

Meeting 3

Yorkshire and Humber Just Transition Network

Minutes for meeting held online 3pm 28 November 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.

A sharable recording of this meeting is available online at <https://youtu.be/CaiYYuDmV3o>

Invitees

Andrew Johnson (andrew.johnson8@nhs.net), Andrew Miles (a.j.miles@virginmedia.com), Catherine Porritt (catherine.porritt@neu.org.uk), Chris Butler (christopherbutler1@mac.com), Chris Page (chris@unison-rotherham.org.uk), Daphne Robins (daphne.robins@unitetheunion.org), Dave Douglas (dave.douglas@gmbactivist.org.uk), Dave Houlgate (david.houlgate@northyorks.gov.uk), David Lightfoot (david.lightfoot@leeds.gov.uk), Debby Cobbett (deborahcobbett@gmail.com), Dilys Beaumont (dilys@beaumont28.plus.com), Ellen Robottom (ellenrobottom@hotmail.com), Gerald Ramsden (gerry.ramsden@gmail.com), Gerry Lavery (unitecommunityleedswakefield@outlook.com), Gwen Vardigans (gwen.vardigans@gmail.com), Ian Sturrock (i.sturrock@tees.ac.uk), Jamie O'Dell (james.o'dell@prospect.org.uk), Jenni Crisp (crispjenni67@gmail.com), Jenny Patient (climateyjen@gmail.com), Jessica Fox (jessica.fox@hullcc.gov.uk), Jo Cutter (j.cutter@leeds.ac.uk), Joan Miller (joanmiller104@gmail.com), John Ingleson (john.ingleson@nhs.net), Julie Forgan (julieforgan@gmail.com), Kerri Tierney (kerri@unison-rotherham.org.uk), Kim Perry (kimlcperry@gmail.com), Lawrence Barfoot (lawrence.barfoot@homeoffice.gov.uk), Liam Murphy (liampatrickmurphy29@gmail.com), Lucinda Wakefield (lmbwakefield@yahoo.co.uk), Martin Hickman (patrick.hickman@homeoffice.gov.uk), Martin Mayer (martin.mayer@unitetheunion.org), Nigel Parry (nigel.parry@unitetheunion.org), Pauline Bailey (pbailey29@gmail.com), Rosie Huzzard (rosie.huzzard@neu.org.uk), Simon Brett (simon_brett2003@yahoo.co.uk), Stephanie Hay (stephanie.hay@suma.coop), Steve Hansom (stevehbusiness@icloud.com), Teresa Moore (tmm914@icloud.com), Tom Kistell (t.kistell@shu.ac.uk), Tracy Pallett (tracy.pallett@hullcc.gov.uk), Zach Adams (zach.adams@nhs.net), Zoey Longley (Zoey.longley@leeds.gov.uk) (42)

Attendees

Sam Perry, Simon Brett, Dave Douglas, Martin Meyer, John Ingleson, Daphne Robins, Lawrence Barfoot, Jamie O'Dell, Ellen Robottom, Jo Cutter (10)

Apologies

Catherine Porritt, Julie Forgan, Daphne Robins, Gwen Vardigans, Tracy Pallett, Ian Sturrock, Jessica Fox, Stev Hanson, Jenny Patient, Tom Kistell (10)

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Welcome (2 mins)

Sam welcomed all attendees and reminded all that we'd be recording the meeting and posting it online for those unable to attend. All consented to this

Minutes from previous meeting (2 mins)

Group confirm previous minutes were an accurate record

Matters arising from previous meeting (6 mins)

Sam proposed slightly less frequent meetings—every two months—so that we have more time to prepare, and we don't use up too much of members' (facility) time

Announcements (10 mins)

- The TUC will be running a Green Rep course in January, and we're hoping to run a few introduction webinars (to Carbon Literacy and to the new Green Rep Toolkit for England) soon
- There's a new ETUI MOOC on [Skills for Labour and Environmental Justice](#), to which all are welcome
- There's a new YHCC [transport survey](#) out
- On Saturday 2 December, folk are leafleting in Harrogate. Contact Ellen for details
- On Monday 4 December, there's [After HS2: What transport system does Yorkshire and Humber need?](#) online
- [We Make Tomorrow](#) has moved from December to Saturday 28 January
- Greener Jobs Alliance, CACCTU, and PCS have put together a draft [General Motion for Climate Action](#) which has been circulated: Sam suggested that the group could agree to advocate for and get this passed at our branches/trades councils or use it as a basis for a Yorkshire specific motion to do the same with

Sam to circulate draft to be worked up for a Yorkshire context

- Tonight 6.45pm there's a [COP28 mobilisation call](#) to which all are welcome
- On Saturday 2 December, there will be Energy for All climate action stalls in Sheffield—near Moor Market, near Debenhams, and on Station Approach between 12 and 3pm
- On Saturday 9 December, we've got the Global Day of Action for COP28:
 - In Leeds, there's [A Yorkshire Alternative to COP28](#), comprising a rally at 11am (Briggate) and a marketplace of stalls and talks at Imagine (7th floor, City Exchange, 11 Albion St, Leeds LS1 5ES) 12.30-3.30pm). Unions are asked to set up stalls (from 10am), arrange talks, put on activities for children, and leaflet Leeds ahead of the event. To get involved, contact Ellen
 - In Sheffield, there's a [COP28 Rally](#) meeting at Devonshire Green at midday and finishing at City Hall. To get involved, contact Martin or Lucinda. This will follow street stalls and leafletting done throughout the preceding week

Topic presentation and discussion (30 mins)

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Martin gave a brief presentation on public transport and the green transition (10 mins):

- Martin described how transport produces 25-30% of global emissions (unevenly distributed), that 77% of emissions from road transport derive from cars (in the EU), and that the sector's emissions are not decreasing. As such, public transport clearly has a significant role to play in decarbonisation.
- Martin showed that solving the problems of transport generally and public transport in particular necessarily meant examining how public transport is funded, organised, and owned—and that, therefore, the debate is necessarily *political*.
- He gave examples of how publicly-owned, appropriately subsidised, integrated, and all day and night services allowed the sector to grow—until privatisation in the 1990s. He showed that the marketisation of the sector did not result in lower fares or better services, but considerable (potentially fatal) shrinkage of the sector.
- Meanwhile, private travel has increased. He stressed that he and Unite (his union) were not anti-car but wanted public transport to appeal alongside cars, and not only for travellers who didn't have cars.
- His main concern in his work in South Yorkshire is for buses to be brought back into public control via franchising as a stepping stone to full public ownership. In London, buses are franchised, i.e., run by private companies but under very clear standards and timetables set by the municipality. This is what the Better Buses campaign is campaigning for throughout Yorkshire, but with an eye to this being a stepping stone to municipal ownership.
- He stressed that privatisation has also caused issues for workers: Not only are their terms and pay worse now, but the sector is struggling to retain workers, compounding the issue. The solutions would also have other cobenefits, improving the lives of especially people on lower incomes, reducing pollution, and easing traffic, with economic benefits.

There followed a wide-ranging discussion, during which Sam invited members to contribute specifically on how unions could campaign on these topics and support members to do so, during which the following contributions were made:

- The argument was made that the trade union movement may, actually, wish to be anti-car. Debby explained how private cars were fuelling extractivism, essentially isolating, and are the primary cause of pollution-related health issues. A discussion occurred where opposing views were aired that it would be politically very difficult to win the argument that people should not be having private cars and may make people view us as elitist.
 - Martin stressed that good arguments for car usage are also good arguments for the need to resolve public transport: When people say that they have to use a car, it's very often because the public transport provision (which they would otherwise use) is so poor.
 - Ellen argued that the goodwill of the public was essential to winning change and that the public were not anti-car, so her preferred approach was to highlight that private cars (or taxis) would need to be part of an integrated green transport system

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but that public transport must also play a far larger role. Jo noted that the International Transport Workers Federation have made these point too: See www.itfglobal.org/en/sector/urban-transport/proposals-20-23-climate-change

- Simon raised the move towards homeworking as significant. He stressed that this has had a complex impact on transport that's not only about reduced usage, and that this move talks to wider movements in how society works which has meant that private car usage is, for many people, necessary for the complexities of modern life (with school runs, kids clubs, working a distance away, and dislocated shops).
- Steve raised that Jamie Driscoll's focus on his mayoral election campaign is on an integrated transport plan which is good for workers, and Sam raised that this is a political focus across other devolved regions too, showing its significance. It was raised that Labour have not been as progressive on this as was hoped (and individual shadow cabinet members have expressed a desire to be), and that the Conservatives are not engaged at all.
- The Better Buses campaign in West, South, and North Yorkshire was praised, as was union involvement in these, but Martin made the group aware that bus companies in South Yorkshire have been taking a very hard line against allowing their staff to participate in this campaign, limiting it to some extent. Martin also encouraged people to get involved in local versions of these campaigns
- Debby called for a Lucas Plan for car manufacturers to close the system and move people into better work. Ellen took up this point to discuss the need for a Lucas Plan for the whole of society rather than for a specific sector—she stressed in particular the need for agricultural and forestry workers, retrofit workers, etc.
- Ellen suggested that a relevant question might also be about *why* we move as we do: Society is requiring much more movement now, and even the benefit system is now more severely incentivising people into jobs, perhaps multiple jobs: The net result is time poverty, which makes using cars much more necessary. Proper valuable of reproductive labour and a four-day working week would be potential solutions. Debby highlighted that Women's Budget Group have looked into this under their Feminist Green New Deal. See wbq.org.uk/fgnd
- Steve made the parallel point that this comes out of the desperate seeking for 'growth'. He suggested that the discussion move into one about degrowth and one in which we remember that things military activity far outstrips domestic fossil fuel use.
 - Debby and Ellen suggested that we could organise a panel discussion on doughnut economics or degrowth.
 - Ellen spoke of how doughnut economic groups are often hyperlocal and can, sometimes, become overly focussed on specific local issues, rather than on general policies or the wider picture
 - Jo stressed that degrowth is potentially a dangerous avenue for trade unionists because our approach has been that we should get an equal share of profits and that labour is valuable and should be the basis of economies: The discussion of

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degrowth may necessitate a reimagination of what trade unions are focused on; we might want to focus on prioritising socially useful growth

- Jo suggested that unions might consider a 'slow travel' policy, as her workplace has just agreed: This has raised the question about how people travel and made the class distinctions inherent in travel clearer. Sam told the group about a similar policy mooted in North Yorkshire (whereby extra holiday days were given to make up for the slower nature of non-air travel) but which wasn't adopted because of fear that it was a benefit only for the top brass.

Jo to keep the group updated on how the slow travel policy is working

- Jo also told the group that she's aware of degrowth training that's been being offered in Germany for the last decade, despite it not necessarily being union policy, and offered to share resources

Jo to share information about degrowth course

- Sam told of a union member who found it very difficult to be allowed to use their bike or public transport to complete their work task, which involved travelling around a patch, and who had to really fight with their HR department to allow them to not use their car
- Martin stressed that public transport has a huge potential to create lots of new green jobs on good terms—but only if we saw the version of public transport that unions are arguing for, i.e. a publicly owned and controlled system
- Sam appealed to members to raise any case studies of union green successes with him: The TUC are putting together green rep resources and this is a key aspect of the process

All to send any green rep case studies to Sam

- Dave reminded the group that his job requires him to work out of a diesel van—he can't use public transport or travel more actively and the electric versions of the vans are very limited in range, carrying capacity, and resale value. He appealed for the group to put pressure on industry to do more in building the infrastructure and technologies to make the transition viable in the trades.

AOB (2 mins)

Sam raised the need to codevelop a cheat sheet of climate information (as discussed last time) and he said he'd circulate something to start that process

Sam to start climate knowledge cheat sheet for comment

Sam also mentioned a retrofit policy paper that the TUC is developing and which he'd love feedback on

Sam to circulate the draft retrofit policy paper for comment