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1. Editorial – Corvis-19 lessons for the climate crisis

The unprecedented, government-led, global response to the coronavirus models how the climate crisis needs to be addressed. At some point this year, when we turn our attention back to the climate crisis, we will be much the wiser for having re-learned the meaning of community solidarity, responsible government and expert advice. Hopefully we will now appreciate the dangers of scientific ignorance in response to a major threat.

So, here are our few thoughts for that happy day when we can return to campaigning on the climate crisis. First, on a brighter note, our Annual General Meeting in February enjoyed its best ever attendance, with support from across the trade unions, environmental campaigns and education. We set our campaigning priorities for 2020, for a just transition, fighting air pollution and supporting Green New Deal bargaining by unions.

Then on 11 March came Chancellor Rishi Sunak MP's first Budget, already overshadowed by the coronavirus crisis. Trailed in advance as the 'greenest ever,' it failed to live up to expectations, revealing how ill equipped this government is to tackle the climate crisis.



Photo: www.flickr.com/photos/sheffim/ferdfjk

3. Reactions to the Budget

The Committee on Climate Change, which advises the government on how to meet its legally binding commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050, said the budget did not 'close the climate policy gap.' The TUC said, 'The u-turn in public spending has been necessitated by failure not success. Austerity is ending not because it did its job, but because it didn't work.'

<https://bit.ly/2UEug6>



Budget 2020: 42 x more on potholes and tarmac than green policies

'Pandemics are not the only existential problem we face. Climate change endangers every present and future citizen of this planet. If we truly care about the health of our communities, countries and global commons, we must find ways of powering the planet without relying on fossil fuels. It would be a tragedy to survive the coronavirus but succumb to human-caused climate disruption.'

Ben Santer, in the Scientific American journal:

<https://bit.ly/2Qvblj9>

The CPRE said the Chancellor's £27 billion spending spree on tarmac and potholes - 42 times the outlay on nature policies - will only serve to encourage more people into cars instead of using sustainable and reliable public transport, where significant investment is sorely needed.

Bill Adams, TUC regional secretary for Yorkshire and the Humber, welcomed the £800m available for Carbon Capture schemes. *'It is a start. But I don't believe that it is nearly enough to fund what will be proved to be vital to help the nation to reach net zero, while protecting jobs in the medium to long term. I'm also seeking clarification as to its application. Competing schemes have to bid for the money. The second one won't happen until 2030. And it's less than the £1 billion for the White Rose CCS project in our region, cancelled by the same government in 2015.'*

Meanwhile, there was nothing to maintain flood defences that have failed across the UK, and as unions point out, no moves to restore the 60% cut to the Environment Agency staff budget in the past 10 years. As new campaign group, www.unchecked.uk argues, *'Many of our most important protections have been eroded by successive governments, and the enforcement teams which defend them have been cut to the bone.'*

Budget in brief

The Budget made 10 'green' announcements, of which four won't take effect until 2022.

Things the government promises this year:

1. Publish the Treasury's 'Net Zero Review': this Treasury-led review is supposed to set out how the transition to net zero by 2050 would be funded and where the costs would fall. It's promised before the UN's climate conference in November.
2. Energy Innovation Programme: double investment to £1 billion a year. This government fund supports innovation in renewable energy, carbon capture, nuclear power, etc.
3. Zero or low emission vehicles: the government promises a 'comprehensive package' of reforms to make it cheaper to buy low emission vehicles and access charging points.
4. Flood defences: 'Doubling' investment over the next six years to £5.2bn.
5. £640m for a new Nature for Climate Fund: including planting around 30,000 hectares of trees and restore 35,000 hectares of peatland.
6. Freezing fuel duty: Carbon Brief analysis shows that the UK's CO2 emissions are up to 5% higher than they would have been if fuel duty had increased as planned, rather than remaining frozen.

Things promised from April 2022 or later:

7. Carbon Capture and Storage: £800m to establish two or more new Carbon Capture and Storage clusters, 'one by the mid-2020s, a second by 2030.' These clusters will store millions of tons of carbon dioxide from power and heavy industry. This will 'create up to 6,000 high skill, high wage, low carbon jobs in areas like Teesside, Humberston, Merseyside or St Fergus in Scotland...It's levelling up in action.'
8. Higher tax on energy used by industry: the Climate Change Levy, paid by companies, taxes the electricity they use at a higher rate than gas. To equalise the rates and encouraging energy efficiency, from April 2022 the government is freezing the levy on electricity and raising it on gas. But he hasn't reversed the former Chancellor

George Osborne's bizarre decision, in 2015, to include electricity from renewables in the scope of the levy, raising £450m a year.

9. New Plastics Packaging Tax: manufacturers and importers will pay £200 per tonne on packaging made of less than 30% recycled plastic.
10. Abolish the tax relief on Red Diesel: the Red Diesel scheme, offering a lower tax per litre on diesel used by industry, will cease except in farming and the rail industry.

Before the virus struck, the government had planned to publish a National Infrastructure Strategy this Spring, followed by a Treasury's 'Net Zero' funding review, then the UN's climate conference in Glasgow in November. Now, who knows?

Link to Budget speech: <https://bit.ly/3dny982>
Carbon Brief Budget analysis is here: <https://bit.ly/2QBtrJN>

3. Climate negotiations

Scottish yards lose out on £2bn wind turbine contract

Unions have criticised Scottish Secretary Alister Jack after he suggested wind turbines being built in Indonesia for Scottish sites was 'the market economy at work.' The £2 billion Neart Na Gaoithe (NnG) project 10 miles off the Fife coast is set to be one of the country's biggest renewable projects. But it's still not clear if Scotland will get a vital cut of the contract. 'Neart na gaoithe' means 'strength of the wind,' yet just eight of the 54 giant turbines will be built in Scotland, while the rest are constructed in south-east Asia.



Neart Na Gaoithe, site of one of Scotland's biggest wind farms.

STUC General Secretary Grahame Smith said, 'Workers in Scotland's fabrication yards are losing out on work that is being shipped from tax-free zones in Indonesia. It is callous and stupid to brush away concerns from workers and local communities with a blasé reference to the market economy. Markets

don't just happen, they are created and regulated by government.' They need government intervention to secure work paid for through our energy bills.

GMB Scotland organiser Hazel Nolan added, 'Mr Jack has unwittingly revealed the truth: the UK government has washed their hands of their responsibility to deliver renewables jobs here in the UK.' The government 'abandoned' the UK's yards to compete with heavily state subsidised yards abroad. Project servicing and maintenance will provide 50 permanent jobs over the 25-year lifetime of the wind farm.

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

'The Scottish and UK governments have failed to produce an industrial strategy to match the rhetoric on green jobs and it's energy consumers here in the UK that are propping up this rigged market with spiralling energy bills'. The British Steel/Jingye deal keeps the steel industry alive in the UK, it safeguards more than 3000 jobs and offers a bright future - providing Jingye stick to their plan. But the job losses are 'heartbreaking', the union says.

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

4. Depot closure will increase carbon emissions – Unite

Unite has accused DHL of hypocrisy over pledges to reduce its carbon footprint, following the announcement to shut the Tradeteam distribution depot in Enfield in July. Matt Draper, Unite national officer for road transport and logistics, said 'By relocating the distribution to Huntingdon, Ipswich and Reading, the company is increasing the depot's carbon footprint, as the lorries will snarled up around the M25 on their delivery runs.'



The proposals contradict DHL's much publicised plan to reduce its carbon footprint by 30% by 2020, and to be carbon neutral by 2050. About 150 workers' jobs are under threat. Negotiations continue as we go to press.

<https://bit.ly/2U85mfN>

5. Deadly toxic fumes at train depot



A [shocking video](#) has emerged of a train spewing a 'toxic fog' of diesel emissions into a Leeds' rail depot, supporting Unite's claim that the emissions could be linked to a number of staff members developing cancers in recent years. Unite says four staff members have developed cancers of the lung, mouth, bowel and kidney respectively.

Unite regional officer Kevin Hepworth said, 'The video captures just how this cancer causing toxic fog fills the depot that staff are expected to work in. Unite believes that the carcinogenic diesel emissions that our members at Neville Hill have been surrounded by day-

in day-out, often for years at a time, could be linked to cancer rates at the depot.'

'This is literally life and death. Both Network Rail and East Midlands Rail need to protect staff by improving the depot's ventilation system as well as the policies meant to minimise staff exposure and the amount of fumes that are emitted. The dangers of diesel emissions have been known about for years and decisive action needs to be taken at Neville Hill immediately. <https://bit.ly/3djs8ZU>

6. Unions combat air pollution around schools

To combat air pollution around schools, the British Lung Foundation (BLF) and the National Education Union (NEU) have produced guidance with support from Living Streets, the UK charity behind the National Walk to School campaign. The NEU wants to highlight the health issues caused and aggravated by air pollution, especially to children's young lungs, and provide guidance on the steps that schools can take to protect pupils: <https://bit.ly/33NzOiR>

The latest TUCAN newsletter is available here: www.greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/air-pollution/



Photo: www.flickr.com/photos/hornbeam/

7. PCS launches *Alternative vision for Transport*

PCS is calling on the Department for Transport (DfT) to '*make climate change and pollution a major priority in all decisions that it makes. With its increasingly fragmented and outsourced system, it is far from likely to able to meet this challenge at the present time.*'

Moves towards a publicly owned, integrated transport system, the new report warns, are hindered by a lack of political will and a myriad of ownership forms.

Speaking at the Parliamentary launch of the report on 3 March, Tahir Latif, PCS Aviation Group President, acknowledged the 'dilemma' his union faced in the jobs vs environment debate.

The report,

'provides the foundations of a policy aimed at protecting the jobs of our members in the face of the urgency of taking action against climate change. This is exactly the dilemma that might face our Heathrow members following the recent decision in the courts regarding the third runway.'

'Our next step is to build practical policies in defence of our members in all areas of the transport sector where PCS has a presence, while also promoting a transformative approach to the future provision of transport based on the clear objectives of it being integrated, publicly owned and green.'

PCS Alternative vision for transport

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

For copies of the report email:

midsbargaining@pcs.org.uk

8. Heathrow defeat divides unions

PCS welcomed, but the GMB lamented, the news that Friends of the Earth won their case against the UK government on the expansion of Heathrow. The courts ruled that the government's Airports National Policy Statement failed 'to take into account the Government's commitment to the provisions of the Paris Agreement on climate change, concluded in December 2015 and ratified by the United Kingdom in November 2016.'

PCS opposes the expansion of Heathrow and is an active member of the No 3rd Runway Coalition. The union remains committed 'to fighting for our members at Heathrow. However we advocate the best way to protect workers in the long term is for a real transition to a low carbon future.'

The GMB was, 'disappointed' by the court ruling. The benefits 'more than outweigh any risks', the GMB says. 'Expansion would protect the existing 80,000 jobs, create a further 114,000 positions, as well as 10,000 apprenticeships. Like everyone else, GMB members are very worried about climate change, but we would have held Heathrow Airport feet to the fire on their target for zero carbon by the mid-2030s.'

9. Teach the Future unveils Climate Emergency Education Bill

Students are denied the right to knowledge and education on the climate crisis, and are calling for radical change to the curriculum, in a new Climate Emergency Education Bill unveiled in Parliament on 29 February. Speaking at the event, Zamzam Ibrahim, SOS-UK and NUS UK president, said:

'I, as well as all students in England, have not once been taught about the social and economic repercussions that this catastrophe will induce or what the possible solutions look like...What we are asking for is systematic reform, not just curriculum change. We need to ensure climate education is no longer exclusive to those who take optional subjects where it is briefly glazed over, but centred in all subjects.'

Teach the Future www.teachthefuture.uk is backed by trade unions the UCU and the NEU, as well as the NUS and a ranger of environmental campaigns.

Zamzam rounded off her speech with an appeal to the government: 'We truly believe that the government should adopt our values, so that we can create a better world for all those who live with it, and that starts with education, for education is how we secure the future.'

<https://bit.ly/3dIVmHI>

10. Our biggest ever AGM sets 3 priorities for 2020



Chaired by Quinn Runkle, Director Of Education at Students Organising for Sustainability, our biggest ever AGM (February 2020) agreed three priorities for the coming year:

- Support Green New Deal (GND) bargaining by working with unions to provide resources to incorporate in local regional and national bargaining.
- Build the Trade Union Clean Air Network (TUCAN) campaign and continue to raise awareness of the link between air pollution and occupational health.
- Identify opportunities for regional projects that support cross-union activity around green skills and related just transition work.



Full AGM report here: <https://bit.ly/394LPBb>

Supporting the Greener Jobs Alliance

The GJA is a loose coalition of organisations involved in climate change work.

We wish to make it clear that the views expressed in our publications and activities do not necessarily reflect the position of all the organisations whom we work with.

We will always seek to make that clear by listing the organisations that have specifically signed up to a particular initiative.