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1. Editorial- Trade Unions’ Stand on Carbon Pollution

The tame phrase ‘climate change’ hardly does justice to the universal carbon pollution that is choking our cities, acidifying the oceans, disrupting seasons with unbounded extremes of heat and cold, and magnifying storms and droughts. As we report here, one impact among many is on 140 million people displaced through climate-related disasters in the past six years. The risks will redouble in coming decades, reversing years of development activity and driving up inequality in the global South.

There couldn’t be a clearer challenge to dogged trade union support for a polluting third runway at Heathrow than that latest withering report from the Environmental Audit Committee of MPs, that we discuss below. Nor a louder silence from trade unions as the government disdains solar power with a new tax on solar schemes, and forgets solar power in the government’s new ‘industrial strategy.’

Not so the National Union of Students, with an increasingly effective campaign to force University endowment funds to sell their fossil fuels investments. And on 22 April UK scientists are uniting in a global swell of opposition to Presidents Trump’s ignorant attack on climate science.

Trade unions proudly support Hope not Hate, fight for safe workplaces and stand against gender and pay inequality. Internationalism is hard wired into trade unions’ DNA. But exactly how are trade unions in the UK confronting the existential threat posed by carbon pollution?



2. Government Fails to Make Safe Case for Heathrow

An independent, cross-Party committee of MPs has said <http://bit.ly/2l6VDIm> that the government was not doing enough to demonstrate a third Heathrow runway <http://bit.ly/2l71mr7> could be built without breaking the UK's targets to cut carbon emissions or breaking laws on air quality.



An independent expert report from the Committee on Climate Change <http://bit.ly/2mk6SbK> has already told the government that “aviation should plan for emissions in 2050 to be no higher than those in 2005.”

The Environmental Audit Committee's (EAC) report argues that Ministers persistently failed to define which obligations it would be meeting on climate change, or whether it would keep to EU limits on air quality

<http://bit.ly/2kpGTTc> after Brexit. And its assurances on noise respite also lacked credibility.

As we go to press, none of the big three unions supporting Heathrow expansion (GMB, Unite, Prospect) had commented on the MPs' report. Unite has set out 5 reasons for a third runway, none of which deal with the profound environmental issues involved. <http://bit.ly/2coW0Up>

Mary Creagh, Labour MP for Wakefield and EAC chair, said: “If the government wants to get Heathrow expansion off the ground it needs to show that a third runway can be built and run without exceeding legal limits on air pollution <http://bit.ly/2gtbgTo> or breaching our carbon budgets.

Growth figures from an expanded Heathrow would leave international aviation emissions 15% higher than the level assumed in the UK's Fifth Carbon Budget, which runs from 2028-32.

Moreover, since the Government intends to withdraw the UK from the EU before April 2019, there is no certainty about what our legally binding air quality limits will be after 2019.



3. Air Quality - A Workplace Issue

There has been a massive amount written recently about air quality in the UK. Yet very little has been said about why it is a priority issue in the workplace. Outdoor air pollution is contributing to around 40,000 deaths a year according to the Royal Colleges of Physicians, Paediatrics, and Child Health. MPs have declared it a public health emergency. It can cause heart disease, lung disease, asthma, and impact children's development, and has been linked to an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Most air pollution is created by work, and people travelling to work. Workers are exposed to and create pollution to fulfil contractual obligations to employers.

Why is more not being done to get employers to address the causes of this environmental disaster?



Photo: Friends of the Earth Scotland

National Policy

The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) will shortly be publishing guidance on road-traffic pollution and its links to ill health. The GJA responded to the consultation by highlighting the fact that it had very little to say about the responsibilities of employers even though they are one of the target groups for the guidance. This is an extract from our submission:

'Employers must have much stronger responsibilities in this guidance. Currently they are informed that 'they could consider' 3 transport-related initiatives. Their responsibilities on air pollution should go much wider than that and be commensurate with their role in an economy responsible for this public health crisis. It should include their energy management policies, procurement, and low carbon transition strategy. Their role in the awareness raising of their workforce is something that requires planning in conjunction with employees and their representative's policy. This should be wide-ranging on air pollution and related issues like climate change.'

The GJA will be interested to see if any of these points are taken on board in the revised version following the consultation that ended in January. When the guidance is published we will circulate it in a future newsletter.

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA)

Nationally, there are laws which prevent employers from exposing workers to harmful emissions in the workplace. Yet these are hardly used to address the problem.

The point we are making is that employees and their trades unions should be involved in the decisions about dealing with air quality. This includes everything from transport arrangements, travel to work policies, combatting pollution both inside and in the immediate vicinity of the workplace, information and awareness. If necessary, unions should use their rights in the Safety Reps and Safety Committee Regulations 1977, to put this on the agenda for discussions with the employer. There is a big overlap with health, safety and welfare issues. Section 2.1 of HASAWA states:

*General duties of employers to their employees.
2(1) It shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees.*

This duty is broken down into 5 sub sections all of which potentially have a relevance to air pollution exposure. Other workplace regulations may also have a role in getting employers to face up to their responsibilities. Of course this will not be easy. For example, without considerable pressure, would a high street supermarket want to highlight air pollution concerns for both its' staff and customers?

The GJA will be exploring opportunities for using



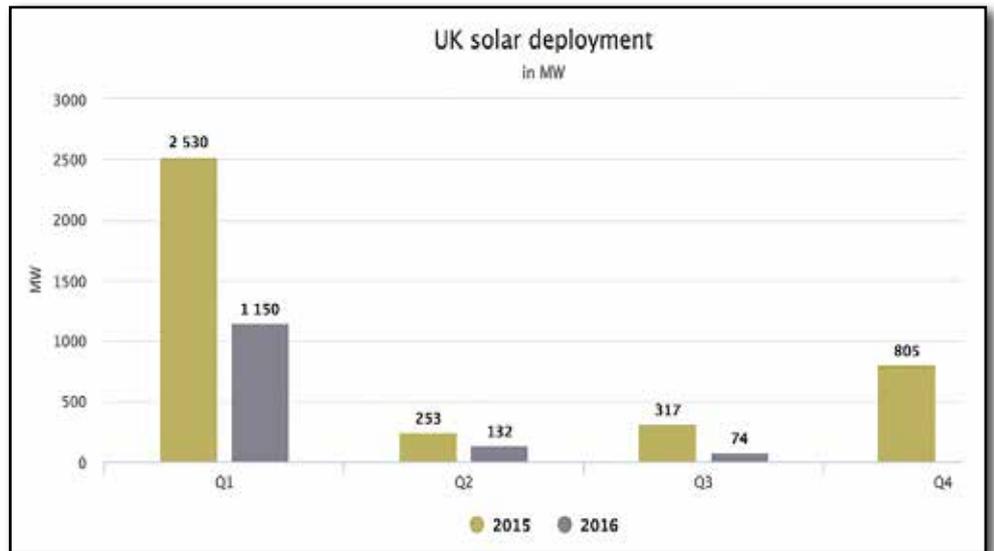
the current legal requirements in a new online training module. This will be launched in June and we are keen to receive any ideas from our supporters about the content of this. Please contact us on [gjacomsg@gmail.com](mailto:gjacoms@gmail.com) with your thoughts.

4. Stop the Attack on the UK Solar Industry

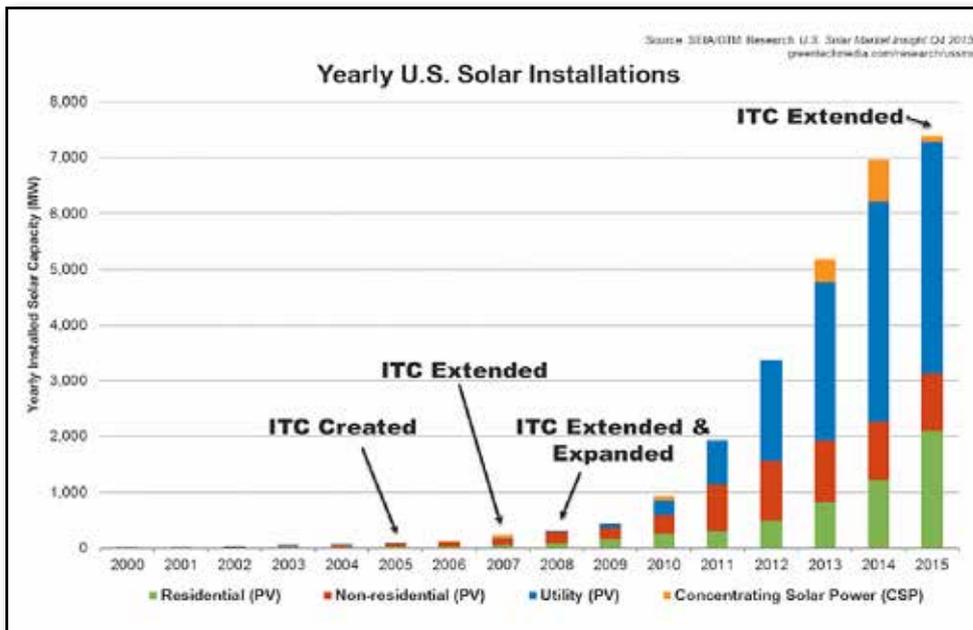
Government cuts to the solar industry already triggered over 12,000 job losses. Now, the Treasury is planning a huge tax increase on the 23,000 commercial rooftop installations in England — thousands of offices, schools and hospitals, many of which installed solar to help save money on their energy bills.

You can sign the Petition here <http://bit.ly/2lgTeFt> – over 175,000 people have so far. Government plans to revise business rates from April 2017 could leave businesses and schools that install solar panels with a tax bill that's up to 8 times higher.

Industry experts are raising the alarm that such a sudden and huge tax rise would prove catastrophic for swathes of UK solar firms. That's why it's vital we speak up now, before the changes are approved in early 2017.



Official figures <http://bit.ly/2lgzUbl> show the installation of rooftop solar projects has collapsed



Can Trump derail booming US solar industry?

In the USA, the solar power industry is booming, supported by a Solar Industry Tax Credit (ITC – see graph left) introduced in 2005, which has provided industry stability and growth – and a huge boost for green jobs.

Source: Solar Energy Industries Association: <http://www.seia.org/research-resources/solar-industry-data>

In 2016, new installations approached 15GW for the first time (in the UK we installed just over 1GW, see graph, half of the 2105 figure). Now in the USA, over 260,000 people work in over 9,000 solar businesses. By 2021, the number is forecast to reach 360,000 workers. <http://bit.ly/2lqo4i4>

However, Oklahoma attorney general Scott Pruitt has been sworn in as head of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Pruitt, a climate sceptic and long-time adversary of the EPA, is to try to roll back many of Obama's environmental policies, including calling time on President Obama's flagship climate policy, the Clean Power Plan to cut pollution from coal power plants.

But hope trumps hate! Sign that Petition!

5. Changing Face of Climate Change

A woman wading through flood waters is replacing the polar bear as the defining image of climate change. She is one of 140 million people displaced through climate-related disasters in the past six years – one person every second. Delegates to the UK's first trade union/Friends of the Earth conference on Climate Refugees (Saturday 11 February) learned that the risks will redouble in coming decades, reversing years of development activity in the global South. A follow-up campaign day is planned for 11 March <http://www.campaigncc.org/climaterefugeefollowup>.

Asad Rehman (FoE) told delegates that to achieve our goal of UN action to address the climate refugee crisis, it falls on us to create a new narrative across civil society based on the principles of 'justice, empathy and humanity.'

Briefing delegates on the hard evidence of climate change, Prof Joanna Haigh (Grantham Institute) showed that every indicator was flashing: rising sea levels, warming oceans and shrinking Arctic sea ice. 'Globally warming is not globally uniform,' with the greatest increases in polar regions and across sub-Saharan Africa. The current growth in carbon emissions would place as much as a quarter of the world's population exposed to water scarcity, flooding impacts and crop failures.



Unions 'angry and ashamed'

For Unite the Union, Diana Holland was 'angry and ashamed' at the government's inhumane treatment of child migrants.

Trade unions have shown through campaigns such as Chile Solidarity and organising migrant domestic workers what international solidarity can deliver. And where union members are impacted by climate change, our demand must be for a Just Transition, with everyone at the table.



Reinforcing this message, Chidi King (first right, see below) said that the ITUC was developing a Just Transition programme to engage trade unions, governments and communities in demands for investments in low carbon technologies, green jobs and new skills. Climate change would drive up global poverty: so Zero poverty, Zero carbon <http://bit.ly/2IglTck> were two core issues for the ITUC.

Zita Holbourne (second right), PCS Vice-President, argued that it was impossible to separate climate change impacts from other causes of human displacement, including war, fear of persecution, famine and poverty. For many climate refugees, their

ordeal is not over when they arrive in the UK, where they are often treated as third class citizens. Unless we are to pass to our children a world worse than ours, we need a new vision for race equality in 2025, based on social just and equity.

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Moving forward: 11 March campaign day

To capture delegates' energy and commitment, Friends of the Earth and the CACC are holding a follow-up campaign and training day on Climate Refugees

<http://www.campaigncc.org/nationalconference> on Saturday 11 March at FoE <https://www.foe.co.uk/feedback> from 13.00.

Saturday's workshops covered the planetary emergency, building trade union solidarity, challenging racism and xenophobia, the Moving Stories

<http://bit.ly/2IRiLZq> of climate migrants, and creating a new narrative around climate refugees. And the Environmental Justice Foundation presented its excellent short film, Falling through the cracks <https://vimeo.com/98563072>

Paris Agreement: a climate refugees Protocol?

Campaigners want a **new Protocol on climate migrants' rights** to be written into the Paris Agreement on climate change. The UN reconvenes in Bonn in November 2017 and in Poland a year later. European social movements have clear opportunities to build pressure for progressive action as the UN takes stock since the Paris Agreement on progress towards carbon emissions reductions, its commitments to address climate impacts, and progress on the rights of climate migrants.

Our challenge is to build a new compelling narrative across civil society – young people, faith organisations, trade unions, and the wider environmental and migrants rights community.

Moving forward 11 March: More details at

<http://bit.ly/2ICCvxq>. All who made or who couldn't make Saturday's brilliant conference are welcome to attend.

6. Emissions Impossible

The National Union of Students (NUS) has been a part of the global divestment movement since our [Emissions Impossible campaign](#) was launched back in January 2016. Our [Freedom of Information](#) research found £100 million of endowment investments in extractor fossil fuel companies at 46 institutions. Of this total, we have seen £37.3 million divested from the fossil fuel industry.

Universities with overall endowment values totalling more than £1.3 billion have committed to divestment and over £28 million has been explicitly ring-fenced for reinvestment into renewables. Some 17 universities - of the roughly 120 in the UK - have fossil fuels exclusions in their investment policies, of which five have positive policy commitments relating to future investments. We have also discovered and celebrated that [14 universities](#) are using 100% renewable electricity (all of which are likely to have pre-dated our campaign, but some of which have told us they may have to drop their commitment to due to the changes to the Climate Change Levy).

In terms of universities leading the way, [Sheffield](#) is the only university that has officially started moving their money out of fossil fuel companies – having divested from coal and tar sands in favour of renewable energy companies. Several universities need to up their game – where there have been strong campaigns running



for nearly 4 years and yet student campaigners have received continual refusals to divest or been misled by university managers over the extent of commitments.



However, we've no doubt that with the energy and creativity there is across the student movement it won't be long until the quarter of UK universities who have divested will be pushed to half. And with the [Global Divestment Mobilisation](#) culminating in May it promises to be an exciting 6 months...

Thanks to Laura Clayson, who leads the NUS work on divestment.



Provoked by Donald Trump's hostility to climate change, UK scientists are joining the global March for Science in London on 22 April www.londonmarch.com. The March for Science is a series of protest marches set to be held in Washington and over 100 cities across the world on April 22. The London March will focus on the UK government's cut in science funding. Globally, the rallies are a response to President Trump's threatened withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change and blatant disregard for science.

"There is no science advisor in the White House now and we don't know whether there will be one."

This was Russ Holt <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-39024648> head of the world's largest scientific membership organisation, the American Association for the Advancement of Science. His comments followed Trump appointing Scott Pruitt to lead the US Environmental Protection Agency. Pruitt has spent years fighting the role and reach of the EPA.

UK far behind in science spending

Government spending on research and development in the UK fell from 0.56 per cent of national output (GDP) in 2009 to 0.49 per cent of GDP in 2013 <http://on.ft.com/2lz5XWw>. The European average was 0.64 per cent. The Chancellor's promise to increase funding in Autumn 2016 was welcomed by the scientific community, yet the extra cash takes us about a quarter of the way towards the 3 per cent of GDP that we should be devoting to R&D. And serious questions remain about access to EU science programmes and networks after Brexit.

How the UK government gagged environmental science

In case we forget, David Cameron's Coalition government silenced its science critics by closing independent environmental agencies or cutting their budgets. For the record:

- **Sustainable Development Commission** – closed in 2011. The SDC had taken an independent, critical look at nuclear power, energy from waste, sustainable agriculture and many other areas where it challenged government thinking. The Coalition argued that it wanted "to mainstream sustainability" across Government. There has been

precious little evidence of that so far. The SDC's funding was withdrawn by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs from 31 March 2011.

- **Royal Commission on Environmental** – shut down in 2010. Since the 1960s, the Commission had a long and proud record of high quality, independent studies challenging government policy, in areas such as airport expansion and population change. Years before devastating floods hit the UK, the Commission's final report <http://bit.ly/2l6Tzcr> said, "The potential costs of ignoring adapting to climate change have not been sufficiently considered, and the potential benefits of adaptation have not been sufficiently explored."
- **Environment Agency** - funding cuts by two-thirds. Funding for vital research to improve flood forecasts, warnings and defences has been slashed by almost two-thirds since 2009. Annual funding <http://bit.ly/2lRo6zV> for flood R&D, which the government has not published, fell from £4.89, in 2008-09 to £1.85m in 2015-16, a drop of 62%.

In the UK, climate activists, including the Campaign Against Climate Change http://www.campaigncc.org/climate_change/introduction, are joining the broad-based show of public support for science. A key aim is to channel the momentum of the event towards meaningful actions and continued engagement around specific issues – like climate change.

Here's just one thing climate science shows us: Climate Lab Book created an animated [climate spiral](http://www.climate-lab-book.ac.uk/spirals/), illustrating the increase in global temperatures from 1850 to the present. <http://www.climate-lab-book.ac.uk/spirals/>