



Environmental Audit Committee Green Jobs Inquiry

Introduction

The Greener Jobs Alliance welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee Inquiry. [Can green jobs support Net Zero Britain ambitions while building back better from coronavirus? - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

The GJA was launched in 2010 to campaign around the issue of the jobs and skills needed to transition to a low carbon economy. Our work combines supporting local projects through to advocacy at regional, national, and international level. We are a loose coalition of trades unions, student organisations, environmental groups, and individual supporters. We believe that a focus on the workplace and the need for worker / union engagement means the GJA helps to fill a large gap in climate change work. Below we outline our initial responses and include links to some of our publications that contain further details.

Question 1 - What estimates are there for the jobs required to meet the pathway to net zero emissions, by sector, and other environmental and biodiversity commitments?

There are a range of estimates that have appeared recently. The Government announced a figure of **250,000** jobs as part of the Green Industrial Revolution launch, and this figure was increased to **2 million** with the announcement of the Green Jobs Taskforce. Other organisations have come up with different estimates. The Local Government Association commissioned a report in November 2020 which proposed in 2030 across England there could be as many as **694,000** direct jobs employed in the low-carbon and renewable energy economy, rising to over **1.18 million by 2050**. [Local green jobs - accelerating a sustainable economic recovery | LG Inform](#)

Some estimates are pitched at a much shorter timeframe. For example, the New Economics Foundation (July 2020) called for the creation of **400,000** full-time equivalent jobs over an 18 month period with a costing of £28 billion. [Building a green stimulus for Covid-19 | New Economics Foundation](#)

This lack of clarity is unhelpful, and there must be clearly defined targets at national, regional, sectoral, and local level. These targets need to be carefully worked through in conjunction with stakeholders – elected authorities, employers, unions, and community organisations. Each level needs to be informed by research and the involvement of academic and specialist organisations.

This must be done as a matter of urgency and in a systematic way rather than plucking figures at random. Once these targets have been established, they need to be assessed against funding and policy requirements. Timescales need to be aligned against the 5 yearly carbon budget cycle up to 2050.

Question 2 - Does the UK workforce have the skills and capacity needed to deliver the green jobs required to meet our net zero target and other environmental ambitions (including in the 25-year environment plan)?

Short answer – No. The GJA has highlighted concerns on this ever since we published our Green Skills Manifesto back in 2011 (revised 2013)

http://www.greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Green_skills_manifesto_2013 The 5 underlying

principles and the 8 actions identified to deliver green jobs remain valid despite some recognition in government industrial strategy recently that skills policy needs to be mainstreamed in any future zero-carbon strategy. In the last 10 years we have written numerous responses to consultation documents that fail to link up industrial / climate and education policy. Unfortunately, we are still identifying government and non-government policy proposals that continue to fail to address this. In November 2020 we wrote a letter to Kwasi Kwarteng at BEIS to highlight our concerns about the lack of connection between green skills and jobs [GJA-letter-to-Kwasi-Kwarteng-2.pdf \(greenerjobsalliance.co.uk\)](#)

Question 3 - What needs to be done to ensure that these skills and capacity are developed in time to meet our environmental targets?

Align the demand and supply. The jobs needed to meet environmental targets need to be subjected to an assessment process which covers:

- Number of jobs in each category
- Regional distribution
- Sector breakdown
- Current training standards in place
- Potential gaps in training standard
- Current training capacity by region and local authority
- Potential gaps in training capacity by region and local authority

All employers need to conduct skills audits to establish the upskilling needs of the existing workforce. This needs to be coupled with an evaluation of new posts needed to deliver their carbon targets. GJA has provided detail on this in the publication 'Cutting Carbon: Growing Green Skills' that we contributed to for TUC Unionlearn [Cutting carbon, growing skills – green skills for a just transition | Unionlearn](#)

The results of these audits should then be communicated to Regional and Local Authority convened Green Skills Taskforces to match potential supply and demand.

Question 4 - What measures should the Government take to ensure that its proposals to meet environmental targets do not by default lead to jobs in affected industries being exported?

This is a major concern and one that we have highlighted in our bi-monthly newsletter. The closure of the BiFab yard in Scotland in December 2020 is the latest example of many. [Turbine jackets for Scotland's largest offshore wind farm will be fabricated in China | Press and Journal](#)

It is vital that the procurement and supply chains linked to the green sector are subjected to regulatory protection. Contracts should be awarded on the basis of meeting targets that support local firms and employment. This needs to be put on a statutory basis and effectively enforced in order that UK and overseas companies do not automatically default to the lowest bid. This will help to ensure decent terms and conditions of employment coupled with prioritisation of local and regional economies.

Contracts should not be awarded to companies that use off-shore tax havens. Criteria should include the labour and sustainability standards of companies tendering for work. There should be a local employer component to maximise incentives to promote local economies and prevent the export of jobs.

Question 5 - What risks are there to meeting the government's ambitions for green job creation in both the public and private sectors? What should the government do to create the conditions to ensure its commitments are met by both sectors?

There are significant risks. Many of these were outlined in a GJA statement on green jobs and skills issued in November 2020 [GJA-statement-on-Green-Jobs-and-Skills-2.pdf \(greenerjobsalliance.co.uk\)](#) The economic impact of Covid19 is a major setback. Although the suggestion that it will contribute to a 'build back better' response is valid, the difficulty in ensuring it happens cannot be underestimated.

The prospect of large-scale unemployment will seriously reduce taxation revenues. This coupled with the risk of the adoption of a fiscal policy like the one that followed the 2008 crash, would undermine the ambitions to deliver a zero-carbon economy. The risk for the public sector is high, not least because it is still subject to major budgetary constraints. Unless large scale quantitative easing is introduced to finance a public sector led recovery the UK will fail to meet its targets. Experience has shown that the private sector cannot deliver a market-based solution.

One of the main risks is that the skills base will not be in place. A Government Minister is needed with an overarching brief across the education, business, and treasury departments. Education policy cannot be turned on like a switch. Policy flip flops have characterised government environment and education policy. It has resulted in the UK having one of the largest skills gaps in key areas like STEM, AI, and key areas of the green economy. We support the position adopted by education unions and student organisations response to the Green Industrial Revolution Plan and the call for Climate Emergency Education Act. [UCU - UCU, NEU, NUS and Teach the Future issue joint statement on prime minister's 10 point green plan](#)

Question 6 - Are the government's ambitions for green job creation in the public and private sectors sufficient for the scale of the challenges? What changes should be made?

Short answer No. The ambitions rest on an assumption that the market will be capable of meeting the challenges. Professor Nick Stern's assessment of 'climate change being the biggest market failure in history' still holds good. The collapse of the Government's Green Deal policy for energy efficiency is a case in point. The combination of the **speed** at which change is required and the **scale** of the changes needed mean that a dominant role must be allocated to the public sector.

Key parts of the economic infrastructure like energy, transport and finance need to be brought under public ownership. The PCS publication 'Just transition and Energy Democracy' makes a clear case for public control as the only way to deal with a climate emergency [Just Transition & Energy Democracy - a civil service trade union perspective.pdf \(pcs.org.uk\)](#). The NHS has shown the importance of a nationally co-ordinated response to Covid19 compared to the outsourcing and privatisation strategy adopted with the failed track and trace system.

Question 7 - How can the UK ensure jobs are created in areas most impacted by the transition to a low-carbon economy?

By conducting the job / sector analysis referred to earlier and providing a strategic and financial framework for local and regional authorities to deliver at scale. There are large regional variations with areas like Yorks and Humberside having the highest concentration of carbon emissions and the subsequent potential impact on jobs. Each of these regions needs to appoint a Climate / Recovery Commission to mobilise resources for a just transition. The trade union movement has been at the forefront of this. [We can create 60,000 green jobs for Yorkshire in less than two years, says TUC | TUC](#)

Question 8 - What additional interventions should be undertaken to aid in a 'just transition'?

There can be no just transition without the effective engagement of the trade union movement. This engagement must take place at all levels of economic activity. GJA has been calling for the statutory recognition of Green Reps. This should put them on an equal footing with union health and safety reps including rights to facility time and training.

Beyond the workplace there should be guidelines issued to make funding for green stimulus packages contingent upon establishing meaningful consultation structures with trade unions. This should apply at sectoral, local authority, regional and national level. Organisations like the Institute for Apprenticeships that have a key role in skills development should include union representation and all public bodies that currently have employer representation should be reviewed to extend membership to unions.

The fairness and social justice requirements of a just transition provide an opportunity to address diversity issues in skills and jobs. For example, many apprenticeship schemes do not have adequate representation of women, BAME and other disadvantaged groups. The Skills Audits advocated in this response must identify this and have actions in place to address it.

Unions have played a vital role in supporting workers to acquire new skills. This has been made more difficult by the recent decision to scrap the Union Learning Fund. This decision needs to be reversed as a matter of urgency.

The GJA has developed a range of online courses, including one on Just Transition, that highlight examples of good practice. [Courses – Greener Jobs Alliance](#)

Question 9 - What impact can green jobs have on the wider UK economy?

The GJA has applied a wide interpretation to the term 'green job'. It has always been our contention that every job can be made greener. By putting green jobs at the core of industrial strategy it will impact every sector. Accountants, financial service advisors, project managers will all need to address how they mainstream sustainability and climate change into their decision making.

Question 10 - What contribution can green jobs make to the UK's economic recovery from Covid-19?

The Care Sector needs to be prioritised as part of the recovery from Covid-19. The GJA classes care jobs as green jobs. The climate emergency and COVID-19, a zoonotic disease, are both borne of human activity that has led to environmental degradation. [Climate and COVID-19: converging crises - The Lancet](#). This means responses to both need to be co-ordinated. For example, jobs in the care and emergency sectors will be essential to deal with climate mitigation measures like health impacts, floods, and other extreme weather events.

Question 11 - How can the UK ensure high emissions are not locked-in when tackling unemployment?

Gains to the environment, health benefits and the 1700 fewer premature deaths saved by reduced pollution and atmospheric CO2 during lockdown will be sacrificed under business as usual. Further, political decisions not informed by climate science will lead to an acceleration in fossil fuel consumption amounting to a catastrophic game of catch-up where cumulative increases to CO2 in the atmosphere will be exponential. The GJA has issued a discussion document that addresses this question [Rescue-and-Recovery-discussion-paper.pdf \(greenerjobsalliance.co.uk\)](#)

Conclusion - The GJA is prepared to follow up this short response with further contributions to support any ongoing inquiry.

Graham Petersen, Secretary, on behalf of the Greener Jobs Alliance

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