

Building a greener future

For jobs, for communities, for our planet



community





Roy Rickhuss CBE - General Secretary, Community

Climate change is a challenge fundamentally different to any we have faced before. The safety of our planet is a cause so important that it has breached traditional political and regional divides. Securing a long-term future for our planet while protecting jobs and livelihoods will no doubt be difficult, but it is vitally important we get it right.

At Community we pride ourselves on being a union that does not confine itself to the workplace. As climate change will impact all our members, in every aspect of their lives we have a responsibility to take a position on that will deliver for our members.

Recent reports by the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) have found that the UK is currently not set to meet our goals to tackle climate change. On this reality we must act urgently with a long-term vision for a better, greener future.

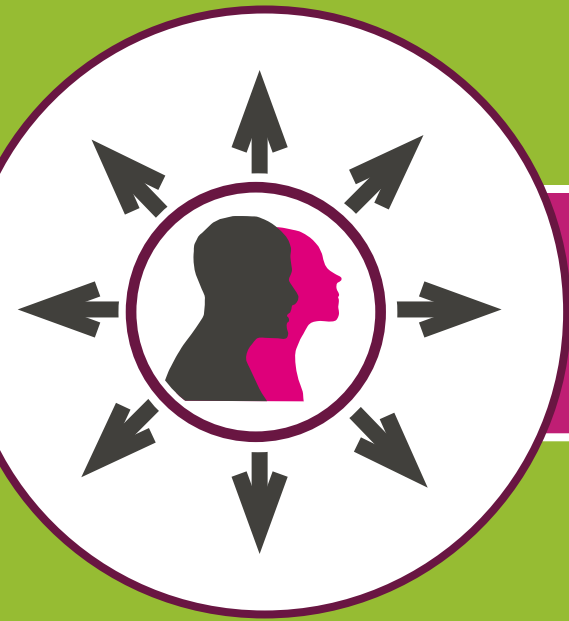
Our position is simple: put workers' voices at the forefront of tackling climate change. That is the only way we will see a green revolution with a just transition at its heart, leaving no one behind.



The pandemic has left us at a crossroad in our decision-making. We can continue as we are, and irreversibly damage our planet, or change to build a better, more sustainable future. By working in partnership, we know we can ensure that highly skilled, well-paid jobs are maintained, and the long-term future of our planet is protected.

This document offers a vision for the future that doesn't shy away from the difficult conversations we will need to have as we face this challenge together.

Roy



Putting workers at the centre



Skills development and training



A just transition



We know that the scale of change required to tackle climate change will have consequences for jobs and communities.

We believe that central to any changes in the workplace, from technology change to climate change, are workers and that working people should not pay the price for a zero-carbon strategy.

Policies that harm workers should not be introduced in the name of helping the environment. Instead, to reach our climate change goals, policies must consider the impact on the workforce across sectors. We believe a green revolution should be about creating jobs and not losing them. This may mean transitioning over a sensible period to mitigate the social impacts a transition may have, with all stakeholders involved sitting at the table.

Where there are consequences for employment, jobs must be protected or redeployed, workers must be supported, and unions consulted throughout any changes.

As we emerge out of the pandemic and focus our aims on achieving a fairer and greener world, this is the time for employers and government to champion and embrace working in partnership with trade unions so we can achieve our climate change goals together. A partnership approach is needed to ensure that green policies protect the wellbeing of our members, and workers across

the UK and that our economy, society, and environment are sustainable. Having workers' voices at the table allows people to be involved in discussions about an issue that will directly impact them at work and beyond.

“We believe that working people should not pay the price for a zero-carbon strategy”

Community recognises that whilst climate change impacts us all, it has the potential to hurt some of our members more than others. Studies have shown that 80% of people displaced due to climate change will be women, with more women using public services, and women less likely to receive vital training, as our economy becomes greener and new jobs require new skills¹.

Those in less secure employment are most at risk of losing their jobs during this transition. Insecure work is prevalent throughout modern society, for example the use of zero hours contracts. These types of jobs are insecure due to the irregularity of work, conditions, and pay. As employers are pressured to become greener, and the costs they may incur as a result, they might be incentivised to reduce their workforce or reduce wages.

¹ Go green at work: the union effect | TUC



Discussions around tackling climate change and green policies will be more prominent in some sectors than others, but climate change must be a constant and developing conversation between workers and their employers. This will ensure greater transparency over the durability of jobs as green changes are introduced, and agreements to discuss changes to green policy with the union prior to implementation. We believe that with a combined effort, the green revolution can result in positive changes for our members, employers and for the public.

What can we do?

Without secure employment or union representation, this is more likely as there is little legal protection and no strong collective voice to defend those workers and their interests. Insecure employment is found in every sector, and as high-carbon sectors undergo vast changes Community is keenly aware of the potential repercussions for these workers. As part of our objective to put workers at the forefront of green policies, we pledge to fight these inequalities.

We want to continue working with good employers, rather than against them, to secure the wellbeing of our members. We will encourage dialogue about the consequences of climate change between our members and their employers.

Our pledge: We will stand up for our members as new challenges emerge in our response to tackling climate change. We will always be here to challenge unfair practices and ensure our members are kept informed of and involved in their employers' decision-making. With Community at the table, we will fight for new green jobs to have good working conditions, for all employees to earn a living wage and for workers voices to be at the centre of every decision.

“...our position is simple: put workers at the forefront of everything we do, especially our response on tackling climate change”



When the Government set an ambitious target to create 2 million new green jobs by 2030, an independent taskforce was created. The Green Jobs Taskforce's² purpose was to consider ways the Government could ensure that these new jobs would be of good quality. The Taskforce included not only individuals from industry and academia but unions, including the Trade Union Congress (TUC), which Community is affiliated to.

The Taskforce put forward 15 recommendations, including calling for Government transparency over how they plan to achieve new green jobs.

Whilst creating enough new jobs to meet demand must be a focus, the quality of work these jobs provide is also of paramount importance. Significant recommendations include listing industry-wide pay agreements, regulations on health and safety, and sectoral bargaining as tools to achieve high quality green jobs. We support calls for government to urgently act on these recommendations.

The Taskforce proves that Government, unions, industry, and other groups can unite on this issue. We must see collaborative practise used more broadly if we are to be successful in legislating and delivering on impactful policies on climate change. We must stand united as a society to tackle climate change, bringing people and workers with us, and realising the opportunities for good work and good jobs.

Building a Green Industrial Revolution

- A new national body to ensure the climate change transition delivers on jobs and leaves no worker behind
- Guarantee good and green jobs through regulation and bargaining
- Expansion of the Government's green recovery programme for rapid job creation
- Greater public investment to decarbonise and retool UK industry and supply chains
- Remove barriers to retraining and upskilling
- Mandatory 'Just Transition Agreements' in high carbon industries

² A greener economy can be positive for workers too | TUC



As we transition to a greener economy, and green jobs are prioritised, jobs as we know them will undoubtedly change.

At Community, we are dedicated to life-long learning and providing all of our members the opportunities to upskill and retrain throughout their life and career. We view future green jobs as not only positive for the environment but for our members too. The green transition provides an opportunity for more highly skilled, well paid, good jobs. However, this cannot be achieved without government action. Financial investment is needed to ensure training is accessible for workers in all companies, including small and medium enterprises.

Community is dedicated to protecting people's jobs in every instance. We believe that unions, workers, and employers must be involved in decision-making that impacts workers. In any instance where employment ends, we demand that workers receive financial support, skills development and training to ensure that they are prepared for future employment.

To ensure workers continue to have secure jobs as our economy changes, we support the TUC's call for mutual recognition of skills and supply chain standards. Government action is needed to ensure that qualifications gained from training are transferable. This would allow workers to ease the transition into new sectors, empowering workers by increasing the employment opportunities available and giving them the freedom to choose.

“Community is fighting so that nobody is left behind during this transition.”

Our pledge: Community is ready to provide support and the necessary guidance to our members. We will work alongside employers to equip our members with the skills, tools and training they may need to adapt to new green jobs. For example, if industries decide to adopt new green methods as part of their efforts to reach net zero and our climate change goals, we will work to ensure our members quickly receive free training and the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow.

A just transition



At Community we want all our members to benefit from the Green Revolution. We recognise that many of our members work in industries that are high emitters; for example, 15% of Britain's emissions come from the production of steel. Given the Government plans for Britain to become net zero by 2050 (and 80% of the way there by 2035) we recognise this presents a huge challenge.

However, it must equally be appreciated that steel, like so many industries within our energy and manufacturing sectors, produce well paid, highly skilled jobs for thousands of people across the UK. Wages of people in the steel industry are 33% higher than the UK average, and 45% higher than Yorkshire and Wales's average³.

Furthermore, simply choosing to import rather than produce products with a high carbon price is not the answer. While this may avoid UK carbon emissions rising, it only moves the problem; it does not resolve it. Allowing highly skilled jobs in industries like steel to be lost in favour of exporting our emissions is not the answer for our economy nor the environment.

If the transition is to be just, the Government must ensure that all areas of the UK are benefitting from green policies. We fear that many of our industrial towns could face economic despair and see their living standards plummet if the transition is not managed in a fair and responsible way.

³ <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/36107/html/>



In our recent report⁴ we argued that the UK needs institutional changes to be able to meet the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) principles for a just transition. One such change was to implement a dialogue between Government, unions, and employers. The creation of the Green Jobs Taskforce proves that this is possible, and such social dialogue is now beginning to happen more often.

However, Government must be prepared to take on a greater role to ensure that the ILO's principles are adhered to. Any green industrial strategy must have at its core a commitment to protecting working and living conditions as well as driving economic growth.

The Government must be willing to take a proactive approach to existing industries that may be negatively impacted as we transition to a greener economy. Nationally, we need long-term visions and plans to assure the protection of workers before crisis hits. This may include skill development of existing workers to allow ease of transfer between sectors, planned Government investment in sectors if they go into financial decline, or closer monitoring of financial activity in strategic industries that employ many Britons.

ILO's Principles:

- National consensus and dialogue involving government, employers and trade unions
- Respect for fundamental rights at work
- Equal treatment for men and women
- The integration of government policy across a number of domains (economic, environmental, social and education/training) "to provide an enabling environment for business"
- The availability of decent jobs in an environment where the government is committed to full employment
- Flexibility in implementation to take account of the diversity of the economy
- Integration of these principles into the model of sustainable development

"...the UK's institutions of governance are unfit for purpose if their task is to execute a just transition" From 'A Just Transition? Managing the challenges of technology, trade, climate change and COVID-19'

⁴<https://community-tu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Just-Transition-Report.pdf>



The former Sahaviriya Steel Industries (SSI) steelworks in Redcar, Teesside, closed in 2019. This terrible and avoidable closure is an example of what happens when unions are kept largely in the dark, with a government unwilling to intervene to support an industry and business. The closure left thousands of workers to feel their jobs had been lost “overnight.”

The Redcar steelworks closure was caused by pressures in the global market for steel. With international steel flooding the UK, prices depressed. But the disastrous consequences of the closure came about because unions and workers had few opportunities to manage the transition. In addition to this, the Government response was “improvised” in the wake of the works going into liquidation, leaving workers in a dire situation.

Almost half the ex-steelworkers said it was difficult or very difficult to find suitable employment after the sudden collapse. Of the 80% that were re-employed within a year of the works closure, many were earning far less. 4 in 5 were earning £30,000 or more

while employed at the steel works, this dropped to 1 in 3 when they moved to their new jobs. This jolt in workers’ finances and the enormous stress that was placed upon them, understandably, negatively impacted many of the ex-SSI steelworkers mental and physical health⁵.

At Community, we believe that the experience of workers at Redcar should never be repeated. Leading figures in the community now see that this plant’s closure is an opportunity for green energy production and good jobs⁶. But a green transition should never be an afterthought of economic decline. Instead, a just transition must be extensively planned years in advance with employers and government working in partnership with workers. Indeed, if workers and unions had been warned of the financial instability of the company and given opportunity to be involved in a just and safe transfer of workers, prior to the company’s insolvency, workers would have been far better off. The government must act before crisis hits, green changes must not be an ad hoc idea and workers must never be forgotten.

⁵ <https://community-tu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Just-Transition-Report.pdf>

⁶ <https://land-referencing.co.uk/media/2021/07/redcar-steelworks-demolition-completed-within-a-year/>



Community is dedicated to promoting the voices, experiences, and priorities of our members. We recognise that climate change can sometimes feel like a distant issue for our members, however, climate change is the biggest crisis our planet currently faces, and it impacts us all. At Community we are taking a proactive approach to climate change, speaking up for our members and their communities on the impact climate change is having on them at work and in their lives.

Too many times workers have been forgotten during crises and periods of industrial change. Community is committed to ensuring that this does not happen as we strive to achieve net-zero and our climate change goals. Community will continue to work in partnership with employers, government and the devolved nations, external organisations, NGOs and charities, local government, and enterprises to ensure that a greener future is achieved in a just way, and that we work to achieve it together.

If you would like any more information about the topics discussed in this document or want to find out more about how Community can work alongside your organisation, please do not hesitate to contact us at research@community-tu.org.



We are Community, the modern union for a changing world. We represent people from all walks of life - no matter how or where they work. We have members in every sector of the UK economy from steelworkers to office workers and the self-employed.

Community have spent decades supporting, advising and bringing together working people from across the UK. We see it as our job to protect and support our members so they can focus on the things that matter most.

