



Photo: The White Elephant in the room by JW McLean flickr.com/photos/st33vo/

1. Editorial: The Price of Gas

The government's decision to fast track licences for 6 new oil and gas fields in the North Sea is a determined step in exactly the wrong direction.

- It will do nothing to reduce energy bills. Development can take from 5-10 years before any gas or oil is actually produced, so there will be no short term impact on supply and therefore on price.
- It will do nothing for "energy security" if the concern is to avoid dependence on gas imports from Russia. Most gas imported into the UK comes from Norway. At present just **3%** of the gas used in the UK is imported from Russia. Four times as much was exported by **privately owned UK gas producers** last year.

What it does do is lock us into fossil fuel infrastructure for years longer than we need. Wind, solar and wave energy does not need to be imported, and is increasingly secure, reliable and cheap; with some **estimates** projecting it to cost half the price of gas by 2030. The new gas fields the government envisages will therefore be an unprofitable white elephant before they can come into production and a black hole for investors; unless they can persuade us to subsidise their profits.

Nor can the crippling increases in energy bills – that could rise to £4,000 a year – be dealt with by the sticking plaster solutions the government envisages, and will never be dealt with if the Net Zero Scrutiny Group's argument that gas is now so expensive that we can't possibly afford to replace it with cheaper alternatives drives government policy. We are heading for a bleak winter of many discontents. Oil and gas companies are **awash with cash** that they are not investing in transition. As the chief financial officer of the oil and gas company BP, Murray Auchincloss, **told investors** last month: *'It's possible that we're getting more cash than we know what to do with.'* We should relieve them of that burden. Friends of the Earth have a petition for a windfall tax [here](#).

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Quote of the Month

Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future.

Hans-Otto Pörtner,
co-chair IPCC working group.

The violent upward twist in the cost of living from the spikes in oil and gas prices resulting from the recovery from the Covid recession overlaid by the impact of the Ukraine war is leading to other countries in Europe sharply **accelerating plans** to shift to renewables and - to some extent - nuclear: with Germany now setting 2035 as its target date for 100% fossil free energy generation.

Ed Miliband's **5 point plan for energy security** is on similar lines and, given the failure of the current government's market led approach to make the transition at the speed we need and generate the jobs that could, this will require a significant increase in state investment and public ownership to make it happen. An issue that we need to address at the September conferences of the TUC and opposition parties.

Meanwhile, Nigel Farage has announced that he is to front up a campaign for a referendum against 'ruinous net zero targets' – arguing 'if we are not careful, the only zero will be the amount in people's bank accounts'; somehow not noticing that it is the increase in gas prices from £13.50 per Kilowatt Hour last January to as much as £290 per KWh now that is emptying people's pockets. As Farage always has serious money behind his projects, be prepared for an onslaught of misinformation and phoney populism directed at our movement.

Paul Atkin

2. We need a windfall tax and public ownership

As energy prices rise to a crushing £3000 a year, it is expected that 8.5 million households won't be able to heat their homes next winter. In this petition, We Own It is calling on Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng to make a public commitment to the following four steps by 1 April.

1. A permanent windfall tax on oil and gas companies, at the same rate as Norway

Research by Common Wealth shows that **oil and gas companies have handed out almost £200 billion to shareholders** since 2010. £20 billion is needed to keep household energy bills at their current level while prices are high - Shell and BP's profits since 2010 **would cover that amount more than seven times over!**

Oil and gas companies operating in Norway pay a **corporation tax of 22% AND a special tax of 56%.**; a permanent windfall tax. For every £100 Norway collects in tax on North Sea oil, the **UK collects only £8.**

Norway used this to invest in hydropower, so today **98% of the country's energy is renewable**, then to set up Statoil (now Equinor, 67% owned by the Norwegian state) and create a sovereign wealth fund **worth \$1.4 trillion**. So, in today's energy crisis, **it will pay 80% of people's bills above a capped price.**

We should tax private oil and gas companies at the same level as Norway, and use the revenue to invest in clean, green, affordable energy.

2. Set up a state-owned renewable energy company

The UK should set up a **publicly owned company** to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and move

us faster towards renewable power, to work locally, regionally and nationally to deliver a just transition, skill up workers, provide decent jobs and level up communities. Profits would go to the public purse for investment.

Around 50% of UK offshore wind is publicly owned right now, but only 0.07% of it is publicly owned by the UK : a huge missed opportunity.

3. Bring privatised monopolies of energy transmission and distribution into public ownership, saving £3.7 billion a year

The UK and Portugal are the only countries in Europe that have **fully privatised its transmission grid.**

National Grid is a private monopoly responsible for gas transmission across the UK mainland and electricity transmission in England. In 2021, **National Grid shareholders received £1.4 billion in dividends** - money that could have been reinvested back into the system.

A handful of privatised distribution companies take the energy - gas and electricity - from the power stations to your home. Shareholders profit from these monopolies. If we brought these energy networks into public ownership, we'd save **£3.7 billion a year**. This could be used to bring down energy bills and to invest in renewable energy. Buying out the companies **would pay for itself in around seven years.**

4. Give people the option of a publicly owned energy supplier

Prices are 20-30% lower in systems with public ownership. In Germany, France and Italy most people get their energy from a publicly owned company. In Germany two thirds of people have municipal owned electricity. In France two thirds of people get their

energy from EDF, which is 80% state owned. Energy Bills there **won't rise by more than 4%** because the government has decided that EDF will take a hit to cushion households.

In the UK, **40 energy supply companies have gone bust recently**, affecting nearly 6 million customers. The government is either letting them collapse or stepping in to bail them out, e.g. loaning **at least £1.7 billion** of public money to keep Bulb afloat.

This is hugely wasteful. Creating a publicly owned energy supply company is an easy way to provide a public option without having to buy out existing companies. When private companies fail, their customers would be transferred to the publicly owned provider.

Public ownership is a vital tool that government could use to reduce energy bills now, and create a greener future. We can't solve the energy crisis without it.

Jack Yates

Thomas Despeyroux on Unsplash

3. Great Homes Upgrade action

The government plans to spend £12bn on refurbishing the Houses of Parliament but millions of families are still waiting for home upgrades to make them warm, safe and comfortable. The **New Economics Foundation** has joined with **Households Declare!** and other organisations to call on the chancellor to back a **Great Homes Upgrade** at the spring budget. Please write to your MP using the quick and easy tool here, and share the videos and graphics far and wide.

Aydin Dikerdem NEF

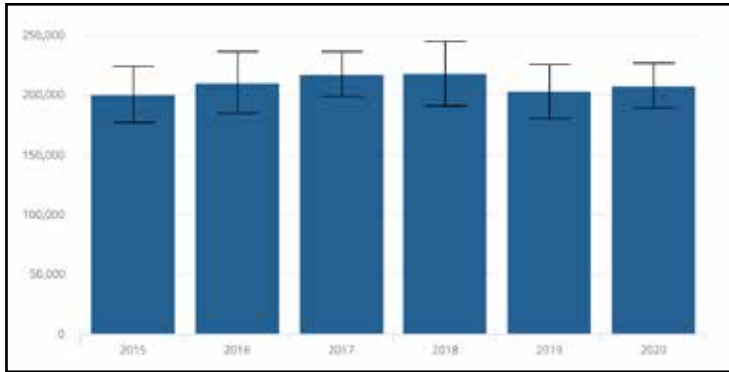


Great Home Upgrade action at Parliament March 9th. Credit Great Homes Upgrade.

4. Green Jobs boast falls flat

Despite the Prime Minister's boasts about a 'green industrial revolution', the facts speak for themselves: official statistics show there has been 'no significant change' in the number of green jobs since 2015.

Jobs in the low carbon sectors: 2015-2020



Office for National Statistics.

Yet most workers back climate action and support the move to a greener economy, according to a new TUC study. But, only a quarter (25%) believe that the government's current plans for climate action will create many new jobs in their local area.

TUC research reveals that the vast majority (86%) of workers support the UK moving to a greener economy to tackle climate change. There's even greater support among younger workers. Large majorities of workers agree that:

- The government should invest in retraining and re-skilling workers for a greener economy.
- They want a say on climate action in their workplace: two in three workers (65%) agree that it's important that their employer is actively helping to tackle climate change.
- They want 'green' consultations with their employers. But only one in three workers say their employer has taken steps to help tackle climate change.

The TUC is calling on the government and employers to get on with climate action – and make sure it delivers more good jobs. The TUC has shown how investing £85 billion to upgrade our homes, infrastructure, and industry for a green future could deliver 1.24 million good green jobs. And employers must cooperate with their workforces and unions on how each business and sector changes their operations to deal with the impact of climate change.

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady said: 'Across the country workers and unions are coming together to innovate and create worker-led decarbonisation plans. Ministers and employers need to get with the programme – and deliver the just transition we all need.'

At Rolls Royce in Inchinnan (Scotland) and at Ansty and Barnoldswick (England), Unite has secured a Green New Deal agreement with their employer including a centre of excellence for zero-carbon technologies. More detail [here](#).

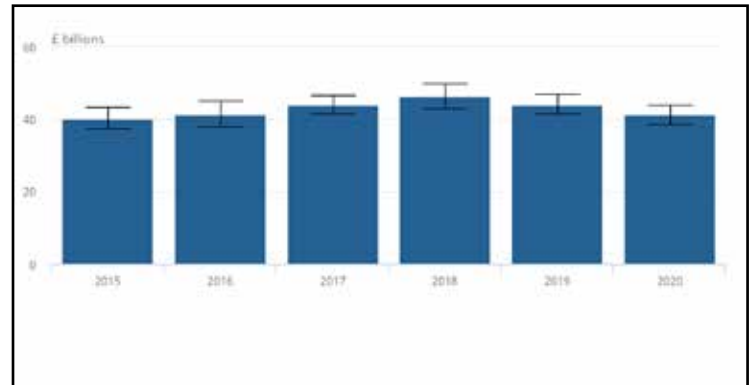
At Tata Steel, Wales, Community is working with experts at Swansea University and the Materials Processing Institute to develop solutions in steel decarbonisation, while upskilling the workforce for green steel production. More details [here](#).

This [TUC research](#) published in 2021 estimates that the future of 660,000 UK manufacturing and supply chain jobs depends on government action to meet climate targets and protect industries against offshoring.

Green jobs: the hard facts

Official statistics show that turnover in the UK low carbon and renewable energy economy (LCREE) was estimated to be £41.2 billion in 2020, with 'no significant change since 2014 when the survey began.' This includes sectors from electric vehicles and wind turbines to energy efficient products like double glazing.

Low carbon economy turnover, £ billions: 2015-2020



Office for National Statistics

Employment in the UK's low carbon and resource efficient sectors was estimated to be 207,800 full-time equivalent jobs in 2020, with no significant change since 2014. The majority of this activity took place in businesses classified within the manufacturing, energy supply and construction industries.

Frances O'Grady said that the UK had an opportunity to be a pioneer on the path to net zero. 'But we will miss out on these opportunities if ministers do not step up public investment and action. And we could see existing jobs lost to other countries who modernise their industry faster.'

Philip Pearson

5. GKN Driveline, Birmingham - Just Transition Plan:

This report has been written with the assistance of a Unite Convenor at GKN, the Unite Environment Taskforce, the TUC, and the Global Labour Institute (GLI).

The GKN Automotive factory in Erdington (Birmingham) is the last UK plant producing automotive drivshafts for Jaguar Land Rover, Nissan, Toyota, and customers worldwide.

Melrose Industries, a private equity group, bought GKN in April 2018 in what workers and Unite believed to be a hostile takeover. The sale was opposed by Unite, the workforce and local politicians.

The UK Government reviewed of sale and approved it. Little interest was shown by the new owners in investing in the Birmingham plant to give it a long-term future.

The workforce was determined to improve the operating profits at the GKN Birmingham plant making automotive drivshafts, but Melrose Industries seemed to be more interested in a cost reduction programme, with no long-term commitment to the plant.

In January 2021, GKN announced the proposed closure of the site in Birmingham with the loss of 519 highly skilled jobs by July 2022. Consultation lasted around 3 months. The union used this process to gather information from the company relating to current and future products. This included the costs of these products and the sourcing information used to decide where the products were made.

The GKN site in Birmingham manufactures and assembles drivshafts and prop shafts. The prop shaft business - around 40% of the total - would eventually disappear as the Automotive industry transitions to electrified vehicles. It became apparent to the Unite Reps that to safeguard and future proof jobs, they needed to transition to producing components for electric vehicles; including new propulsion systems and e-drives.

Although GKN had developed a new e-drive system at its Abingdon research facility with the help of UK Government funding through the Advanced Propulsion Centre (APC) this will not help the workforce at the GKN Driveline Birmingham plant.

Unite and its members realised that if they wanted to see a green future for their plant and save their skilled jobs, they could not leave matters to the company and had to take matters into their own hands. The joint consultative committee put together a 90-page Just Transition Plan. This detailed how the plant could reorganise production to save the company money and transition towards producing new components required for e-drive systems.

This was the first Just Transition Plan ever put together by union shop stewards in a UK Automotive plant. It echoes the 1976 Lucas Plan; constructed by the Lucas Aerospace Combine Committee in 1976/77, which aimed to convert military production at Lucas Aerospace plants to socially useful and environmentally friendly products, as the then Labour Government cut military expenditure. The Combine worked with Coventry and North London polytechnics to put their product designs into product prototypes.

The Just Transition Plan constructed by the GKN shop stewards focused on saving jobs at the Birmingham plant. But it also involved transitioning the plant into an asset for the UK Automotive sector transitioning into producing electric vehicles and hydrogen vehicles. This would be a positive for the workforce, the Automotive sector, and the environment. The Unite Convenor said, "if this is not what is meant by the phrase a just transition, I do not know what is". GKN declined to take the plan forward.

The Unite shop stewards at GKN Birmingham felt that they were left with no alternative but to ballot Unite members for industrial action. This resulted in a resounding 93% voting in favour of action on a turnout of 95% of the members.

The ballot result got the company back to the negotiating table with the trade union, and other stakeholders; included the late Jack Dromey (Labour MP for Erdington, Birmingham), Andy Street (West Midlands Metro

Mayor), Professor David Bailey (a leading authority on the Automotive sector at the University of Birmingham and Coventry University), the Advanced Propulsion Centre (APC), and officials from the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. Although all the stakeholders agreed that the Just Transition Plan provided the best outcome for the GKN Birmingham plant and the UK Automotive sector, GKN, once again, declined to accept it. The company instead put together an improved severance package to the workforce.

The Unite shop stewards did not recommend acceptance, but the members voted to accept it. The Unite Convenor explained that the Automotive sector is about to go through one of its largest transitions in decades, and the component supply chain is going to take the brunt of the changes. It is crucial as trade unionists, that we look at how these changes will impact future employment for our members in the Automotive sector. "We need to ensure that this process of change includes a workers led "just transition" to protect our members".

* *The next issue of the Newsletter will carry a report of Just Transition plans being developed by workers in Rolls Royce. A longer version of this article is published in the UNITE Environment Quarterly. Ed*



Electric Vehicle made by the Unit for the Development of Alternative Products at Coventry Polytechnic.

An example of the pioneering environmentally friendly and socially useful products developed in the Lucas Plan of 1976/77. It is similar in design to EVs currently being trialled by the Royal Mail for post and parcel deliveries 40 years later.

6. Net Zero Schools. Unions tell DFE to go further



In February half term, the NEU held an all member climate crisis zoom with over 2,000 taking part.

*Joint General Secretary **Mary Busted** made the following points. The full text of the Joint Unions letter to the DFE can be read here. Ed*

When Kevin Courtney attended COP26 in November, he was inspired by the ideas, energy and enthusiasm of the many young climate activists he met.

At the COP, the DFE produced its draft climate strategy. Whilst there are steps forward – it falls short of what the education unions are asking for.

To be part of the solution to the climate crisis, our education system must respond adequately and appropriately to two things.

- Everyone in schools, colleges, and the wider community, needs to understand the nature and scale of the crisis and be able to play the fullest possible part in the transition to a sustainable society.
- The anxiety that leads 77% of young people globally to fear the future, 54% to believe that humanity is doomed and 38% to be actively planning not to have children, must be turned into positive action and engagement in that transition. Young people must not be allowed to sink into despair.

The steps being planned by the DFE go part of the way, but in mid-January the NEU, NAHT, NASUWT, UCU, Unison, GMB, NUS SOSUK, Thoughtbox and The Edge wrote to Nadhim Zadawi making these key points.

1. We need to review the entire curriculum; because we all need to understand the crisis and be playing a part in the transition. Article 12 of the Paris Agreement mandates governments to educate and mobilise the whole of society to deal with this crisis. It is the biggest challenge of our time and cannot be left primarily to people studying STEM subjects and Geography. It cannot be confined to a "skills agenda" for the "green sector" of the economy, though that is vital. It is about making the whole of our society 'green'. We need to be much more expansive in our understanding of 'green' skills – including for example caring roles and teaching – alongside proper appreciation of these roles in the

economy, and acknowledge and address the gender disparity in STEM subjects.

2. We need to decarbonise school and college buildings and develop green travel plans with a greater sense of urgency: with the job done by 2030. That would send a message to the wider community that we mean business and are not hanging around. This needs resourcing with full funding commitments – particularly for schools in areas of high deprivation.
3. We have a serious concern about any attempt to freeze debate in schools and colleges by labelling ideas that may go beyond what the government is prepared to do now as “partisan”. It is vital that students should be able to discuss this emergency in free-flowing ways. No one party, in government or opposition, has all the answers. Some of the welcome, but limited, moves being made today are the result of extraordinary actions by our students telling their elders to wake up. The Government really must not attempt to gag this movement, or support for it among teachers and other education staff. This would compound the justified anxiety felt by so many young people about what the future offers for them.



7. Putting the worker voice at the heart of recovery programmes

The need to publish detailed research that can be used to support union engagement on job creation in the regions and at national level has never been more important. An excellent example of this - Building a just transition for a resilient future - has just been published in the USA.

‘Climate Jobs Rhode Island is a coalition of Rhode Island labor unions, environmental groups, and community organizations working together to establish a Just Transition in the development of a green economy in Rhode Island grounded in the principles of economic, environmental, racial and social justice’.

One of the principles that distinguishes it from other economic regeneration research publications is that a just transition is at the centre of the policy proposals:

‘Maximize family-sustaining job growth through the creation and maintenance of good, well-paying union jobs and apprenticeship programs, and create defined career pathways for current workers in the fossil fuel industry.’

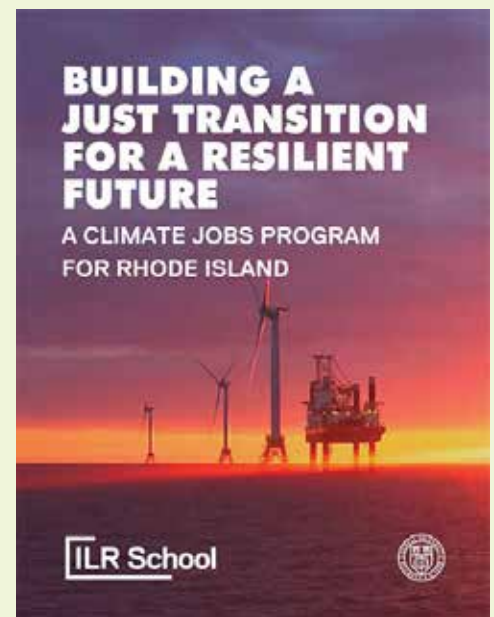
The report contains 7 key recommendations covering:

Schools, Buildings, Energy, Just transition, High quality jobs, Transport, Resilience and adaptation

It provides an excellent illustration of what the GJA has been advocating for in the UK on climate justice. The call to ‘Create a multi-stakeholder Office of Just Transition and require labor representation on existing government agency councils or commissions that work on climate change mitigation and adaptation’ echoes our demands for regional and national structures in the UK.

We urge unions and environmental campaigners to read this report as part of putting together comparable research for each region and nation in the UK.

Graham Petersen



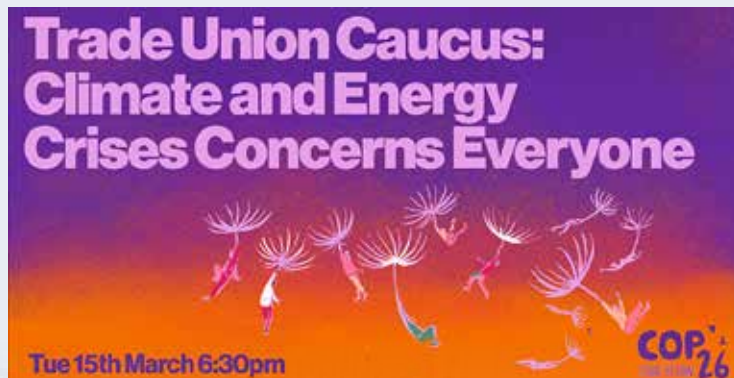
8. For a common program and solidarity for Africa at COP27

In February the COP coalition trade union caucus heard from comrades in Africa with a discussion on building our solidarity and support for workers' demands at COP27 in Egypt. This will be a key moment for Africa and our focus in the coming months will be centring on their struggles.

We were reminded that more than energy transition, many Africans face energy poverty where they still lack access to electricity. Equally, where renewable energy is being advanced, this is being done under a privatised model. Here we were reminded of the Political Declaration on the Just Energy Transition in South Africa announced at COP26 with the UK, US, Germany and the EU which will pressure the break-up (or unbundling) of the state owned energy company Eskom. What some have called a new 'green' structural adjustment program, it was heralded by news channel CNN as a "multilateral effort that could serve as a model for other developing nations to ditch fossil fuel".

With Boris Johnson trying to use the dangerous situation in Ukraine as an opportunity for a "climate change pass", and others pushing for more oil and gas extraction, the next trade union caucus meeting is timely in focussing on the energy and the climate crisis. Two sides of the same coin, tackling climate change through a climate justice transition, means ending fossil fuel use, ending fuel poverty and establishing affordable, universal access to energy.

Specifically, it will discuss what kind of energy programme could deliver these goals, and how we can unite with others to stop those in power cynical push for a new home grown fossil fuel agenda.



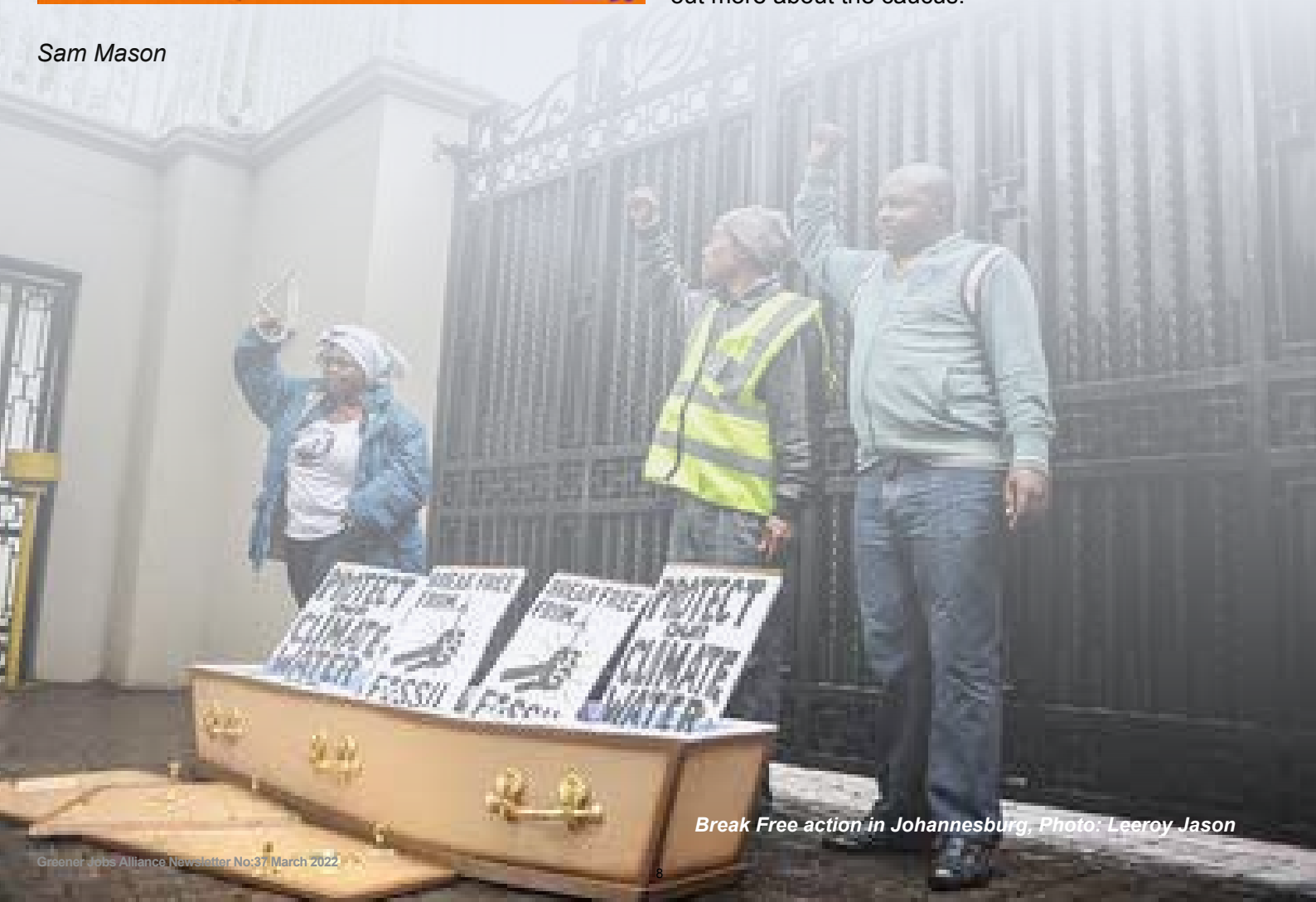
Speakers include **Sean Sweeney** from Trade Unions for Energy Democracy; **Ellen Rowbottom**, author of the energy chapter of the new climate jobs report; **Mbulaheni Enos Mbodi**, National Secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) in Eskom.

Tuesday 15 March at 6.30pm

Registration via [EventBrite](#)

Contact Sam@pcs.org.uk for the zoom link and to find out more about the caucus.

Sam Mason



Break Free action in Johannesburg, Photo: Leeroy Jason

9. Sinn Fein on Just Transition



The current political crisis in the North of Ireland is heading for Stormont elections on May 5th in which Sinn Féin is very likely to top the poll and take the First Minister role. A similarly strong standing in polls for the next general election in the South - due before February 2025 - makes the Party's policies on green transition of great significance in both these islands, so we are very happy to publish this article by Orfhlaith Begley MP. Ed

Fairness and sustainability must be the basis of Economic policy

With the Climate Crisis and the cost of living crisis upon us, economic policy must change to be centred on supporting hard pressed workers and families through these unprecedented times.

Sinn Féin has focused on delivering a Just Transition away from fossil fuels and towards green energy, knowing that people want to make the changes that are required, to heat and power their homes with renewables, but as things stand many people cannot afford it.

People in the north have lower wages, lower discretionary income and lower savings than people in Britain and are therefore more exposed to rising energy costs.

Many workers and families are worrying about paying heating bills right now. So we need to support ordinary people to make the changes that are required, instead of simply taxing people who are already struggling.

In the Assembly Sinn Féin has brought forward more climate related legislation than any other party. This legislation, if implemented, would be transformative to delivering a Just Transition.

- The Small Scale Green Energy Bill will support people and community groups to generate their own electricity from renewables through micro generation, while also placing an obligation on major energy providers to source a proportion of their energy from micro generation.

This would allow people to not only produce their own

electricity but to also sell the excess electricity back to energy companies. These types of incentives will help persuade people to make the transition to renewables, making renewable energy beneficial to their household budget.

We have also brought forward

- legislation to ban fracking from being used to extract petroleum
- a ban on single use plastics.

We also realise that implementing legislation alone will not be enough.

- The Just Transition also requires a fundamental change to the labour market in relation skills and training, as well as pay and conditions.
- When climate change is discussed there are sometimes fears and misconceptions that this means jobs being lost and industries closed.

We aim to change that narrative; delivering job creation to offer people better opportunities, and guarantees of support to attain green jobs with better pay and conditions.

Currently there are only 5,000 people employed in full time green jobs in north, but projections show that with the right investment that 13,000 green jobs can be created in areas like renewable energy, manufacturing, retrofitting and conservation.

Our focus is to reform our skills and training courses to give people the qualifications they need to access these jobs.

Precarious work and low pay is no basis for delivering a Just Transition and that is why we are focused on improving workers' rights in the here and now through

- tabling legislation to ban zero hour contracts
- and implementing policies to guarantee workers a real living wage as a minimum standard of pay.

We also believe that workers need a better work-life balance and that the premise of the Just Transition is to eradicate the levels of work-related stress and anxiety that are often associated with commuting and being overworked.

If the Pandemic has taught us anything, it is that some jobs can be done from home and that home working can actually provide people with a better work life balance as well as reducing carbon emissions.

Through our Work Life Balance Bill we have sought to give workers a day one right to request home working arrangements and for these arrangements to be available to agency workers.

The tasks ahead are unprecedented, and Sinn Féin stands ready to build an economy based on fairness and sustainability. **That is our focus in the time ahead.**

Órfhlaith Begley MP

10. Taking liberties

In Parliament, in the streets, in the courts, at the ballot box and among those seeking refuge, this Government is intent on stripping away people's rights and the power to challenge them. In the face of the barrage of dangerous legislation being rushed through Parliament, it's clear how determined they are to make themselves untouchable.

Policing Bill

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill threatens the right to peaceful, non-violent protest in England and Wales. The police would get more powers to arrest people for peaceful activities, and criminalise trespass, threatening the lifestyle of nomadic Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and limit access to nature.

More than 250 organisations and over 500,000 individuals have signed an open letter against the government's proposals

As Open Democracy reports, the House of Lords voted down some of the worst aspects of the Bill:

- Criminalising protests that were deemed too noisy or disruptive.
- Criminalising 'locking on.'
- Criminalising "interference with key national infrastructure" - roads, railways and airports.
- Criminalising 'obstructing major transport works.'
- Allowing police to stop and search people if they suspected an offence was being planned, without having to give a reason.
- Allowing the courts to ban regular protesters from even attending some protests.

We have a fight on our hands to ensure the proposals to limit demonstrations are not voted back in by MPs.

Elections Bill

The Elections Bill, promoted by the laughably entitled Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, would bring in compulsory Voter ID for elections. This move could disenfranchise millions of voters and make it harder for those already sidelined to make their voices heard at the ballot box.

The Bill would also shackle the independent Electoral Commission and put in its place the will of government Ministers. Former electoral commissioner, David Howarth, accused the government of an 'appalling' attack on the watchdog, saying that the changes 'look like something straight out of Putin's playbook.'

Refugees

The Nationality and Borders Bill would penalise most refugees seeking asylum in this country, creating an asylum model that undermines established international refugee protection rules and practices. According to the [Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants](#) the Bill would introduce:

- long criminal sentences targeted at asylum seekers arriving in the UK, who have no connection to criminal gangs.
- systems to delay or deny protection by declaring asylum claims 'inadmissible' where a person has a connection to a safe country.
- powers to push back asylum seeker boats at sea, contrary to the law of the sea.
- powers to send asylum seekers to offshore detention facilities.
- reforms to make it more difficult for a person in need of protection to be recognised as a refugee or a victim of trafficking.
- granting far fewer rights to those who are eventually recognised as refugees.

[Amnesty International](#) argues that the Bill targets victims of people smugglers, and fails to provide safe and legal routes to the UK. It is likely to push more and more people seeking asylum into more desperate measures.

Human Rights

Plans to overhaul the Human Rights Act are a blatant power grab with the aim of putting the government above the reach of the law. The government has issued a further public consultation, which closed on 8 March 2022.

Justice Secretary [Dominic Raab MP](#) claimed that to claim overhaul of human rights law will counter 'political correctness.'

But the devolved administrations for Scotland and Wales argue that:

'The Human Rights Act plays a critically important role in protecting fundamental human rights across the whole of the United Kingdom. For more than two decades it has benefitted individual members of society and ensured public institutions respect, protect and fulfil human rights.'

Philip Pearson

11. Union action on toxic air

The **Trade Union Clean Air Network (TUCAN)** continues to highlight the importance of treating air pollution as an occupational health emergency. Unions need to be at the forefront of local and national campaigns, as well as those in their own sectors of employment.

Transport sector

The sector's contribution to poor air quality is well documented but not so much is said about the hazards faced by transport workers. This was the theme of the RMT Annual Health and Safety Reps Conference that took place in Doncaster on February 23rd, 2022. Graham Petersen and Hilda Palmer from the Greener Jobs Alliance, and Hazards, were among the speakers that focused on toxic air in the workplace. The presentations included the results of monitoring that had been carried out by TUCAN on the underground network on the day of the conference. Fine dust levels (PM2.5) were recorded at over 1,100 mg/m³ in some locations, which is more than 40 times the inadequate UK standard. Tube workers, unlike commuters, can be exposed to these excessive levels for much longer periods of time, and are at greater risk. The conference agreed to follow up on monitoring and standards, including liaising with RMT sponsored MP, Andy McDonald.

Clean Cities scorecard



Photo: Julian Brown

The need for action is highlighted by the latest assessment of cities to deliver net-zero emissions City Ranking - Clean Cities

Out of 36 cities scored there are 3 in the UK. London comes 12th, Manchester 30th and Edinburgh 31st - so plenty of room for improvement.

Date for diary

The next TUCAN meeting:

Friday, 6 May from 11.00am – 1.00pm.

It will provide updates on union campaigns and prepare actions for National Clean Air Day on June 16th, 2022. Registration details for the the online meeting will be in the next newsletter.

Newsletter

The TUCAN Spring edition will be published later this month. Check the GJA web site for further information.

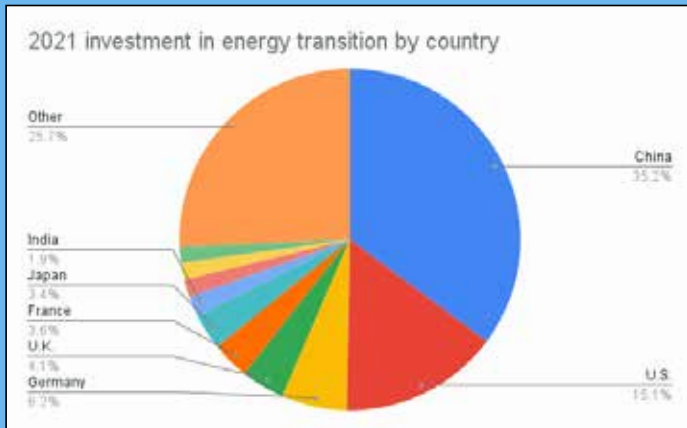
greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/air-pollution/

Graham Petersen



12. Green bites

Graphic of the month



Statistic of the month

£2.5 billion

How much cutting the “green crap” has added to UK energy bills since 2013

Website of the month

carbonintensity.org.uk

This site gives up to the moment information on what sources of energy are being used to generate electricity in the UK nationally and by region. It changes quite a bit depending on how hard the wind is blowing, but wind is now usually between 33 -43% of overall generation.

The regional differences are very interesting and will help us get a handle on what we need to do in each place. Consistently most fossil fuel dependent are South Wales and the East Midlands. Scotland is already almost free of fossil fuel generation.

At the moment Biomass is included as a “green” source, which is very significant for Yorkshire because the Drax power station supplies a substantial part of the Region’s power. The latest IPCC Report should reclassify that, which will require a significant shift and transition debate locally.

This Month on the GJA Blog

- Austerity Protests highlight the high costs of fossil fuels
- “Posh folk” or “Plain Folk” - who is the Net Zero Scrutiny Group. Part 1.
- What is the Net Zero Scrutiny Group. Part 2.
- Leeds Bradford abandons its expansion plans – where does that leave us?

greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/latest-news/

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