

Green Skills Manifesto 2013

The green skills gap

Two years on and the prognosis is pretty much the same. Urgent action is needed if the supply and demand sides for skills are going to come together to fulfil the 'enabling the transition' strategy. The government strategy of 'localism' and the 'big society' show no signs of stimulating either side of this equation to the level needed. Local authorities potentially have a key role to play but a recent report by the Green Alliance shows that in two thirds of local authorities climate change work has narrowed, is very weak or absent (*Is localism delivering for climate change*, October, 2011)

http://www.green-alliance.org.uk/grea_p.aspx?id=6100

A UNISON publication *The new green team: Local government, sustainable energy, jobs and skills* confirms this. Sustainable energy projects are a chance for councils to tackle climate change, kick-start the economy and create jobs, but policy and funding barriers are standing in their way, Dave Prentis, UNISON's general secretary, said:

This research demonstrates how bringing together sustainable energy measures, to reduce carbon emissions, with efforts to create employment, can be a powerful engine for economic recovery. This could be happening all over the country, but there are too many barriers currently standing in the way. National government should be working with local authorities as a matter of urgency to beat those barriers. It will help place green-jobs at the heart of economic recovery.

http://www.unison.org.uk/green/news_view.asp?did=7281

An overall vision of employment and skills opportunities is needed. This needs to reflect those sectors prioritised by the Committee on Climate Change: energy supply, transport, energy efficiency at home and at work, and linking carbon policy and industrial policy.

Underlying principles of the Green Skills Manifesto

A low carbon skills strategy must be based on:

1. Equalities: Many of the potential low-carbon growth areas like construction and engineering do not adequately reflect the potential workforce. The under-representation in apprenticeships and employment in these sectors must be addressed to ensure access to job opportunities by all disadvantaged groups. A recognition that climate change and energy prices will hit the poorest sections of society hardest.

2. Fair and decent jobs: The move to a low-carbon economy must be based on fair wages and decent terms and conditions of employment. These should include opportunities for career progression, and rights to health and safety and trade union recognition.

3. Co-ordination and coherence: The current policy is characterised by short-termism and uncertainty that is hampering progress. Stimulating demand for jobs and training requires a long-term strategic approach in areas such as low-carbon sector incentives, and procurement policies.

4. Communication and engagement strategy: Partnerships across civil society at national and local level are needed to promote training, job opportunities and inclusiveness.

5. A just transition: Workers and communities must be consulted about the opportunities and threats to employment in each sector of the economy. Provision to retrain and up-skill in good time must be built into all jobs and sectors at risk from a transition to a low-carbon economy.

June 2013

The Greener Jobs Alliance welcomes comments on the content of this manifesto. It will be reviewed in January each year. Please email comments to: gpetersen@ucu.org.uk

GreenerJobsAlliance

Summary

The Greener Jobs Alliance was established to advocate a coherent approach to deliver green jobs and skills in the UK. The founding members of the GJA are the University and College Union, Trades Union Congress, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, National Union of Students, People & Planet, and the Institute of Public Policy Research. With unemployment at a 17-year high it is imperative that the government seizes the opportunity to promote low-carbon jobs. The current reliance on a 'market driven' approach has not and will not deliver the training and green skills required. This manifesto sets out the essential components of a strategy for the UK to achieve the stated aim of the transition to a low-carbon economy.

We urge all organisations with an interest in sustainability skills to support the manifesto. If you agree with the proposals please endorse the manifesto by emailing Graham Petersen at gpetersen@ucu.org.uk



1

Government leadership

There have been some positives like the creation of a Green Economy Council and funding for apprenticeships, but the current approach is not delivering the green skills and jobs needed to meet our carbon targets. Responsibilities are spread across a number of government departments. A minister with responsibility for green skills is needed to direct a co-ordinated strategy inclusive of all stakeholders. This must be consistent and long-term to encourage investment in skills. Planned cuts to the education sector will seriously limit the capacity to deliver the quality and quantity required. Funding cuts must be reversed to enable the sector to expand provision.

2

Consultation and information

Sustainability skills require greater prominence within national consultation bodies. Establishing a Skills sub-group of the Green Economy Council will provide a forum that can monitor and contribute to the strategic direction.

3

Training the workforce

All workers require a level of environmental awareness. A comprehensive sustainability skills programme which addresses the generic and specialist skills needed by the UK workforce must be drawn up. We welcome the 'Skills for a Green Economy' grouping of sector skills and the recognition of the role of Unionlearn to support lifelong learning. However, sector skills councils and awarding bodies need far greater co-ordination to fast-track this. Qualifications and accreditation need to be put in place urgently to ensure training providers can deliver with certainty.

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4

Apprenticeships

Funding for 1,000 apprenticeships under the Green Deal is a start to providing the capacity to deliver the de-carbonisation of buildings in the UK. But funding is needed for an expansion of quality apprenticeships for a range of ages based on a coherent system of delivery. Progression programmes that lead into real apprenticeships, particularly for young people not in education or employment, have to be prioritised. Any expansion must address the under-representation of some sections of society in certain trades such as the under-representation of women in science, technology, construction and engineering occupations.

5

Local authorities

Local authorities have a key role in co-ordinating community engagement which will drive the skills agenda. They can develop strategies to ensure that skills gaps are met where possible by local people. Sustainable development needs to be a principal aim alongside a requirement to develop local climate change strategies. All local authorities must establish carbon targets which include how they will support low-carbon skills. Schools and social housing are potential sectors for local authority investment to stimulate energy efficiency and building technologies initiatives. The commissioning role of LAs and local enterprise partnerships offer an opportunity to drive this.

6

Curriculum changes

School sector: Sustainability and understanding climate change require strengthening in the school curriculum. Funding needs to be restored to the Sustainable Schools Initiative. Career advice on employment opportunities in the low carbon sector needs to be mainstreamed.

Further education sector: Institutions must integrate education for sustainable development across the curriculum at all levels of education. They need to adopt community engagement policies to support the supply and demand sides of skills and jobs. Progress on greening the curriculum should be part of the inspection framework.

Higher education sector: The expansion of courses offering science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM skills) is needed to underpin sustainable development delivery in the public and private sector. The UK risks being left behind in the research and development of new product technology. Incentives should be offered to study course programmes that can show a major sustainability skills component.

7

Employers

Employers should conduct sustainability skills audits. Providing information and consultation will be an important part of an employee engagement strategy. Procurement policies need to reference training standards. Vocational education and training performance must become a mandatory part of reporting procedures. Financial incentives to expand apprenticeships in line with higher national targets could target priority growth areas. Where existing jobs are at risk there should be consultation on alternative economic plans that fulfil the needs of a low-carbon economy.

8

Building alliances

The revolution needed in training will only come about if there is the maximum involvement of green skills advocates. Concepts like the 'big society' and 'localism' will remain empty slogans without the participation of trades unions, students, campaign groups and other civic society organisations.

The workplace: The legal right to appoint union environment reps will help to promote staff engagement. Liaison with union learning and health and safety reps will also inform the approach needed.

The community: Students, unions and campaign groups can provide the impetus to promote links between the education sector, community level and local employers. Local and national alliances can help to mobilise around an integrated, interventionist industrial strategy that will deliver green skills.



Why we need a Green Skills strategy

We have a global economic crisis and a global environmental crisis. Finding a solution to the climate crisis will help us to solve the economic one. That is why the GJA supports the demand for one million climate jobs. We need jobs that deal with the impact of climate change as well as those that will prevent a further descent into global warming. Sustainable development will have to be mainstreamed into the economy if climate targets are to be achieved.

The current government strategy

The government made a commitment in the fourth carbon budget to reduce CO₂ emissions by 50% by 2027 in the UK. This means we have 15 years to engineer an economy capable of achieving this.

The government's strategy document *Enabling the transition to a Green Economy* (August, 2011) falls well short of what is required. There is no clear strategy for delivering green growth. At the heart of the problem is the view that an 'employer-led' approach will provide the mechanism. Experience following the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, shows that this is wishful thinking. The Stern Report findings that 'climate change is the biggest market failure in history' seem to have been forgotten.

The skills component of the strategy is contained in the document *Skills for a green economy* (October, 2011). This is simply a 'report on the evidence' and so there is a question mark over its status and whether it represents a strategy document.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/s/11-1315-skills-for-a-green-economy.pdf>

There is no recognition in the report of the fact that skills policy is a devolved issue. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have an opportunity to produce a strategy that effectively embraces the skills needed for a low carbon economy.

The green skills gap

The green skills gap is a major stumbling block to delivering the transition to a low-carbon economy. In 2009 the Aldersgate Group produced a report that concluded:

Strong evidence suggests that the UK does not have the necessary skills to make the transition at the pace required, or the training arrangements in place to fill the gap. (Mind the Gap, November 2009)

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