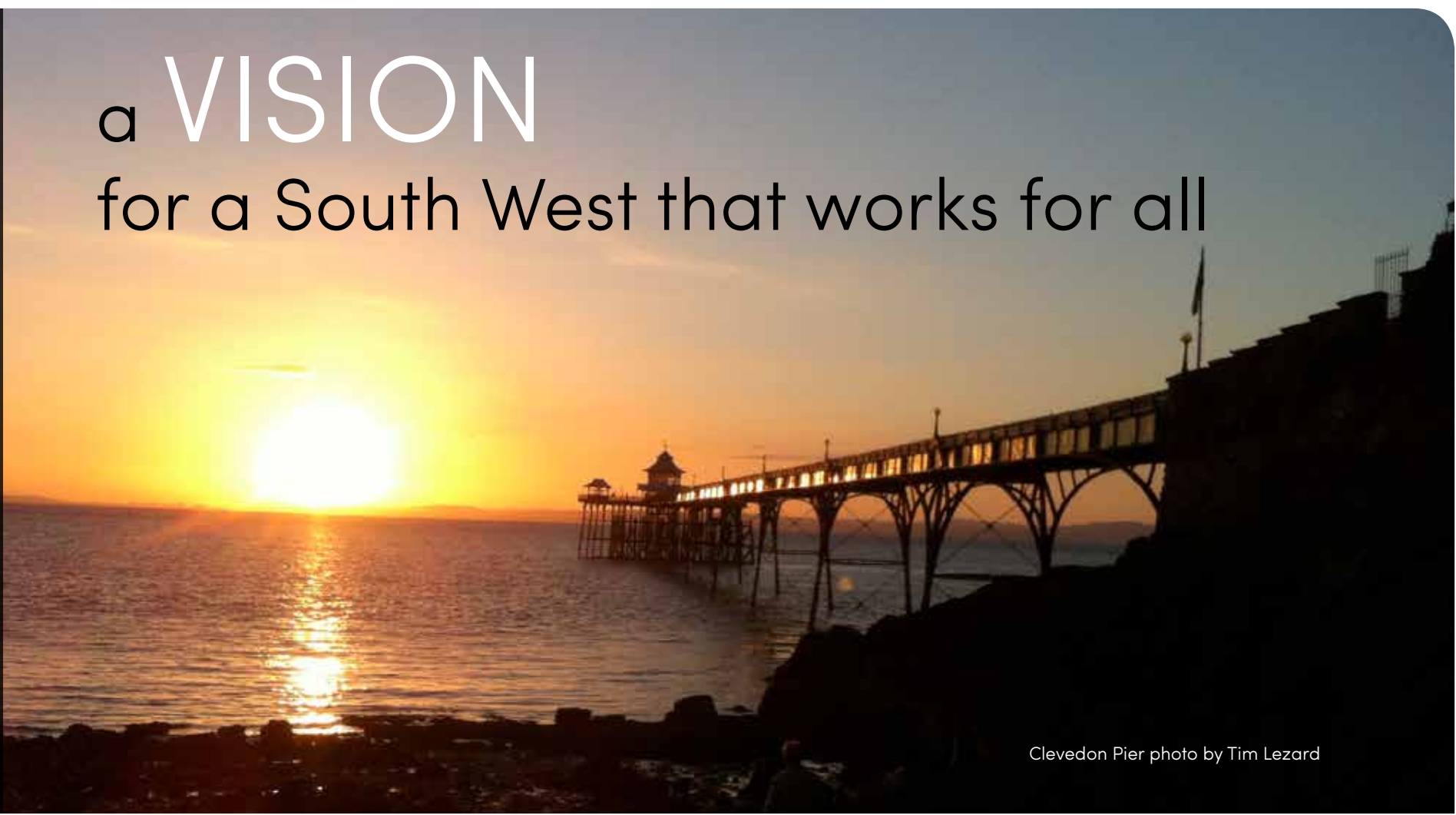


a VISION

for a South West that works for all



Clevedon Pier photo by Tim Lezard



- ▶ DECENT JOBS
- ▶ SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE
- ▶ EQUALITIES
- ▶ A WELL CONNECTED REGION
- ▶ AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- ▶ A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY
- ▶ STRONG PUBLIC SERVICES



INTRODUCTION

The last few years have been hard for most working people. Pay has been squeezed, jobs have been lost, insecurity at work has risen and public services have been cut.

The government tells us we have to face more of the same for years to come, but trade unions believe there is an alternative.

The South West TUC, which is not affiliated to any political party, has developed this vision for the South West.

We hope it will provide an important contribution to the debate, setting out a more hopeful, optimistic view for the future of our region.

Nigel Costley
South West TUC
Regional Secretary

VISION

for the South West

Published by the South West TUC, in consultation with member unions across the South West, on behalf of 100,000 trade unionists across the region.

Unions are a force for good in workplaces: they resolve issues quickly and ensure a fair voice for workers. As workplaces have changed, so has the role of unions.

One of the main causes of the gulf of economic inequality has been the ebbing away of workplace democracy and union rights in the workplace. We want to see the establishment of a Commission on Fairness at Work to explore practical policy ideas that can improve workers' rights and voice at work.

We want to bring union laws into the 21st century to promote a spirit of co-operation and freedom for unions to organise. We want to see the law around union ballots changed to restore secret workplace ballots and introduce electronic voting, making it easier for union members to participate in union democracy.

We want to see an end to

the onerous forthcoming auditing requirements for unions and the abolition of the £1,000 Employment Tribunal fees pricing workers out of justice.

We want to see legal protection for union equality representatives and union green representatives in the workplace.

We want to see the democratic voice of workers respected by reforming collective bargaining arrangements; should a majority of workers in a workplace want a union to represent them, and they express this by joining a union, then this should be respected and the role of the Central Arbitration

EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE . . . AND BEYOND

Commission should be reformed to better accommodate workers' wishes.

Unions work hard promoting equality. Austerity has led to a reversal on achieving equality for marginalised groups.

The real gains made in the 2000s have been stalled by the public sector cuts which have a disproportionate impact on women, BME people, LGBT people and those with disabilities.

Incidents of harassment and discrimination at work have risen and the introduction of fees for Employment Tribunals are impeding those seeking justice.

The closure of Equality South West, a body that was successful in putting equality issues at the heart of the debates on the issues facing our region, has been keenly felt, especially given the

A COMMISSION ON FAIRNESS AT WORK TO EXPLORE PRACTICAL POLICY IDEAS THAT CAN IMPROVE WORKERS' RIGHTS AND VOICE AT WORK.

loss of many racial equality councils in the region too.

We want to see more support for regional equality structures to ensure the voices of marginalised groups are heard.

The duty of public sector bodies to carry out Equality Impact Assessments has gone some way in ensuring that equality perspectives are heard when decisions are made. This duty must be protected and enforced.

We want to see a duty on large employers to carry out equal pay audits and to report on gender pay gaps to build on the obligations employers have had since the introduction of the Equal Pay Act.

We also want to see a strengthening of the protections for pregnant workers and workers returning from parental leave.

Fair Play

SOUTH WEST

We support the South West Women's Manifesto produced by Fair Play South West, the women's network.

Its main points are:

To improve women's access to jobs with adequate hours and decent pay

- ▶ More free and subsidised childcare
- ▶ Better access to flexible working in higher paid jobs
- ▶ Improved public transport
- ▶ Equal pay and a living wage

To increase women's power and influence

- ▶ All women shortlists for all political parties
- ▶ Quotas for women to sit on company boards and government quangos

- ▶ Requirements to ensure meeting times take account of the needs of women's domestic responsibilities

To increase women's safety in the home and on the street

- ▶ Control of the media to end exploitation of women
- ▶ Relationship education in schools
- ▶ Better funded support for victims and more effective dealing with perpetrators
- ▶ Improved policing of streets

To improve women's access to health services

- ▶ Recognition of specific health needs of women
- ▶ Recognition of different ways women experience and access health care.

We want to see an end of the scapegoating of immigrants. We have helped trade unionists and others engage in the debate over migration and population by producing facts and figures alongside the main arguments. The region has an overwhelmingly white, British population but that sometimes allows scare stories to spread unchallenged.

We want to see a crackdown on bad employers who by exploiting migrant workers over wages and conditions are making money by undercutting existing communities.

People who come to the UK need support to learn English in order to fit in at work and in the community. We want to see an end to the hypocrisy of politicians who demand migrants speak English at the same time as cutting the resources for such courses.

Universities and colleges in the South West rely on fee-paying international students. We want a region where these students are

TRUTH, LIES AND MIGRANTS IN THE SOUTH WEST

welcomed and where our education institutions encourage everyone to develop an international outlook and share knowledge around the world.

We were one of the first signatories to Bristol as a Sanctuary City. We share a vision that is welcoming to strangers, outward-looking and one that does not risk closing off global opportunities for West Country people and businesses.

DECENT, FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE JOBS

We want the South West economy to provide decent, fair and sustainable jobs. Too many employers pay less than the Living Wage and lower than average wages, encouraging a race to the bottom.

The region has seen a massive growth in forced part-time working, zero- and short-hour contracts, leading to an increase of insecure jobs and a big drop in living standards.

So-called umbrella payroll companies have been set up in some sectors to avoid giving workers their legal rights and to help companies evade National Insurance contributions.

We want to see concerted action from political and business leaders to regularise employment contracts with fixed hours and decent terms becoming the norm.

Sustainable growth will only come as workers get more pay and feel confident to invest and spend. Weekly pay for an average full time worker in the South West is

WE CHALLENGE THOSE EMPLOYERS WHO ARGUE IT IS GOOD TO HAVE A JOB AT ANY PRICE.

£485; the national average is £518, meaning West Country workers are losing £1,716 every year.

Almost a quarter (23%) of workers in the region earn less than the Living Wage of £7.85 per hour, more than the national average.

Several employers in the South West already pay the Living Wage. We want to see this spread throughout the region, with the public sector taking the lead, not only by paying their staff the Living Wage but also by only sub-contracting work to companies that pay it.

In the short term we want the National Minimum Wage raised to at least £7 per hour; longer term we want this to rise to £10 per hour.

We want politicians to limit the qualifying period for employment rights to a maximum of three months, and for more resources to be put into the legal

enforcement of the Minimum Wage, especially in sectors such as social care where such abuses appear to be common.

We want to see the re-introduction of the Agricultural Wages Board which helped keep wages and terms and conditions

£10
AN HOUR –
NOT TOO MUCH
TO ASK

at a decent level in rural communities. We want to see similar sector-based pay agreements in sectors such as social care, retail and distribution, which are built on low pay and poor conditions.

We have witnessed too much exploitation of vulnerable workers. We have supported the work of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, arguing against limiting its remit and resources. We want to see its scope widened to cover other sectors where abuse exists, such as construction, catering and social care.

We challenge those employers who argue it is good to have a job at any price. The economy needs to raise productivity and performance through skills and decent work. The economy will not be built on low pay.

We want to see a Job Guarantee for all young



people who have been out of work for six months and for all adults facing long-term unemployment of over a year, including clear responsibilities and duties for employers to invest in training young workers.

We need a fair system of taxation to help achieve a fair and sustainable economy. People at the top and corporations have been able to exploit the weakness of the global system to avoid or evade paying their tax share.

Britain needs to be part of developing a fair international tax system, with a clear timetable for ending tax havens, agreements to ensure transnational companies pay taxes at the same rate in each country, measures to ensure developing countries get a fair share of taxation so they can escape aid dependency by 2030 and a Robin Hood Tax that discourages speculation and encourages long-term investment in the real economy.

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
NEEDS A LONG-
TERM STRATEGIC
APPROACH TO
MAKE THE LINKS
BETWEEN SKILLS
AND ENTERPRISE,
HOUSING AND
TRANSPORT, JOBS
AND PEOPLE.

We are keen to work with the region's six Local Enterprise Partnerships, the Economic Development teams in local authorities, the skills and jobs agencies and others in the disjointed structure that currently exists.

Decisions need to be made and delivery achieved at the most appropriate level but the demise of regional institutions based on the obvious geography of the South West has resulted in conflict and confusion amongst those who need to collaborate.

To develop a sustainable economy with planned investment in infrastructure, housing and skills needs an approach bigger than local authority areas. Work to promote the South West to inward investors, for example, will not be successful at local level.

Foreign investment in the South West collapsed by 40% cent after the Regional Development Agency was abolished. Wales, which retained its co-ordinated economic development approach, saw its foreign

investment rise by 244%.

We want to see a thriving, vibrant economy that includes a strong internationalist outlook. The South West has a poor exporting record and business should be encouraged through support to trade around the world.

International trade is vital but unions, environmental and other campaign groups are right to oppose the proposed Transatlantic Trade Investment Partnership (TTIP). This is not an agreement to remove trade tariffs but an attack on minimum standards. We are particularly alarmed at the threat to the NHS.

PUBLIC SERVICES
IN THE PUBLIC
INTEREST

We want to see a reversal of the cuts to public services. Our public services are the core of what makes our communities work; what makes us secure when times get tough; the very essence of a fair, decent society.

Public services need a high quality, well motivated workforce, with fair pay, pensions and employment standards. In the last few years, public servants have felt demonised and demoralised as pay has been cut, jobs lost and work intensified. But most upsetting for public sector workers is to see valuable services being lost.

Privatisation led to the contract for NHS Kernow's out-of-hours GP services being awarded to Serco, then taken away after the contractor was criticised by the Parliamentary accounts committee for failing to meet national standards, falsifying

data and a 'bullying culture'.

We are concerned private firms are winning contracts on the basis on unsustainable bids believing that they will be able to raise prices once the public sector option has been defeated. The public sector should be the default provider before any services are outsourced or contracted out.

Trade unions are open to genuine innovation in our public service delivery and welcome an inclusive dialogue about how we organise our public services. There should be universal standards in our public services but there should also be genuine localism.

Public services in the South West face demographic challenges as life expectancies continue to rise and older people from other parts of the country migrate here to retire.



EDUCATION AND HEALTH NOT FOR SALE

The Health and Social Care Act heralded the biggest re-organisation of the NHS in its history by opening up the organisation to competition and privatisation, effectively putting it up for sale in a market free-for-all.

We have a vision for health services in the South West where people are not waiting hours for an ambulance and to be seen in A&E, not waiting weeks to see a GP and not waiting months – sometimes years – for operations or cancer treatment.

Cuts to healthcare are having a major impact on communities. We are starting to see Clinical Commissioning Groups, such as North East and

West Devon CCG, rationing access to clinical procedures for those who are obese or are smokers. This approach undermines the bedrock principle of the NHS that healthcare should be for all, not for a few, and we oppose it strongly.

We call for the repeal of the Health and Social Care Act and for the establishment of a newly-integrated health and social care system with the NHS as preferred provider and social care free at the point of use.

We want to see enacted the key recommendations of the Francis report on safe staffing ratios and the regulation and training of healthcare assistants.

Education not for sale

All pupils and students have a right to a high-quality education; education should not be a commodity.

Market-based reforms introduced over the past twenty years are based on the idea that schools and colleges compete against each other for the business of attracting pupils. Now some are arguing that

competition would improve if schools were run for profit.

There should be a commitment by all political parties to enshrine in legislation that no school should be allowed to be run for profit directly or indirectly.

All publicly-funded educational institutions must be fully accountable to all, especially parents and local communities.

All state-funded schools should adhere to national 'education entitlements', including the right of all pupils to be taught by fully qualified teachers and for all schools to be governed by the same requirements and flexibilities with regard to the National Curriculum.

In further and higher education, the government should introduce a new requirement that public support must only go to educational and training organisations that are not-for-profit, and should put in place a tougher regulatory framework for those organisations owned by for-profit companies.



Our welfare safety net is under threat. Government campaigns to 'cut the welfare bill' are putting more people at risk. In the South West last year, more than 105,521 people resorted to using foodbanks. Cuts to vital lifelines such as the Independent Living Fund and Access to Work are making it harder for disabled people to live and work in our society.

The Bedroom Tax is forcing vulnerable social housing tenants into choosing whether to eat or pay the rent. And yet rhetoric about 'scroungers' and 'skivers' masks the reality that the majority of welfare recipients are either in work or retired.

The South West TUC wants to see the welfare bill reduced, but in a way that supports people into a better quality of life, not punish them for working in low-paid jobs.

We believe giving people a pay rise reduces the burden on a limited welfare budget in a fairer and more prosperous way. The problem is not how high (or, in reality, how low) benefit

INSTEAD OF ATTACKING TAX CREDITS AND BENEFITS FOR WORKING MIGRANTS WE NEED EMPLOYERS TO PAY A WAGE THAT CAN SUPPORT ALL WORKERS WITHOUT RELYING ON STATE SUBSIDY.

levels are, but how low wages are.

But we would want to see the protection that tax credits provide kept for the time being, and hopefully diminish the need for them through fairer pay levels.

Instead of attacking tax credits and benefits for working migrants we need employers to pay a wage that can support all workers without relying on state subsidy.

The current regime of sanctions – where Jobcentre Plus advisers are given targets on how many claimants have to be sanctioned – has to be reformed and a new emphasis on providing jobseekers with actual skills, advice and guidance be placed.

We are opposed to the government's unpaid Workfare scheme which

destroys what limited paid job opportunities exist. Expecting JSA claimants to do work for free in return for their benefits also undermines the value of the work of the people they work alongside.

The only people who benefit from compulsory unpaid work are the employers who are getting labour for free that they otherwise would have to pay for.

Media in the South West

Journalists play a vital role in the democracy of the South West by holding politicians to account.

Cost-cutting by newspaper companies and broadcasters, leading to fewer jobs, makes it harder for journalists to carry out this scrutiny role. We want to see a diverse, well-funded media in the region.

Ten photographers employed by Local World in the South West,

have been forced to accept new contracts as “freelance consultants” on worse pay, terms and conditions.

We want to see the implementation of the arrangements for press self-

regulation put forward by the Leveson Inquiry in 2012. We need the system to offer an effective right to reply to inaccuracies, operated by a regulator that represents journalists and the public.

We also want publishers to operate a ‘conscience clause’ to enable journalists to refuse to work unethically.

The slow reaction of the government to the 2014 storms showed the failure of the fragmentation of the South West’s transport infrastructure.

In the aftermath of the floods, the Transport Secretary said he would invest £40m in the Plymouth area to prevent a recurrence but we believe the true figure needed is nearer £7billion.

A long-term solution to the issue of the Somerset Levels needs to be ecologically sustainable while meeting the needs of local communities. As the impact of climate change increases so will the need for a regional response to resilience and rapid reaction to emergencies.

Privatisation and competition on buses and rail networks has led to reduced services

KEEPING THE SOUTH WEST MOVING AND COMMUNICATING



focused on the profitable routes. The less lucrative services have been cut to satisfy shareholders, not passengers, and fares have risen.

We need a transport vision that connects the South West with fast and reliable rail services integrated into an affordable bus system. This requires authorities working together, and where necessary, such as around Bristol and Bath, forming an integrated transport authority to plan routes, fares, discount ticketing systems, times and quality of services. Concessionary travel permit schemes should enable retired people to travel at times that suit them.

The TUC has a positive vision of a publicly-owned rail system for the 21st century. The experience of East Coast Trains showed that a publicly owned railway can be affordable, efficient and reliable. Privatisation of our railways has led to a fragmented, expensive and dysfunctional system.

Since privatisation, more than £11 billion of public

funds has been misspent on debt write-offs, dividend payments to private investors, fragmentation costs including profit margins of complex tiers of contractors and sub-contractors, and higher interest payments in order to keep Network Rail's debts off the government balance sheet.

Our fares are among the highest in Europe, many of our services are overcrowded and rely on obsolete rolling stock. We welcome the investment in electrification of the line from London to Bristol but it should go further. The report by WPS engineering highlighted that the £2 billion price tag for electrifying the line to Penzance would be more than met by a £60 billion boost to the regional economy over its sixty years' life span.

Trade unions have supported campaigns for local bus and train services. Rural services have been cut to the bone with villages left isolated and young people in particular unable to enjoy a social life using public

transport. The authorities and transport providers have dragged their feet over badly needed investment in projects such as restoring the station at Portishead and opening the Henbury Loop around Bristol.

Communication networks in our communities are vital. The further rolling out of superfast broadband should be motivated by a desire to provide a service for communities, not by a desire to make money.

The Universal Service Obligation of Royal Mail is vital as competition in the postal sector allows private companies to cherry pick the more profitable services. The six-day service is under threat, especially for large rural areas such as the South West.

MORE THAN JUST BRICKS AND MORTAR: HOUSING POLICY FOR ALL

Average house prices in the South West are now out of reach for most workers. In 1997 the average house price was less than five times the average local salary in 31 of the 35 local authority areas across the South West. By 2013 every part of the region had seen house prices rise above this level.



EVERY PART OF THE SOUTH WEST HAS AVERAGE HOUSE PRICES MORE THAN FIVE TIMES THE AVERAGE SALARY

The Cotswolds is the most unaffordable area in the South West, with a house price to local salary ratio of 11.6 compared to 5.5 times the average local salary in 1997. In 1997, Plymouth, Swindon and Gloucester were all 'easily affordable', with house price to wage ratios around three to one. They are all now out of reach for many local people.

The National Housing Federation estimates that 21,500 new households will form each year between 2013 and 2021, but in 2012/13, only 13,460 new homes were completed in the South West.

Private rents in the region are expected to rise by 40% by 2020, much ahead of the national average. The average house price in the region is £225,001, an increase of 55% on

2002 prices at a time when average wages rose by only 26%.

The crisis is particularly acute for young and older people. 23% of people aged between 20 and 34 are still having to live with their parents; at the same time the number of households led by people aged over 64 is set to rise 21% by 2021.

It's not just that the region isn't building enough homes – it is also that what few are being built are unaffordable and unsuitable for most working people. The big homebuilders and landowners are putting their profits before the needs and wishes of local communities.

So called 'land-banking' – holding onto land suitable for housing development – is delaying building in order to boost profits.

We want to see an end to excessive letting agency fees, the outlawing of 'revenge evictions' of tenants who raise issues with their landlord and the introduction of rent controls. Such measures, alongside a greater role for councils

to regulate landlords, can give more powers to tenants in a relationship which has become far too unequal.

Community involvement in housing planning is vital. We oppose 'NIMBYism', but believe it is possible to balance the region's dire need for new housing with the wishes of the local community.

When housing supply is so short, quality suffers and communities fear the impact of poorly designed, 'off-the-shelf' housing estates. Local community investment schemes, such as the Bristol Bond, mean communities can raise funds through sympathetic investors, credit unions and councils to build attractive housing on the basis of need.

Councils should be allowed to borrow at cheaper rates in order to build more social housing to meet the demand for affordable housing. Housing must also be of a good standard and provide a safe, comforting space for those who live in it and we want to see action to bring all housing up to minimum standards so that all can

enjoy a decent house to call their home.

The question of what is 'affordable housing' should also be addressed. Currently, 'affordability' of housing costs is judged according to average house prices and rents in a particular area, rather than on average pay packets. Government reforms meant that Housing Benefit payments are linked to the 30th percentile of rents in a particular area – we would want to see this restored to average rents in a particular area, along with abolishing the pernicious 'Bedroom Tax'.

SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

GKN employing thousands of people across our region. Future skills are critical to the future of the sector.

We have a large financial sector with companies such as Nationwide Building Society, Zurich Insurance, Friends Life and Liverpool Victoria having major operations in the region.

We enjoy one of the most burgeoning and innovative media and creative sectors outside of London with companies such as Future Publishing, Made in Bristol and Aardman.

Alongside these sectors, agriculture, tourism and

The South West's manufacturing sector remains strong, with companies such as Airbus, Babcock, Rolls-Royce, Augusta Westland and



hospitality still employ many of the region's workers, and we are seeing a major increase in our social care sector to deal with an ageing population.

The future of the South West economy lies in having a highly-skilled workforce, but the current system is struggling to produce the skills we need.

Young people are being pushed into an ever-narrowing range of options in further and higher education. Companies have cut back on workplace training and skills.

Opportunities for unions and employers to work together on shared aims for skills and training are not being taken up. We need a radical new approach.

We want parity of esteem between apprenticeships, and more academic routes. There are plenty of examples of high-quality apprenticeships and traineeships, developed collaboratively between employers, unions and providers which give young people the skills, knowledge and experience they need.

Times are still tough for many companies in our region because of weak growth and low demand, and because of this, in-work skills and training opportunities are suffering.

If we are to have the highly-skilled workforce we need serious investment in work-based training. Tax relief for companies who invest in in-work skills and training can make a real difference and give support to those companies who want to do the right thing for their workforce.

Our Local Enterprise Partnerships should seize the opportunities to work with unions to help develop a learning culture in every workplace.

At a time when workers may have to retrain during their working lives, good, reliable advice and local learning centres are needed. Workers must be able to access all levels of training, from essential skills in English, maths and IT to further and higher education.

THE SOUTH WEST HAS THE POTENTIAL TO LEAD THE WAY TO A NEW LOW-CARBON, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY.

Bristol is the 2015 European Green Capital and green issues and the need for the transition to a low-carbon, environmentally friendly economy will be on the front page more than ever.

Unions want to see a just transition that doesn't disadvantage working people or shoulder them with an unfair burden.

We believe tackling climate change can have a real positive social and economic impact beyond the environment. We want to see serious investment in the skills and opportunities to develop green energy. The challenge of a depleting fossil fuel supply with an ever-increasing demand for energy means society has to think big and think the unthinkable. But the mad dash for new fuel shouldn't put our communities at risk and should be done in harmony with the Earth, not against it.

Marine energy has a huge potential for our region. We have a skilled workforce in the marine sector which can harness the power of sea and our waterways to provide plentiful and environmentally friendly energy.

We want to see energy generated from the Severn estuary that balances the needs and lives of the various communities along the channel. Confusion over the government's policies toward renewable energy led RWE to withdraw plans to build the massive Atlantic Array wind farm in the Bristol Channel.

The Wave Hub, built off the north Cornwall coast, was a brave investment led by the Regional Development Agency but progress on the world-leading wave energy initiative has stumbled following the government's decision to abolish the RDA.

Government intervention and leadership is essential in

developing these significant projects. A well funded state Green Investment Bank can help build new markets in green energy, creating the skilled jobs that our region desperately needs.

Energy conservation has been badly handled by the government. The Green Deal is a fiasco. A major, systematic programme of retrofitting homes and small business buildings to improve energy efficiency will be a major boon for our region. Not only would it create thousands of jobs, but it would also reduce the energy bills of already highly-squeezed households and small enterprises and reduce our overall energy use. It needs to be driven by the public sector with local authorities playing a central role in its roll-out.

There is a big role for unions and we want support for union green reps in workplaces across the region.

We've outlined our vision for a South West that works – and now we need you to get involved to help us make it a reality.

Quiz your election candidates

Make the candidates earn your vote – ask them questions on where they stand on the issues we've raised. Email them, write to them, go to hustings.

Join and get active in your union

Unions are at the forefront of campaigning for a better deal for working people. If you're not already a member of a union, visit www.tuc.org.uk/joinaunion. And if you're a member, why not get involved? Unions work best when members get involved.

Sign up for updates from the TUC

Keep up to date with everything the TUC is doing, in the South West and beyond. Email southwest@tuc.org.uk and sign up for the South West TUC enews.

Join our online campaigns

goingToWork is the TUC's online campaign hub. It's a space where you can support union campaigns for a better, fairer society. Sign up now at www.goingtowork.org.uk

South West TUC

Church House
Church Road
Filton
Bristol BS34 7BD
phone: 0117 947 0521
email: southwest@tuc.org.uk
web: www.tuc.org.uk/southwest
twitter: @swtuc