

TUC Special 2025

TRADE UNION YEAR OF CLIMATE ACTION

ITUC Demands for COP 30

Among the ITUC demands to governments at the COP30 are,

- **Make COP30 the Just Transition implementation COP**
- **Mainstream the role of workers and their demands in all aspects of negotiations**
- **Scale up Nationally Determined Contributions, including Just Transition policies and measures**
- **Provide climate finance for Adaptation, Loss and Damage as well as Mitigation**
- **Tackle fossil fuels.** *Instead of subsidising oil and gas corporations, states should use public procurement to support climate action and lay out clear rules to make private investments conditional on Just Transition away from fossil fuels with employment guarantees.*

The full demands can be read here.

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Contents

- ITUC Demands for COP 30
- The Key debate on Climate at Congress
- Other Climate related motions
- Events on the Fringe
- UNISON's plans for the Year of Climate Action
- North East Supply Chains Conference

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The key climate debate at Congress

The key climate debate at Congress at this year's TUC Congress is around Motion 75 from the **Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union** and an amendment that they have rightly refused to accept from **UNITE**.

All the Motions in the provisional agenda can be read [here](#). The final agenda, after compositing, is only likely to be available shortly before Congress.

The **BFAWU motion** reads as follows

Year of trade union climate action 2025–2026

Congress welcomes the 2024 TUC motion recognising that the climate emergency is a trade union issue impacting all jobs and workers. Congress reaffirms its support for climate-related workplace action, including heat strikes, and the call for a year of trade union climate action 2025–2026, now also national policy for several affiliated unions.

Congress recognises:

- i. workers are already suffering from extreme weather, flooding, and unaffordable fossil fuel energy
- ii. the UK is unprepared for escalating climate disasters
- iii. a rapid, just global transition from fossil fuels is essential to avoid catastrophic climate breakdown.

Congress calls on the TUC and affiliates to:

- a. support and organise a workplace day of action on 14 November 2025 and support protests on the global day of solidarity on 15 November 2025, during COP30 in Brazil.

Congress resolves to:

1. promote green bargaining in all union training, campaign for facility time for green reps, build national and regional green reps' networks
2. encourage unions to organise outreach events, including workplace discussions and joint actions with other unions and civil society on climate, housing, health, fuel poverty and anti-racism during 2025–2026
3. support global solidarity initiatives including the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and climate justice finance such as Brazil's proposed two per cent tax on billionaires
4. promote and support mobilisation around the workplace day of action on 14 November 2025 and global day of solidarity on 15 November 2025, during COP30 in Brazil
5. instruct the TUC Just Transition team to produce and coordinate publicity and promotion to support affiliates throughout the year.

This is very clear.

- It states the obvious points that tend to be ignored; that, ten years after the Paris Agreement, the crisis is happening now, faster than anyone expected, is already hitting workers hard and that only a rapid transition off fossil fuels can limit the damage.
- That we have to campaign for this, organise our unions so we have the capacity, and reach out to each other and campaigning organisations to make this happen.
- It puts this in the necessary international framework.
- It gives us an outward looking organising agenda, initially around the November day of workplace action and 15 Nov 15th global day of solidarity during the COP in Brazil.

**BAKERS
FOOD
AND ALLIED
WORKERS
UNION**

The tortuously worded amendment from **UNITE** reads like this.

In bullet 3., after “billionaires” insert: “ while understanding that future fossil fuel production can only be ended when and where a fully funded workers’ plan for jobs has been agreed and delivered in full”. Our emphasis.

As formulated, this weakens the motion. Discussions with UNITE about framing it more positively in a unifying composite have so far sadly not been fruitful, because they seem to see the climate crisis as a bargaining chip rather than an existential threat.

This framing does not put our movement where it needs to be, leading the transition and the fight for it to be just; because we have two problems.

1. The transition is going too slowly, with the impacts of climate breakdown we can see already happening all around us, with catastrophic impacts all over the world; and already showing up in food prices as extreme weather shrivels harvests. We have to campaign as a movement for it to accelerate, and push for government investment to create demand in desperately needed sectors like retrofit.
2. There is insufficient commitment from government, and resistance from employers, to a just transition and we have to campaign for that at the same time, as part of the transition, not as an opposition to it. Because it's not the transition that threatens the jobs.

To explain this more fully

- As written, with “can only”, the amendment is a statement that is simply untrue. Within capitalism, fossil fuel production, past, present and future, ends when it is uneconomic, or its supply in any given place is exhausted, whether there is a plan for the workforce or not.
- There rarely is, as we know, to our cost in the trade union movement.
- And there never is unless we fight for one.
- A fully funded workers’ plan for jobs for workers in the fossil sector is even more vital now that fossil fuels are at the tipping point at which renewable sources of energy are cheaper, and increasingly so.
- No one is going to put such a plan in our laps. The employers won't. The government won't.
- Which is why it is important that unions like UNITE which are organising the workers in threatened sectors, put one forward so we can all get behind it and campaign for it during and after this year of action, so it can be agreed with government and forced on employers.
- This is particularly the case in exhausted, expensive and hard to extract sources like the North Sea; where half of the jobs went the last 15 years, despite continued investment and exploration.
- Putting forward the idea that lifting the ban on more of this will stop jobs there falling off a cliff is not consistent with what's been happening or what's projected to happen, which is consistently grim for the workers concerned.
- This has nothing to do with the growth of offshore wind at the same time, which offers the only lifeline offshore workers have got; and implying that it has, doesn't do them any favours because it implies that stopping the transition would save jobs, when it won't.
- That leads the members up the garden path, leaves them bitterly blaming the wrong thing, and open to Nigel Farage's fantasies of an oily future; which would lead to us all going up in smoke.

On this basis, we would appeal to Unite to accept the composite in the interests of unity and putting the whole movement in a position to campaign together for the most rapid possible just transition.



Other Climate Related Motions

There are many motions that would be strengthened by an exploration of their climate dimension.

This section aims to draw these out.

Neither of the motions on fighting the far right from **EIS** and **USDAW** note that Reform is largely funded by fossil fuel interests and has made campaigning against “*stupid net zero*” one of its major campaigns. We need that understanding baked in as a political reflex.

The UNITE Motion 23 on a wealth tax is welcome, as is **Accord’s** Motion 35 and reference to Brazil and Spain’s proposal for a global wealth tax on billionaires to fund global future proofing would strengthen it.

Prospect’s slightly understated Motion 31 on UK resilience notes “*vulnerabilities related to national security, natural and environmental hazards, transport infrastructure, and human, animal and plant health*” and the dangers in cutting regulation and the skilled staff who manage these and sounds a warning about the fragility of funding for the scientific research that keeps tabs on all this. The overt attack on climate related research and information being made domestically and internationally by the Trump administration is a model of worst practice and a foretaste of what we might have here if there’s a Reform government. The FDAs amendment flags up the publication of the Chronic Risk Assessment, including climate change, as a welcome attempt to get the truth out.

RMTs motion 34 on Restructuring the economy to shift wealth and power in favour of working people calls for an “*improved industrial strategy*” and would be strengthened by making it explicit that such a strategy, in conditions of a climate emergency, has to be a joined up attempt to make our entire society sustainable, and to mobilise the population to that end; so we are conscious collective participants in our own salvation in every workplace and every community.

UCU’s Motion 37 on **Wages not Weapons** is another crucial debate. It commits to “*a safe and liveable planet*” and notes that “*ever-higher expenditure on arms will inevitably mean less money for our education, health, and councils, and the green transition.*” If the 5% of GDP on military spending target were to be met, it would cost £77 billion extra every year. That’s an annual financial black hole four times the size of the one Rachel Reeves was complaining that the Tories had left.

The motion is also right to note that “*rearmament is not a suitable standalone foundation for national renewal*”. Military investment gets a very limited return compared with the multiplier effect of investment in almost any other area, because the goods that it produces can only be used to destroy things (so it’s better that they are not); while investment in anything else has immediate and lasting positive benefits.

Investment in green transition has the added benefit of giving us some chance of surviving the very real climate threats that we are already beginning to experience. The notion that the country has to become “*battle ready and armoured plated*” (Keir Starmer) in preparation for a land war in Europe, is suicidal in the medium term and will impoverish us in the short term. If this motion is not passed, it will hinder mobilising opposition to any of the cuts and attacks that the government will make in order to throw all our resources down this £77billion black hole.

The **BDA’s** Motion 45 on **Reducing health inequalities through nutrition and prevention** would be strengthened by mentioning the current increases in food prices brought about by climate impacts, and the projection that, without more action, food prices will rise by about a third by 2050, and that the shift to healthier, more plant based, diets is also a very useful contribution to cutting the carbon emissions of food production; so the Dimbleby Report shelved by the last government, should be given another look by this one.

Motions 47 and 48 from **UNITE** and **UNISON** on **Local Government Funding** would be strengthened by noting the crucial role Local Authorities have to play if we are to build a new wave of sustainable council housing, carry through the scale of retrofit we need, integrate public transport and coordinate communities on increasingly sustainable lines.

Motion 50 from the **FBU** on **Zane’s Law** rightly highlights the way that firefighters are in the front line of the increased scale and intensity of climate impacts, with floods and wildfires, and the way that these can impact on historic poor disposal of toxic waste in landfill.

Other Climate Related Motions

UCU's Motion 51 on a **National Education Service** rightly stresses the vital role of Post 16 education in *"tackling inequality, mitigating climate change, rebuilding our communities"*. FE Colleges have a key role in developing the skills we need, for instance, to retrofit homes and public buildings, install heat pumps etc, but also for the apprentices to know why they are doing it. So, when the motion calls for the TUC to *"produce, by next year's Congress, a TUC report outlining a bold, progressive vision for a national education service, free at the point of use from cradle to grave."* and **Community's** amendment to the *EIS* motion 52 Stand up for quality education calls *"to reform the curriculum so that it better meets the needs of a 21st century education system"* this will need to be done with reference to **Article 12 of the Paris Agreement**, to prepare us for the sustainable society we need, not tried to fit us into the unsustainable society we've got. A sober assessment of the forthcoming DFE curriculum review will have to be at the core of that.

The **GMBs** motion 60 on **Ceramics** and **Community's** motion 61 on **Steel** both note that high energy costs in the UK are affecting the viability of both industries. Calling for a gas subsidy in this context is a roundabout way of conceding how expensive it is. Even the *Daily Express* is now conceding that high UK energy costs are primarily a result of having electricity prices pegged to gas. So, the best approach to cut these costs would be to change that policy, so the reduced costs from using an ever greater share of renewables feeds through.

Motions 62 - 67, all on the impact of **Artificial Intelligence** from **Equity**, **Community**, the **MU**, **NUJ**, **Aegis** and the **AUE** indicates the breadth of concern that AI companies are simply ripping off content in creative industries, allowing the endless recycling of unoriginal content, displacing workers on a large scale, and that the government is simply following the US lead on letting this rip - noting *"its delay in introducing a bill to regulate AI, which they announced would be before Christmas 2024, but which has still not been tabled"* and *"refusing to sign (in February 2025) a statement on inclusive and sustainable artificial intelligence for people and the planet signed by 58 other countries"*.

The **NUJ** notes that AI helps spread misinformation - the world according to Elon Musk - though that would carry more weight if current media wasn't awash with exactly that, on climate and other issues; so the issue of technology plus power should also be part of this discussion.

As should the, at present, enormous power and water demands of AI data centres, which are already leading to increased bills in places like Florida and is very bad news for any area in which they get built; as, in a drought, when there is a conflict of interest between local farmers or communities needing water and a billionaire tech bro, who do you think will get priority?

Some discussion on the extent to which the AI companies' rapacity could be driven by their current unprofitability, with their stock market ratings being dependent on a shared belief that they will be quids in at some point in the future; which is classic financial bubble territory would also be useful.

ASLEF's motion 69 **Rail Freight Future** rightly calls for nationalisation of rail freight and a greater emphasis on it in the forthcoming Industrial Strategy, as it seems at the moment that roads are being prioritised.

TSSA's motion 70 on **Just Transition for Rail Workers** rightly calls for a campaign to *"expand investment in rail, putting it front-and-centre in plans to upgrade our infrastructure and make the whole-economy transition to net zero."* Definitely something to do during the trade union year of climate action. The RMT's amendment calling for the London and Liverpool mayors to be able to take "rail services they are responsible for into public ownership" could be a useful pilot scheme for other City Regions if implemented.

Events on the Fringe

A festival of radical solidarity and eco-socialism



WORKERS PLANET

SUNDAY THE 7th SEPTEMBER
The Old Courthouse Brighton
BN1 1UD

Part of the **Workers Planet** event on the first day of TUC conference, following on from two related panel discussions: ***"The climate crisis is a working class issue"*** at 11am, and ***"Intersectional climate justice"*** at 1pm - both at the Old Courthouse - just a few minutes walk away from Community Base.

Hosted by Campaign Against Climate Change Trade Union Group

Retrofit, climate & jobs: Why unions must lead

Monday 8 September, 5.45pm

Speakers:

- Stu Bretherton, FPA
- Paul Atkin, GJA
- Toby Sedgwick, ACORN
- Paul Kershaw, Unite / SHAC (Social housing action campaign)

Join this fringe event to discuss why retrofitting homes must be central to the trade union movement's climate agenda. With the cost-of-living crisis, rising bills, damp homes and a heating planet, mass retrofit led by local authorities is vital to cut carbon, tackle fuel poverty, deliver quality training for young workers and create hundreds of thousands of secure, unionised green jobs.

Kicking off the TUC's Year of Climate, this session brings together Fuel Poverty Action, ACORN, Greener Jobs Alliance, Medact, frontline trade unionists and MPs to explore how we win the skills, training, tenant protections and investment needed for a just transition.

Learn how the Retrofit for the Future campaign is fighting for a publicly funded, whole-house retrofit programme – and why unions must lead.

TUC fringe meeting
Sun 7th September



The climate crisis is a working class issue - building a year of trade union climate action

Sarah Woolley, Gen Sec, BFAWU
Sarah Kilpatrick, President, NEU
Liz Wheatley, Unison
Suzanne Jeffery, CACCTU
Miranda Irwin, Heat Strike Chair, Tahir Latif, Greener Jobs Alliance

Meeting room 1C Brighton Centre



North East England's economic future is up for grabs!

Join the TUC for our **All to Play For** conference this September. Across two packed days, we'll explore alternative futures for the oil and gas supply chain and how we seize the opportunities of offshore wind for our communities. Join leaders and experts from government, industry, and the shopfloor for speeches, panel discussions, and deep dive seminars to help us develop a shared plan for long-lasting and jobs-rich clean growth.

Open to all workers in the energy supply chain, all experts on economic transition, and everyone wanting a strong future-proof economy across our country!

Join us 16-17 September 2025 at Redhills Miners Hall, Durham, DH1 4BE. More details and registration at <https://tuc.zohobackstage.com/AllToPlayFor>.

CONFERENCE

All to Play For

Building a Positive Future for Energy Supply Chains

Tue 16 and Wed 17 Sep 2025 | Redhills Miners Hall, Durham

Speakers include: Paul Nowak, TUC | Dhara Vyas, Energy UK | Dan McGrail, Great British Energy | A senior representative from HM Government | And dozens more

North East England's economic future is up for grabs. Across two jam-packed days, we'll explore alternative futures for the oil and gas supply chain and how we seize the opportunities of offshore wind. Join leaders and experts from government, industry, and the shopfloor for speeches, panel discussions, and deep dive seminars, and help us develop a shared plan for long-lasting, jobs-rich clean growth

 Changing the world of work for good

hosted at 

GREEN UNISON

Doing our bit to make
public services greener

Planning for UNISON Green Week – and beyond

UNISON is urging its members to start planning for the union's Green Week; from 19-26 September.

This paves the way for the **2026 UNISON Year of Green Activity**: which will offer members a springboard to engage even more

on climate change, while the union will support its branches to bargain and negotiate proactively on green workplace issues.

When launching the year, general secretary Christina McAnea said: *"Tackling climate change can't wait until a more convenient time – there's too much at stake for our members, their jobs, their families and the communities we all live in – we have to act now. In 2026 Green UNISON is going big."*

Plan and ideas that could be emulated by other unions as a basis for coordination

- Find out about Green UNISON and sign up for the campaign newsletter
- Order Green UNISON sustainable promotional items
- Find out more about the Year of Green Activity calendar
- Year of Green Activity

Edited from UNISON website.

GJA Newsletters will highlight union plans for the Year of Action and report on activities through the year, so to keep up to date.

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