

## Meeting 5

# Yorkshire and Humber Just Transition Network

## Agenda for meeting held online Wednesday 10 April 2024

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/gw6lewn8XPw>**

### Invitees

Andrew Johnson ([andrew.johnson8@nhs.net](mailto:andrew.johnson8@nhs.net)), Andrew Miles ([aj.miles@virginmedia.com](mailto:aj.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 Copland ([coplandattalktalk@gmail.com](mailto:coplandattalktalk@gmail.com)), Dan Wynn-Mackenzie ([dan.wynn-mackenzie@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:dan.wynn-mackenzie@rotherham.gov.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)), Dave Merrett ([dave.merrett1@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dave.merrett1@hotmail.co.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)), Finn Jensen ([finn.jensen@rocketmail.com](mailto:finn.jensen@rocketmail.com)), Gerald Ramsden ([gerry.ramsden@gmail.com](mailto:gerry.ramsden@gmail.com)), Gerry Lavery ([unitecommunityleedswakefield@outlook.com](mailto:unitecommunityleedswakefield@outlook.com)), Gwen Vardigans ([gwen.vardigans@gmail.com](mailto:gwen.vardigans@gmail.com)), Ian Rashbrook ([ian.rashbrook@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:ian.rashbrook@networkrail.co.uk)), 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)), John Ingleson ([john.ingleson@nhs.net](mailto:john.ingleson@nhs.net)), Julie Forgan ([julieforgan@gmail.com](mailto:julieforgan@gmail.com)), 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)), Luke Neal ([laneal1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:laneal1@sheffield.ac.uk)), Mark Hudson ([mark.hudson@unitetheunion.org](mailto:mark.hudson@unitetheunion.org)), Martin Hickman ([patrick.hickman@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:patrick.hickman@homeoffice.gov.uk)), Natalie Ratcliffe ([n.ratcliffe@unison.co.uk](mailto:n.ratcliffe@unison.co.uk)), Nigel Parry ([nigel.parry@unitetheunion.org](mailto:nigel.parry@unitetheunion.org)), Pauline Bailey ([pbailey29@gmail.com](mailto:pbailey29@gmail.com)), Rosie Huzzard ([rosie.huzzard@neu.org.uk](mailto:rosie.huzzard@neu.org.uk)), Simon Bowens ([simon.bowens@foe.co.uk](mailto:simon.bowens@foe.co.uk)), 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)), 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)) **(48)**

### Attendees

Sam Perry, Gwen Vardigan, Catherine Porritt, John Ingleson, Carl Wood, Eve Merrall, Andrew Johnson, Ellen Robottom **(8)**

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## Apologies

Mark Hudson, Jenny Patient, Jo Cutter, Dave Merrett, Debby Cobbett (5)

## Welcome

Sam welcomed all attendees, introduced the network for those new to the group, and reminded all that we'd be recording the meeting and posting it online for those unable to attend. All consented to this. All attendees were then invited to introduce themselves

## Minutes from previous meeting

Group confirmed previous minutes are an accurate record

## Matters arising from previous meeting (15 mins)

Sam invited matters arising, and reflection on past events, meetings, action, etc.

- Sam fed back on progress of the General Motion for Climate Action circulated last time: Passed in branches and trades councils across the country and especially in Yorkshire, and a version has now passed through Yorkshire and Humber TUC regional conference. The regional TUC is now committed to engaging with climate justice group and will now campaign vigorously for 1) the cessation of new fossil fuel exploration; 2) the establishment of a National Climate Service; 3) a huge public education campaign on a just transition; 4) a specific just transition body within the education sector to oversee plans to retrofit every school, college and university to zero carbon standard by 2030; 5) public ownership of key sectors such as energy, water, and transport; and 6) the adoption of local, regional, and national policies that address climate change and environmental degradation, rooted in economic and social justice
- Sam fed back on progress of the retrofit policy paper. He said that, due to Labour's scaling back of the available funds (and the TUC's internal assessment that we are unlikely to be able to change that fact before the election), the TUC has taken the decision to put the paper as it currently stands on ice. The TUC feels that there remains an opportunity to influence the delivery methodology and principals of the remaining commitments, however, and will be publishing a shorter piece shortly setting out its policy delivery priorities. This will likely advocate for a hard reset of current schemes and delivery methods, and a single new nationally available scheme which prioritises delivery by local authorities, ensures longer-term and reliable funding delivery, ensures a worst-first approach (regardless of tenure), and ensures that key roles and responsibilities sit inalienably in local authorities. This approach is designed to be adoptable by Labour, set out trade unions' expectations, and prepare the ground for more ambitious commitments in future years. It should encourage the sector to get used to publicly led delivery, genuinely prepare the ground for future works (by ensuring a sense of the actual need in each area), and encourage LAs to actively train the workers needed to (eventually) retrofit all 28 million homes, once the economy picks up in a second and third Labour term

## Announcements (10 mins)

- Sam drew invitees' attention to the *United for Warm Homes* campaign being run by Friends of the Earth: Two local MPs (Rachael Maskell, York Central, and Olivia Blake,

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Sheffield Hallam) have [signed the accompanying pledge](#) and several local Labour PPCs, councillors, and others are supporting it

- Sam advised that the TUC is aiming for a green rep course in 2024 and a new *Leveraging Green* series of workshops for trade union officers and senior reps on how to incorporate (and benefit from incorporating) green issues into traditional and mainstream trade union work
- Sam advised that he'd got a slot at [Yorkshire Sustainability Festival](#) to put on a panel discussion on how only employers that work with their staff (via unions) can be truly sustainable. The audience is largely North-based green-minded SMEs (plus some big players), so this is a good opportunity for us to try to win converts to the value of unionism. **Sam asked for any suggestions of speakers to be sent to him**
- Sam said that Theo Hobson's blog on the Liverpool UCU green new deal claim is now on [the TUC website](#). He advised that the TUC is always looking for more case studies, so **please send any ideas for further blogs to Sam**
- Sam advertised an event as part of the [Festival of Debate](#) 7-9pm Thursday 16 May at Cemetery Road Baptist Church, Sheffield, and online on *Can the Green New Deal Fix the Cost-of-Living Crisis?* at which Olivia Blake MP, Chaitanya Kumar (NEF), Sam Mason (PCS), and Maeve Cohen (Social Guarantee) are speaking
- Sam advertised *Climate Jobs, Climate Justice* a [one-day conference](#) from CACCTU in London Saturday 13 April—[this Saturday](#)
- Ellen drew our attention to Claire James's [article](#), *Climate change is a workers' movement issue*, which is well worth reading in itself, while also prefacing the CACCTU conference this weekend
- Sam also advertised a [global live online event](#) on *World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2024*, hosted by the ILO 12.30pm Thursday 25 April
- Sam advertised *Heat Strikes: Workplace Temperature and Climate Justice*, an [online session](#) 10 April 6.30pm—[tonight](#)
- Sam advertised the *GMB Energy for All* [online launch event](#) 7pm Wednesday 24 April
- Sam reminded members of the *With Banners Held High* [festival](#) in Wakefield Saturday 11 May. Catherine reminded members that the strapline for this remains, 'The past we inherit the green future we build' but the specific focus this year is on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Miners' Strike and there are events around Orgreave and asbestos, which have just transition elements but not specifically green just transition elements, of course
- Catherine also advertised a joint NUM and NEU meeting at 6pm 25 April at the Barnsley NUM offices (2 Huddersfield Road, S70 2LS) which they also hope to stream to focus on asbestos as a trade union issue and ongoing injustice. For more information, contact Catherine

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- Catherine advertised the union banner exhibition at Wakefield Cathedral that she's organising ahead of *With Banners Held High*. She asked that anyone with a banner they wish to add to the show contact her

### **Topic presentation and discussion 1 (30 mins)**

Carl Wood, an organiser within Unite's national leverage team, gave a brief and informative presentation on Unite's *Fight for Steel* campaign and the situation at British Steel in Scunthorpe:

- He reminded members of the huge job cuts (2800) being proposed and now very likely in Port Talbot due to the planned closure by Tata Steel of the blast furnaces and their eventual replacement by recycled steel-manufacturing electric arc furnaces
- British Steel are planning a similar transition in Scunthorpe and Teesside, with the blast furnaces at Scunthorpe disappearing and new electric arc furnaces going up in Teesside, threatening 2500 jobs
- Carl told us that, while a blast furnace requires some 300 or 400 workers to run, an electric arc furnace can require only 10 to 15
- Unite's focus is for public investment to allow for a managed transition, whereby the blast furnaces are kept open while the electric arc furnaces come online and while other (greener, i.e. hydrogen) options for the production of virgin steel are developed
- With proper investment, Unite is arguing that the UK could be a world leader in steel production, rather than abandoning our capacity to other countries. Certain rules, like our non-protectionist procurement rules, mean that industry and infrastructure products are not favouring UK-produced steel (a change to which could produce 8000 more jobs itself). HS2, for instance, only uses 25% UK steel. And other rules, such as that businesses do not get reduced energy rates, mean that it's artificially more expensive to produce steel in the UK compared with places like Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain
- Unite are also campaigning that UK investment should result in the public having additional control over companies: They're not suggesting that everything be immediately nationalised but that commensurate stakes in companies be given in exchange for UK public investment
- His element of the campaign in Scunthorpe is about mobilising the community and Unite's plan has gained considerable local support from individuals and businesses. 180 local businesses have signed their petition, as have local MPs and PPCs
- He lamented that not all the unions were united on a single plan for steel

There followed a discussion during which the following contributions were made:

- Catherine stressed the high requirements for good quality steel needed to enable a just transition, and Carl agreed. For him, the tragedy is that British Steel (but also Liberty and Tata) are not being forced to think strategically or about the needs of the UK but only about their own approach. Some electric arc furnace capability is required, but it doesn't come soon enough in their plan and costs the UK dearly

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- Sam asked about Unite's approach to the potential gains for employment in Teesside and whether transitional arrangements had been discussed with British Steel to relocate workers. Carl saw the two campaigns separately, with Teesside winning and Scunthorpe losing: British Steel are not suggesting relocation for workers at all, and anyway Teesside needs employment itself because its own steel production was decimated in the past. He stressed that there were once 40,000 steel workers in Scunthorpe and there are now a tenth of that

### **Topic presentation and discussion 2 (30 mins)**

Eve Merrall gave a brief and informative presentation on the University of Liverpool's [Joint Trade Union Green New Deal Collective Bargaining Claim](#) and working group on decarbonising employer operations:

- She highlighted how climate change would make universities, like other workplaces, more unsafe—working temperatures, flooding risks, etc.—but also would destabilise the institution financially and destabilise employment because it risks making employment more precarious and poses significant retraining needs for certain subject-expert academics especially
- The local UCU branch used their national Green New Deal framework to build a cross-union action group (including the student union), to pass Green New Deal motions in each union, and to put a claim to the University of Liverpool
- The claim had five themes: Emissions reduction, sustainable employment, decarbonising and decolonialising curricula, decarbonising research (especially research funding streams), and divesting the employer's assets from carbon-heavy investments. They conducted extensive research on these issues and what success would look like. The action plan they developed was structured around the UN Sustainable Development Goals because they speak to the same topics but also because the employer was a signatory to them so it was felt that they could be effectively leveraged
- The University of Liverpool responded to the claim by saying that they did not believe that the issues raised were matters for collective bargaining but that they would hold eight meetings to discuss each aspect of the claim, plus a final review meeting. The unions didn't spend much time challenging this because they felt it was not a winnable argument and the result of meetings was already achieved
- The claim gained very strong support from union membership, increased inter-union relationships and solidarity with the student union, built relationships with local MPs and others, spread success through the press and union outlets, and allowed UCU to 'guinea pig' their negotiating approach, helping national staff to understand what good green bargaining looks like
- It also put climate action firmly on the local unions' agendas; allowed the unions to build more productive relationships with more diverse representatives of senior management; allowed the unions to make headway on the anti-casualisation claim that ran in parallel; resulted in improved carbon accounting; gained a standing quarterly meeting with the trade unions to discuss matters of sustainability with the sustainability

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team and senior management; and gained union consultee status on additional elements of the employer's strategic development

- Eve reflected on that their successes, while real, were diffused and it was not always clear what the university would have done anyway

There followed a discussion during which the following contributions were made:

- The group expressed how they were very impressed with the work of the campaign and learnt from the presentation
- The group reflected on the novelty of the claim and how it can be helpful for others in other settings, to which Eve responded that they intended to publish lesson learn here too
- A question was asked as to whether the claim was pursued by longstanding traditional unionists or newcomers to unionism. Eve said that most of the active members have been new to unionism—coming from climate justice backgrounds rather than trade union backgrounds—but that the longstanding unionists fully supported the claim and that this 'new blood' was enabling of action that would likely not have happened without it

### **AOB (5 mins)**

- Contributions in AOB have been added to the announcements section above

*Members of the YHJTN (listed below as invitees) consent to their contact details, attendance, and contributions being shared with the TUC and with other members of the Network. This consent extends to video content as shared by the TUC and made publicly available. For the purposes of data protection legislation, the TUC is the data controller and members' data are held according to the TUC [Privacy Policy](#). Should any particular member wish to withdraw their consent, please contact Sam Perry in the first instance.*