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1. Editorial: UN Climate Report - final wake-up call

In a year in which extreme weather has battered every part of the planet, the UN's scientific panel has issued its most critical report ever on climate change. Leading scientists, adding up all the promises to cut carbon made by countries signing the Paris climate agreement, conclude unanimously <https://bit.ly/2pA6aKo> that these 'commitments' would see the world heat up by more than 3 degrees C by the end of this century. Limiting global warming to 1.5 C would require 'rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.' This means an intensification of cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, with a rapid move to renewable energy and steep reductions in our use of oil, coal and gas.



By 2030, global emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) would need to fall by about 45% from 2010 levels, reaching 'net zero' by 2050. The UK is among the many nations that now need to intensify cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. The government will have to reassess its current approach, which has seen cuts to support for renewable energy and home energy efficiency schemes, and supporting fracking.

Yet worldwide evidence of climate breakdown – forest fires from Saddleworth Moor to the Arctic Circle, huge cyclones hitting the USA and the Philippines, and more – would suggest it's a time for a collective response from unions. TUC energy policy - the balance between renewables, gas, coal and nuclear - was once rightly seen as an issue for all trade unions to resolve. Yet TUC Congress 2018 broke with this consensus, with a motion that views of 'energy workers and their unions should be paramount to the development of all TUC policies on energy, industrial strategy and climate change.'

Partisanship is a real problem with such an approach. Views become polarised. People start believing those they identify with, including union leaders, and reject what they hear from others. The tone of the debate at the TUC this year began to look like this. Fracking is a case in point. In the face of evidence from the local to global impacts, to frack or not to frack is still the 'hot potato' of union energy policy, as we report here from the debate at this year's TUC Congress.

In developing a Just Transition strategy, the TUC would do well to implement the Bakers Union motion it also endorsed: *'to consult with all affiliates on energy and industrial decarbonisation policy.'*

2. TUC Congress 2018 – unions at odds over Just Transition

TUC Congress in Manchester (9-12 September) adopted a controversial new policy on Just transition and energy workers' voice. In a shift from previous TUC policy, the GMB's Motion 7 <https://bit.ly/2IERmmt> argued that the views of energy workers and their unions 'should be paramount to development of all TUC policies on energy, industrial strategy and climate change.'



The GMB's national energy officer, Justin Bowden, said 'lower carbon gas' was an essential part of the UK's future energy mix. Energy workers felt under siege from green 'axe grinders' who seemed happy

to 'throw 30,000 gas workers' jobs under a bus.'

In response, unions in the public, education, manufacturing and transport sectors with a direct interest in tackling climate change objected to their being excluded from TUC policy making. Chris Baugh, PCS-AGS, argued for a collective response to climate change, wherever working class interests were threatened. 'Climate change is an issue affecting every union affiliated to the TUC.'

The GMB motion also welcomed the 'just transition conference'

organised between GMB, Prospect, Unison and UNITE, which asked their energy members what they, their communities and industries want from an energy sector of the future.

In response, the UCU's Robert Clunes said,

'You need to be careful about limiting the involvement of other unions...education unions have a key role to play in skills and training for the future.'

(See Energy unions' hold Just Transition conference, below).

3. TUC steps back from fracking ban

The Bakers' Union Motion 7 on Fracking <https://bit.ly/2IERmmt> calling for an immediate ban was passed with a Unison amendment replacing an immediate ban with a 'moratorium.'

Sarah Woolley for the Bakers Union argued that, 'Fracking is to be condemned. We should support campaigners. Methane gas leaks. Fracking pollutes water supplies, and is therefore a risk to the food industry. Tackling climate change is not just an issue for energy sector. When did we become a movement protecting jobs at all costs?'

Unison called on the TUC to 'independently evaluate the risks fracking might cause local communities versus the benefits of developing indigenous supply; support a moratorium whilst evaluation is concluded and commit government to a clean gas strategy, decarbonising gas fully using hydrogen/bio gas, ensuring affordable warmth is available to all.'

A Unison delegate argued that the science on fracking was not clear, and its risks could be better managed. The UK was heavily dependent on gas for power generation and domestic heating, and looked to hydrogen conversion as 'part of the solution to decarbonising heating.'

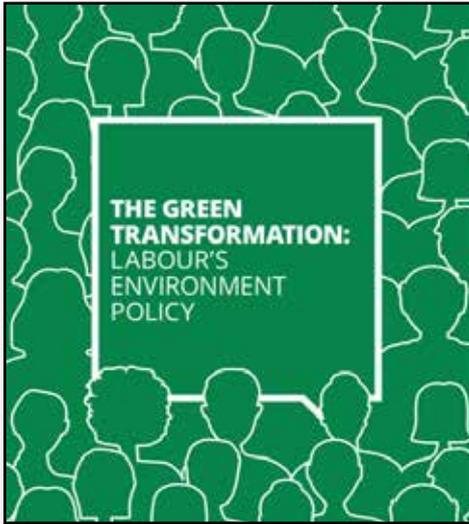
The Bakers Union reluctantly supported this amendment. But its motion also called on the TUC 'to consult with all affiliates on energy decarbonisation policy, and to develop strategies to support workers in the transition to a zero-carbon industrial strategy.'

Meanwhile, please see here https://www.campaigncc.org/fracking_protesters_jailed links to the various ways to support those jailed for their peaceful anti-fracking protest at Preston New Road, from the Campaign Against Climate Change.



Source: Creative Commons

4. GJA moving and shaking at the Labour Party Conference



At this year's Labour Party conference in Liverpool, the GJA joined with SERA and the NUS in hosting a Roundtable on 'Providing the skills and jobs: How can Labour ensure no one is left behind by the transition to the green economy'.

We were pleased to receive commitments from Barry Gardiner MP, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Chi Onwurah MP, Shadow Minister for Industrial Strategy on setting up a Just Transition Commission. This is something that the GJA has been campaigning on ever since the commitment made in the Paris Agreement.

<https://bit.ly/2K28Zvs>

The Labour Party conference had plenty to say on energy policy. It committed to zero carbon emissions by 2050. This pathway would be supported by ensuring that 60% of the UK's energy comes from low-carbon or renewable sources within twelve years of coming to power.

Alongside this there were 5 other commitments:

- supporting the development of tidal lagoons.
- bringing the UK's energy transmission and distribution networks back into public ownership.
- creating a thriving renewables industry with good, long term jobs across the UK.
- working closely with energy unions to support energy workers and communities through transition.
- joining France, Germany and other countries around the world in a ban on fracking. <https://bit.ly/2NG84aP>

5. Air Pollution – Unions stepping up the campaign

The hazards of indoor and outdoor air pollution are increasingly being recognised as a workplace issue. The GJA has been following up a summer of activity at union conferences with joint work with the Hazards Campaign, including:

Air quality workshop with UNITE in Southampton

Southampton is one of six cities under a requirement to implement clean air zones. This will have major implications for workers and likely to be a major issue in the council elections next year. As a port city there is the additional issue of pollution generated by ships and the associated activity. At the GJA-led workshop on September 28th at the UNITE office, reps from Red Funnel talked about pollution levels on the ships themselves and their efforts to monitor exposure



Source: Creative Commons: Peter Howe, Princess Cruise ship in Alaska

It was agreed that the GJA and Hazards would produce an Action

Sheet on monitoring equipment to help workers identify what is available and guidance on getting support. Linking up with campaign groups like Clean Air Southampton and ensuring a union presence at their 'Air Pollution - Time for Change' meeting on November 17th were also agreed.

<https://bit.ly/2y2JDuA>

International transport unions want zero emission cities

The International Transport Workers Federation has issued a statement on how the federation, and the 20 million workers it represents will support a declaration to create zero-emissions cities by 2030. It was launched at the Global Climate Action Summit, in San Francisco, USA on 13 September 2018.

<https://bit.ly/2yj9PAg>

'Green and Healthy Streets: Transitioning to zero emission transport' identifies the need to work with regional mayors to ensure that the transition to fossil-fuel-free streets is a just transition

that creates decent jobs, reduces inequality, and drives inclusion and improvements in the lives of working class and low income people GJA is liaising with the ITF to support the campaign in the UK.

Education unions working together

Like transport, this sector is starting to organise across unions to ensure maximum impact in policy decisions. The UCU is in the process of co-ordinating with other organisations to establish a Joint Union Air Pollution Committee. This will support the voice of unions in the education sector on raising awareness and policy development.

Air pollution is rightly becoming a major issue for the labour movement and there is a huge job of work to do in ensuring that the responsibilities of employers and businesses are recognised. The GJA will be intervening in the regional, national and international forums to stress this point.

6. 'Energy unions' hold Just Transition conference

Some 80 energy union delegates from Unison, Unite, Prospect and the GMB made it to Unison's energy workers conference, Protecting Jobs, Saving the Planet <https://bit.ly/2Oc2Cg2> in London in early September. The aim was to discuss *'the challenges posed by climate change, including a transition to sustainable energy that won't come at the expense of workers.'*

According to Unison's summary, the keynote speaker, Benjamin Denis of the European TUC, argued that *'Climate change is here, and so are its consequences.'* The Paris Agreement saw governments commit themselves to keeping global warming below 2 degrees Centigrade. To have any chance of reaching that target, the global community needs to be carbon neutral by 2050. *'We are nowhere near that target,'* he said. *'Respecting the Paris mandate requires a deep and rapid change in the way we produce energy and goods, travel and consume.'*



Sue Ferns, Prospect, said,

'Today is about trying to put us on the front foot with all unions working together. Everyone in the room had the example of the UK coal mining industry in the back of their minds. The precipitous fall in employment devastated communities from South Wales to Fife. The labour movement's demand for a 'just transition' is about ensuring that the move from a high-carbon energy industry to a low-carbon one comes with justice.'

Key issues debated by delegates include:

- Not repeating the decimation of jobs and communities in the 1990s.
- the rise of low paying, non-union energy companies eg in renewables.
- the lack of government long-term planning.
- how to ensure that the transition to a low-carbon economy is a just one, involving consultation with workers and communities.
- the need for a long term, **'balanced energy policy.'**
- the creation of an energy council to bring together all stakeholders.

Peter McIntosh, Unite, rounded off the day by affirming three priorities:

- for skilled, well-paid jobs to be at the heart of a strategy for a just transition.
- a new deal for further education and retraining in the sector.
- a balanced energy mix – for a diverse, affordable and safe energy supply.

A report on the conference, Protecting Jobs, Saving the Planet, is available at: <https://bit.ly/2Oc2Cg2>

7. Gas in a 'balanced' energy policy

To frack or not to frack is the current 'hot potato' of union energy policy. But clearly, it's now part of a wider debate unsettling inter-union relations on the future of gas in the UK's energy mix. Some basics: natural gas (methane) is a greenhouse gas. It heats 8 UK homes in every 10 and generates 40% of our electricity.



The independent Climate Change Committee has offered expert advice <https://bit.ly/2mk6SbK> on the future of gas in the energy mix:

- The UK's carbon reduction targets for 2030 'makes fracking impossible.' We have to cut carbon used in power stations by 75%, which applies to both coal and gas. <https://bit.ly/2y5veNX>
- Major savings in the amount of gas used in homes and industry are essential, through investment in energy efficiency.
- We should explore 'low-carbon heat' processes, eg adding hydrogen to the gas grid.

In the absence of a credible government energy and industrial strategy for a low carbon future, unions are adopting a variety of positions on fracking *'low carbon gas.'* Unison sees a potential for fracked gas as part of a *'clean gas strategy.'* It supports the new All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hydrogen. Its first meeting on 22 October will focus on what steps can national and local government take to support hydrogen conversion, a process in its infancy with the potential to convert the UK gas grid from natural gas (methane) to zero-carbon hydrogen.

Three of the four unions at the Unison conference support fracking in the TUC debate. To take some key points: the GMB spoke in defence of its gas industry members. Prospect, believing that most of the fracking risks stem from poor regulations. And Unison opposed a ban as part of its work on a 'clean gas' plan. Meanwhile, Community opposed a ban because it was a threat to the 'job opportunities for steel making, including '12,000 km of underground steel piping.'

A number of trade unions are adamant in their support the Bakers Union motion to ban fracking, for all the reasons put forward by Sarah Woolley, to do with climate breakdown, fossil fuel dependency, environmental pollution and supporting community resistance to fracking.

Meanwhile, the Labour Party will ban it, and wants 60% of the UK's energy from renewables by 2030. And local communities across the UK are mobilising against it, with three environmentalists now in jail for protesting at the Preston New Road site <https://bit.ly/2CsKS9Z>

Getting the balance right between renewables (wind, solar, wave and tidal power), gas, coal and nuclear is part and parcel of the debate on Just Transition. Resolving these differences will clearly require further discussions between unions.

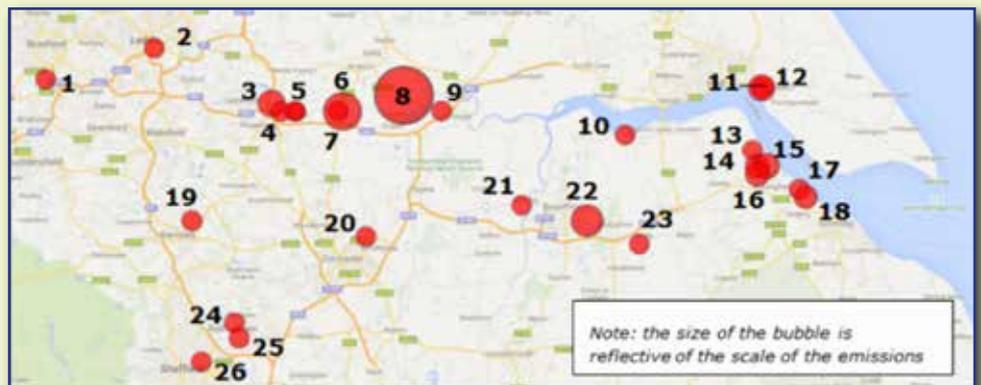
8. New 'Just Transition' course for reps in Yorkshire & The Humber

Unions in Yorkshire and the Humber region have been working together with the regional TUC and its partners to develop a low-carbon regional strategy. TUC Congress 2018 supported this project (Motion 9), which moves to the next phase this autumn with a new environmental training course for shop stewards in the energy intensive industries like steel, cement and food manufacture, and power industries in the region.

Yorkshire and the Humber region hosts a strategically important industrial complex that generates more carbon gas emissions than any other region in the UK. The TUC is committed to working with unions, employers, local enterprise partnerships, local authorities, environmental groups and relevant civil society organisations to find environmentally sustainable solutions that can ensure the continued operation of these essential industries and protect the jobs they provide.

A key aim, as the TUC motion noted, is to secure 'a just transition for workers so that no-one is left behind as industry and commerce adjusts to a low-carbon future.' Congress agreed to encourage Trade Union Councils in other regions of England and Wales to work with their regional TUC to develop appropriate low-carbon regional strategies, considering the particular carbon footprint applicable in their area.

For more information: <https://bit.ly/2J1IUU9>



The biggest carbon emitting power stations and industrial plant in Yorkshire