

## Meeting 2

# Yorkshire and Humber Just Transition Network

## Minutes for meeting held online 2.30-4pm 23 October 2023

The Yorkshire and Humber Just Transition Network is an open forum for green reps and other trade union activists to learn from each other (and each other's unions), develop (new) campaigns and strategies, share successes and setbacks, access (new) resources and events, and meet similar activists. Its intension is to work towards a just transition to a green society for Yorkshire and the Humber.

### Invitees

Andrew Johnson ([andrew.johnson8@nhs.net](mailto:andrew.johnson8@nhs.net)), Andrew Miles ([a.j.miles@virginmedia.com](mailto:a.j.miles@virginmedia.com)), Catherine Porritt ([catherine.porritt@neu.org.uk](mailto:catherine.porritt@neu.org.uk)), Chris Butler ([christopherbutler1@mac.com](mailto:christopherbutler1@mac.com)), Chris Page ([chris@unison-rotherham.org.uk](mailto:chris@unison-rotherham.org.uk)), Daphne Robins ([daphne.robins@unitetheunion.org](mailto:daphne.robins@unitetheunion.org)), Dave Douglas ([dave.douglas@gmbactivist.org.uk](mailto:dave.douglas@gmbactivist.org.uk)), Dave Houlgate ([david.houlgate@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:david.houlgate@northyorks.gov.uk)), David Lightfoot ([david.lightfoot@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:david.lightfoot@leeds.gov.uk)), Debby Cobbett ([deborahcobbett@gmail.com](mailto:deborahcobbett@gmail.com)), Dilys Beaumont ([dilys@beaumont28.plus.com](mailto:dilys@beaumont28.plus.com)), Ellen Robottom ([ellenrobottom@hotmail.com](mailto:ellenrobottom@hotmail.com)), Gerry Lavery ([unitecommunityleedswakefield@outlook.com](mailto:unitecommunityleedswakefield@outlook.com)), Gwen Vardigans ([gwen.vardigans@gmail.com](mailto:gwen.vardigans@gmail.com)), Ian Sturrock ([i.sturrock@tees.ac.uk](mailto:i.sturrock@tees.ac.uk)), Jamie O'Dell ([james.o'dell@prospect.org.uk](mailto:james.o'dell@prospect.org.uk)), Jenni Crisp ([crispjenni67@gmail.com](mailto:crispjenni67@gmail.com)), Jenny Patient ([climateyjen@gmail.com](mailto:climateyjen@gmail.com)), Jessica Fox ([jessica.fox@hullcc.gov.uk](mailto:jessica.fox@hullcc.gov.uk)), Jo Cutter ([j.cutter@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:j.cutter@leeds.ac.uk)), Joan Miller ([joanmiller104@gmail.com](mailto:joanmiller104@gmail.com)), Julie Forgan ([julieforgan@gmail.com](mailto:julieforgan@gmail.com)), Kerri Tierney ([kerri@unison-rotherham.org.uk](mailto:kerri@unison-rotherham.org.uk)), Kerri Tierney ([kerri@unison-rotherham.org.uk](mailto:kerri@unison-rotherham.org.uk)), Kim Perry ([kimlcperry@gmail.com](mailto:kimlcperry@gmail.com)), Lawrence Barfoot ([lawrence.barfoot@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:lawrence.barfoot@homeoffice.gov.uk)), Liam Murphy ([liampatrickmurphy29@gmail.com](mailto:liampatrickmurphy29@gmail.com)), Lucinda Wakefield ([lmbwakefield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lmbwakefield@yahoo.co.uk)), Martin Hickman ([patrick.hickman@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:patrick.hickman@homeoffice.gov.uk)), Martin Mayer ([martin.mayer@unitetheunion.org](mailto:martin.mayer@unitetheunion.org)), Nigel Parry ([nigel.parry@unitetheunion.org](mailto:nigel.parry@unitetheunion.org)), Pauline Bailey ([pbailey29@gmail.com](mailto:pbailey29@gmail.com)), Simon Brett ([simon\\_brett2003@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:simon_brett2003@yahoo.co.uk)), Stephanie Hay ([stephanie.hay@suma.coop](mailto:stephanie.hay@suma.coop)), Steve Hansom ([stevehbusiness@icloud.com](mailto:stevehbusiness@icloud.com)), Teresa Moore ([tmm914@icloud.com](mailto:tmm914@icloud.com)), Tom Kistell ([t.kistell@shu.ac.uk](mailto:t.kistell@shu.ac.uk)), Tracy Pallett ([tracy.pallett@hullcc.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.pallett@hullcc.gov.uk)), Zach Adams ([zach.adams@nhs.net](mailto:zach.adams@nhs.net)), Zoey Longley ([Zoey.longley@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:Zoey.longley@leeds.gov.uk)) (39)

### Attendees

Sam Perry (chair), David Lightfoot, Jessica Fox, Gwen Vardigans, Dave Douglas, Jenny Patient, Lucinda Wakefield, Simon Brett, Ian Sturrock, Debby Cobbett, Jamies O'Dell, Andrew Johnson, Daphne Robins, Tracy Pallett, Ellen Robottom, Jo Cutter, Gerry Ramsden (17)

### Apologies

David Houlgate, Catherine Porritt, Zach Adams, Thomas Kistell, Kerri Tierney (5)

### Welcome (2 mins)

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Sam welcomed all attendees and reminded all that we'd be recording the meeting for those unable to attend

### **Minutes from previous meeting (2 mins)**

Group confirm previous minutes were an accurate record

### **Matters arising from previous meeting (1-8 mins)**

Sam reminded all that between this meeting and the last, we wrote to the prime minister to note our disappointment his 'new approach to net zero'. We've not yet received a response

### **Announcements (5 mins)**

- Jenny advertised *Better Buses South Yorkshire protest* 1pm-1.45pm Tuesday **24 October** at South Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority offices, 11 Broad Street West, S1 2BQ
- There are *Global Day of Action* protests planned for 9 December for COP28: There's a *Yorkshire planning meeting* 6pm Tuesday **24 October** to which all are welcome
- Sam advertised *From Climate Doom to Bloom: How a Green New Deal gives us reason to hope*, 7-8.30pm Thursday **26 October**
- All are also encouraged to attend *Workers for Climate Justice Conference*, hosted by the Institute of Employment Rights, Friday **27 October**
- The next meeting of the *West Yorkshire Eco Educators* is 7pm **13 November** online. Contact [Catherine](#) for details
- All are encouraged to consider attending the *We Make Tomorrow* conference on **25 November**
- Jo advertised an online course on *Skills for labour and environmental justice* running January and February 2024. Registration closes **8 December**
- The ITUC delegates to COP28 are also actively seeking views/responses/perspectives to take to COP28: Please pass any feedback to [Catherine](#) within the **next couple of weeks**

There was also a discussion about how we need to expand the numbers and diversity of workers and others involved in the fight against climate change.

### **What is a 'just transition' (30 mins)**

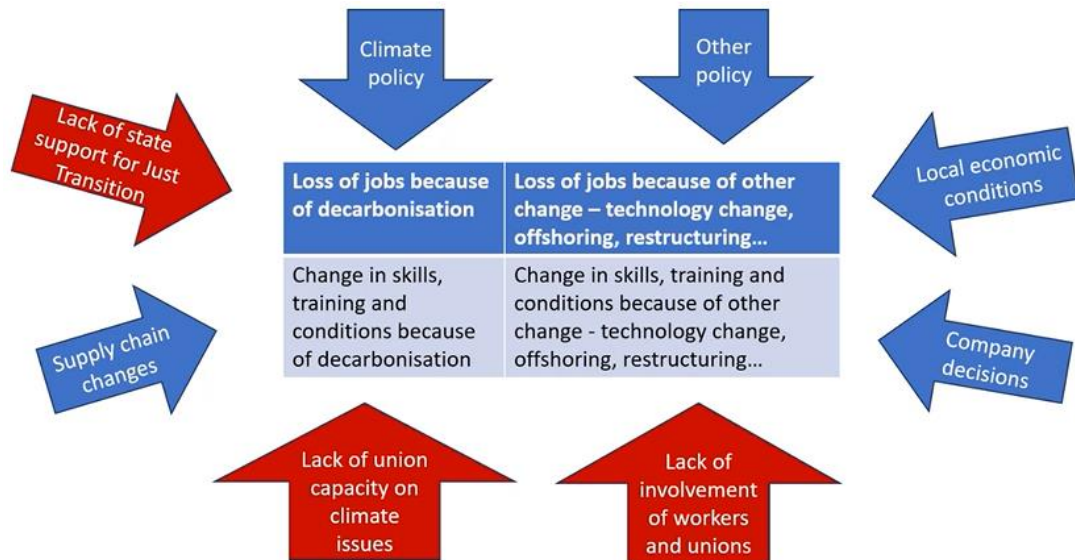
Jenny gave a presentation on what is meant by 'just transition', how unions have conceptualised/bargained for it, and the reason we need to understand and fight for it (10 mins):

- Jenny introduced the work of Darryn Snell ('Just Transition', 2018): He made the point that governments alone are not providing a just transition, but that trade unions are necessary to the process. Jenny explained that there has been an assumption within the labour movement that the technical transition is already in process (led by government/industry) and that the unions' role is simply to make this 'just' or to address the social outcomes of the transition. But, actually, the transition itself is not guaranteed and the technical and legal framework for it may mean that *injustice* is baked in. Snell stresses that unions are quite bad at making the *economic* argument for transition, and are focused instead on *social* questions, which disempowers unions and

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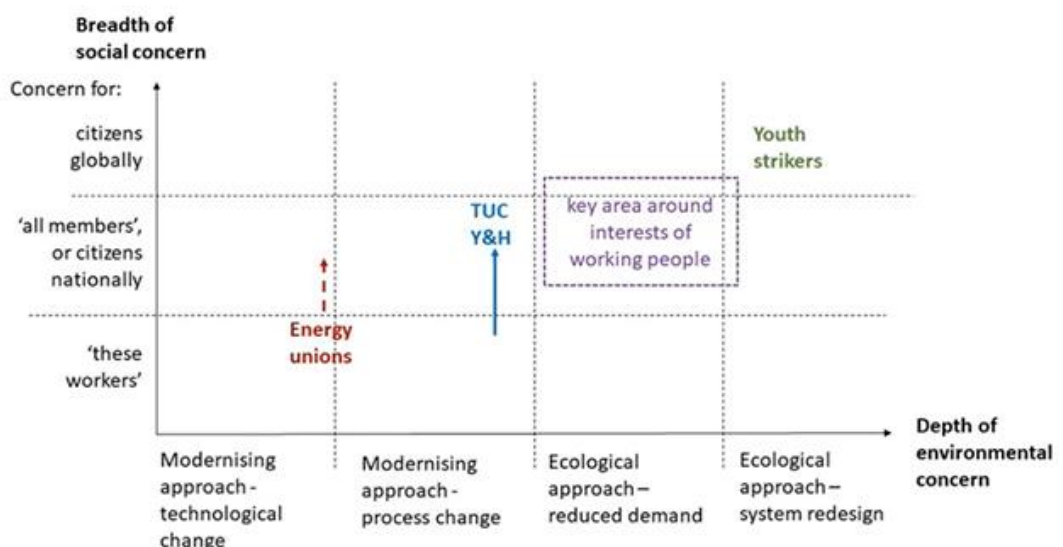
makes a just transition difficult. There are some good examples of state-led just transition in, for example, Spain, but there are no signs of this kind of transition in the UK or the majority of the world. **Jenny offered to send Snell's article to anyone interested: Contact Jenny via [climateyjen@gmail.com](mailto:climateyjen@gmail.com)**

- Jenny provided her diagramme of what the 'transition' looks like in the UK:



She stressed that the effects of climate change were often confused with the effects of climate change policy decisions; companies/governments/unions have very often blamed climate change for the negative results of company/government policy decisions. The arrows in the diagramme show the problems which are impacting the transition, and very significant is the lack of union capacity and lack of worker leadership on climate issues.

- Jenny presented her 'matrix of concern around a just transition':



She pointed out that the energy unions often confused who 'just transition' applied to: Often, it is considered only for workers at direct threat of change (i.e., energy workers) rather than all workers—she saw that 'climate change' was thought about as an 'all

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workers' issue while 'just transition' was thought about only as an 'energy workers' issue. Her work showed that unions in Yorkshire and the Humber had more appreciation of the need to involve all workers, but, nonetheless, unions across the board had more social concern and less environmental concern. She compares this stance with climate activism from pupils. She pointed out that there was a large untapped area into which unions needed to move, which allowed conceptualisation of a just transition that was for all workers, ensured social justice, but also ensured environmental justice. The Better Buses campaign and retrofit activism is occupying this space.

- She concluded that just transition could have a narrow definition but this was inherently unstable and that a broad, system-wide, global approach to the idea was necessary

There followed a discussion (20 mins):

- Jo stressed that 'just transition' is a workers term, but that it has been coopted by companies and governments to the exclusion of workers
- Ellen raised the problem that unions are cautious about being political in the UK because of the strict anti-political union laws. She argued that, to tackle this, unions need to embrace the political aspect of this
- The group agreed and Jenny made the point that successful union actions have joined up environmental and social concerns, but that this is more complicated now due to globalisation
- Lucinda praised the broad approach of the school strikers and reported that she had invited them to trade council meetings. She stressed that just transition must be a whole system approach, e.g., how do people retrain when the education system is broken, etc.
- Debby agreed and highlighted the importance of a doughnut economics approach
- Jamie raised the problem of terminology: 'Just transition' is a technical term which has the potential to close down discussion. The suggestion of explaining the term as 'worker-led transition' was broadly supported. Ellen also made the point that 'fair' was sometimes a more accessible word than 'just'
- A discussion was also had about how public transport was part of a just transition: The angle should not be anti-car but pro-bus, etc.

### **The role of the green rep as part of seeking a just transition (45 mins)**

Sam gave a brief introduction to the purpose and activities of the green rep according to the TUC (10 mins):

- He discussed how unions broadly agree that green issues are in some way union issues and that, therefore, unions should organise around these issues in some way, but exactly how and to what extent is widely debated. He argued that how unions and individual reps conceptualise the role is about the lens through which they view the issues: Is this a moral, practical, class, or political issue
- He discussed that 'raising awareness' was key, but, again, about what and how varied

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- The importance of inspection was stressed, but, again, there is debate around what they should be inspecting and how
- And finally, he stressed that green reps were usually tasked with developing or advocating for alternatives, but that this was often the most difficult step. He discussed how unions have had more success in incremental change than via disputes or claims, but that green national/sectoral claims and disputes have not been widely tested
- He praised UCU's green cyclical bargaining model ([here](#)) but stressed that campaigns varied in their ambition: Some aimed at carbon emission reduction/environmental protection within business as usual, but others argued for *Climate and Jobs Action Plans*, or even full alternative business strategies. He made the argument that successful plans were more likely if proactive, rather than reactive, and if they included the whole branch and whole community

There followed a discussion (35 mins):

- Ellen stressed that the role of a green rep cannot be one person's role, but that they need to build communities and movements within their union. Jenny agreed and suggested creatively using the role of the ULR or Health and Safety Rep to bolster the powers and impact of the green rep role. Daphne supported this, stressing that ULRs have very broad powers which can empower workers
- Lucinda stressed that finding a specific topic or campaign helps to concentrate the focus of the green rep and make them more impactful
- Lucinda also stressed how union branches should share capacity here and work within their trade councils to ensure continuity and impact in the face of a rise in precarity and silo working
- Daphne recommended having multiple green reps who can work together and shared her approach which sees her team of green reps discussing what they are passionate and knowledgeable about and building campaigns off of this
- Tracy stressed that green issues remain political and are influenced by conspiracy theories: The green rep needs support from a community of experts, which this group can be, because it can make reps feel very attacked and vulnerable. Jenny supported the creation of these networks within a union or within this group. Tracy suggested the creation of something like a climate questions cheat sheet

**Sam to initiate creation of a climate questions cheat/myth buster sheet, building on CACC and GJA resources and [DeSmog](#)**

- Ian stressed the lack of capacity of green reps, including himself, and the dangers of greenwashing from employers
- Jo raised the possibility of segmenting action into sectors because context is very important. Her own branch works across multiple unions on this issue with success

**Sam to create WhatsApp group for Network to share thoughts and immediate myth busting: Join the YHJTN group chat at <https://chat.whatsapp.com/JFNYagFKav98rCIWYJPUIs>**

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- Dave's employer, Centrica, refuses to recognise a green rep role so they're having to creatively use the Health and Safety role. Centrica have been very reluctant to work with the union, except that they're now approaching them because of their links with Labour, likely the next government. It was stressed that unions don't necessarily need to be the underdogs but can leverage our connections to offer things to employers in exchange for action from them

### **AOB (1-5 mins)**

There was no other business raised