with environmental issues in their workplaces and support working people benefit from a just transition where clean, green jobs support the growth of a low-carbon economy that will see trade unions leading the way.

**Kevin Rowan**  
*Director of unionlearn*

## Background to the climate crisis

Climate change is the greatest challenge of our time. The TUC Congress motion ‘Climate crisis and a just transition’ passed in 2019 recognised that “The Earth’s temperature has already risen by one degree above pre-industrial levels. The autumn IPCC report warned that we only have 12 years to keep global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees. Net-zero cannot be achieved without urgent investment in new, low-carbon energy generation. Congress believes climate change is a trade union issue. The future of our planet is at risk if we don’t organise now to force governments to cut emissions in line with the IPCC report.”

» <https://congress.tuc.org.uk/composite-02-climate-crisis-and-a-just-transition/#sthash.UQHlclgE.dpbs>

The fires, floods, heatwaves and droughts we have seen recently are a foretaste of the global impacts anticipated between now and the end of the century.

### Global warming

The last five years have been the hottest on record, and the period from 2010 to 2019 was the hottest decade since records began. CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations are now the highest they have been for at least 800,000 years based on data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S). <https://phys.org/news/2020-01-hottest-year-eu.html>

### Ocean temperatures

In 2019, the oceans heated to record levels showing “irrefutable and accelerating” heating of the planet. The world’s oceans are the clearest measure of the climate emergency because they absorb more than 90 per cent of the heat trapped by the greenhouse gases emitted by fossil fuel burning, forest destruction and other human activities. The new analysis shows the past five years are the top five warmest years recorded in the ocean and the past 10



years are also the top 10 years on record according to a report published by *The Journal of Atmospheric Sciences* in January 2020. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00376-020-9283-7>



## CASE STUDY TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS' FESTIVAL REDUCES ITS CARBON FOOTPRINT

When it comes to meeting the challenge of the climate emergency, the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival does not merely talk the talk by foregrounding green issues on the festival fringe. It also walks the walk by working with organisers, stallholders, campaigners and visitors, to reduce the environmental impact of the three-day event, which is held every July in the Dorset village that was home to the six farmworkers transported to Australia for forming a trade union in 1834.

With the significant increases in energy, water, food and waste generated by the festival, let alone the apparently ever-increasing number of similar events throughout the summer months, Tolpuddle's organisers are doing all they can to minimise the environmental impact of the event.

This is vital work, as demonstrated by the 2018 report *The Show Must Go On*, which was produced by festival industry thinktank, Powerful Thinking. That report estimated the industry as a whole is responsible for 20,000



© Jess Hunt/reportdigital.co.uk

**“Tolpuddle is demonstrating that major changes can be made to successfully reduce the carbon footprint of the festival.”**

tonnes of onsite CO<sub>2</sub> emissions every year (a figure that excludes audience travel) and generates 23,500 tonnes of waste (more than two-thirds of which ends up in landfill).

But while there is as yet no agreed industry-wide approach to sustainability, Tolpuddle is demonstrating that major changes can be made to successfully reduce the carbon footprint of the festival.

“We’ve been interested in reducing our environmental impact for many years, in line with TUC policy on a just transition to a greener, fairer economy,” explains Tolpuddle Museum Manager Tom De Wit.

“But we really decided to up our game five years ago because we recognised that putting on an event that is a good time for visitors but causes negative environmental impacts is not justifiable in a modern climate and flies in the >>

## “We have completely eliminated single-use plastic in the shop – the drinks we sell are either in glass bottles or cans that can be recycled.”

» face of the message we are trying to get out.”

The earliest significant innovation was the installation of solar panels in December 2015–24 on the roof of the museum plus 15 smaller panels on another building.

Over the past four years, the solar panels have between them generated 40 megawatt hours (MWh) of electricity, which has saved more than 20 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from power generation and significantly helped »  
» offset the carbon emissions generated by the festival.

Reducing waste, always a major issue at any festival, has also long been a priority, Tom says.

“Although we’ve recently changed our waste contractors, even the people we were working with before were genuinely passionate about making sure food waste was properly composted, that any waste that could be re-used would be re-used, and had a real enthusiasm to

keep landfill to an absolute minimum,” he says.

Single-use plastic is another priority, both inside the museum shop and outside in the festival.

“We have completely eliminated single-use plastic in the shop – the drinks we sell are either in glass bottles or cans that can be recycled,” Tom says. “And we have moved on from that to make the festival plastic bottle-free as well.”

Even those small number of visitors who do arrive with the plastic bottles they may have bought en route can refill them with tap water now that the museum has become a Refill Station, which it did in June 2019, enabling visitors, walkers, hikers and cyclists to stay hydrated without having to buy a plastic bottle. (The app-enabled initiative is run by City To Sea, which is also based in the south-west.)

But combatting single-use plastic is not only about eliminating the need for plastic bottles. The

festival has also almost entirely replaced the tens of thousands of cable ties it used to get through each year.

“We asked ourselves what people used to do before cable ties and the answer, of course, was string, so we’ve been investing in all sorts of different kinds of string to put up banners and attach bits of equipment – and it’s fabulous!” Tom says.

“The cable tie will have a legacy in the environment for decades to come and may end up somewhere where it could cause real harm so we think twice before using them now – and it’s really not that hard.”

The festival is also working very closely with all the organisations that come onto the site (stallholders, campaign groups, catering companies) to keep plastic to an absolute minimum.

“We’ve had problems in the past with organisations giving out plastic freebies that are destined to end up in landfill, so we have been getting out the message that that kind of stuff isn’t welcome here – it’s not what we should be doing and it doesn’t inspire people!” Tom says.





“Climatological events such as extreme temperatures, droughts and forest fires, have more than doubled since 1980.”

### Extreme weather events

The flooding in Indonesia and the devastating fires in Australia in 2020 are part of a huge increase in extreme weather-related events. Climate change has increased recent extreme rainfall and associated floods; coastal flooding due to sea-level rise; heatwaves in Australia, China and Europe; and increased the risk of wildfires, with implications for humans and animals, the environment and the economy. Data from the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC) published in March 2018, highlights the quadrupling of floods and other hydrological events since 1980. Climatological events such as extreme temperatures, droughts and forest fires, have more than doubled since 1980. Meteorological events such as storms, have doubled since 1980. <https://easac.eu/press-releases/details/new-data-confirm-increased-frequency-of-extreme-weather-events-european-national-science-academies>

### Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions increasing

Worldwide emissions continue to rise despite these impacts. The 2019 emission gap report suggests that there is no sign of GHG emissions peaking in the next few years. Even if countries meet their existing climate pledges – Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) – emissions will continue to rise over the next decade. By 2030, the UNEP report estimates that emissions will be 27 per cent and 38 per cent higher than is needed to limit warming to 2C and 1.5C, respectively. [unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2019](https://unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2019)

The environmental and economic crises are linked. The solutions to both lie in a green industrial revolution that will transform the world of work. One thing is certain: ‘business as usual’ is no longer an option. Unions will need to increase their profile on this issue and see it as core to their organising and industrial strategies.

Trade unions need to be at the forefront of this change. The scale of the change required will have an impact on all current jobs and shape the jobs of the future. Such a transformation has huge potential, but it also contains risks. That is why unions have stressed the importance of a just transition.

## What is just transition and why is it a trade union issue?

In July 2019, the TUC issued a statement supporting the decarbonisation of the economy. The statement also made it clear that this transition away from fossil fuels could not be done at the expense of workers. It concluded by saying that *“a just transition must provide fairness and overcome injustices experienced by all workers, male and female, young and old, black and white, in the global north and south.”*

Four requirements were identified:

- › There must be a clear and funded path to a low-carbon economy.
- › Workers must be at the heart of delivering these plans.
- › Every worker should have access to funding to improve their skills.
- › New jobs must be good jobs.

The TUC campaign plan for 2019–20 pledged that the TUC and member unions will *“support efforts to tackle the climate emergency and ensure a just transition for workers.”* [www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-09/TUCCampaignPlan2019.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-09/TUCCampaignPlan2019.pdf)

This was followed by a motion passed unanimously at TUC Congress that included *“a campaign for national and regional just transition commissions including full union and education representation to develop, monitor and implement the process.”*

### United Nations agreements

The term ‘just transition’ is enshrined in agreements that have been adopted by the UK government. These are referenced in Appendix 1.

### International trade unions

Despite these commitments, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) is clear that *“Nonetheless, the just transition will not happen by itself. It requires plans and policies. Workers and communities dependent on fossil fuels will not find alternative sources of income and revenue overnight. This is why transformation is not only about phasing out polluting sectors, it is also about new jobs, new industries, new skills, new investment and the opportunity to create a more equal and resilient economy.”* Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, ITUC [oecd.org/environment/cc/g20-climate/collapsecontents/Just-Transition-Centre-report-just-transition.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/environment/cc/g20-climate/collapsecontents/Just-Transition-Centre-report-just-transition.pdf)

**“Transformation is not only about phasing out polluting sectors, it is also about new jobs, new industries, new skills, new investment and the opportunity to create a more equal and resilient economy.”**



The ITUC has established a just transition centre that has resources for union engagement on this issue.

The centre shares union experiences of just transition across the world from Norway to Nigeria and Canada to New Zealand. For example, the FNV, a Dutch trade union, describes how it is making sure fossil energy sector workers are not left behind as the country is transitioning into climate-sustainable energy production. [https://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?page=more&id\\_rubrique=602](https://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?page=more&id_rubrique=602)

### Climate proofing agreements

In June 2019, the ITUC announced a day of global action on climate change. It called on unions to find out their employers' plans to climate-proof their operations and jobs. A campaign guide provided resources for the global day of workplace action, including a model letter to send to employers, and questions to ask in the meeting.

Unions were invited by the ITUC to put questions to their employers:

1. Do you measure CO<sub>2</sub> emissions? If yes, can we develop a plan for reducing emissions? If no, can we agree to a process to measure our emissions?
2. Will we have net-zero emissions by 2050 or have a 50 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030?
3. What will we do to get there?

The ITUC guide contains a model letter that includes the three questions. If your employer has not given you any of this information, then adapting the letter and using it could be a good way of starting to find out what your employer has and hasn't done. [ituc-csi.org/climate-proofing-work](https://www.ituc-csi.org/climate-proofing-work)

The Canadian Task Force's Final Report by the Task Force on Just Transition for Canadian Coal Power Workers and Communities from 2018 ([canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/task-force-just-transition/final-report.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/task-force-just-transition/final-report.html)) contained a range of measures that included the creation of:

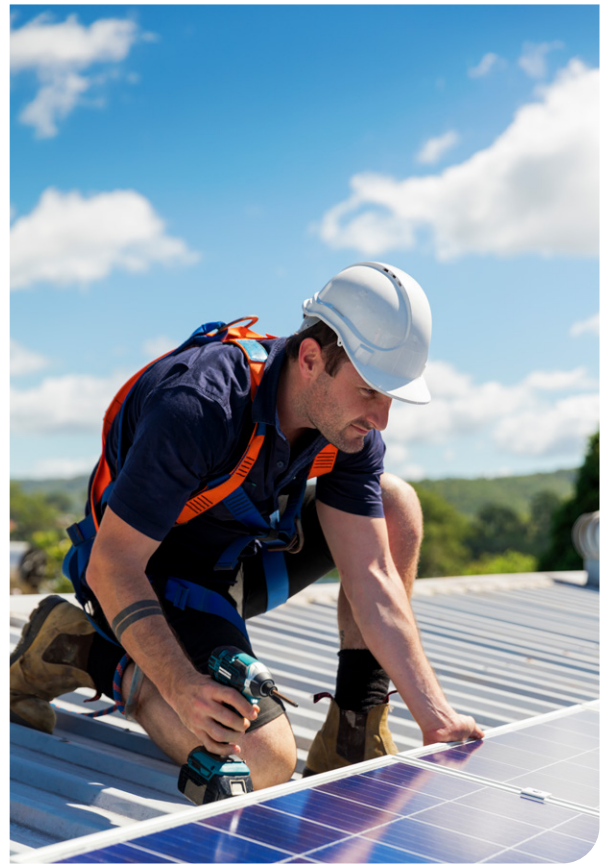
- › a detailed and publicly available inventory with labour market information pertaining to coal workers, such as skills profiles, demographics, locations, and current and potential employers
- › a comprehensive funding programme for workers staying in the labour market to address their needs across the stages of securing a new job, including income support, education and skills building, re-employment and mobility.

### The UK perspective

The UK government has yet to implement the just transition principles of the Paris or Silesia Agreements. Previously, it had established a Green Economy Council (GEC) in 2011 with membership from the TUC, although this has now been disbanded. It also established a working group to review sustainability in industrial strategy with particular reference to skills. Its written evidence suggested that *“To go further, both government and industry should give consideration to our conclusions above, which emphasize the desirability of continued partnership working to develop and deepen the sustainability that already exists in industrial strategy.”* Green Economy Council (2014) Review of Sustainability in Industrial Strategy. <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/environmental-audit-committee/a-201015-progress-report/written/17992.pdf>

The trade union members of this working group submitted their concerns about the lack of effective mechanisms for both sustainability and trade union consultation. The GEC didn't meet again, but there is a union seat on the Industrial Strategy Council.

The Committee on Climate Change report *Net-Zero: the UK's contribution to stopping global warming*, commented that *“It is vital that the UK's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) that is submitted under the terms of the Paris Agreement contains a reference to just transition and the mechanisms to engage with trade unions as key stakeholders.”* [theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-the-uks-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming](http://theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-the-uks-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming)



© ZStockphotos/Getty Images

The 2014 GEC report addressed the issue of procurement and supply chains: *“We conclude that greater encouragement to bids that would support supply chains in ‘green growth’ areas, and ideas or projects demonstrating a high degree of environmental sustainability, would be advantageous.”* To give meaning to this, union members on the committee made a specific call for each industry council to draft guidelines on sustainable procurement as a practical demonstration of the stated aim to give *“greater encouragement to bids.”* Despite this, the growth of outsourcing has led to many contracts that could sustain jobs in the manufacturing supply chain in the UK ending up overseas.

Unions are leading the calls for investment in green jobs and the motion on industrial strategy passed at the TUC Congress in 2019 called for a *“procurement policy that supports a ‘build local’ strategy to reduce our carbon footprint and invest in skilled jobs and apprenticeships.”*

## “TUC Congress in 2019 called for a procurement policy that supports a ‘build local’ strategy to reduce our carbon footprint and invest in skilled jobs and apprenticeships.”

### The Scottish experience

A Just Transition Commission ([gov.scot/groups/just-transition-commission](https://gov.scot/groups/just-transition-commission)) was established in 2018. There are two trade union members on the commission and it will report back to the Scottish Government at the end of 2020. This is a positive step and the Commission will be making recommendations covering five sectors and three cross-cutting policy areas:

- › power generation and transmission
- › transport/buildings and the public sector
- › oil and gas
- › land and agriculture
- › energy intensive industries
- › finance and investment/business
- › innovation and delivery at scale
- › skills and labour market/education.

The interim report of the Just Transition Commission has highlighted trade union concerns:

*“There are other reasons for Scotland’s failure to capture opportunities in the renewables sector that we could point to. Trade unions made representations to us that domestic firms are operating on an unfair playing field with foreign competitors, leading to them losing out on potential business. The subsidy mechanism to support renewable energy (Contracts for Difference), operated by the UK government, was also said to have not been effective at driving local supply chain content in*

*developments. But nonetheless, failure to plan and invest long-term appears to have been a significant factor.”* [gov.scot/publications/transition-commission-interim-report/pages/5](https://gov.scot/publications/transition-commission-interim-report/pages/5)

A classic case of the consequence of failing to address the concerns of unions can be found in the offshore wind sector in Scotland. The potential for job creation within this sector has been compromised by the failure to award contracts to the Scottish renewable sector and associated supply chains. [gmb.org.uk/news/joint-union-statement-bifab](https://gmb.org.uk/news/joint-union-statement-bifab)

The Scottish Government has made the concept of ‘Fair Work’ central to economic strategy, with ambitions to be a world-leading ‘Fair Work Nation’ by 2025. One delivery mechanism for achieving this is the promotion of Fair Work First, which seeks to extend Fair Work criteria to funding streams, business support grants and public contracts. In practice this should mean that to receive support, businesses are asked to commit to:

- › investment in skills and training
- › no inappropriate use of zero-hours contracts
- › action to tackle the gender pay gap
- › genuine workforce engagement including with trade unions
- › paying the real living wage.

From the interim report of the Scottish Just Transition Commission:

*“Across sectors of the climate change plan, government spends money supporting businesses to deliver programmes that deliver emission reductions. Whether funding is granted by government, or through a delivery partner organisation, we would expect the Fair Work First approach to be the norm.”*

The Scottish TUC (STUC), which is represented on the commission, has welcomed the interim report and issued this statement: [stuc.org.uk/media-centre/news/1410/stuc-response-to-the-just-transition-commission-interim-report](https://stuc.org.uk/media-centre/news/1410/stuc-response-to-the-just-transition-commission-interim-report)



## CASE STUDY YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER TUC, JUST TRANSITION TRAINING

Yorkshire & the Humber TUC is equipping an increasing number of union reps with the skills to successfully negotiate improved environmental outcomes through its pioneering programme of just transition training courses.

The two-day training course is the key priority of the Low Carbon Task Force, originally set up by regional TUC in 2018 to develop a regional low-carbon transition plan through cooperation between unions, business and environmental groups.

The urgent need for a strategic response to the climate crisis is clear from the high concentration of carbon-heavy industries across Yorkshire and the Humber.

Not only is the region home to the Drax power plant, the country's single biggest emitter of carbon dioxide, there are also steel, cement, chemicals and glass manufacturing works, as well as energy-intensive industries such as food processing and brewing.



**“They’re looking to invest in new green technology, new processes that aren’t polluting – that’s where the future profits lie and that’s where big investors are going to be.”**

The evolution of this industrial profile means that this network of plants currently provides around 28,000 jobs, according to regional TUC estimates, with another three to four times that number supported in the supply chain.

It was the combination of the urgency of answering the call of the climate emergency and supporting tens of thousands of workers into green jobs that

lay behind the launch of the Low Carbon Task Force, according to TUC Regional Secretary Bill Adams.

“Our role is to bring together employers, unions, academics, local authorities and enterprise partnerships who are working on just transition, and even institutional investors, to work out what needs to be done in the next 20 to 30 years to make those industries sustainable,” Bill says.

And central to the work of the task force is its training programme.

“Our main job is to inform union reps in those industries about what the issues are, how they can go about challenging some of the decisions that certain firms are making and how to get these issues on the collective bargaining agenda,” Bill says.

“It's about helping them develop the skills to get involved, to have their feet under the negotiating table right at the start and in some cases lead from the front in terms of what needs doing.”

The just transition course enables learners to:

- › examine what national and international climate change policy means for their workplace and region
- › map their region's energy use
- › evaluate renewable energy and energy reduction options where they work
- › assess the implications for skills and training where they work
- › develop a negotiating strategy with their employer.

“I wanted to create a new course that will give people the ideas to get them thinking and all the skills to go out and do something about it.”

Complementing the regional TUC course is a new Level 2 Environmental Certificate at East Riding College called Green Shoots.

Designed from the ground up by Trade Union Studies Curriculum Leader Rob Goodfellow, the course is aimed at giving union reps not only the latest, up-to-date environmental knowledge but also the organising skills to create change in their workplaces.

“I wanted to create a new course that will give people the ideas to get them thinking and all the skills to go out and do something about it – social media skills, public speaking skills and bargaining skills in the workplace,” Rob says.

With the pressure of dealing with day-to-day industrial issues, union reps may feel they have enough on their plates without having to engage with green issues, Bill points out.

But many parts of the business world already recognise their profits are

at risk unless they help industries decarbonise, he says.

“A lot of investors are saying that if you're not working towards greening your business, we'll be pulling our money out,” Bill says. “They're looking to invest in new green technology, new processes that aren't polluting – that's where the future profits lie and that's where big investors are going to be.”

Union reps working on just transition also have the force of UK law on their side, he points out. “I've said to many reps on the course that green issues might feel like just another headache with all the things they are having to deal with in the middle of austerity but this is the law,” says Bill. “The government passed an act of parliament to say that companies need to be zero-carbon by 2050, so they need to get on with it. And given the changing, often devastating, weather we are seeing, the sooner the better.”

## Women and climate change

Globally, climate change disproportionately affects women. UN figures show that 80 per cent of those displaced by climate change are women. Women are also more likely to rely on public transport and are more likely to lack the technical skills needed for a green transition.

At the 2020 TUC Women's Conference held at Congress House in March, the TUC Women's Committee released a statement addressing the issue:

*“The recent floods across much of the UK is just one example of the extreme weather we are seeing across the globe as a result of climate change. As our report to conference sets out, the gender impacts of climate change are huge. Eighty per cent of those displaced by climate change are women.*

*Women and our unions must be at the heart of measures to address the climate crisis.*

*A transition to a green, net-zero carbon future can only be fair and just if it addresses the unequal impact of climate change. We need investment in vital services like greener public transport, in skills and in supporting transition for affected industries. New green jobs must be good jobs. We must recognise the impact on women across the world and, in particular, on those in the global south. And we need a voice in how we mitigate the impact of climate change, too. Our fire services and local authorities have faced huge cuts over the past ten years, but they are on the frontline supporting communities hit by extreme weather.*

*Work on climate change will be an important priority for the TUC over the coming year, particularly as the UK hosts the COP26 summit. The Women's Committee is committed to playing its part in shaping that work to reflect women's voices and the impact on women.”*

The UN Climate Change Learning Partnership has produced a free online course 'Gender and Environment' which explores the issues. See [unccllearn.org/open-online-course-gender-and-environment](https://unccllearn.org/open-online-course-gender-and-environment)

**“UN figures show that 80 per cent of those displaced by climate change are women. Women are also more likely to rely on public transport and are more likely to lack the technical skills needed for a green transition.”**

## Regional strategies

Around 100 local authorities had declared climate emergencies by the beginning of 2020. These declarations need to be accompanied by detailed plans for reducing emissions if they are to be meaningful. Unions need to be engaged with these since they will impact workers in that area both directly and indirectly.

## Greener Jobs Alliance

In 2018, the Greener Jobs Alliance (GJA) published a just transition statement ([greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/JustTransitionJointStatement-FINAL.pdf](https://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/JustTransitionJointStatement-FINAL.pdf)) that contained three demands:

1. Incorporate just transition principles within the UK's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement, including the UK's industrial and clean growth strategies.
2. Legislate for the right to appoint workplace environment representatives to help ensure workers' views are fairly represented at local level. At company and sector level unions need the right to a voice in the economic restructuring decisions that will take place.
3. Establish a just transition commission to develop a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead, along the lines of the welcome initiative of the Scottish Government to establish such a body.



# The role of the green or environmental rep

The increased profile of climate change has started to impact on union organisation. More unions are reviewing how they respond to the issue. For some unions it has led to an increased focus on branch organisation. In some places they are referred to as green reps but this is not a universal term. They may be known as environment rep, climate rep, sustainability rep and in a way the title is not important. The most important thing is that in each workplace there is at least one person taking responsibility for the impact of climate change measures on employment.

There is currently no legal right to appoint union reps to represent workers on this issue. In 2017, the TUC Congress passed a motion calling on unions to “lobby to demand rights for workplace environmental reps.” In addition to changes in the law, amendments should be made to the Acas code of practice ‘Time off for trade union duties and activities’. This would allow facility time for:

- › appropriate training
- › conducting environment- and climate-related audits
- › raising issues with the employer.

There is of course a big crossover with other industrial relations matters. In some union branches it will be the health and safety rep that takes on this role. The advantage of this approach is these reps do have legal rights under the Safety Reps Regulations 1977. On the issue of green skills, other reps with legal rights, like union learning reps, may also play a role.



A TUC study, *The Union Effect – greening the workplace*, highlighted six case studies where union involvement had triggered positive initiatives. [www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/union-effect-greening-workplace](http://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/union-effect-greening-workplace)

© Joeef Polk/Getty Images



## CASE STUDY BFAWU WORK WITH GREGGS TO GO GREEN

The Bakers Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU) has been working with high street baker Greggs to train staff and raise environmental awareness.

Sarah Woolley, the general secretary of the BFAWU, has been leading the unions work to green workplaces where they have members.

Sarah explained why the union is getting involved with the green skills agenda: "After moving the climate change motion at TUC Congress in 2017, we approached a number of employers about our plans to extend the health and safety reps role to incorporate an environmental aspect, with a view to work towards green reps in the future, when we had a training programme in place."

"Greggs bit our hands off. We explained that our health and safety reps would initially become SHE reps (safety, health and environment) and they jumped at the chance to work with us to make that happen."

Greggs were very keen to work with the union on this agenda and offered



© BFAWU

**"It's refreshing to have an employer engage so much and it not be a fight!"**

to produce some training that was relevant to the company, as well as being acceptable to the union.

Sarah said: "We really are pushing at an open door. Greggs have had a SHE department for years and were waiting for us to catch up – it's usually the other way around. It's refreshing to have an employer engage so much and it not be a fight!"

Sessions were trialled with reps before rolling out the training. The first training session looked at carbon footprints, with

further sessions covering waste management and energy use.

Sarah feels this is just a start and said: "It would be fantastic if other employers would engage in this way. We now have a template of how the sessions can be run; they just need tweaking to make them relevant to specific employers."

"The format Greggs has used is great. They have included us in the discussions, and to a point the development, though they have taken the

lead with that. They have made the sessions short, informative and engaging. There really is no reason why other employers can't work with us to do the same – many are doing some great things around the environment!”

Beyond the work with Greggs, the BFAWU has been collating green surveys that were completed at their annual

conference and various regional meetings. Sarah said this has shown there is an interest from reps and members for the union to develop a role for green reps.

In the meantime, the union is producing a quarterly Green Future newsletter which is full of best practice, ideas that can be done at home or at work, interesting articles and

links to more information and online resources.

Back at Greggs, the reps who attended the sessions have given very positive feedback, mainly about being more aware of their own behaviour and how they can make a difference in their shops or at home.

## Green reps and climate emergencies

Many employers in the public and private sector have declared climate emergencies. In some cases, they have committed to a target to reduce their carbon emissions to net-zero by a certain date. This presents an opportunity for unions to incorporate climate-related issues in the collective bargaining process. Issues like skills and recruitment can be linked to the ability of the employer to meet carbon targets. Where employers have not declared an emergency or clearly identified their carbon emissions, there is an opportunity for the union to initiate a discussion.

The functions of a green rep will be influenced by their sector of employment but are likely to include the type of activities covered below:

1. Raising awareness and promoting green workplace practices with members, such as reducing waste, recycling, energy saving, green purchasing.
2. Liaising with the branch on green and sustainability issues that need to be raised with management.
3. Taking forward and promoting union policy and campaigns on green and sustainability issues in the branch, eg on energy, climate change and fair trade.

4. Carrying out workplace environmental audits.
5. Monitoring employers' activity on, or progress towards, green and sustainability policies and targets.
6. Involvement in developing best environmental practice in the workplace, eg through committees and working parties, developing environmental policies and management systems, and drawing up workplace agreements etc.
7. Networking with other green reps to share information and good practice.

Extract from PCS guidance: [www.pcs.org.uk/resources/green-workplaces/green-reps](http://www.pcs.org.uk/resources/green-workplaces/green-reps)

## Increasing membership awareness

A key function of a green rep will be raising the awareness of members about climate change issues and the role of the union. This may create the conditions for members to play a more active role in the branch and reinforce support for union initiatives.



## CASE STUDY BRISTOL UNIONS UNITED WORK TO GREEN HORIZON HOUSE

Union reps from PCS and UNISON working for different organisations in the same building in Bristol have created a cross-union committee to advance their environmental and industrial agendas.

Horizon House is both the headquarters of the Environment Agency (organised by UNISON) and home to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), Natural England, the Animal & Plant Health Agency and the Rural Payments Agency – all represented by PCS.

Bristol Unions United, the cross-union committee covering the building, is pursuing a multi-stranded campaign that combines educational events on pressing environmental concerns with a negotiating agenda that encompasses climate justice and industrial issues.

The group kicked off its awareness-raising work with an event last autumn, held in the atrium on the ground floor of the building on the eve of the September 2019 international youth climate strike.



© Paul Box/report4light.co.uk

“We had around 40 colleagues listening attentively to a 14-year-old and a 15-year-old explaining what they thought needs to change in their city.”

“We had around 40 colleagues listening attentively to a 14-year-old and a 15-year-old explaining what they thought needs to change in their city and in the UK to respond to the climate emergency,” recalls PCS green rep Tom Youngman, one of the linchpins of the cross-union committee.

The event definitely made an impact, and it was young people in the city that had originally inspired Tom to

take on the green rep role in addition to his workplace rep work. “Our office is three minutes’ walk from where the school children gather when they are out on strike,” he says. “It really hit me that if they could be bold enough to organise in school, then we should be as bold as them in the workplace, as well.”

Since that meeting, the committee has followed up with events examining the pros and cons of

carbon offsetting and a packed event in February 2020, looking at how the council is addressing the urgent need to decrease air pollution in the city, which has been shown to cause 300 avoidable deaths every year.

Speakers included Councillor Kye Dudd, who is not only the city council's cabinet member for transport and energy but also chair of the local Communication Workers Union (CWU) branch; Harriet Aughey from MedAct Bristol, who is a paediatric registrar at University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust; and Stuart Phelps, from local campaign group Residents Against Dirty Energy (RADE).

The issue was so urgent and the speakers so gripping, that it was standing room only in the atrium and staff on the first floor were leaving their desks to listen to listen in from their vantage point overlooking the meeting.

**“The issue was so urgent and the speakers so gripping, that it was standing room only in the atrium and staff on the first floor were leaving their desks to listen.”**

In addition to helping colleagues work out what they can do collectively to combat climate change, the committee is also pursuing negotiations to improve the building's response to the environmental crisis.

“We're planning a meeting with the canteen managers to understand what their sustainability policies are and to improve the number of meat-free options, given the high-carbon impact of meat production,” Tom explains.

“And we're talking about workers' rights as well – whether workers are being paid the living wage and whether they have access to a union as well – because we're always making sure we tie in green issues with

workers' issues, because that's where we can be most powerful.”

For Tom himself, taking part in the annual PCS green forum in Leeds last year was an enormous help to him developing in his role as green rep.

“Getting together with other reps around the country at the green forum was really key,” he recalls. “Swapping notes on some of the organising challenges we've faced and the different events and tools we'd use to get people together more effectively – that was really vital.”



## CASE STUDY GREEN-FINGERED FIREFIGHTER LEADS ECO REVOLUTION IN LONDON

Simon Jakeman is the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) London region's union green rep, union learning rep and green champion co-ordinator in the sustainable development team at London Fire Brigade (LFB) headquarters.

After completing an Open University access module on the environment in 2010, Simon became involved with training to raise environmental awareness within the fire service.

Simon explained that this was just the spark: "I took the plunge and enrolled on a degree in environmental studies via distance learning, graduating six years later with a BSc(hons)."

The knowledge and skills gained on the course aided Simon's career development and union roles. Simon also took the opportunity to complete a union green rep course and put the skills to use by both promoting learning opportunities and encouraging greater environmental awareness amongst colleagues.



© Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

**“The Mindfulness Gardens provide a space for personnel to reflect, especially after such tragic recent incidents, while also benefitting the local environment.”**

In 2011, Simon created LFB's first rooftop garden, starting with one tomato plant in a fire bucket. Other actions followed: energy saving, encouraging sustainable travel, recycling and more.

Surbiton was crowned London's greenest fire station, and since then the initiative has grown and now over 50 Fire stations are involved.

Simon said: "The Mindfulness Gardens provide a space for personnel to reflect, especially after such tragic recent incidents, while also benefitting the local environment by greening otherwise grey roof terraces and helping to improve air quality. They provide an oasis for biodiversity, including planting for pollinators such as bees and butterflies."

Simon became LFB's first green champion and gives presentations to fire service staff on how they can make workplaces more eco-friendly.

Getting the employer on board was hard work but worth it, as Simon explained: "To be honest, at first it was difficult to get green actions on the agenda, but slowly but surely I chipped away and never gave up."

"As a firefighter, I don't give up easily. It's taken a decade of hard work, but the door is finally open!"

Simon feels that firefighters are on the frontline of the changing climate, saying "When you see the floods, it's firefighters wading down high streets and in boats, or we're chasing wildfires."

Simon has recently been working in collaboration with Avon Fire & Rescue Service, and they have created a new training guidance tool which is available to all staff.

**"This new learning tool shows there is plenty fire crews can do to learn best practice for protecting the environment in the fire station and being aware about how to reduce pollution."**

Simon explained: "This new learning tool shows there is plenty fire crews can do to learn best practice for protecting the environment in the fire station and being aware about how to reduce pollution, conserve water and being more energy efficient in their day-to-day jobs."

"It addresses the key environmental issues and legislation relevant to FRS sites, highlighting topical issues such as air quality, single-use plastics and mental wellbeing, and how fire services can play their part in addressing these."

The module was developed with support from the Environment Agency and has been endorsed by the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) and FBU.

Simon hopes this work will lead to green reps becoming commonplace in the union, saying: "It's early days, but I hope the union green rep role within the FBU will develop across the country. We now have another rep in Region 9 and we are working together to raise the profile of why firefighters are at the forefront of the climate emergency."

"Learning is a bit like gardening: once that seed is planted, you nurture it and then it just takes off. We're always busy but you can always find time. And when you go for it, just see what happens."

## What skills will workers need for a low-carbon economy?

The answer to this may seem obvious. Skills related to jobs in the renewable sector, construction and waste management are normally mentioned when this question comes up. Skills linked to wind turbine installation, energy efficiency etc. will be vital but the key point is that every job will require green skills. There is no common approach to, and thus no definition of, green skills and jobs. Even within countries, it has often been hard for the concept to be pinned down and sometimes definitions continue to evolve.

A general conclusion from Cedefop's report (see 'Skills for Green Jobs' box on page 23) is that:

*"There tends to be a weak connection between organisations involved in national policy making on environmental topics and those involved in labour markets and skills policy, including skills anticipation. This parallels a generally weak connection between environmental and skills policies. There are also gaps in policies and regulations in relation to gender issues and to monitoring and evaluation of policies or activities relevant to green skills."*

The types of skills and the number of jobs in each sector of the economy needs to be based on research and consultation across each sector of employment. This has been recognised by the Scottish Just Transition Commission in its interim report from 2020:

*"There is a great deal of information and research regarding the number of jobs that may result from investment in a net-zero economy. However, what these job numbers mean in terms of job quality (contractual security, skills, earnings, voice) and the extent to which they offer fair work, is too often unclear. More understanding is also needed on the scope of the 'just transition challenge' in Scotland –*



*for instance, detailed mapping of jobs and skills in both existing and emerging industries will help shape transition plans."*

There is a crucial research role here for the education sector in collaboration with employers, unions and local and national authorities.



## Skills for Green Jobs

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training's (Cedefop) report *Skills for Green Jobs* contains the following information for the UK:

“The document *Green Skills and Jobs in Scotland* adopts a framework for anticipating green skills that is based on the US O\*NET classification of green occupations. Three sets of green occupations are recognised based on the level of new and enhanced skills required:

- › new and emerging green occupations
- › green enhanced skills occupations
- › and green increased demand occupations.

In England, green skills were defined and listed in the government report *Skills for a Green Economy*. A four-way classification was used:

- › resource efficiency
- › the low-carbon industry
- › climate resilience
- › skills to manage natural assets.

The list reflects a different approach to that taken by a 2009 government report, which identified nine groups of skills and 45 subgroups, giving a more detailed breakdown of green skills. This particular development illustrates how fluid the definition of green skills can be.”

**Source:** Cedefop (2018a to f) Skills for green jobs country reports for Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Spain, France and the UK. Summaries are available in Annexes 1 to 6. [cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3078](http://cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3078)

## Lessons of the UK Green Deal

An example of the failure to link funding, demand for training and industrial strategy can be found in the UK Green Deal programme that ran between 2013–15. It provided loans to households to carry out energy efficiency improvements. There were plans to create 1,000 apprenticeships.

The high interest rates for the loans linked to the scheme and consumer-demand approach adopted led to a very low take up. Small building companies that had invested money in to recruiting and training staff went bankrupt. Colleges that had invested in developing green construction centres had to close them due to lack of demand for training. This was also at a time when the further education sector was experiencing huge cuts in funding provision. It turned out to be a classic example of how not to develop a green skills strategy and the importance of long-term planning rather than a short-term, market-led approach.

## Matching up skills policy with industrial strategy

The UK record on matching demand for green skills with the supply has not been helped by the constant changes in skills policy. In July 2017, the independent Industrial Strategy Commission (ISC) published a report called *Laying the Foundations*. <http://industrialstrategycommission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Laying-the-Foundations-the-Industrial-Strategy-Commission.pdf>

Skills is one of the seven themes:

*“Skills policy must focus on addressing the UK’s historic deficit in skills and on better utilising skills to drive higher growth and productivity. Skills policy must be more stable and holistic in its approach and better connected to other areas of policy. Policies are needed to both increase the overall supply of general technical skills and to develop the specific skills needed for particular sectors and places.”*

### Green skills manifesto

The green skills manifesto ([greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Green\\_skills\\_manifesto\\_2013\\_to\\_print\\_1\\_.compressed.pdf](https://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Green_skills_manifesto_2013_to_print_1_.compressed.pdf)) was launched by the Greener Jobs Alliance in 2013 to address the concerns about the lack of alignment between green skills and jobs. The five underlying principles in the manifesto remain relevant today:

- 1. Equalities:** Many of the potential low-carbon growth areas like construction and engineering do not adequately reflect the potential workforce. The under-representation in apprenticeships and employment in these sectors must be addressed to ensure access to job opportunities by all disadvantaged groups. A recognition that climate change and energy prices will hit the poorest sections of society hardest.
- 2. Fair and decent jobs:** The move to a low-carbon economy must be based on fair wages and decent terms and conditions of employment. These should include opportunities for career progression and rights to health and safety and trade union recognition.
- 3. Coordination and coherence:** The current policy is characterised by short-termism and uncertainty that is hampering progress. Stimulating demand for jobs and training requires a long-term strategic approach in areas such as low-carbon sector incentives and procurement policies.
- 4. Communication and engagement strategy:** Partnerships across civil society at national and local level are needed to promote training, job opportunities and inclusiveness.

**“Skills policy must focus on addressing the UK’s historic deficit in skills and on better utilising skills to drive higher growth and productivity.”**

- 5. A just transition:** Workers and communities must be consulted about the opportunities and threats to employment in each sector of the economy. Provision to retrain and upskill in good time must be built into all jobs and sectors at risk from a transition to a low-carbon economy.

A National Open College Network (NOCN) report in 2018 ([nocn.org.uk/productivity-report](https://nocn.org.uk/productivity-report)) highlighted the need to address skills across all sectors with a focus on:

- › management skills to enable identifying potential and being confident in pushing forward performance improvements and digital changes
- › employability and generic skills, particularly addressing literacy, numeracy, digital and cognitive skills
- › technical skills and knowledge, particularly to support the transition to an AI- and digital-based economy.

Advances in digital and AI will fundamentally change jobs in many sectors. There are predictions that up to 35 per cent of jobs will be affected in the coming decade. Underpinning this are poor levels of literacy and numeracy. The UK government’s industrial strategy notes that *“within two decades, 90 per cent of jobs will require some digital proficiency, yet 23 per cent of adults lack basic digital skills.”*

Yet a major weakness of this report is the failure to reference climate change and the importance of low-carbon skills.



## Skills gaps

Technological change, globalisation, ageing populations and climate change will dramatically increase the pace of change in labour market and skills needs for new and current jobs alike. The growing importance of sustainable development and the shift to a low-carbon economy will also require new skills and qualifications, offering great potential for the creation of green jobs, but also implying structural change and transformation of existing jobs.

Today, skills gaps are already recognised as a major bottleneck in sectors, such as renewable energy, energy and resource efficiency, renovation of buildings, construction, environmental services and manufacturing. The adoption and dissemination of clean technologies requires skills in technology application, adaptation and maintenance. Skills are also crucial for economies and businesses, workers and entrepreneurs, to rapidly adapt to changes as a consequence of environmental policies or climate change.

The International Labour Conference of June 2008 stated that skills development should form part of an effective response to changing conditions with climate change among those. Identifying skills requirements for adaptation to climate change and mitigation measures via reduction of greenhouse gas emissions has therefore an important role to play in policy development. Meeting skills needs is a critical factor for productivity, employment growth and development.

At EU level, the need to shift towards resource-efficient and low-carbon economies has been identified in the EU 2020 strategy and the 2020 climate and energy package, and reaffirmed by the 2030 climate and energy framework. The transition offers significant opportunities for job growth and simultaneous emergence of new occupations, job profiles and therefore skills. The 2016 New Skills Agenda for Europe of the European Commission identified the development of green jobs and of green skills as a priority that can be served by its 10 key actions.



The European Centre for Vocational training (Cedefop) and ILO joined forces and produced a report *Skills for Green Jobs: a global view* (2011). The research was based on 21 country studies with a primary focus on good practice examples of how national policies for greening economies are complemented by identification of skills needs and efficient skills response strategies. Cedefop covered country studies in six EU member states: Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Spain and the UK. For further information on international standards see 'Appendix 2: International agreements related to skills policy'.

The Aldersgate Group's Time to Deliver report from 2019 noted a *"Lack of demand for training to develop skills required in a net-zero economy; a lack of diversity, especially in emerging sectors; and an insufficient pipeline of necessary skills and educational barriers. As most sectors of the economy will be exposed to these risks, government needs to build a solid understanding of the role of different sectors in delivering net-zero, the skills required to enable this and their regional distribution."* [aldersgategroup.org.uk/asset/1578](https://aldersgategroup.org.uk/asset/1578)

The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) research also identified the following significant skills gaps:

- › Skills to compete. Only 13 per cent of companies are fully confident that they have the skills to successfully compete in a sustainable economy.
- › Leadership gap. Only 25 per cent of business leaders, and 20 per cent of senior managers, are fully capable of addressing the sustainability agenda.
- › Funding gap. In 72 per cent of organisations, investment in environment and sustainability skills is less than other disciplines, with 63 per cent of organisations spending less than £100 per head on environment and sustainability training each year.
- › Strategic challenge. 65 per cent have not carried out a strategic evaluation of skills needed to successfully compete in a sustainable economy.
- › Recruitment gap. Over half (53 per cent) of organisations are unable to recruit environment and sustainability professionals with the right skills.

### **Student organisations campaigning on green skills**

The National Union of Students (NUS) has published research showing that over 66 per cent of students believe that sustainable development should be incorporated into all university courses.

Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS-UK) developed from the work of the NUS and seeks to get more students leading and learning about sustainability. They have developed programmes like Responsible Futures for the FHE sector which wants *"all graduates to have the knowledge and understanding, skills and attributes needed to contribute positively to social responsibility and sustainability. Geographers, engineers and artists. Nurses, hairdressers and lawyers. Bricklayers, sociologists and politicians. Everyone!"* <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk/responsible-futures>



**“Historically, unions have played an important role in apprenticeship policy and apprenticeships are considered to be one of the cornerstones of dealing with the skills deficit in the economy.”**

SOS-UK also run a For Good programme that offers to link students’ dissertations and placements with workplaces and unions. A good example of this is UK trade unions engagement with climate change and the need for a just transition: <https://forgood.nus.org.uk/student/communities-and-sustainability>

In February 2020, SOS-NUS joined forces with the UK Student Climate Network (UKSCN) to launch the Climate Emergency Education Bill in parliament. This includes a section on vocational training and green skills: <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk/articles/teach-the-future-unveils-climate-emergency-education-bill>

*“A programme of vocational training through the development of national centres of excellence to promote the reskilling of the workforce in line with the green skills requirements of industrial strategy.”*

## **Apprenticeships**

At TUC Congress 2019, one motion stated:

*“Congress notes its concern that the drive to grow apprenticeships has too often been at the expense of quality and genuine job creation. The central importance of education within apprenticeship programmes is not recognised. Apprenticeships are not just about training for tasks or for specific job roles; they should include a broad education which prepares people for the changing world of work and empowers them to be engaged, adaptable and resilient.”*

Apprenticeship policy has failed badly in recent years. Historically, unions have played an important role in apprenticeship policy and apprenticeships are considered to be one of the cornerstones of dealing with the skills deficit in the economy. However, the new Institute for Apprenticeships has no union representation on the board. There are six employers and two college employers.

An apprenticeship charter has been developed by unionlearn to help employers and other organisations working with unions, to commit to delivering and offering high-quality apprenticeships. [www.unionlearn.org.uk/charter-apprenticeships](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/charter-apprenticeships)

Apprenticeship levy and government target. The government’s target of three million apprenticeships is unlikely to be reached and an urgent review of policy is needed. [theguardian.com/education/2020/feb/03/uk-firms-demand-shake-up-of-inflexible-apprenticeship-system](https://theguardian.com/education/2020/feb/03/uk-firms-demand-shake-up-of-inflexible-apprenticeship-system)

## National and regional skills plans

### *Scotland: development of a climate emergency skills action plan*

The Scottish Government has produced a Future Skills Action plan to support Scotland's acquire the necessary skills to address issues such as EU exit, rapid technological changes and the climate emergency.

This plan aims to ensure that Scotland has a skilled and productive workforce which is resilient to future economic challenges and highlights action to increase upskilling and retraining opportunities.

One of the plans key actions involves publishing a climate emergency skills action plan to provide the framework for the skills investment needed to meet the global climate change challenge.

The development of a climate emergency skills action plan is seen to be an important factor in delivering a just transition for Scotland.

This action plan should include an assessment of workforces most likely to be affected by the transition (including those indirectly affected through supply chains), and the most immediate and pressing skills requirements needed to support the net-zero transition. It will need to identify skills for which demand can be expected to increase or decrease, and set out how these will be managed by the skills system in Scotland.

### **Regional skills policy**

The devolution of the skills budget puts a greater focus on regional authorities to match up skills with industrial strategy. Many of these authorities are also declaring climate emergencies and net-zero targets. Unions will need to review these strategies to ensure that skills development is fully integrated into the action plans.

## Examples of regional strategies

### *Greater London Authority*

In 2018, the Greater London Authority (GLA) issued the *Skills for Londoners* strategy.

There are three key priorities at the heart of the strategy:

1. Empower all Londoners to access the education and skills to participate in society and progress in education and work.
2. Meet the needs of London's economy and employers now and in the future.
3. Deliver a strategic city-wide technical skills and adult education offer.

The strategy contains no reference to climate change and the transition to a zero-carbon economy. It also fails to cross-reference the GLA Environment Strategy. Unions have raised these concerns and called for the establishment of a Just Transition Commission to provide a forum for consultation.

[london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sfl\\_strategy\\_final\\_june\\_20186.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sfl_strategy_final_june_20186.pdf)

### *Liverpool*

Extract from the vision statement from Liverpool City Region's *Skills Strategy 2018–2023*:

*“An outstanding and effective skills system that meets the needs of employers, individuals of all ages and communities and drives high aspirations and attainment, to create a truly global and competitive city region at the heart of the Northern Powerhouse.”*

Unions only get mentioned on the final page of the strategy under the heading 'Implementing Our Strategy':

*“The operation of Skills Strategy will be defined through the production of an improvement plan, with LEP and ESB, focusing on the delivery of the key outcomes. These will be shared with sector groups (linked to the Skills for Growth Agreements), providers, schools, unions and other stakeholders to develop specific activities that deliver the high-level actions set out in this strategy.”*

## Skills Strategy 2018–2023: ‘Low-carbon and energy’ – one of the seven growth sectors listed

Sector	Jobs		Gross value added		Number of businesses	Business size (%)			
	Num.	Prop.	Amt.	Prop.		0–9	10–49	50–249	250+
Low-carbon and energy	30,300	4.8%	2.0	6.5%	3,505	87.9	10.3	1.0	<1.0

Source: [www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCRCA\\_SKILLS\\_STRAT.pdf](http://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCRCA_SKILLS_STRAT.pdf)

Steve Rotherham, Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, said:

*“The challenge of becoming a zero-carbon city region by 2040 is not an easy one. It involves substantial changes to how we generate and consume energy, and to our infrastructure and transport networks. But the benefits are far reaching for everyone who lives and works in the city region and for generations to come.*

*“We want to create an environment which allows our children and grandchildren to breathe fresher, cleaner air and benefiting from the jobs and skills brought by investment in a cleaner, greener economy that works for everyone who lives and works in Liverpool City Region.”*

© Lucy Lambrix/Getty Images



## Types of green skills

Any skills strategy must address the range of green skills required. There are two broad categories:

### General green skills

Every worker and prospective worker needs a general understanding of climate change and how it could impact both their job and wider society.

Aldersgate’s Time to Deliver report calls for “a national low-carbon skills strategy, which integrates sustainability at all levels of the educational system – in the national curriculum, apprenticeship programmes, higher education and particularly through lifelong learning. This will ensure the UK has an attractive pipeline of skilled workers for new and growing industries in the long run. More widely, everyone entering the workforce, irrespective of their sector, should be equipped with skills for the low-carbon economy and basic net-zero literacy, as all job roles will require this knowledge to ensure the step change needed by employers to get to net-zero.”

The TUC’s report *Powering Ahead* compares what is happening in Denmark and Germany with the UK and calls for a “sustainable industrial strategy should seek to build a consensus across political parties, business organisations and trade unions” and sets out recommendations for the sustainable growth of the renewable energy sector.

The Teach the Future campaign supported by students groups and education trades unions has called for “a government commissioned review into the whole of the English formal education system in preparing students for the climate emergency and ecological crisis.” [teachthefuture.uk](http://teachthefuture.uk)







## CASE STUDY UNITE'S GREEN SKILLS TRAINING OFFERS FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Unite is rolling out a multi-stranded education programme to equip its reps with the skills to negotiate with their employers on all aspects of the climate emergency.

The programme includes a new five-day environmental reps course; tailor-made training for Unite's industrial sectors; and a one-day seminar the union will be delivering in its regions.

Managing a just transition to a zero-carbon economy is of particularly pressing interest to Unite, given the union's significant membership in many of the industries that are most carbon-intensive, including agriculture, chemicals, energy, food, paper and transport.

The new five-day environmental reps course aims to give reps an up-to-date understanding of climate change through coverage of the Trade Union Clear Air Network (TUCAN) Charter and TUCAN's guidance for union reps; the work of the Just Transition Centre, which was set up by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in 2016; and the approach



© West End/Getty Images

**“What we try to do is make sure that reps have got the tools to go back into the workplace and deal with the issues there and also know where the links are in the wider community.”**

of Trade Unions for Energy Democracy, the global multi-sector initiative launched in 2013.

But as well as bringing reps up to speed with the latest trade union thinking on climate emergency, the course gives them the chance to hone their organising and negotiating skills, explains Unite's national tutor for the environment, Carl Jerromes.

“We show them how to do a workplace check to identify where the environmental hazards are and a travel survey to see what policies are in place in that area, as well as exercises to help them negotiate on climate change issues,” he says.

“What we try to do is make sure that reps have got the tools to go back into the workplace and deal with the issues there and also know where the links are »»

» in the wider community,” Carl says.

The one-day seminar for the regions covers some of the same ground as the five-day course, with Unite-specific material on environmental issues that the education department has gathered together with the help of the union’s national officers.

Unite is also developing the green skills of its shop stewards by spotlighting the climate emergency at some of the week-long residential courses the education department runs for each of its industrial sectors every year.

Dave Spooner, the national tutor responsible for the union’s courses in the food, chemicals, construction and voluntary sectors, has recently designed a five-day course for the food, drink and agriculture sector with a major emphasis on climate change.

“The whole issue has gone flying up the agenda and the growing awareness of the contribution of the food sector to climate change in the past year or so has upped the ante as well,” Dave says.

Worldwide food production currently emits 22 per cent of global anthropogenic

greenhouse gasses (GHGs), with another 10 to 15 per cent contributed by the switch in land use from forests and peatlands to agriculture.

It’s statistics like these that have led to the prioritising of climate issues by the International Union of Food Workers (IUF), which helped Dave with the development of the course.

While tackling the climate emergency can seem impossibly huge, and many workplace reps already having their hands full with disciplinaries, harassment or redundancies, the key for Dave is showing stewards and convenors how to set achievable goals.

“If you ask, ‘How are we going to make the entire world food production system sustainable?’ some stewards are going to feel overwhelmed by the scale of the problem,” Dave points out.

“That’s why we concentrate on the real here-and-now issues that can be placed on the negotiating table, like demanding from the company what their transition policy is within the industry and looking at their investment strategy, not just turning off the lights and saving paper.”

Like Carl, Dave aims to focus on climate change as a collective bargaining issue. “Our starting point is climate change is happening; employers are going to have to change; so how do we address the agenda from the workers’ position,” he explains.

“That means asking very simple questions such as, ‘Do you know what the emissions are from your company? Do you know what investment policies your company has to address those carbon emissions? What are their proposals for transition? And how is the union involved through collective bargaining in discussing how that can happen in a way that protects workers’ interests?’”

Helping stewards and convenors improve their negotiating skills is the key, he says. “Being able to take part in policymaking in the union and joining union campaigns around climate change is important. But the crucial question is how they approach such questions industrially through collective bargaining.”

There is also the related issue of people coming into the workforce with no prior knowledge of unions. The TUC has recognised the need for policy on this in the motion on trade unionism and collectivism in the curriculum at Congress 2019:

*“Congress calls on the General Council to lobby the UK parliament and devolved legislatures to include in the secondary curriculum specific education on the history of trade unionism and collectivism, workplace rights and the current role and operations of trade unions today.”*

### **Specific green skills**

Existing jobs will need to be assessed in order to determine any new skills requirements to ensure they are ‘climate-proofed’. In some cases, this may just be minor adjustments whereas in others it could be learning a new skills set. Sector plans must take a strategic long-term approach in order to ensure that the supply of workers with the necessary range of green skills is available to meet the demand generated by the requirements of a rapid decarbonisation programme.

#### **Planting trees needs people with skills**

**In the 2020 budget, the government committed to plant around 30,000 hectares of trees and restore 35,000 hectares of peatland. However, at the moment there is no skilled workforce capable of delivering it. This offers an opportunity for workers interested in arboriculture or countryside management to develop skills in this area.**



### **Jobs in a decarbonised economy**

#### ***The potential***

The green transition could create millions of jobs, but would require major investments in reskilling.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has produced estimates of the impact that the transition to energy sustainability by 2030 will have on employment (ILO, 2018a). The extension of this analysis shows that almost 25 million jobs will be created and nearly seven million lost globally. Of the latter, five million can be reclaimed through labour reallocation – that is, five million workers who lose their jobs because of contraction in specific industries will be able to find jobs in the same occupation in another industry within the same country. This means that between one and two million workers are likely to be in occupations where jobs will be lost without equivalent vacancies arising in other industries, and will require reskilling into other occupations. It also means that massive investment will be needed to train workers in the skills required for close to 20 million new jobs (see figure ES3). [ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_732214.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_732214.pdf)



## CASE STUDY

# UCU SUPPORTS CLIMATE-THEMED WEEK AT CITY AND ISLINGTON COLLEGE

Every February, the five City and Islington College centres come together for a themed learning week. The event, which has run at the college for the last six years, aims to unite different college faculties around an academic or political idea central to today's life and times.

With the support of education publication TES and the University and College Union (UCU), students and staff tackled the ever-relevant issues of climate change and power. The event is recognised today by over 100 schools, colleges and universities who also participated in their own projects throughout the week.

The multidisciplinary event included activities ranging from poetry recitals to interpretative dance routines and also featured a number of guest speakers.

Event organiser, and UCU Branch Officer, Sean Vernell spoke at the launch of the themed learning week, saying: "A few of us got together and thought 'what can we do just for one week of the year where



© University and College Union

**“A few of us got together and thought ‘what can we do just for one week of the year where we all get together and act collaboratively, and see if we can teach an interesting thing?’”**

we all get together and act collaboratively, and see if we can teach an interesting thing?”

Sean continued, adding that staff are “now more confident to teach these issues and integrate into their teaching.”

The college was pleased with the way that the initiative is reaching out and building partnerships, both inside and outside of their borders and

integrating the weeks theme into classes.

Around London, City and Islington College sites supported the mission with their own initiatives:

- › The Sixth Form Centre in Angel hosted talks by young environmental activists and ran a number of competitions and educational talks on reducing food waste and environmental impact.

- › Students from the Centre for Business, Arts and Technology students presented their work at the annual Tate Exchange exhibition in Southwark. They also put on a show for staff, fellow students, Chief Executive Roy O’Shaughnessy and local Islington North MP, Jeremy Corbyn.
- › Over 100 Performing Arts, Music, Art and Design, and Fashion students (and their teachers) shared their art with the public, during the college’s three-day residency in the Tate’s Blavatnik Building. Students

created and staffed artistic installations, ran workshops, told powerful and intensely personal stories, danced, played great music, acted, and provoked the public to think about power in its many forms.

Mid-way through the week, City and Islington College hosted a question time climate challenge debate, featuring panellists from Arsenal FC, Islington Council, the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) and the college.

The week successfully brought together the college’s five distinct

centres to think about tackling the main issues of a generation. With the themed learning week now a national phenomenon, City and Islington College students can be proud to have sparked an invaluable conversation around not only climate and power, but on how much can be achieved through collaboration and education.

[candi.ac.uk/2020/02/learning-for-a-future-that-does-not-cost-the-earth-our-climate-change-and-power-themed-learning-week](https://candi.ac.uk/2020/02/learning-for-a-future-that-does-not-cost-the-earth-our-climate-change-and-power-themed-learning-week)

### The reality

At a time when they should be on the increase, the number of green jobs in the UK dropped from 235,900 in 2014 to 224,800 in 2018, according to ONS statistics. This represents a loss of around five per cent. In order for the potential to be realised a comprehensive, interventionist government-led industrial strategy is required. [www.tuc.org.uk/news/new-figures-show-dreadful-record-creation-green-jobs-says-tuc](https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/new-figures-show-dreadful-record-creation-green-jobs-says-tuc)

Some sectors of employment will experience a drop in employment rates while others have the potential for significant growth. The level of job creation required to decarbonise at scale is potentially huge. The Campaign Against Climate Change’s report *One Million Climate Jobs* breaks it down as follows:

Electricity	400,000
Transport	300,000
Buildings	185,000
Industry	25,000
Education	35,000
Agriculture, waste and forestry	45,000

<https://campaigncc.org/climatejobs>

In 2020, the National Grid called for the creation of 120,000 jobs in the energy sector by 2030 to meet targets. [theguardian.com/business/2020/jan/28/uk-must-create-120000-green-energy-jobs-by-2030-to-meet-targets-national-grid](https://theguardian.com/business/2020/jan/28/uk-must-create-120000-green-energy-jobs-by-2030-to-meet-targets-national-grid)



## Transferring existing skills

A skills shortage emerged following the introduction of strong energy efficiency standards and rapid innovation. Employers and unions jointly assessed training needs and developed training programmes, which government agencies then implemented.

» [www.oecd.org/environment/cc/g20-climate/collapsecontents/Just-Transition-Centre-report-just-transition.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/environment/cc/g20-climate/collapsecontents/Just-Transition-Centre-report-just-transition.pdf)

The Aldersgate Group has called for a strategic approach to direct low-carbon investment to regions in need of opportunities and with transferable skill sets. This will require identifying parts of the low-carbon economy where the UK is particularly well-placed to grow its supply chains and in which geographic areas these jobs are likely to be created. This should be mapped against how sectoral transition pathways are likely to impact on employment, with plans made accordingly to support the growth of new industries with similar skill sets as declining industries in the same parts of the country.

Each sector of the economy will require a strategic approach based on how it fits in to the overall plan for decarbonisation of the economy. There are already examples of this transition, with over one-third of marine engineers working in offshore renewables transitioning from the oil and gas sector. More details of transferable skills in this sector can be found in Appendix 4.

Workers will need support to transition to different jobs.



## CASE STUDY BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE WITH THE GREEN SKILLS PARTNERSHIP

The Green Skills Partnership (GSP) is rolling out a construction site upcycling scheme that re-routes unused new materials and fittings that would ordinarily be destined for landfill sites, into the hands of individuals and local communities.

Badged as Think Global Act Local, the scheme has been developed to provide construction projects with an alternative to disposing of excess building materials, fixtures and fittings through what has been the common practice of burying them onsite or treating them as waste in designated skips.

By making surplus materials available for local use, the project has the potential to significantly reduce construction waste and offer a boost to local small businesses and communities by providing them with materials they would otherwise have to buy new.

The upcycling scheme focuses on the materials that become surplus to requirements at the end of each of the five



© Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

**“By making surplus materials available for local use, the project has the potential to significantly reduce construction waste.”**

key stages of any major construction project.

Once ground works are completed, there are surplus concrete blocks; bricks at the end of plate level; timber and tiles once roofing is complete; doors, windows, plasterboard, flooring, kitchen and bathroom fittings at the end of internal works; and topsoil, paving and fencing once landscaping and external works are finished.

Up to now, all of this has usually ended up

either buried under the new build or dispatched to landfill – which is wasteful, expensive and environmentally unsustainable.

But under the GSP’s new initiative, all these materials can be upcycled into local communities or transferred to local training providers to enable young people, within the impact zone of a project, to be trained to enter the industry. »

» The initiative is typical of the joined-up approach to greening the construction industry that the GSP has developed since its launch nine years ago.

The GSP was originally inspired by the San Francisco-based Apollo Alliance, a coalition of unions, business, environmental and community groups set up in 2003 to promote the low-carbon economy.

It was launched by unionlearn in 2011 – coincidentally the same year that Apollo became part of the larger, Minneapolis-based BlueGreen Alliance of Unions and Environmental Organisations.

The original brief was to bring together a set of stakeholders that could create work experience opportunities, placements, apprenticeships and local jobs in construction, retrofit, horticulture and waste management projects, first in London and then across the south-east.

Stuart Barber, who is now head of operations and strategy for the GSP, has been involved in the partnership from the very beginning: he was working for unionlearn at the time

of its launch, when the GSP was a pivotal part of his portfolio.

These days, the GSP has evolved into a social enterprise made up of 50-plus stakeholders that has been incorporated as a Community Interest Company (CIC) since 2016.

But it remains committed to the holy trinity of jobs, skills and environmental issues, and is still working to create pathways into construction and helping construction companies, and the projects they embark upon, to reduce their carbon footprint.

That's why the new Think Global Act Local scheme sits so neatly in the GSP's project profile.

The germ of the original idea came from Steve Lukacs, operations director at Kent-based Conduit Workforce CIC, which provides high-quality routes into the construction industry for young people with no previous experience.

Like Stuart, Steve has been part of the GSP since the launch and was a regular visitor to the old UCATT (now part of Unite) learning centre based at Canary Wharf in the early years of this century.

“The way construction projects have put thousands of tonnes into the waste stream every year has been a bugbear of Steve's over the years,” Stuart explains.

“It was his idea that we could do something about it, so we put together a thinktank, came up with Think Global Act Local and put that under the badge of the GSP.”

The green ambassadors, who will be central to the success of the scheme, are themselves very much inspired by the trade union movement's green reps and union learning reps (ULRs).

“We're targeting the green ambassador training at young people that the construction companies pay us to train and then they go out into their local communities and help spread the word about upcycling the surplus materials,” explains Stuart.

“By getting the materials into the hands of local small businesses, we can help make the difference between them going under and staying afloat because we can reduce their overheads by supplying them with fixtures and fittings they don't have to go and buy.”







## CASE STUDY BIRKBECK OFFERS A FANTASTIC CLIMATE FOR LEARNING

Thanks to the historic partnership with unionlearn, Birkbeck, University of London offers a 10 per cent discount for trade union members.

Hundreds of trade union members have taken advantage of this opportunity, studying courses in subjects from law to counselling to business and accounting, and attending evening classes that mean it's possible to attend lectures and seminars and gain a University of London degree, while still working during the day.

Birkbeck's excellent Department of Geography offers courses around environmental management, climate change and environment and sustainability.

One trade union member who has taken up this opportunity is Malcolm Powers. Malcolm is a member of Community and a freelance communication and training consultant, mostly working with local government.

Malcolm is studying part-time towards an MSc in climate change.



© Birkbeck University of London

**“By making surplus materials available for local use, the project has the potential to significantly reduce construction waste.”**

The course takes a cross-disciplinary approach, covering the science, policy and economics of climate change, as well as practical aspects such as renewable energy and sustainable business practice.

Malcolm explained why he decided to sign up for this course: “Sustainability and climate change are lifelong interests. But since I started working as a freelancer, I have found that a lot of the organisations that I am working with are focusing more and more on how

they should respond to the climate emergency, so it's definitely helping with my career.”

The course has been varied and has a range of optional modules. Malcolm chose environmental policy, sustainable business practice, the science of climate change, renewable energy, environmental economics and environmental modelling, and has just got the dissertation to go.

Malcolm has found Birkbeck inspiring and said: “I have enjoyed all aspects of the course but have focused in on climate change governance and policy as my specialist area. The cross-disciplinary nature of the course has meant that students have a wide range of directions they can take in their studies.”

“I picked Birkbeck primarily because of the course content and because it allowed me to continue to work full-time while studying. Birkbeck is an incredibly welcoming place and both the academic and support staff have been really supportive.”

The discount available to trade union members has also helped and Malcolm said: “It has certainly helped make studying more affordable.”

Having been away from higher education for a long time, Malcolm said he found the support and advice at Birkbeck amazing and has made some good friends. He has also rediscovered learning looks forward to using it, saying: “It’s not only the knowledge that I have gained, but I have already found that refreshing my critical thinking skills has been beneficial to work.”

“Birkbeck has definitely given me the bug for further study and I have been actively looking for potential PhD places.”

To find out about Birkbeck and the trade union discount go to the link below:

[bbk.ac.uk/student-services/fee-payment/discounts](https://bbk.ac.uk/student-services/fee-payment/discounts)

## Next steps



### Identify ways in which your branch can raise the awareness of members on climate change and skills-related issues

Despite the evidence that action on climate change is an increasing priority across society, it can't be assumed that union members will see this as a union priority. In 2011, unionlearn published its report *Stewarding the Green Skills Agenda*, which identified that "A number of interviewees and the focus group participants felt that the mainstream workforce perceive green skills to be an environmental issue which should not be prioritised against 'real' problems of redundancy and loss of pensions. This suggests that 'environmental literacy', meaning the skills and knowledge to communicate environmental issues in different contexts, is important if unions are to create a workforce movement that supports and understands the need for a transition."

[www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/stewarding-green-skills-agenda](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/stewarding-green-skills-agenda)

### What opportunities are there to raise the issue in your workplace?

Think about:

- › discussions in branch meetings
- › staff development activities or continuous professional development
- › circulating online resource material, eg GJA course modules – see [greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/courses](http://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/courses)

### Employers' current policies

- › Has your employer declared a climate emergency?
- › Is there an action plan that spells out how they intend to reduce carbon emissions?
- › Does it contain any reference to green skills and training the workforce?

### Sector policies

Has your sector of employment published any material that addresses current and future skills issues?

### Local authority policies

- › Has your local authority declared a climate emergency?
- › Is there an action plan that spells out how they intend to reduce carbon emissions?
- › Does it contain any reference to green skills and training the workforce?



## CASE STUDY UNISON CARBON LITERACY TRAINING

UNISON's team of environmental reps at Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) is helping deliver peer-to-peer training at the local authority to equip staff with the knowledge and skills they need to protect and improve the environment.

Over the past year, environmental officer Mary Clarke, environmental reps Cassie Mailvaganam, Don Naylor and Andy Pennell, and another five colleagues, have trained more than 150 staff at the council.

And now the council leadership is looking to transform what has been a voluntary carbon literacy course into a mandatory programme, to ensure that all of its 2,400 staff learn what they can do to meet the climate emergency.

It was Stockport MBC's arm's length social housing organisation, Stockport Homes Group (SHG), that began environmental awareness training, using an interactive course called My Planet and Me in 2018.

The one-day course is accredited to the standards drawn up by



© Paul Hermann/reportdigital.co.uk

“There were a few of us who went along to one of the training sessions and we thought, ‘This is brilliant – we need to find out more.’”

the Carbon Literacy Trust, the Manchester-based charity formed in 2013, to educate people about the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environments.

Learners who demonstrate that they understand the climate emergency and commit to making significant changes to reduce their own carbon footprint, can obtain a carbon literacy certificate at the end of the course.

Mary Clarke was one of a group of council staff who attended the course when SHG introduced it in autumn 2018. “There were a few of us who went along to one of the training sessions and we thought, ‘This is brilliant – we need to find out more’,” Mary recalls.

The group decided they would customise the programme for local authority staff and begin rolling it out across the council, too. »

» Designed by Angie Jukes, a sustainability specialist within the council's planning team, the course has been delivered since 2019 by the team of peer-to-peer trainers, with sessions held roughly once a month.

The course has proved very popular with staff who have already taken part. "We get really good feedback from people who've been on the course: they say it's the best council training they've ever been on!" Mary says.

And the sessions also help tutors extend their knowledge of the issues and the steps different departments can take. "Every time I run a carbon literacy training session, I know I'm going to finish the course having learned something from somebody else in the room," she adds.

Stockport LG Branch has been working on environmental issues in partnership with the authority for several years, having signed the Joint

**"We get really good feedback from people who've been on the course: they say it's the best council training they've ever been on!"**

Environment and Climate Change Agreement (JECCA) with Stockport Council in April 2014.

"The JECCA gives us facility time to work on environmental matters and a formal channel we can use to feed in suggestions, query things and make corrections," Mary says.

The branch based the agreement on a template in the TUC handbook Go Green at Work, which helped a generation of reps tackle climate change when it was first published more than 10 years ago.

"After personnel changes among senior management in recent years, having the JECCA in place has proved the enduring

worth of signing collective agreements," Mary says.

"I was able to remind the new senior management team that we still have this agreement, so they have given us a foot under the table on the climate task force groups they have set up to help them draw up a climate action plan," Mary explains.

"Being part of the groups that include the senior officers that are tasked with climate change at Stockport – that's very significant. As we've said to them, we all live on the same planet, we all breathe the same air: it doesn't make sense for us not to work together."

### **Regional authority policies**

- › Has a climate emergency been declared in your region?
- › Is there an action plan that spells out how they intend to reduce carbon emissions?
- › Does it contain any reference to green skills and training the workforce?
- › Does the Learning Enterprise Partnership (LEP) have policy, funding or course provision that could support a workplace initiative on green skills?



### Branch organisation

- › Has the impact of climate change on future employment and skills been discussed?
- › Has there been liaison with other unions to coordinate a response?
- › Is there a branch officer leading on climate change and green skills?

This could be a green rep or a union learning rep. If both have been appointed it will be important that there is liaison between the two.

### Conduct a skills audit

Have the views of members been obtained on the jobs and skills required over the next 10 years? Consider a survey to help generate data that could be used in discussions with management.

### Formulate a claim

- › Have green job creation and skills mapping been discussed with the employer?

Based on the information generated from the questions above:

- › What are the main risks for current staffing arrangements as a result of climate change policies?
- › What are the main opportunities for future staffing arrangements as a result of climate change policies?
- › What general training arrangements need to be prioritised to minimise the risks and maximise the opportunities?
- › What job specific training arrangements need to be prioritised?
- › How will you progress green jobs and green skills as a bargaining issue with management?

## Sources of information

*Accelerating the Low Carbon Transition* (2019)  
Launched by the UK government at COP25, Madrid.  
[brookings.edu/research/accelerating-the-low-carbon-transition](https://www.brookings.edu/research/accelerating-the-low-carbon-transition)

*A Just Transition to a Greener, Fairer Economy* (2019)  
Trades Union Congress. [www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/just-transition-greener-fairer-economy](https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/just-transition-greener-fairer-economy)

*A Trade Union Guide to Just Transition* (2019)  
Greener Jobs Alliance. [greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/courses/a-trade-union-guide-to-just-transition-background](https://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/courses/a-trade-union-guide-to-just-transition-background)

*Demanding a Just Transition for Energy Workers* (2018) Prospect. [prospect.org.uk/get-involved/just-transition-for-energy-workers](https://prospect.org.uk/get-involved/just-transition-for-energy-workers)

*Five Steps to Secure a Low Carbon Future* (2019)  
Prospect. [prospect.org.uk/get-involved/climate-crisis](https://prospect.org.uk/get-involved/climate-crisis)

*Go Green at Work* (2007) Trades Union Congress  
[www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/extras/gogreenatwork.pdf](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/extras/gogreenatwork.pdf)

*Just Transition in Action* (2020) Just Transition Centre.  
[ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/191120\\_-\\_just\\_transition\\_case\\_studies.pdf](https://ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/191120_-_just_transition_case_studies.pdf)

*Just Transition and Energy Democracy* (2017)  
Public and Commercial Services Union.  
[www.pcs.org.uk/resources/green-workplaces/new-pamphlet-just-transition-and-energy-democracy-a-civil-service-trade](https://www.pcs.org.uk/resources/green-workplaces/new-pamphlet-just-transition-and-energy-democracy-a-civil-service-trade)

*Joint Statement on Just Transition in the UK* (2018)  
Greener Jobs Alliance. [greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/JustTransitionJointStatement-FINAL.pdf](https://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/JustTransitionJointStatement-FINAL.pdf)

*Powering Ahead: How UK industry can match Europe's Environmental Leaders* (2016) TUC.  
[www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Powering\\_Ahead\\_Report.pdf](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Powering_Ahead_Report.pdf)

*Skills for a Greener Future: a global view* (2019)  
International Labour Organization.  
[ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_732214.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_732214.pdf)

*Skills for Green Jobs* (2011) International Labour Organization.  
[ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---ifp\\_skills/documents/publication/wcms\\_156220.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_156220.pdf)

*Skills to Drive a Productive Society* (2018)  
National Open College Network.  
[https://www.nocn.org.uk/data/Page\\_Downloads/'SkillstoDriveaProductiveSociety'Publication\(SIN GLES\)optimized.pdf](https://www.nocn.org.uk/data/Page_Downloads/'SkillstoDriveaProductiveSociety'Publication(SIN GLES)optimized.pdf)

*Stewarding the Green Skills Agenda* (2012)  
unionlearn. [www.unionlearn.org.uk/sites/default/files/publication/Stewarding%20Green%20Skills.pdf](https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/sites/default/files/publication/Stewarding%20Green%20Skills.pdf)

*Targeting Climate Change* (2008) Trades Union Congress. [www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/tucfiles/tuc\\_targeting\\_climate\\_change.pdf](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/tucfiles/tuc_targeting_climate_change.pdf)

*Union Action on Climate Change: a trade union guide* (2019) Labour Research Department.  
[lrdpublications.org.uk/publications.php?pub=BK&iss=1988](https://lrdpublications.org.uk/publications.php?pub=BK&iss=1988)

*Working Together for a Just Transition* (2018)  
New Economics Foundation.  
<https://neweconomics.org/2018/11/working-together-for-a-just-transition>

The Greener Jobs Alliance course 'Climate change awareness'. This is the only online course specifically aimed at trade union members.  
[greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/courses](https://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/courses)



# Appendix 1: International agreements on climate change and just transition

The Paris Agreement that came out of the COP conference in 2015 contained this clause:

*“Taking into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities.”*

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

The Silesia Declaration of 2018 was also signed off by the UK and notes:

*“The importance of a participatory and representative process of social dialogue involving all social partners to promote high employment rates, adequate social protection, labour standards and well-being of workers and their communities, when developing national determined contributions, long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies and adaptation planning processes.”*

<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14545-2018-REV-1/en/pdf>

## The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The UK government has also signed up to these UN goals. They set 169 targets in 17 areas that should be achieved by 2030. Of the 17 goals, just transition relates to SDG 8 (decent work) and SDG 13 (climate action), even though it is not specifically mentioned among the target indicators.

The UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development (UKSSD) has been set up to monitor progress on implementation of the SDGs ([ukssd.co.uk](http://ukssd.co.uk)). *Measuring Up*, its report published in July 2018, found that of 143 relevant targets “The UK is performing well on 24 per cent (green), with 57 per cent where there are gaps in policy coverage or performance is not adequate (amber) and 15 per cent where there is little or no policy in place to address the target or the performance is poor (red).”

The SDG Knowledge Hub has produced a brief, *Just Transition in Focus* (2018), that highlights the linkages with the SDGs.

## UN agencies

These commitments are backed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), a tripartite body consisting of governments, unions and employers. In its guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all, it says “A just transition for all towards an environmentally sustainable economy ... needs to be well managed and contribute to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty.” [ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/publications/WCMS\\_432859/lang--en/index.htm](http://ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/publications/WCMS_432859/lang--en/index.htm)

## Appendix 2: International agreements related to skills policy

### UN standards – The Paris Agreement

The preamble of the Paris Agreement further affirms *“the importance of education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and cooperation at all levels on the matters addressed in this Agreement.”* Article 6 emphasises the importance of public participation in climate action including calling for efforts to *“enhance public and private sector participation in the implementation of nationally determined contributions”*, and Article 12 of the Agreement states that *“Parties shall cooperate in taking measures, as appropriate, to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information, recognising the importance of these steps with respect to enhancing actions under this Agreement”*.

### UN Agreements – Sustainable Development Goal 4 Quality Education

The UK government has signed up to this including the seven targets. Target 4.7 reads *“By 2030, ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of cultures contribution to sustainable development.”*

### UN Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)

To implement these UN commitments *“Social dialogue will remain essential to ensure relevant education and training to achieve a just transition for all.”* [https://unfccc.int/files/cooperation\\_and\\_support/education\\_and\\_outreach/application/pdf/action\\_for\\_climate\\_empowerment\\_guidelines.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/cooperation_and_support/education_and_outreach/application/pdf/action_for_climate_empowerment_guidelines.pdf)

### Education International

Education International (EI) represents organisations of teachers and other education employees. It is the world’s largest, most representative global, sectoral organisation of unions with more than 32 million trade union members in 391 organisations in 179 countries and territories. In its contribution to the Doha Work Review in 2020, EI’s view on the ACE was *“For climate change education to become universal, it must become a curricular priority in every jurisdiction and be included in teacher training at all levels of education. Teachers need the support, time and resources to be able to provide students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to respond to climate crisis.”*

## Appendix 3: TUC skills policy

Unionlearn has continued to support union engagement in a range of skills bodies, including those with a national remit and others with a role at a sector or industrial level or at a local or regional level. The TUC welcomed the establishment of the Institute of Apprenticeships and also the subsequent decision by government to extend its remit to cover the forthcoming technical education qualifications (T levels). However, the TUC has expressed concerns that appointments to the Institute's board did not include anyone with a union background and that this was very different to the 'social partnership' arrangements governing apprenticeship systems in most other European countries.

The TUC is represented on the Apprenticeship Stakeholder Board by the unionlearn strategy manager. This forum was established by government to get feedback from key stakeholders on the planning and implementation of the Apprenticeship Levy and related reforms. Government funding for the main sector skills bodies – Sector Skills Councils and Industrial Partnerships – has been in decline for a number of years and this has led to a large degree of rationalisation, including a number of mergers and closures. However, many of these bodies have continued to play a significant role through alternative funding arrangements.

A motion at TUC Congress 2019 on skills and retraining states:

*“Therefore, Congress calls on the TUC to:*

- i. lobby the government for better skills provision, including, but not limited to, free college courses for people who have left employment*
- ii. call on employers to recognise the importance of and to provide transferable skills, reskilling opportunities and well-paid apprenticeships*

*iii. continue working to understand the impact of technological change on workers and how this affects the skills agenda*

*iv. support unions to continue to open up opportunities for union members to access skills-based learning and the opportunity to retrain*

*v. work with unions and employer organisations to develop effective skills audits, with workers at the centre.”*

Congress also noted that British employers are spending 50 per cent less on training per employee than the EU average. It called for *“work with unions and employer organisations to develop effective skills audits, with workers at the centre.”*

The Scottish Just Transition Commission assessment of skills needs noted that *“Increasing digitalisation of the economy, a shrinking and ageing workforce is expected to require skills such as self-management, social intelligence and innovation. Others cite the importance of interpersonal skills, higher-order cognitive skills or system skills such as judgement or decision-making.”*

## Appendix 4: Transferable skills in the oil and gas sector

### Extracts from the Skills Landscape report

The Skills Landscape report recently published by OPITO predicts that 25,000 new people will be required by 2025 to offset attrition. This means that the vast majority of those already in the workforce will still be there in 2025. As a result, employers need to consider how they will upskill existing staff to meet the challenges and opportunities arising from the anticipated development of new technology and increased digitalisation. In addition, the sector must be ready to compete for new talent that will not be industry specific, such as data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, remote operations, cyber security and other roles that will be transferable between sectors.

Oil and gas skills requirements are changing at a rapid pace. Digitalisation, internationalisation and the transition to a lower-carbon future require re-skilling opportunities to be created and new roles to be defined. The recently published report *UKCS Workforce Dynamics: the skills landscape 2019–2025*, commissioned by OPITO and produced by the Robert Gordon University (RGU) Oil & Gas Centre, outlines a number of actions that are needed to prepare the workforce for the future.

The new skills and roles identified in that report could prove to be a positive influence on gender balance in the industry, particularly given they are in relatively new disciplines with higher numbers of women than traditional STEM areas.

[opito.com/policy-and-research/research/the-skills-landscape](https://www.opito.com/policy-and-research/research/the-skills-landscape)

There is an increased focus on energy diversification and internationalisation.

With both the UK and Scottish governments committed to delivering the 2030 targets set by the Paris Climate Change Agreement, significant change is expected over the next decade as the UK transitions its energy system. Combined with the pathway towards Vision 2035, the focus on a lower-carbon future and the potential for increased international activity for the UK supply chain, will significantly impact the future skills requirements for the sector.

Based on the Offshore Wind Sector Deal secured in March 2019, UK offshore wind installed capacity has the potential to grow from over 8GW in 2019 to around 30GW by 2030. UK offshore wind projects currently being installed and operated have around 30 per cent of UK local content (components manufactured in the UK). By continuing to increase UK local content in areas such as blade and tower manufacture, cable supply, operations and maintenance, and by developing strengths in other areas, including installation and foundation manufacture, the Offshore Wind Sector Deal anticipates around 60 per cent of UK content, up to 20,000 new skilled jobs and global exports of £2.6bn by 2030.

Given the clear synergies between the different energy sources, it is expected that there will be an increasing skills and technology convergence between the various parts of the energy sector over the next decade. This will create significant new opportunities for supply chain companies and the workforce to support a wider range of energy projects



and operations. [gov.uk/government/news/offshore-wind-energy-revolution-to-provide-a-third-of-all-uk-electricity-by-2030](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/offshore-wind-energy-revolution-to-provide-a-third-of-all-uk-electricity-by-2030)

*“OPITO is currently working on a skills mapping initiative to help ensure that, as more companies diversify, the workforce has the ability to operate across the energy mix, both in the UK and internationally.”*

The project, facilitated by the UK government’s Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) with representatives from offshore and onshore oil and gas, nuclear and renewables industries, aims to identify skills across similar roles. The objective is to help develop plans for upskilling existing personnel and pinpointing specifications for new candidates. This work will also seek to complement the commitment made in the Offshore Wind Sector Deal to deliver an energy skills passport.

Based on the latest EY Oil Field Services Review (January 2019), exports from the UK oil and gas sector were around £10.6bn in 2017, with exports representing c. 39 per cent of turnover. With the drive to deliver Vision 2035, it is anticipated that by 2025, a significant part of the UKCS workforce will be focused on new exports and energy diversification opportunities. Vision 2035 assumes a doubling of the UK’s share of the global technology and services market by 2035.

To support the delivery of the energy transition and Vision 2035, OPITO will explore the development of a multi-skilled energy apprenticeship.



One of the 15 key actions for net-zero is to *“promote application of our skills, capabilities, assets and knowledge in support of delivery of low-carbon production and carbon capture, usage and storage.”* [energyvision2035.com/roadmap-2035/supporting-net-zero](https://energyvision2035.com/roadmap-2035/supporting-net-zero)

There are concerns about the failure to effectively engage with the trade union movement around this strategy. The Scottish Just Transition Commission noted this in its interim report from 2020:

*“While Vision 2035 came about as the result of significant engagement by companies in the sector by Oil and Gas UK, our discussions with trade unions highlighted a lack of awareness among the workforce. Government can play a role in defining who has an empowered role in these discussions, making sure that voices of workers and communities are properly accounted for and weighted in decision-making.”*



Published by unionlearn  
Congress House  
London WC1B 3LS

020 7467 1212  
unionlearn.org.uk  
 tucunionlearn  
 @unionlearn

March 2020  
ISBN 978 1 911288 72 5

Design by TUC and Rumba  
Printed by College Hill Press  
Cover photos by Caiimage/Trevor Adeline/  
FG Trade/Monty Rakusen/Tara Moore/  
ZStockphotos/Getty Images