



## TUCAN Seminar Report

*'How can we protect workers from air pollution and other climate risks'*

Held at UCU Head Office, Wednesday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

This is a brief report of the event organised by the Trade Union Clean Air Network (TUCAN) in conjunction with the TUC LESE Region, and the University and College Union (UCU). It was a hybrid event bringing together trade unionists, academics, local authorities and campaigners.

It was designed to highlight some of the key areas that need engagement with workers and unions.

**Panel 1: Air pollution** – The session was chaired by Marianne Quick (UCU Environmental Policy Officer}. Marianne spoke about the integrated union approach that had been adopted with the Green New Deal strategy in the further education sector. [UCU - UCU Green Futures newsletter, May 2025](#)

**Local authority actions** – Cllr Paul White (London Borough of Wandsworth Cabinet Member for the Environment} and Jason Andrews (Air Quality Lead for 3 South London boroughs) described initiatives taken on indoor air pollution with local trade unions and the wider community. (PowerPoint included as an attachment)

**Academic research** – Professor Frank Kelly (Imperial College) outlined the work of the London Air Quality Network [London Air Quality Network](#). The average person breathes in 11,000 litres of air per day with much of this being polluted indoor air. An example he gave was the impact of cooking by gas which can generate significant levels of NO<sub>2</sub> and particulate matter compared to electric induction units.

**Union initiatives** – Patrick Bennett (National Education Union Policy Officer) referenced the joint union protocol on the need for good ventilation in schools, and how to achieve it. [Ventilation in schools | National Education Union](#) School unions are working together on a guide to indoor air pollution for publication later this year.

**Campaign developments** – Livi Elsmore (Healthy Air Coalition) talked about the need to keep up the pressure to secure air quality standards that as a minimum are in line with World Health Organisation targets. HAC will be launching a Policy Blueprint in July [Home - Healthy Air Coalition](#) (PowerPoint included as an attachment)

After each presentation there were a number of questions and comments including air pollution on the tube network, impact of incinerators and the Silvertown tunnel.

**Panel 2: Other climate risks** – The panel was chaired by Mick Holder (TUCAN), who described the work of the network over the last 12 months. This included practical guides for workers [TUCAN - Greener Jobs Alliance](#)

**Think Tanks** – Sophie O’Connell (Green Alliance Senior Policy Officer) described the impacts of climate risks on marginalised groups. This had been made worse by the lack of focus from Defra and other government departments. A Climate Risk report will be published by Green Alliance in July. [Home - Green Alliance](#)

**Trade union resources** – Graham Petersen (Greener Jobs Alliance) referenced the overlap between health and safety and climate risks. It was vital that unions use climate risk assessments to negotiate control measures that address both. (PowerPoint included as an attachment)

**Regional authorities** – Mete Coban (Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy, Greater London Authority) recognised that more attention needed to be paid to indoor air pollution. The GLA is conducting an Extreme Heat consultation. Retrofit, particularly of the social housing stock, is vital for climate adaptation. A Climate Action Plan for London is being developed. An offer was made to TUCAN and trade unions to contribute to these plans and for a meeting to be arranged as part of a follow-up to these discussions.

## **Next steps**

The meeting identified several follow-up actions:

- Liaise with the TUC and TUCAN supporting unions to take up the offer from the GLA Deputy Mayor and arrange a meeting to highlight trade union issues
- Promote campaigns around specific climate risks
- Highlight the link between health and safety and climate risks
- Increase the range of resources available to support union action
- Support union engagement on policy frameworks at national, regional and local levels
- Apply legal rights on the use of climate risk assessment and control methods
- Continue to press for central, regional and local governments to adopt WHO standards.
- Link this work into the 2025 TUC Year of climate action.