GREEN UNISON
Doing our bit to make public services greener

UNISON
the public service union

Bargaining on green issues in the workplace

Ensuring that workers have a voice in a just transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 in public services.

Foreword

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.

That's why UNISON announced that 2026 is the Year of Green Activity. UNISON members – in all their different roles across local government, the health service, community, police, fire & rescue, education, housing, environmental protection and others – have to deal with the additional burdens of climate change. Burdens like pollution, extreme weather, floods or cold homes.

And we are all also increasingly affected by the financial burdens of global economic shocks that climate change causes to food and energy supplies.

As the UK's largest trade union, and an exclusively public service union, we know we have a significant role to play in addressing this crisis. Its impacts are already evident across our society, as ever disproportionately affecting the most disadvantaged, and we must be ready to make the changes required to mitigate, address and adapt.

We should all be proud that UNISON has been the leading union on climate change since it was founded. From submitting a report on the original Kyoto agreement in 1997 and being a founding member of the Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC) to attending five of the last global climate summits (COP) – our engagement has never stopped.

We know that UNISON members believe in the vital role of public services in protecting our communities and are committed to delivering a good quality of life to all without compromising the future.

But we also know that your voices need to be at the table when issues are discussed – whether it be about necessary workplace and service transformations, or about workloads and workspaces being affected by extreme weather, or about ensuring that the transition to greener workplaces is fair and leaves no-one behind.

In the UK, climate change is already harming our health, our jobs, our economy and our environment in ways that are going to be hard to reverse. With most of the world now grappling with extreme weather events, severe levels of pollution and habitat loss, it could not be more vital that we all do our bit to recognise, and tackle, the issue of climate change and UNISON has never shied away from that challenge.

And while the climate emergency has potentially devastating impacts on the planet and on all of us, it is now indisputable that the impacts of climate change fall more heavily on the disadvantaged and that this is true not just in the UK but also globally.

UNISON has always understood that for global targets to be met we need to make sure that meeting UK targets doesn't just shift the problem along to other countries.

UNISON's international work in this area, from supporting UNISON's engagement on the global COP climate conferences, to its role in shaping Just Transition agreements for workers in global supply chains, demonstrates our commitment to recognising this as a global crisis requiring global action.

However, it is the large-scale transformation required in public services and the direct impact of climate change on our members that means we need to engage at a national and local level wherever we can. And, of

course, our energy workers are at the forefront of delivering the new renewable technologies and infrastructure that reduce reliance on fossil fuels. We are fighting for a Just Transition for members whose jobs and communities are directly at risk if not protected as part of the transition. Our members working across public services are often at the frontline of managing the impacts on our health, our environment and our resources. All our jobs are, or will be, impacted in one way or another, either directly or indirectly.

We cannot accept a repeat of what happened in the coal industry in the 70s and 80s where whole communities were left behind. The opportunities that come with reskilling and new green jobs must be an integral part of the solutions ahead.

And we know that, while we are committed to engaging politically with current and prospective governments on ensuring the necessary changes and funding needed to meet their climate commitments, it is also vital that we encourage and enable our members to get actively involved in the local transformations and negotiations that are already happening across public services to ensure that workers are recognised as key stakeholders in the plans that affect them and to ensure the transition to a greener workplace is a fair one.

This guide is just part of that support, along with training and other resources to help you along the way. The guide provides details on how UNISON activists can get involved at every level to ensure employers deliver the necessary Just Transition to meet its climate commitments and protect jobs and services. You can use this guide to equip you to get fully involved in influencing your employer's climate change policies from beginning to end or it can help you identify stand-alone actions that you can consider which are easy first steps to supporting your work in this area.

Right now, public service workplaces, big and small, are an excellent place to start tackling climate change in the UK and in many areas the door may already be open for having those discussions.

Christina McAnea
UNISON general secretary

NOTE: This guide aims to be an online resource that will be reviewed and updated annually as resources and best practice guidance changes.

Why is UNISON engaged on this issue?

Half of UK carbon emissions are produced by work activity. This is more obvious in our energy-intensive industries such as power stations and manufacturing plants. But almost all workplaces have a 'carbon footprint'.

Public services directly emit around 8% of the UK's greenhouse gases and that excludes public transport. When you add in their influence on procurement, construction, social housing etc, the impact is even bigger, and the UK government recognises that public services have a huge role to play in meeting our climate commitments.

Workplaces are an important place to start reducing carbon emissions and taking a lead on tackling climate change.

Public service employers are under a legal obligation to reduce their carbon emissions to zero by 2050 (2045 in Scotland, five years ahead of the rest of the UK), so most of that work would need to be done by 2030 to be on track. It is obvious that to deliver these obligations, changes are ahead that will impact on our members' workplaces, the jobs they do and the way services are delivered in the future.

UNISON believes that:

- Only a **Just Transition to a low-carbon economy** can secure the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities
- Just Transition plans should be **co-created with workers and their trade unions** to guarantee decent work, social protection, training opportunities and job security for all workers affected by global warming and climate change policies
- Plans must be **underpinned by the fundamental labour rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining**, and facilitated through social dialogue between workers and their unions, employers and governments, as established by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

You can find an up-to-date guide to our full UNISON policy on matters related to climate change under the resources section of the Green UNISON campaign pages here.

You can also find out about our work on stopping people and the planet being harmed by the actions of corporations and the public sector within the Working internationally pages here.

What is this guide for?

This guide goes into a great deal of depth about how UNISON can get involved at every level of the necessary Just Transition needed in order for the employer to meet its climate commitments.

However, we do not expect everyone to be able to pick up this guide, set up a negotiating forum and complete all aspects contained within it straight away – particularly if you work in an area where there is no formal trade union recognition or established negotiating forum.

Whilst the aim is to equip you to get fully involved in influencing your employer's climate change policies comprehensively from beginning to end, there are also many stand-alone actions that you can consider and which are easy first steps to supporting your work in this area.

The guide aims to:

- give a background to UNISON's work on climate change and why it affects our members' jobs and families, including what we mean by a 'Just Transition' and why it is so important
- introduce the role of branch environmental officer (EnvO) and how it interacts with other branch positions
- explore how to make the arguments for
  a. the need for employer engagement on green issues generally and
  b. why trade union involvement and partnership working is not only necessary but advantageous, in any proposed green changes in the workplace
- offer guidance on basic first steps to collect information, evidence and ideas for starting a discussion with your employer
- offer guidance on how to engage with the employer on their wider plans to meet any national emissions reduction targets, which may impact on our members' jobs and the services they deliver
- introduce the role of formal negotiating forums such as joint environment and Just Transition committees for bargaining specifically on green issues
- offer guidance on specific areas that you might want to negotiate on a local 'greening the workplace agenda' such as greening waste, transport, or goods and suppliers policies
- provide template letters and checklists to help you progress various areas further and
- signpost to the various training and further information that can help you continue to explore this important area of trade union activism.

UNISON and climate change – a timeline

This is a non-comprehensive timeline of UNISON's engagement on climate change from 1995 to date of publication. In recent years activity has become substantial so this timeline seeks to highlight the most significant events only.

1995	UNISON sends messages of solidarity to UN Climate talks in Berlin at the first Conference of Parties (COP) conference
1997	UNISON writes a report in support of the Kyoto climate agreement and the relevance for the future of our planet and public services
1998	UNISON becomes a founding member of the Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC)
2002	UNISON produces guidance on bargaining for greener transport, better recycling and cycle to work schemes in the workplace
2005	UNISON publishes its PURGe report (Public Utility Reform Group report) calling for a new low carbon energy policy to address fuel poverty and climate change
2006	UNISON is the first trade union to sign up to the Stop Climate Chaos coalition
	UNISON responds to the government's energy review consultation calling for investment in renewable energy
	UNISON establishes an internal green taskforce, chaired by the general secretary, to build sustainability into its corporate operations
2007	Two climate change motions are passed by national delegate conference, one calling on the government to undertake a massive programme of investment in green technologies and for local authorities to undertake carbon audits, and the other with a comprehensive body of measures including starting a campaign for a climate change bill and a successor to the Kyoto agreement
	UNISON is involved in negotiating the new NHS Green Travel plan
2008	Three UNISON branches successfully apply to become part of a government funded green workplace pilot programme
	A 'Women and climate change' motion starts our engagement with the Women's Environment Network recognising the impact on women and the lack of women's voices in the climate change debate
2009	UNISON calls on members to join 'The Wave' - the UK's biggest demonstration in support of action on climate change and UN climate talks in Copenhagen
	UNISON commits to supporting local government pension funds to invest more sustainably for a greener planet in the 'Green the Planet' campaign
	UNISON calls on the government to recognise that government, trade unions and employers must work together to beat climate change both locally and globally
2010	UNISON funds unions from the global south to take part in UN climate talks in Cancun
	UNISON's local government conference agrees a campaign to call for investment in green jobs and facility time for green reps
2012	UNISON publishes a report mapping out a green path to economic recovery as a rebuttal to 'austerity' which calls on local authorities to take a lead in developing sustainable energy projects, cut carbon emissions, ease fuel poverty and create local green jobs
2014	UNISON publishes its response to the 'Green Deal' calling for a systematic national programme of home insulation measures

2015	UNISON supports the Paris Climate Conference and plays an active role, attending and speaking on behalf of the UK trade unions' delegation
	UNISON supports the Climate Coalition's lobby of parliament, national demonstration and supports national and local 'Go Green Week' activities
2018	UNISON publishes the first edition of the 'Divesting from carbon' campaign guide for local government pension schemes
2019	UNISON backs the national School Climate Strikes, attending demos and speaking at national and local events
	UNISON is one of several trade unions to sign up to 'Just Transition in Energy'– a joint statement on what a just transition to green energy should look like
2020	UNISON is highly involved in the planning for the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow
	UNISON is represented by Stephen Smillie from our NEC as one of the UK members of the ITUC delegation, helping to organise marches, meetings, seminars and workshops that will be held alongside the conference
2021	After a delay due to COVID, COP26 finally goes ahead in Glasgow in November
	UNISON launches its report 'Getting to net zero in public services: the road to decarbonisation' showing what measures will be necessary to decarbonise public services and at what cost. The report clearly demonstrates that delay will cause costs to spiral and impacts of climate change will hit harder
2022	UNISON launches its Green UNISON campaign, committing to an annual Green UNISON week of activity, a national newsletter and a new focus on embedding climate change across all areas of UNISON, also adding the role of the environment officer as a rule book branch officer position, developing training, guidance and supporting regional and national networks across the union
	UNISON once again attends COP27 in Egypt as one of only two UK members of the ITUC delegation
	UNISON sends a motion on the climate emergency to TUC congress which is carried and adopted as TUC policy
2023	UNISON feeds into the Labour Party policy process on its green policy along with other affiliated trade unions via UNISON's Labour Link
	UNISON publishes 'Gridlocked – A report about the energy crisis' outlining the impact on members and the sustainable solutions needed for a just transition to better energy solutions
	UNISON members take part in the Women's Environment Network workshops as part of their work on the Feminist Green New Deal, ensuring gender and racial equality area is at the heart of plans to tackle climate change
	UNISON attends the ILO conference on Just Transition, contributing to workshops that led to an ILO agreed position on a Just Transition framework for getting to net zero
	UNISON once again attends COP28 in Dubai as one of only two UK members of the ITUC delegation
	UNISON again sends a motion to TUC congress on climate change and a Just Transition, which is carried
2024	UNISON commissions research on the impacts of local climate change mitigations on care workers, aiming to produce guidance on best practice, practical options for support and negotiating on this issue locally
	UNISON launches this guidance
2026	UNISON's Year of Green Activity making it clear that climate change is an issue we cannot afford to ignore
	TUC's Year of Trade Union Climate Action

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Green UNISON campaign page for the latest details www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/green-unison/

If negotiators have any comments on this guidance or any experience of negotiations that could be usefully incorporated in the guidance, please contact Bargaining Support at bsg@unison.co.uk

Further guidance is available from bargaining support for branches and workplace reps www.unison.org.uk/bargaining

Contact your regional education teams and / or LAOS to find out what training and resources are available to assist you with negotiating with your employer or promoting the issues in this guide with your members https://learning.unison.org.uk

BACKGROUND – the case for more sustainable workplaces

We are facing a climate change crisis

As the UK's biggest trade union, UNISON has a key role to play in protecting our planet and ensuring our public services become greener.

We're already seeing the impact of the climate emergency here in the UK and around the world. We need to work together to take actions now to reduce emissions, support communities and provide a Just Transition for workers.

The year 2024 was confirmed as the warmest on record, with 2025 anticipated to beat that record.

The record global warmth has helped to worsen many extreme weather events with intense heatwaves, droughts and wildfires, severe flooding and mudslides, typhoons and hurricanes. The UK is not exempt from these impacts.

According to research by scientists from the European Copernicus climate service, the Met Office, Nasa and other climate experts around the world, average global temperatures for 2024 were around 1.6C higher than pre-industrial times. It breaks the record set in 2023 by just over 0.1C, and means the last ten years are now the ten warmest years on record.

As a union, we have a vital role to play

- in campaigning for greener policies from UK and devolved parliaments and regional mayors
- working with employers to make workplaces more sustainable, as well as more adaptable and resilient to climate hazards
- ensuring we are at the bargaining table so that the necessary changes to the workplace do not have a detrimental effect on the workforce
- ensuring that workers have access to retraining and redeployment
- addressing the potential health and safety impacts to workers of these climate hazards
- informing members of climate change.

UNISON members in all their different roles across local government, the health service, community, police, fire & rescue, education, housing, environmental protection have to deal with the additional burdens from the effects of climate impacts, be it pollution, extreme weather, floods or cold homes.

UNISON members are committed to protecting communities and delivering a good quality of life that does not compromise the future.

On the international stage, our union works with other unions from around the world to campaign for public investment to tackle climate change.

The impact on society, on our public services and on our members is profound

Without all UK governments stepping up to this existential emergency, there is no doubt, we will run out of time to protect our planet.

This is a fundamental trade union issue, because the jobs, health and finances of UNISON members are all affected by climate change.

Christina McAnea, UNISON general secretary

Climate change policy in public services is inextricably linked to policies on public health, renewable energy generation and distribution, the cost-of-living crisis, education and skills and almost all other areas of public policy.

UNISON has members across all public services. All are affected directly or indirectly by climate change. This impact will only increase over the coming years.

Examples of direct impacts on service groups

Our local government members – Local authorities are tasked with reporting on their own direct and indirect emissions. They are required to reduce their emissions from their own operations (direct and indirect). Many have already signed emergency declarations and instigated action plans. The impact across local authorities and the services they provide is massive and they have power to have a big impact across large geographical areas and influence populations. The Local Government Association agrees that this level of transformation will require "a significant step-change in the development of the workforce through a strong skills and jobs agenda that is responsive to need." (LGA, www.local.gov.uk/publications/green-jobs-creating-workforce-deliver-net-zero")

Our care sector members – our care workforce is having to adapt to mitigations on transport that they can ill-afford, as well as a bigger workload in managing the increased health impacts on the people they care for.

Our schools and further education members – the costs of heating and cooling ancient school buildings is impacting on all budgets. In FE, climate change was a central part of 2023's pay claim precisely because our members there are facing a huge overhaul of service delivery in order to meet the necessary skills training required by government to mitigate climate change.

Our members in the health service are having to manage the increasing workload as a result of the health impacts from excess heat or pollution, as well as large scale transition planning to greener ways of working.

Our energy members – national climate commitments to reduce reliance on fossil fuels will inevitably mean a transition to renewable energy sources and an increase in demand on our electricity distribution networks. Our members in energy are rightly demanding a central seat in all discussions about the impacts of the transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. UNISON is clear that the transition must be fair, and our energy members need to be represented at every stage of any transition arrangements that will affect their jobs and skills. The workforce needs new skills to safeguard their jobs. That means proper investment in the right training.

Our members protecting the environment are frontline responders to increased flooding incidents and impacts on water quality, droughts as well as other direct environmental impacts on wildlife. The increasing frequency of these events means

increased costs and pressure on budgets, as well as an impact on the workers with workplace stress, long hours and worker burnout.

These are just some examples of areas affected and is not an exhaustive list. Similar changes are planned for cleaning our water, greening transport and environmentally sustainable housing, providing further examples of how necessary climate change related mitigations are affecting areas of our membership.

Climate change affects the most disadvantaged people and communities the most

It is now universally accepted that those who are most harmed by climate change are also those with the least voice and the least power to change the situation.

That is true globally and within the UK.

Impact on women – women still take on a disproportionate burden of care giving, feeding, housing, and warming their families, all of which is becoming unaffordable, directly linked to the global impacts of the climate crisis. In addition, women are less likely to be represented within energy industries.

Impact on disabled members – disabled people rely on cars more than other groups. This raises issues of affordability and accessibility for the transition to greener transport. Charging points for electric vehicles are being built that are not able to be fitted to all UK homes and new charging stations can be unusable by disabled drivers and create obstacles for disabled pedestrians. Disabled people are less able to evacuate safely when an environment-related disaster strikes such as flooding or fire, and many impairments and health conditions are exacerbated by extreme temperatures or pollution. Disabled workers are also more likely to be in precarious employment and require significant reasonable adjustments or Disability Passports to be able to retrain and be redeployed.

Impact on Black members - as has been demonstrated by the ULEZ debates in some areas, Black people, and people in poorer urban areas, are disproportionately made chronically unwell from climate change related harms such as air pollution.

Impact on retired members - older people including older workers are less able to cope with the extremes of temperature caused by climate change and the inherent energy costs of trying to manage them.

Impact on young members – young people are not only victims of climate change, bearing the brunt of an uncertain and precarious future, they are also valuable contributors to climate action.

And **LGBT+ members** are also not immune – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is clear that all socially marginalised groups are disproportionately impacted.

> Life will be harder, more expensive and less predictable. And it will be the poorest, the working class, who'll be most affected by that.
>
> *Chris Burrow, UNISON activist*

UNISON needs to be involved in climate issues at work to ensure that any change to workplace practices and policies benefit our members and make our communities safer.

We must ensure employer action on climate is genuine and undertaken in partnership with UNISON branches.

UNISON's survey and report 'UNISON members, climate change, the green economy and Just Transition' highlights that

many UNISON members already have a clear idea of the ways in which their workplaces, and the services they provide, could decarbonise and help deliver a clean, safe and sustainable environment.

UNISON is well placed to engage on this issue at every level and to deliver a Just Transition to a safe and sustainable planet.

The good news is that there is considerable scope for action to reduce carbon emissions across public sector buildings, modes of transport, land use, service delivery models and more widely through its purchasing power.

Environmental concerns are at the forefront of many of UNISON members' minds

The report, 'UNISON members, climate change, the green economy and Just Transition' shows that UNISON members are much more worried about climate change than the average UK worker, with 95% of members taking part saying they are very or fairly concerned about climate change compared to only just over three quarters of the wider sample.

Just over 85% of members think we are seeing the effect of climate change in the UK already, and six out of ten believe the issue should be addressed with extreme urgency – twice the level of the wider sample.

Not only are UNISON members concerned about the threat of climate change, almost two thirds (63%) reported very, or quite, strong feelings of 'outrage' compared to the UK average of 40%.

The union's members also feel higher levels of fear (52% against 37%) and anxiety (54% against 39%) when compared to the wider sample.

UNISON members are already more likely to:

- try to reduce their carbon footprint at home
- be involved in action to reduce emissions or protect the environment
- and be involved in environmental activities or campaigns in their community

than those in the wider sample.

The UNISON report also found that UNISON members anticipate they will need to learn new 'green' skills in their current role so that they can work effectively in a more sustainable way.

Climate education and more specific training to help workers address climate goals are seen as critical.

The necessary transition to greener public services must be fair and leave no-one behind

What does UNISON mean by a Just Transition?

The trade union movement often refers to supporting a 'Just Transition'.

Scotland's 'Just Transition Commission' explains that "a Just Transition is both the outcome – a fairer, greener future for all – and the process that must be undertaken in partnership with those impacted by the transition to net zero (carbon emissions). It supports a net zero and climate resilient economy in a way that delivers fairness and tackles inequality and injustice."

UNISON understands that taking responsibility to limit temperature increases and avoid catastrophic global warming will require significant transformations across our economy, communities, public services and other industries.

A Just Transition must consider the fair treatment of the workers and communities most affected.

UNISON is clear that action to reduce emissions must not be at the expense of the workforce, communities or countries most impacted either by climate change or by the necessary changes to mitigate against climate change.

A Just Transition means moving to a carbon-neutral economy in a way that protects workers' livelihoods, protects the environment and delivers a fairer society.

As the TUC have highlighted, the recent mass redundancies at Port Talbot steelworks and inevitable local economic damage that will be experienced for years to come could have been entirely avoided if planning was done well in advance, and the workforce was properly involved throughout the process.

The concept of a Just Transition is central to a successful response to climate change, and to building popular support for action to cut emissions.

A Just Transition should involve trade unions, communities and environmentalists at the heart of the process.

UNISON believes the costs of transition to a decarbonised economy and society must not fall on those least able to pay and that the fairest outcomes will be generated by public investment, not driven by profit.

The TUC are calling for a new requirement on companies that are receiving any form of government funding to sign a **Just Transition Agreement (JTA)** with their workforce.

The core aim would be to involve workers in decarbonisation planning so that existing sites and the jobs they support are futureproofed through taking early and decisive action to decarbonise.

The form of JTAs would cover:

- Support for worker voice, including trade union recognition and openness to collective bargaining, for example establishing a Just Transition Committee with union representation and decision-making power
- Commitment to no compulsory redundancies
- Funding for training and paid time-off for workers to upskill or transition into alternative jobs where desired
- Commitment to redeployment support, co-ordinated job transfer schemes and priority for vacancies, in the event of future site closure

More information: www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/industrial-decarbonisation-strategy-union-priorities

A truly Just Transition leaves no one behind. This includes vital recognition that public service jobs are an integral part of a green future. They must be invested in, in order to raise pay and conditions and be seen as attractive employment opportunities in a zero-carbon economy.

For example: a Just Transition for homecare workers

Care staff are heavily reliant on personal (often older and more polluting) vehicles because they need to visit several clients on a tight schedule. Often under-valued, overworked and low-paid, they find it difficult to afford cleaner vehicles or to use sustainable modes of transport. Without targeted support, they - more than others - risk being negatively affected by policies aimed at decarbonising transport.

UNISON commissioned research from Campaign for Better Transport to establish what measures locally, regionally and nationally could overcome the challenges of the transition to greener and healthier communities.

Their survey found that 71% of homecare staff rely on their cars for work, with many driving over 600 miles per month. Only one in ten travel by public transport for their work because many say they find it too unreliable or infrequent.

The report called for systemic reforms to address operational and transport inefficiencies, encourage greener practice and foster equitable solutions (such as subsidised transitions) to ensure a Just Transition for care workers, while improving their working conditions and financial wellbeing. Crucially, while some of their recommendations require upfront investment, they also promise long-term savings and increased efficiencies.

Much of these recommendations could also be applicable in other public sector organisations where car use is standard for work.

The test for any Just Transition is whether those most affected are allowed to lead the debate and have ownership of the priorities. If not, it cannot be a Just Transition.

As the TUC warns, the change to a low-carbon economy, "if left solely to the market, could have massive economic and social consequences, in terms of jobs, skills and knowledge lost and communities destroyed."

Yet, as UNISON's survey and report 'UNISON members, climate change, the green economy and Just Transition' found, less than 20% of UNISON members surveyed have been consulted by management on climate plans and even fewer have received relevant training around this topic.

For example: a Just Transition for energy workers

UNISON supports our energy service group executive in developing and promoting decarbonisation of the energy system in a way that ensures it is affordable for all, and in ensuring a Just Transition for energy members.

UNISON supports the need for affordable and public ownership of energy, water and the agencies charged with defending the environment and preparing us for climate emergencies. UNISON believes in the need to engage with employers, service users and elected representatives in developing inclusive Just Transition boards for all public service sectors.

UNISON opposes new coal mines, the issuing of new licenses for oil and gas exploration in UK waters and also opposes the financing of gas and oil exploration abroad.

UNISON believes that while carbon capture is an important strand of necessary innovation, investment in renewable energy and storage is essential to avoid unnecessary reliance on fossil fuels and increase the security of the UK's own energy supply.

More information: Demanding a Just Transition for energy workers www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2019/01/just-transition-to-low-carbon-leaflet.pdf

UNISON has joined the campaign for a new international treaty, the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, which would ensure no further expansion of oil and gas sites and guarantee the costs of the transition to renewable energy don't fall on those least able to pay.

More information:
www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2024/09/unison-joins-campaign-to-move-away-from-fossil-fuels/

With public sector budgets cut to the bone, UNISON's actions to green the workplace can help ensure that financial savings from resource and energy efficiency ease the pressure on other costs and helps to protect jobs.

For example, a Just Transition for college workers

UNISON has been working in coalition with other unions on a Just Transition Framework for Colleges.

The framework is set out in three key areas:

1 - Leadership

The commitment of leaders within the organisation is critical to encouraging and supporting staff at all levels to develop their skills and expertise, enhance career prospects, and provide future job security and a Just Transition.

2 - Workplace

It is crucial that the college creates an environment where colleagues feel valued and supported through this transition and the need for change to ensure a sustainable future for everyone and future job security. The college will commit to support staff to enhance their existing skills, obtain new skills and develop expertise to equip them for the future opportunities created by the green economy.

3 - Impact and opportunities

Transparent accountability should be provided through consistent and effective mechanisms, regular evaluation and reporting, and a partnership approach between college and staff and student representative groups. Just Transition should be seen as an opportunity in which the potential benefits will outweigh any investment costs, and that these can be best achieved through a trusted partnership approach.

UNISON's head of education Mike Short said: "Further education is crucial in delivering the skills needed to meet the government's growth ambitions. Colleges also have an important role to play in the move to a greener economy, yet little is being done to prepare for that shift. This framework is an important step for the sector and individual institutions in ensuring staff are at the heart of a just transition."

Just Transition for workers in global supply chains

Respecting and protecting human and labour rights and protecting the environment are inextricably linked. The costs of destroying the environment and measures to fix it are disproportionately put on the most precarious workers and communities around the world.

A few of the countless examples include how forests, savannas, fresh water sources and oceans are being privatised, polluted and destroyed by industries such as agriculture, timber, pulp and paper, mining and oil and gas extraction. For some people, the rush to net zero is exacerbating their abuse eg producing low emission vehicles and solar energy.

In recognition of this, UNISON is playing a leading role in **Corporate Justice Coalition**'s campaign for the UK government to urgently introduce a new law requiring all businesses – all sectors and all sizes, including financial institutions – and the public sector to prevent, address and remedy any harm to human rights, including labour rights, and the environment in their global value chains.

UNISON is now hoping that green campaigners, **Friends of the Earth**'s local groups and union members can also start to work together on the campaign, alongside other local community groups, small businesses and other unions to put pressure on their local MPs to support the new law.

More information from the UNISON briefing for branches: https://unsn.uk/3TkCDIM

UNISON is also a very active affiliate of **Electronics Watch**, a worker-driven monitoring organisation supporting its public authority affiliates to use their economic leverage to identify and remedy violations in their electronic supply chains. This includes pilot work on Low Emission Vehicle batteries and mining.

Electronics Watch cooperates with trade unions across the world and one of the strategic overarching goals in the next five years is that "workers exercise their right to organise and access remedy with support from affiliated public buyers".

From universities to local authorities, government departments to cities and purchasing consortiums, Electronics Watch already has 50 direct and 1,500 indirectly affiliated public bodies throughout Europe and Australia. This includes nearly all UK universities, the GLA and Transport for London, a few UK councils, parts of Crown Commercial Services and more.

Affiliation to Electronics Watch is not overly costly and UNISON's guide to Electronics Watch is due to be published by the end of 2026.

You can also find out about the ethical challenges and potential solutions to the production of solar energy in UNISON's **Clean (dirty) energy** guide.

For more information, contact UNISON's international unit: i.relations@unison.co.uk

What to know more about Just Transition?

Just Transition explained by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) in their short video www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqZZwgTppil

'A Trade Union Guide to Just Transition' free online training from the Greener Jobs Alliance https://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/courses/

'Climate emergency: winning a Just Transition' campaign from the TUC www.tuc.org.uk/climate

'Cutting carbon, growing skills – green skills for a Just Transition' is a publication from unionlearn explaining the facts around what Just Transition is and what unions are doing to ensure their members are not left behind. www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/cutting-carbon-growing-skills-green-skills-just-transition

The Just Transition Centre from the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) provides information and resources to ensure that labour has a seat at the table when planning for a Just Transition to a low-carbon world.

The Just Transition and climate change adaptation briefing from the Climate Change Committee commissioned by the Scottish government, considers how adaptation to a changing climate links to the broader concept of a 'Just Transition' and how the distributional consequences of both climate impacts and adaptation actions can be addressed as part of policy making.

Why public service employers need to take decarbonisation seriously

The UK has a legal commitment to net zero

Public services are a **key** part of the UK decarbonisation plan.

All public sector employers have been asked by government (through the Climate Change Act 2008) to make significant changes to their service provision in order to get to **net zero by 2050**.

Want to know more about net zero?

Net zero explained by the BBC in their short video on YouTube

The UK plans and progress to reach net zero by 2050: House of Commons research briefing

Net zero means balancing out between the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced by human activity and those removed, so any negative impact is cancelled out.

The UK government now has legally binding targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the UK by at least 100% from 1990 levels by 2050.

The Scottish government has set a target date for net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. This includes the Scottish public sector.

The Welsh government has set out the ambition for the public sector in Wales to be net zero carbon by 2030.

In Northern Ireland, The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, mandates a net zero emissions target for 2050. This means that most changes would need to be in place by 2030 – again in a reduced budget environment.

Inevitably, new jobs and roles are being created in many public sector workforce areas to manage these commitments, as well as changes being made to how services are delivered that will inevitably impact on our members' jobs.

UNISON's has published its own groundbreaking report, Getting to Net Zero in Public Services: The Road to Decarbonisation.

This report concludes that without significant and immediate government funding, public services still reeling from a decade of austerity, will struggle to decarbonise.

UNISON believes that, if the UK wants to meet its public service decarbonisation and net zero targets, its efforts have to accelerate tremendously.

UNISON recommends joint working, engaging workers in the workplace, and adopting social partnership approaches with public service trade unions, so we can establish an agreed Just Transition, transparent and sustainable path to achieve net zero.

We also need to see the urgent modernisation of tools such as public procurement to drive green and decarbonisation outcomes in contract delivery and supply chains.

Devolved governments in Scotland and Wales have embedded a social partnership approach to achieving net zero carbon emissions.

This is resulting in clear benefits, including for example:

- a shared understanding of the challenges and potential gains from ambitious decarbonisation measures
- realistic decarbonisation and Just Transition costings and fundings

- planning of green job growth, jobs lost, new skills and training of the workforce
- public service sector and workplace green agreements, technology agreements and Data Impact Assessments
- recognising the need for mandatory union branch green reps facility time
- opportunities for public service infrastructure
- the use of green public procurement social provisions and new corporate Failure to Prevent (negative human rights and environmental impacts) regulations based on human rights due diligence for all goods and services.

Where public finance is not provided, an alternative approach has been, for example, local government partnerships with private energy companies to support their net zero ambitions.

For example, in 2023 Eon joined forces with Coventry City Council to launch a 15-year energy partnership to transform the city's approach to carbon reduction while also promoting new investment in the city and the growth of a new green economy.

Through this Strategic Energy Partnership they aim to deliver practical solutions to improve energy efficiency across Coventry's homes, buildings, and transport systems. This has included delivering energy efficiency upgrades across five key public buildings with air source heat pumps, rooftop solar PV, LED lighting, insulation & electric boilers and smart energy controls.

Climate change is also an organising and recruitment opportunity

The impact of climate change on jobs, services, family and local communities is significant and increasing. Many of our members care about this issue.

Therefore, it has the potential to be a large organising and membership growth area for UNISON.

Green UNISON Week, held each year in late September, is a chance to raise awareness of green issues, plan green activities to encourage members to get more active on environmental concerns, both at work and at home, and show non-members that UNISON is active on the climate emergency.

Great Big Green Week in early June, is the UK's biggest celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. During the week, communities, schools, businesses, churches, mosques and more join together in a wave of support for action to protect the planet.

Coordinated by Global Action Plan, **Clean Air Day** in June, brings together communities, businesses, education and the health sector, improving public understanding of air pollution, building awareness of how air pollution affects our health and explaining some of the easy things we can all do to tackle air pollution, helping to protect our health and the environment too.

Take the jump is a grassroots project created by everyday people. It's for anyone worried about the state of nature but are not necessarily 'environmentalists', and for anyone looking for constructive, positive and impactful steps we can take in our own lives. Their website includes ideas for putting on an event and many resources.

Negotiating for a Just Transition to a sustainable future can provide opportunities for recruitment of new members and activists and organising workers in support of a green campaign.

It is a subject that particularly resonates with younger members and is increasingly recognised as important to all members and prospective members, including those who may not necessarily immediately associate themselves with trade unionism.

Seeking to make changes in service delivery that will directly affect staff as a result of decarbonisation, are prime organising opportunities. This also highlights the impact of climate change directing many areas of our members' work. Organising and recruitment are particularly essential in advance of any conflict in the workplace as a result of these changes.

One tactic for widening reach is to raise awareness of how workers can make changes at home to save their energy bills and improve their environmental impact. For example, by running a lunchtime event and providing advice. This can be great for recruitment, encouraging enthusiasm and speaking to hard-to-reach workers who don't always see unions as relevant to them. Action at home often leads to taking on more workplace activity too.

What to know more?

See more information about UNISON's **'Organising to win'** strategy below, get support from your branch or contact your regional organiser for additional guidance.

The role of the UNISON branch environmental officer

The environmental officer (EnvO) role is a formal UNISON branch officer position. It is an elected role ratified by the branch.

The environmental officer can be abbreviated to EnvO to distinguish it from the equality officer or EO position.

This role is often referred to as a 'green rep' and both names are used in this guidance.

But is there a difference between the environmental officer and 'green rep'?

The short answer is yes. A branch environmental officer (EnvO) is a formal branch committee position, elected at a branch AGM, tasked with overseeing all green activity within a branch.

However, in addition to the EnvO role there can be any number of local 'green reps' who support that activity. So, while every EnvO is also a 'green rep', not all green reps will hold the formal branch committee officer role of environmental officer.

The UNISON EnvO role was added to the UNISON rule book by our members in 2022. The role can be as little as being the main contact point for members on all things relating to greening the workplace.

Over time the role can quickly develop into actively engaging with employers, on behalf of the branch, on all matters relating to climate change in the workplace.

Do I need to know a lot about climate change to be a branch environmental officer?

No. As with all branch trade union roles, you are a volunteer and, while you may have a wealth of relevant experience that can help you in the role, we do not expect you to already have any knowledge – just a keen interest and a willingness to support the work. Training is available, there are support networks within the union where you can ask questions. This guidance too aims to help you undertake the role in your workplace.

How does the environmental officer work with the other branch officers?

We recognise that many members interested in this work may not have a huge experience of other branch matters or other branch officer roles.

However, it is important to note that as a formal UNISON branch officer position, the EnvO will be representing the branch and will therefore need to work in full collaboration with the branch secretary.

They cannot act alone or without the knowledge of the senior branch officers. This is for two important reasons. Firstly, to ensure that the EnvO has the full protection and support of the branch when carrying out any work on the branch's behalf and secondly, to ensure that the EnvO does not accidently cut across any wider branch negotiations or activity.

In practice this might mean making a regular report to the committee on any activity and a recognition of the importance of consulting with senior branch officers ahead of any major activity.

Once elected the EnvO should aim to ensure that the role is mainstreamed into the work your branch does.

Environmental officers and green reps should be a critical part of the branch structure if we are to build a Just Transition to a greener economy.

Just as unions and employers work together to improve health and safety in the workplace through safety committees, UNISON environmental officers should be elected to champion environmental issues both in the workplace and as part of the branch committee.

They can raise awareness and ensure that green issues are included in the negotiating or bargaining agenda at work.

EnvOs can work closely with, and get support from, other branch officers such as the health and safety officer (climate change affects many aspects of health and safety at work), the education officer (to support training needs and events including promoting environmental/climate awareness and green skills learning amongst the membership), the equality officer and of course the senior branch officials.

Participants in UNISON's first branch environmental officer seminar, September 2025

What does the role entail?

The overarching role of an environmental officer is to ensure that climate-related practices at work have Just Transition at their heart.

The duties of an environmental officer will be influenced by their sector of employment but are likely to include the following:

- Raising awareness and promoting green workplace practices with members, such as reducing waste, improving recycling, saving energy, and green purchasing.
- Liaising with the branch on green and sustainability issues that need to be raised with management.
- Taking forward and promoting union policy and campaigns on green and sustainability issues in the branch, eg on energy, climate change and fair trade.
- Carrying out workplace environmental audits.
- Developing a climate and jobs action plan through dialogue between the employer and the branch.
- Involvement in developing environmental best practice in the workplace, eg through committees and working groups, developing environmental policies and management systems, drawing up workplace agreements, etc.
- Networking with other green reps to share information and good practice.

Adapted from: 'Greener workplaces for a Just Transition - A TUC toolkit for trade unionists'

UNISON has a downloadable poster and leaflet for noticeboards and email circulation to encourage people to stand for the environmental officer/green rep role.

The leaflet explains that you don't have to be an expert or have experience in the area at all. The role really can be as little as being the contact person for circulating updates or it could become a major role in shaping the green activity of the branch and employer policies.

But it's important that environmental officers are supported in their role with training (see **Training available for activists** below).

For example:

London-based social worker Emmanuel Okot is the environmental officer for UNISON's community and voluntary organisations' branch, "inspired, by the need to participate and give back to our communities, to keep our environment clean, safe and sustainable".

He has been working to make sure that "all UNISON members promote zero carbon emissions in their respective communities and workplaces" in a number of ways, including using public transport, cycling and walking.

In the workplace itself, he has been promoting reducing, reusing and recycling all materials and equipment used by members. "By cutting down on the amount of waste dumped, this will conserve natural resources, landfill space and energy," he explains.

And Emmanuel has also shared useful green information on the branch's WhatsApp platform and emails.

Don't forget to join UNISON's Green Network

It's the best way for activists to get the latest news and developments with training opportunities and resources. There will be opportunities for members to get involved at their workplace and campaign at a local, regional and national level. www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/green-unison

And look out for opportunities to work with other like-minded organisations, locally and nationally.

Any campaign base should be as broad as possible and include other interested groups who can add to your resources and influence.

These organisations may be influential in helping you achieve your aim within the workplace – for example, a local environmental organisation may be able to help with providing the employer details of local suppliers and examples of more sustainable resources.

Your aims may also support and contribute to the wider aims of these other organisations.

The Climate Justice Coalition is a coalition of groups and individuals committed to building solidarity and power for Climate Justice in Britain and across the globe.

It is a multi-level coalition made up of environment and development NGOs, trade unions (including UNISON Scotland), grassroots community campaigns, faith groups, youth groups, migrant justice networks and more.

https://climatejustice.uk/

Training available for activists

UNISON College has produced several new climate change training modules for activists - speak to your local or regional training rep for more information. https://learning.unison.org.uk/college/

From the TUC:

Too hot, too cold: How to protect workers from extreme temperatures, and fight climate change – interactive guide www.tuc.org.uk/resource/too-hot-too-cold-how-protect-workers-extreme- temperatures-and-fight-climate-change

Climate change proof your workplace: Interactive guide www.tuc.org.uk/resource/climate-change-proof-your-workplace-interactive-guide

Green Skills at Work www.unionlearn.org.uk/green-skills-work

Green Skills – resources and workplace case studies www.unionlearn.org.uk/green-skills-resources-and-workplace-case-studies

Green Skills and Environmental Awareness Badge www.unionlearn.org.uk/green-skills-and-environmental-awareness-badge

Green Skills for a Just Transition (on YouTube) www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYl36q0LB0Y

The Wales TUC Education Service has developed a new course called 'Greening our workplaces – green skills for trade unionists'. It's for new and existing environmental officers or green reps and other reps taking on sustainability as part of their role. It is available as an online course. More details are available from the Wales TUC and on their website www.tuc.org.uk/green

From the Greener Jobs Alliance:
https://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/courses/ including 'A Trade Union Guide to Just Transition', 'Climate Change Awareness' and 'Air Quality – a trade union issue'.

MAKING THE CASE FOR YOUR EMPLOYER TO ENGAGE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

In many workplaces your employer won't need persuading and may already be planning or making changes to meet their commitment.

Where the employer has not yet started this work, or is not prioritising this work sufficiently, the following may help to persuade your employer to get on board.

Their legal requirement

The strongest case to put forward to the employer is their legal requirement discussed in the section above on **why public service employers need to take decarbonisation seriously**.

The UK has a legal commitment to net zero.

Public services are a **key** part of the UK decarbonisation plan.

All public sector employers have been asked by government (through the Climate Change Act 2008) to make significant changes to their service provision in order to get to **net zero by 2050** (2045 in Scotland), with additional specific targets to reach by 2030.

Climate hazards in the workplace and the need for a resilient workplace can't be ignored

With the increasing number of extreme weather events and other risks associated with climate change, employers cannot ignore the need to make the workplace more adaptable and resilient.

As extreme weather events become more commonplace, employers may have to face a loss of business or a decline in service delivery, as well as increased insurance premiums. The health and safety impact on workers too, must not be ignored.

'Conceptualising work-related psychosocial risks' from etui (European Trade Union Institute) cites research that shows that "numerous health effects on workers have been linked to climate change including injuries, cancer, cardiovascular disease, respiratory conditions and effects on their psychosocial health (ILO 2024b).

There are both direct and indirect effects of climate change on mental health: mental distress, anxiety, mood disorders, stress, PTSD, substance abuse, domestic violence and depression after acute events. Potential threats can lead to stress, depression, burnout and climate anxiety – that is, worries about the effects of climate change (ILO 2024b). Excessive heat can lead to sleeping disorders, behavioural changes and a lowered ability to concentrate."

Your employer should also be monitoring the **Heat-Health Alert (HHA)** colour warning system and discussing the potential health and safety impacts to workers that may arise with our health and safety reps.

As UNISON members work delivering services in both the public and private sector across the whole of the UK, some areas may have different levels of weather warnings in place. Therefore, local authorities may issue guidance relating to their local circumstances and demands on local health services.

Health and Safety law requires employers to ensure that so far as reasonably practicable they do all they can to protect the health, safety and welfare of their staff. This includes protecting them from the risks of excessive heat and cold. Employers need to take all reasonable steps to achieve a temperature which is as close as possible to comfortable.

UNISON supports the TUC's call for a specific legal maximum temperature for indoor work of 30°C; or 27°C where the work is strenuous.

Want to know more about climate hazards in the workplace?

UNISON's health and safety team have provided guidance and information on health and weather warnings about extreme heat.

The TUC has an interactive guide for reps, 'Too hot, too cold: How to protect workers from extreme temperatures, and fight climate change'

The International Labour Organization's (ILO's) 'Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate: a global report' found that global occupational safety and health (OSH) protections have struggled to keep up with the evolving risks from climate change, resulting in worker mortality and morbidity. These risks include excessive heat, UV radiation, extreme weather events, workplace air pollution, vector-borne diseases and agrochemicals.

Additionally, employers will need to consider what aspects of their organisation are business or service critical (such as maintaining servers and other essential IT equipment) and those which are safety critical (such as ensuring accessible exit routes) and how these can be protected at all costs.

Their workers will clearly be best placed to help identify these risks as well as to suggest sustainable solutions.

It provides long-term financial and reputational benefits

The economic case for adaptation is strong.

The UK government highlighted in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022:

"A conclusion is that many early adaptation investments are highly effective and deliver high value for money with benefit-cost ratios typically ranging from 2:1 to 10:1 – ie, every £1 invested in adaptation could result in £2 to £10 in net economic benefits."

Efficient use of resources also provides a long-term investment in the future security of a business or service. In the long-term, more efficient use can reduce overheads such as energy costs, landfill costs, water bills, transport costs and lower the costs of consumables, hardware and repairs, as well as better address emerging resource security and scarcity issues in the future.

For example:

"Castle Hill Hospital in Hull is saving around £250,000 a month in energy costs during the summer, and energy efficiency upgrades at Broomfield and Basildon hospitals in Essex are reducing annual energy bills by £3.8 million. These remarkable financial savings can now be redirected to support frontline care for our patients and communities."

Source: Greener NHS Bulletin, July 2024

Employers can also save tax by making environmentally friendly choices through various **environmental taxes, reliefs and schemes** for different types and size of business.

Subsidies, grants and loans may also be available for organisations, such as through the **Energy Saving Trust** and the **Carbon Trust** to help with any initial investments made.

Engaging actively on this issue will also help to avoid people or organisations suing an organisation for not doing enough to prevent harm created by climate change.

For example, in July 2024 Friends of the Earth took the UK government to court for not having sufficient climate adaptation plans to protect its citizens from harm.

Employers could be held liable for any climate related harm that they might reasonably have been expected to protect people from.

As well as having a better reputation in the wider world if the employer is seen to be engaging on climate change issues, acting with social responsibility and operating ethically, the organisation is likely to be able to recruit more widely, with more potential applicants wanting to work with them.

And as British Business Bank highlights: "Adopting carbon neutral practices may enhance your reputation as a business. Research by the Carbon Trust found that customers increasingly expect companies to make sound ethical decisions on their behalf, with green businesses attracting new customers."

MAKING THE CASE FOR TRADE UNION INVOLVEMENT

It makes statutory requirements easier to achieve

Many employers have no choice but to face up to the climate emergency.

Under the Climate Change Act 2008, the UK government committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% of 1990 levels. The UK government subsequently committed to reduce emissions by 100% reaching net-zero by 2050 in line with the advice from the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC). This committee was established to advise government on the level of the carbon budgets.

As well as being covered by the Climate Change Act, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have separate climate change policies.

On 1 July 2022, the NHS became the first health system to embed net zero into legislation, through the Health and Care Act 2022. The Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service report is now issued as statutory guidance.

Many local authorities too have declared climate emergencies and are developing net zero action plans.

Climate Emergency UK, working with a team of trained volunteers, have assessed all UK councils on their progress toward net zero. The results are published in their **Council Climate Action Scorecards** and can be explored in full at https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/

You can also search the open database of **UK local authority climate action plans**, climate targets, and climate emergency declarations available from CAPE https://cape.mysociety.org/

Two heads better than one

Good practice highlights that collaboration and consultation with workers and communities are essential for successful decarbonisation and a Just Transition.

UNISON has a role in highlighting to employers the wealth of worker expertise to help improve environmental performance.

We all stand to benefit when employers work alongside their workforce to safeguard our future. And in a workplace the most important stakeholders to a climate change policy are the workforce.

Workers inevitably have detailed knowledge of the work process and may have many ideas on how it can be improved. Consultation and negotiation with UNISON reps will be the best way to ensure effective input and buy-in from staff.

UNISON's past research in this area is clear that a co-production approach, where workers' experience and expertise is shared, valued and utilised alongside management experience and expertise, leads to better and more efficient outcomes. This matters more where the planned transformation is significant and wide-ranging.

Union consultation also gives employers and their sustainability-focused managers access to UNISON communication networks. It enables them to get the opinions of the sometimes hard-to-reach frontline workers who inevitably are best placed to provide practical suggestions for future working practices.

Wales TUC is clear about the benefits of employers working with unions, as they are best placed to:

- monitor the effectiveness of environmental policies and provide staff input
- gain staff support for changes to workplace practices
- use existing union structures and procedures to influence and develop members' thinking and actions
- raise staff awareness and encourage behavioural change
- improve operational procedures.

It gives a positive message to the general public

It's not just workers who care about the environment. Climate change issues are of great importance to the wider public, to customers and services users. So being seen to be proactive can have a positive impact on an organisation's long-term reputation.

It signals to the general public that the organisation is serious about environmental issues. And the general public particularly expect the public sector to act responsibly for the good of society.

So, a 'green' profile can help reassure service users, attract customers and other businesses.

It can also improve recruitment, retention, morale and productivity of staff. It has been reported that 60% of UK employees say it's important to work for a company that has an active policy to reduce its carbon emissions (YouGov survey of 1,217 employees across the UK, 2007).

As one UNISON member commented in the UNISON survey and report 'UNISON members, climate change, the green economy and Just Transition', a move to lower-carbon products or services will provide "an opportunity to lower costs, and set a good example to others".

WANT TO GET STARTED?

Establish a UNISON trade union working group within your workplace or branch to help identify the issues and work out solutions

It isn't essential but a working group can really harness the power of key members of the branch who also have an interest in this area and who can support you in this work.

You could try to include other relevant branch officers and local green reps – there may be members who are interested and have experience of facilities management, risk management and workplace health and safety.

Consider how this group might want to work together going forward:

- How often should you meet?
- What are your priorities – long term and short term?
- What are the first steps you want to take?
- Are there any immediate climate related niggles that you or the wider group are already aware of?

For example:

When Sam Perry was the UNISON environmental officer at Harrogate Borough Council in 2022-23, he was instrumental in setting up the Staff Green Group.

Staff were represented at all levels, up to directorate heads and they met regularly to discuss environmental matters that affect how the council operates. Their aim was to improve policy and processes through the work of three subgroups. Sam led the 'staff issues' subgroup looking at the following areas:

Communication, information, & empowerment

- Lobbying for improvements to their Carbon Reduction Strategy
- Lobbying for publication of an environmental matters-themed newsletter for all residents
- Lobbying for addition of green info on general residents' newsletters
- Creation of new intranet pages to raise awareness, encourage action, provide educational resources, and grow movement

Travel & transport

- Working to 'green' their 'return to workplace' plan (after the COVID-19 pandemic) including the promotion of active travel and lift-share information
- Lobbying for EV (electric vehicle) salary sacrifice scheme
- Lobbying for EV charging points at the offices
- Supporting their 'Commute Back Better' lift-sharing campaign
- Lobbying for introduction of pool bikes (like pool cars, but greener)
- Lobbying to 'green' the council employee benefits package

Governance & carbon budgeting

- Lobbying for procurement carbon impact assessments
- Lobbying for carbon negative pledge to be maintained
- Lobbying for declaration of climate emergency
- Creation of new environmental policy progress dashboard published to all staff
- Creation of new recycling messaging to go on all letter templates and envelopes

Staff training

- Lobbying to encourage development of new carbon literacy eLearning course Sustainable infrastructure
- Creation of new signposting for recycling bin provision in offices
- Lobbying for carbon literate representative on specific procurement team
- Lobbying to promote Ecosia as the search engine for council staff.
- As well as promoting UNISON's Green Week and the activities of the Staff Green Group to all staff, they also got agreement from the Parks department to co-fund a new copse of trees on the iconic 'Stray' park in the middle of Harrogate.

As Sam explained: "Our slogan is 'this union is a green union' and we want to take action to show people what we mean by that, what we can all do and how we are working with other bodies, like the council, to put climate concerns at the heart of everything we do."

Sam Perry is now the Green Bargaining Officer for Yorkshire and the Humber TUC.

While the wider aim of the group might be to get agreement on setting up a full joint committee with the employer to discuss all plans and actions towards a Just Transition to meet the employer's net zero targets, first steps can be smaller.

For instance, you could ask this group to collect and share details of climate hazards in the workplace such as building leaks after heavy rain, staff unable to travel because of ice and snow, hefty insurance claims due to structural damage caused by extreme weather events.

If there are any immediate climate-related workplace hazards that are raised, you can discuss with the group about how these incidents could be avoided or how the workplace could be made more resilient and record the potential solutions.

Considering how the organisation could plan to mitigate the risks or effects of climate change and severe weather conditions such as flooding on its business and service delivery, could provide an opener for negotiations with the employer.

Consider also who within the workplace would be most affected by these risks associated with climate change. It would be important to invite workers from across the organisation (not just those on higher grades) to be involved in the working group, for example shift workers and manual workers who may have very different perspectives and experiences of the workplace at different times of the day that desk-based middle managers might otherwise overlook.

Want to know more about climate hazards in the workplace?

For an in-depth look at climate hazards in the workplace and how your employer could approach them, UNISON Scotland, STUC and Adaptation Scotland's handbook and workbook for trade unionists on '**Climate Hazards & Resilience in the Workplace'** provides a detailed climate hazards checklist.

Their downloadable checklists also provide suggestions on how to score climate hazards, as well as adaptation actions for different climate hazards in indoor and outdoor workplaces, home and hybrid working, and when travelling for work.

The handbook and workbook provide extensive information to help employers, union officers and reps take action to build resilience and protect workers from the unavoidable impacts of climate change. Although focusing on Scotland, many aspects can be adapted for elsewhere in the UK.

Next steps: find out what your employer is already planning to green the workplace or the services they provide

If your branch already has a good partnership with your employer, then you may already be aware of the employer's plans.

But it will be important to review your employer's position on the climate change crisis and collect as much detail as possible, ahead of any formal approach to the employer.

Things to explore ahead of requesting a formal meeting might be:

- Has the employer declared a climate emergency? Many public and private sector organisations have publicly declared a climate emergency recognising the gravity of the problem.
- Are there are any existing environmental policies in your organisation (they may be included in the annual accounts)? If so, do they appropriately involve the union and consider the impact on the workforce?
- Does the employer have any climate-proofing policies?
- Are they undertaking any climate risk assessments or carbon management plans? Do they have a Sustainability Officer?
- Are they already undertaking actions or have them planned?
- Have they set out targets and a timeline to reduce emissions?
- Do any government targets apply to your workplace?

It will be important to try and collect this information to inform yourself before any discussions start with the employer.

Perhaps these details are readily available from the employer, or it may be a crucial first part of negotiations to request them.

It's important to check if your branch is already involved in net zero action plans for the organisation and may already have some details.

It would also be worth checking best practice examples of climate emergency declarations in your sector, which may help to convince your employer to do something similar in future discussions.

For example:

Bristol City Council was the first council to declare a climate emergency in 2018. More details in their One City Climate Strategy which provides a framework for what needs to happen to achieve net zero by 2030.

NHS England recognises the climate emergency as a health emergency, and that climate change and human health are inextricably linked as part of their Greener NHS ambitions.

Cardiff University declared a climate emergency in 2019 and state that student and trade union representatives are involved in development and consultation of all their sustainability-related policies.

For further examples, you can search the open database of UK local authority climate action plans, climate targets, and climate emergency declarations available from CAPE https://cape.mysociety.org/.

Establish the existing carbon footprint of the workplace

In addition to collecting information on the employer's environmental policies and strategies, it will be important to try and establish the starting carbon footprint of the employer. This doesn't have to be a first step but will be useful.

If the existing carbon footprint of the organisation is not yet known, you can encourage the employer to establish it as part of your discussions with them.

This will then provide a baseline with which to compare in the future. It will help to measure the benefits of actions.

Want to know more about calculating carbon footprints?

The Carbon Trust provides a tool for calculating the greenhouse emissions of small and medium organisations as well as guidance on carbon footprints for businesses.

Climate Impact Partners has a Small Business Carbon Calculator providing a quick and robust way to calculate and offset the carbon footprint of most small business activities.

As the Wales TUC state in their 'Greener workplaces for a Just Transition' toolkit, "The principle that 'you can't manage what you can't measure' is relevant here. An employer who is serious about climate change action will need to know their carbon footprint and have a clear strategy for reducing it in line with targets."

Want to get started?

You can use UNISON's **'green workplace inspection pro forma'** below and identify some practical areas for improvement that can be taken to the employer.

The process of undertaking a green workplace inspection or audit is similar to a health and safety inspection. It may need to be completed over a period of time depending on the size of the workplace. You may want (or need) to conduct it jointly with management in which case it can form part of your first formal approach. It is likely to need some preparation, perhaps gathering information in advance and agreeing on how the information will be recorded.

Importantly, you will need to consider how the information will then be used to inform discussions and negotiations.

Consider running a green survey in your branch or workplace

You could open discussions with the employer by providing them with some data on what staff think about this issue.

Ask members about their concerns and for ideas on how to 'green up' the workplace. Offer a prize or raffle as an incentive to respond. Collate the suggestions as part of the evidence to share with management. This evidence could also add to the members' credibility as a serious stakeholder in achieving a reduction in carbon emissions.

Want to get started?

Use the **'model green survey'** available below to collect workforce suggestions about how their employer could invest and make changes to help reduce carbon emissions. It may also be useful as a recruitment and organising tool, highlighting the importance of the issue to UNISON.

Many UNISON members will be able to provide a wide range of suggestions about how their employer could invest and make changes to help reduce carbon emissions as reported in 'UNISON members, climate change, the green economy and Just Transition'.

For example, when asked 'what key changes or investment is needed to ensure that your organisation decarbonises?' over a third responded calling for **green travel** (21 respondents), **climate education** (18 respondents), **increased budgets** (14 respondents), **improved energy efficiency of buildings** (13 respondents), **better leadership** (12 respondents) and **improved engagement and dialogue with staff** (8 respondents).

Checklist

- ☐ Has your branch elected an environmental officer or green rep?
- ☐ Are they part of UNISON's Green Network?
- ☐ Have you established a working group to identify climate change risks and solutions? Does the working group reflect the diversity of the workforce including workers at different grades, differing duties etc?
- ☐ Will this working group also help identify the net zero activities and changes that particularly impact on the workforces and potential solutions to ensure a Just Transition? (see also **'The necessary transition to greener public services must be fair and leave no-one behind'** above and **'New ways of working; training and skills in a Just Transition'** below)
- ☐ Will this working group also consider the equality impacts of net zero activities and changes? (see also **'How sustainable choices can be made in the workplace'** below)
- ☐ Has your employer declared a climate emergency? If so, the employer can be reminded in future negotiations of their commitment and how their actions need to reflect the seriousness of the issue.
- ☐ Does the declaration refer to specific targets such as being carbon neutral or net zero by specific dates? Does this target cover the whole of the organisation's operations and service delivery? Does it also include the whole supply chain?
- ☐ Does the declaration refer to a Just Transition? Is this recognised as an important part of the response to the climate emergency? And that upskilling and training of staff may be required with

changing roles?

- ☐ Does the declaration recognise the importance of social justice and equality issues such as fuel poverty and unequal access to training and employment?
- ☐ Find out who the senior manager is with responsibility for this work (such as the sustainability officer, energy or finance manager). Do you know the key contacts to link up with? Will they act as a 'sponsor' for your project? Getting them on-side will make your goals more achievable. It will also be easier if they have sustainability targets that are reliant on your success. It can be helpful to involve them in your discussions early.
- ☐ Have you collected and reviewed all information on the employer's environmental policies and strategies? Do they have any climate-proofing policies? And are they undertaking any climate risk assessments or carbon management plans? Are they already undertaking actions or have them planned?
- ☐ Does the employer have a legal duty or requirement to contribute towards statutory emissions and environmental targets?
- ☐ Has the employer already established their existing carbon footprint as a baseline measurement for a net zero action plan? Does it contain any reference to green skills and training the workforce?
- ☐ Is there already information on how they are planning to deliver this? How will it involve their workforce and are management willing to consult with trade union representatives?
- ☐ Have you run a **green survey** in your workplace or branch to collect suggestions on how the employer could invest and make changes to help reduce carbon emissions? (see below)
- ☐ Have you started to gather information from a **green workplace inspection?** (see below)

IF YOU'RE READY: THE FORMAL APPROACH TO THE EMPLOYER

Aim to develop a workplace climate change agreement

Even without a formal collective agreement at this stage, negotiations with the employer about a commitment to a Just Transition to achieve net zero carbon emissions can be initiated. And the evidence and ideas collected so far from workplace inspections, member surveys and your working group, could illustrate to the employer why involving the union is the best way to achieve better environmental standards.

But it will be important for you to get the support of the branch in your negotiations, to discuss the aims with the branch committee and to put it to members at a branch meeting. In that way, members' priorities and ideas on how to achieve them, can also be collected.

It is important that you let the branch know of any progress and setbacks. This will ensure that all the branch officers are able to consider any potential impact of any local activity on members including on their terms and conditions.

Effective consultation to ensure that the principles of a Just Transition are adopted is key. By keeping the branch informed, you can take advantage of local and regional forums to exchange information and request advice, including from regional and national officers.

If possible, via the branch secretary, involve other unions at your workplace if there is more than one: often management feels less threatened by union involvement when a joint union approach is made.

Want to get started?

Once you have gained the support of the branch, a letter can be sent to the employer requesting a formal meeting to discuss trade union engagement on climate change issues.

An **example letter** (found below) can be adapted according to the information you already have.

Ensure that the letter sent to the employer includes a timescale for response.

At the same time, it will be useful to develop a communication campaign in the workplace and branch to raise awareness, generate support and signal to the employer the importance of the issue. This can include outlining supportive actions that staff could take to demonstrate their support or an awareness raising event. All the staff will then know that the union is prioritising the issue, which may benefit recruitment and widen the support available from colleagues on this issue.

As the TUC's 'The union effect: greening the workplace' highlights: "Unions are well placed to:

- monitor the effectiveness of environmental policies and provide staff input
- gain staff support for changes to workplace practices
- use existing union structures and procedures to influence and develop members' thinking and actions
- raise staff awareness and encourage behavioural change
- improve operational procedures."

The report also includes case studies of workplaces where UNISON is recognised including EDF Energy and Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Contact your regional organiser (www.unison.org.uk/regions) to see if they are able to share examples of where UNISON involvement has improved environmental and business performance, and how unions can help the employer to manage risks.

Want to get started?

Once initial discussions have started with the employer, your branch could propose the development of an agreement. A **model workplace climate change agreement** is found below.

The agreement should cover the main issues, such as waste management, but it may also cross reference to other more detailed policies that already exist, as long as specific targets and actions points are included.

Ideally a **green workplace inspection** (found below) should be undertaken regularly, seasonally and at differing times of the day and night to fully assess the environmental impact. This also acts as a good opportunity to visually raise the profile of the union's involvement in green issues with the wider workforce and non-members.

These inspections should be a key part of the workplace climate change agreement, as it can help identify risks and vulnerabilities.

They could involve facilities management, maintenance, and front-line staff. As well as identifying areas for improvement, they can importantly consider how buildings, sites, and activities could be impacted by extreme weather, and how these risks are changing as climate change progresses and as site activities and buildings evolve over time.

"A site walkaround should not be a one-off event, rather it is an activity that should be undertaken regularly to spot emerging risks and the integrity of protection measures

(such as drainage or ventilation) needed to protect workers from climate hazards."

From UNISON Scotland, STUC and Adaptation Scotland's handbook and workbook for trade unionists, 'Climate Hazards & Resilience in the Workplace'.

It's not just about greening the workplace – consider the impact of changes to service delivery on jobs and workforce

Public service employers should be planning major changes to their service delivery to meet their climate commitments right now.

Further on in this guide we detail the various options for greening the workplace. However, it is important to remember that this is not just about plans for the employer's workplace and green policies for staffing. It is also about large-scale changes to the way all public services are delivered.

For instance, in **'Greening transport and reducing pollution'** below we discuss reviewing transport support for staff. But it may be that transport is also a key part of your employer public services (be it local bus provision, hospital transport or delivering supplies related to the public services).

Where major changes to how services are being delivered are being planned, it is vital for trade unions to be part of the conversation about how this might impact on the staff that deliver those services.

As discussed in the section **'Making the case for trade union involvement'** (see above), it is also vital to recognise that service providers are often best placed to spot risks, efficiencies and inefficiencies in any changes to service delivery models.

In some cases, the planned changes to meet climate targets will impact significantly on jobs (see the examples above of care workers and our members who work in the energy sector in **'Examples of direct impacts on service groups'**).

It will be important to identify areas highly affected by local green initiatives and net zero plans at an early stage and ensure that the branch engages appropriately on behalf of affected members.

A Just Transition approach to a move to greener service delivery is key.

A key goal would be to persuade the employer to create a joint environment and Just Transition committee

An integral part of any workplace climate change agreement should be the creation of **a formal negotiating forum** with management, such as a joint environment and Just Transition committee.

This committee should help ensure the workforce is fully engaged and any net zero action plan is meaningful.

Ideally, the formal agreement will include terms of reference for the committee, and make clear the involvement of environmental officers/green reps.

We recommend that this is a stand-alone branch sub-committee reporting to the branch committee with links to other relevant sub-committees, such as the health and safety committee.

The committee will work with the branch to help hold the employer to account and bring them back to the negotiating table when needed.

The agreement will need to clarify

- who is on the committee with representation by a senior manager

and roles like facilities and purchasing included, as well as union reps

- how the committee will function, number of meetings, chairing, relationship to other workplace bodies
- terms of reference.

It will help if you discuss approaches within the branch that are more likely to lead to a positive response from senior management.

Perhaps you will be able to identify if there is someone in senior management who will support the union position. Hopefully, they will be willing to be actively engaged in environmental projects to help deliver results and convince other stakeholders that the project can succeed.

It will be important to get senior management buy-in to the agreement and committee in order to achieve significant change, as well as to convince the workforce that the people holding the purse strings have bought into this.

Checklist for developing a workplace climate change agreement

- ☐ Is there an agreed climate emergency declaration made with the employer?
- ☐ Is the branch actively supporting the development of a workplace climate change agreement and any planned activities?
- ☐ Has a campaign within the workplace and branch to raise awareness, generate support and signal to the employer the importance of the issue been initiated?
- ☐ Are you recognising the recruitment and organising opportunities to support this work-strand within such a campaign?
- ☐ Have you contacted your regional green contact organiser for support?
- ☐ Has an initial letter been sent to the employer from the branch requesting a discussion on the trade union involvement in the employer's climate plans to meet the net zero targets?
- ☐ Has the employer developed their own net zero action plans? If not, why not?
- ☐ Are other unions within the workplace (if relevant) involved via the branch secretary?
- ☐ Is any agreement clear about who is responsible within the management structure for delivery of actions? Are senior managers and board members involved?
- ☐ Does it recognise the role of the trade union and environmental officers/green reps? Does it include facility time?
- ☐ Does it include details and terms of reference for a formal negotiating forum such as a joint environment and Just Transition committee?
- ☐ Does the agreement cover the main issues, such as transport, energy and water, waste management, suppliers and procurement, land use and building, pension funds and investment?
- ☐ Does it recognise how addressing these issues will impact on how the service will be delivered, as well as the employer's workplace and green policies for staffing? Are these identified at an early stage?
- ☐ Is there a commitment to a Just Transition and to reducing any negative impact on the workforce on jobs?
- ☐ Does the agreement include regular green workplace inspections and audits that involve the trade union, facilities management, maintenance, and front-line staff? Does it include details of climate change risk assessments and is the union consulted on these?
- ☐ Does the agreement set targets for improvements within the main issues, and is it clear about how these will be fulfilled (or does it cross-reference to other related policies and/or the net zero action plan that provide suitable objectives and targets)?
- ☐ Are any targets for improvements SMART (ie specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound?)
- ☐ Does the agreement and any action plans include a review date? Is it signed and dated by a senior manager?
- ☐ Is all the workforce including senior management made aware of this policy and provided with information and training?

Net zero action plans

Any commitment to or policy for achieving net zero and making sustainable choices, will be ineffective without an action plan. This is crucial to ensure that any agreed decisions are actually put into practice across the organisation.

The net zero action plan should clearly:

- set out how the commitment and agreement will be implemented
- how the plan will be monitored and reviewed
- cover the specifics of what is expected from management and workers in all aspects of the organisation
- include targets for short-term and long-term objectives
- importantly include a commitment to the principles of a Just Transition.

Other than the specifics and timeline for delivery, much may be already covered within the workplace climate change agreement and instead cross-referencing may be needed to that agreement.

You may agree that the workplace climate change agreement provides the mechanisms (including roles of management and trade union) and principles and focus for activity.

The net zero action plan then provides the specific actions, targets and timelines. However, it is important that the actions outlined in the plan do fully reflect the scale of ambition within the climate change agreement.

The working group will need to identify any strengths and weaknesses within the action plan and consult with others to present alternative actions.

For example: NHS England

The Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service report sets out the considerable advances that the NHS has already made in improving its carbon footprint and reducing the environmental impact of its services.

It provides a detailed account of the NHS' modelling and analytics underpinning the latest NHS carbon footprint, trajectories to net zero and the interventions required to achieve that ambition. It lays out the direction, scale and pace of change.

To start with, the environmental officer or green rep may only get agreement on their involvement on a few issues.

Initially, it will be important to start with a non-contentious issue that is easy to get approval for from the employer and make a short-term impact. You will need the employer's backing, a positive response and a quick win to highlight the value of union involvement.

You could look to further, more substantial projects that need more funding once the union has a reputation for delivering environmental success. And once you've proved your success, you may be able to negotiate an extension of the environmental officer role with facilities and paid release.

Make sure that any development of this role is reflected in the workplace climate change agreement.

Taking account of the climate change impacts in all negotiations

Just as all new workplace policies and procedures should be equality impact assessed, reps and branches could also insist that all negotiations and consultations take account of any potential impact of climate change and consider how the workplace can be more adaptable and resilient.

In that way, negotiations will help ensure that the organisation is always future-proofed.

Developing a green framework for negotiations

The following questions could provide a framework for all workplace negotiations and consultations on activities that might contribute to net zero ambitions. (They are adapted from the goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015):

1. Are all activities safe, well-communicated to staff and service-users, viable and do they positively contribute to the net zero ambition?
2. How are the wide range of people affected by actions (workforce, service users etc) to be involved in decision-making?
3. Can acting in collaboration with the union and other organisations help in achieving the net zero objectives?
4. Are resources being used efficiently and proportionately? This includes the workforce – are there opportunities for development of skills and training and progression? Are these opportunities open to all?
5. Are the importance of short-term needs balanced with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs, including of the workforce and wider society?
6. Are systems in place to ensure the resilience of service delivery and the capacity of the workforce to adapt to change?
7. How do actions to prevent problems occurring or getting worse help the organisation meet their net zero objectives?
8. Are all staff encouraged and supported to fulfil their potential and contribute fully to objectives no matter what their background or circumstances? And which takes account of the physical and mental health of the workforce?

Climate change impact assessment tools

Many local authorities have climate change impact assessments toolkits in place already.

However, these assessments may not consider the wider issues addressed above, particularly the impact on staff but may focus only on the costs and benefits of carbon use reduction on the environment.

For example: Chesterfield Borough Council

Chesterfield Borough Council's Climate Change Impact Assessment is an excel-based decision support tool which generates an infographic showing a simple visual key to the main climate costs and benefits of any given decision. The tool aims to demonstrate how changes to policies and proposals made by the council will impact carbon emissions and the wider environment.

For example: Cheltenham Borough Council

The Council deployed its Climate Impact Assessment Tool within internal decision-making processes to ensure new projects and policies are aligned with the Council's commitment to climate action. The tool is designed to enable officers and decision-makers to easily evaluate the environmental and social impacts of projects and policies from the very start of decision-making and project development processes. This 'from day one' approach results in more robust, climate-friendly projects and earlier opportunities to mitigate and improve the social and climate impacts of the Council's projects.

Source: Local government association (LGA)

In both of the above cases, the local branch is at early stages of engagement with the employer and are now actively recruiting to the branch environmental officer role to further that engagement.

For example: NHS England

The NHS Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) Tool www.england.nhs.uk/publication/climate-adaptation-resources/ is designed to support NHS organisations to identify climate-related risks specific to their operations and to plan a response through identifying potential adaptations.

The Climate Adaptation Framework www.england.nhs.uk/publication/climate-adaptation-resources provides a holistic approach to organisational change for any NHS organisation to prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change.

Branches are asked to encourage your employer to use the resources.

Any climate change impact assessments can be valuable tools for negotiations and to measure the benefits of improvements to operations. Ideally, they could also be used for all internal policies, procedures and agreements as well as for considering decisions about service delivery.

Importantly, they should involve the trade union as a key stakeholder representing the workforce.

Whilst climate change impact assessment tools may be developed with officers across an organisation, it is crucial:

- for UNISON reps to be involved in the process, if workers are to buy-in to the consequences of decisions made and any future activities
- that they always take into account the impact on the workforce to help ensure a Just Transition on the path to net zero.

Additionally, workers will be able to share their valuable experiences of existing practice within the workplace and help inform any project development.

Environmental officers or green reps will need to anticipate any barriers management may put in the way of trade union involvement and have some counter arguments ready (see **Making the case for trade union involvement** above).

Environmental management systems (EMS)

Your joint environment and Just Transition committee may want to consider whether they think the organisation should be signed up to an accredited environmental management system (EMS), and what system should be introduced.

But, if you do not have a committee yet set up, the environmental officer/green rep may want to encourage the employer to register with an EMS to promote their green credentials. It will also help with continuous improvement.

These systems control the activities, products and processes that cause or could cause environmental impacts, and in doing so minimises the environmental impacts of an organisation's operations.

They can clarify responsibilities and ensure compliance with legislation.

There are a number of different accredited systems. For example, the International Standards Organisation (ISO) – ISO 14001 is a generic management system standard, meaning that it is relevant to any organisation seeking to improve and manage resources more effectively.

It provides a framework for organisations to design and implement an EMS, and continually improve their environmental performance. By adhering to this standard, organisations can ensure they are taking proactive measures to minimise their environmental footprint, comply with relevant legal requirements, and achieve their environmental objectives.

The framework encompasses various aspects, from resource usage and waste management to monitoring environmental performance and involving stakeholders in environmental commitments.

Importantly, stakeholders should include the workforce represented through the union.

If the employer is already signed up to an EMS, ask for copies of relevant performance reports. This information may help you assess whether your employer is addressing the right issues and whether 'continuous improvement' is taking place.

Whether or not your employer is signed up to an EMS, it should always be backed up by a collective agreement if possible.

Checklist for developing a workplace net zero action plan

- ☐ Does the net zero action plan set out how the workplace climate change agreement will be implemented, covering the specifics of what is expected from management and workers in all aspects of the organisation?
- ☐ Does it include targets for short-term and long-term objectives?
- ☐ Does it have key milestones up to 2035 in order to get to net zero by 2050?
- ☐ Does the plan include a commitment to the principles of a Just Transition?
- ☐ How can workers be allowed to actively contribute to the action plan? Our members may have fresh ideas on how best to decarbonise the workplace and create a sustainable future.
- ☐ Will your working group help identify any strengths and weaknesses within the action plan, and consult with others to present alternative actions?
- ☐ Will the management agree to a workforce wide survey alongside the trade union?
- ☐ Is the employer reporting their climate-related risks and opportunities in their annual reports?
- ☐ Encourage the employer to register with an accredited environmental management system (EMS).
- ☐ Can all new policies, procedures and agreements particularly relating to health and safety and wellbeing, be climate change impact assessed? For example, air pollution at work is both a health and safety as well as an environmental issue.
- ☐ Encourage members to become health and safety reps or involve existing health and safety reps in engaging members about health and safety issues, investigating potential climate hazards, and working with employers to improve safety by addressing specific hazards.
- ☐ Identify the employers' health and safety policy. Seek to develop a written health and safety policy that includes reference to climate hazards through the joint health and safety committees. The policy should ensure risk assessments are carried out to control workplace risks, as far as reasonably practicable.
- ☐ Will the employer agree a green framework for all negotiations?
- ☐ Will the employer agree to involve UNISON environmental officers/green reps in any climate change impact assessments, and to include the impact on the workforce to help ensure a Just Transition on the path to net zero?
- ☐ Will the employer allow paid facility time and training for environmental officers/green reps to engage on climate-related issues?

New ways of working: training and skills in a Just Transition

A Just Transition to net zero and climate resilience means a balanced low-carbon energy mix, investment in skills and infrastructure, protecting and creating high-quality jobs and employment and ensuring no community is left behind.

It means the fair treatment of workers and communities most affected by change as we move to a lower carbon world.

According to the report 'Job quality side of climate change' (Eurofound 2024, Working conditions and sustainable work series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg), several working practices have been identified that could support the green transition, such as an increase in telework (i.e. home or remote working) and a reduction in working time, including the development of the four-day week. They rely on the use of digital technologies to support the green transition in most instances.

The report also recognises that the ecological transition can be seen as an opportunity to reinvent work and improve job quality. It highlights the role of workers in sustainability transitions and the need for work practices that facilitate collaboration and joint problem-solving.

Therefore, in order to ensure a Just Transition, re-skilling and training (including in digital skills) must play an important role for the workforce. It may be possible to transfer existing skills to new ways of working but it will be likely that gaps will be identified.

Reps and branches need to demand from their employers relevant training around carbon reduction issues for all our members, in order to raise awareness and to contribute to wider net zero plans.

But don't just wait for workplace training. Spread the word about training available from UNISON and the TUC (see **'Training available for activists'** above).

"There is no agreed definition of 'green jobs' or 'green skills'. Green skills can encompass the huge and diverse range of technical and practical skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that will all be needed to develop and support a sustainable society. The concept of green skills and jobs will also continue to evolve over time...

But the key point to remember is that every job will require 'green skills'. They will be needed across all sectors and at all levels."

From Wales TUC 'Greener workplaces for a Just Transition'

Green skills are defined by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (and as used by the Carbon Literacy Trust) as:

"the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a society which reduces the impact of human activity on the environment."

At a practical level if new procedures for resource management or recycling are introduced for example, training will be required to ensure workers know how to operate the system, to separate waste effectively and why this is important.

Training new and existing staff provides an ideal opportunity to also raise their awareness of local implications of climate change, and what they can do to help protect themselves, their colleagues or service users.

The transition to net zero impact of service delivery is bound to affect the current jobs and skills in the workplace, so it is crucial that the employer consults with the trade union on **skills strategy and climate aims**.

If there is a union learning rep (ULR) in your workplace it will be important for the environmental officer or green rep to involve them too in developing **a green skills strategy**, as well as raising awareness and climate literacy amongst workers.

For example:

The energy sector workforce is changing. Up to 725,000 more jobs could be created by 2030.

E:ON estimates that the retrofitting of all homes to comply with EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) band C by 2035 could create 150,000 jobs and add £47 billion to the UK economy.

But more than a quarter of workers in the utilities sector will retire in the 2020s. And, despite government rhetoric, 99% of homes in Britain are still heated by fossil fuels and the UK has the worst insulated homes in Europe.

"We can get to net zero, but we're really going to have to rack up our efforts if we want to get on track for clean heat," says Steve Dickon, UNISON member working at British Gas. "If companies work with the unions, we can ensure there is training and support in the right areas. Where there are well-rewarded jobs with proper training, people will want to take them up."

Source: The winter newsletter 2023 for members working in the energy sector

Whilst there may be opportunities for future staffing arrangements as a result of climate change policies, there will undoubtedly be risks for the current staffing arrangements.

It is important that workers and communities are consulted about the opportunities and threats to employment in their sector. Provision to **retrain and upskill** in good time must be built into all jobs and sectors at risk.

It may be worth undertaking a **survey on the views of members** about the jobs and skills required over the next ten years, to collate and take to management as an opener for discussions on a Just Transition.

Want to get started?

Use the '**model re-skilling and training survey**' available below to help generate data that could be used in discussions with managements on a Just Transition. It may also be useful as a recruitment and organising tool, highlighting the importance of the issue to UNISON.

Checklist for considering the impact of changes on jobs

(This checklist is based on checklists from unionlearn's 'Cutting carbon, growing skills – green skills for a Just Transition' and 'Greener workplaces for a Just Transition - a TUC toolkit for trade unionists')

- ☐ Has the impact of climate change on future employment and skills been discussed with the employer?
- ☐ Have green job creation and skills mapping been discussed with the employer?

Based on the information generated from the questions above:

- ☐ What are the main risks for current staffing arrangements as a result of climate change policies?
- ☐ Have any potential health and safety and equality impacts been factored into considerations?
- ☐ What are the main opportunities for future staffing arrangements as a result of climate change polices?
- ☐ Have the views of members been obtained on the jobs and skills required over the next ten years? Consider a survey to help generate data that could be used in discussions with management.
- ☐ What general training arrangements need to be prioritised to minimise the risks and maximise the opportunities?
- ☐ Is there appropriate climate hazard training for all workers taking place?
- ☐ What job specific training arrangements need to be prioritised?
- ☐ How will you progress green jobs and green skills as a bargaining issue with management?

GREENING THE WORKPLACE: SOME OF THE MAIN ISSUES

How sustainable choices can be made in the workplace

This section covers the key issues that will be most likely the focus of your consultation with employers on greening the workplace, offering some practical suggestions on how these can be tackled, supported by checklists.

To help inform negotiations, the environmental officer or green rep could establish a green working group of members, as mentioned in next steps above.

Dependent on the size of your workplace you may want a number of working groups covering each of the specific priority areas, although many of the issues overlap.

Equality impact assessments

It will be important for the working group/s and the joint environment and Just Transition committee if you have one, to consider the equality impacts of all these priority areas and proposed action.

One way to do this is to undertake equality impact assessments with the advice and support of the branch equality officer.

Consideration should be given to different protected characteristics alongside other equality and fairness considerations (eg impacts on lower-paid workers and people with caring responsibilities).

These assessments are a tool to help organisations check and record how they have made the best decisions, based on robust evidence. They help make sure that a change or decision does not have an unintended negative impact on particular groups of people.

For example, fuel costs are a huge burden on home care workers, according to the Campaign for Better Transport's report for UNISON 'Greening social care: a just transition to cleaner transport'. More than half (51%) of home care workers spend over £100 a month on petrol or diesel for work. Electric vehicles (EVs) are cheaper to run, particularly if charging at home. Yet a majority (61%) of home care workers believe they are too expensive to buy, and only a small proportion (2%) say they own a hybrid or EV.

That is why, in addition to incentives such as EV leasing or purchasing schemes, employers must also rethink how they allocate care visits, says the report. This would significantly reduce the travel distances required of domiciliary carers, decrease fuel expenses and the impact on the environment. Better route planning would also improve home carers' efficiency and give them more time with the people they look after. The report also calls for free e-bikes, discounted bus travel and other incentives to encourage low-paid workers to use green transport.

Want to know more about equality impact assessments?

UNISON's **equality impact assessment** flowchart will tell you:

- **what** an equality impact assessment means
- **why** impact assessments are important
- **who** should be involved, and who can help
- **when** to do an impact assessment
- **how** to conduct an assessment.

Greening transport and reducing pollution

One key issue to address in any net zero action plan, is how members can be able to choose more sustainable and less polluting modes of travel for work, as well as to and from work.

According to the latest government statistics, transport is the largest emitting sector in the UK of the main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. Vehicles also emit gases and other substances that have significant health consequences.

The Trade Union Clean Air Network (TUCAN) charter of which UNISON is a signatory, describes air pollution as a public health emergency and occupational health emergency.

Whilst cars generally account for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions, they are also the primary source of pollution that have a negative impact on the health of members and their families.

UNISON'S London regional secretary, Jo Galloway is clear that: "Urgent action must be taken on the dangerous levels of air pollution. Without a robust plan to tackle this issue, there's an extreme burden on already-stretched public services."

But charging drivers of older, more polluting vehicles entering clear air zones and low emission zones can have a serious impact on the earnings of many of our members who need to use their vehicle for work.

Galloway says employers need to play their part, and reports that UNISON has achieved some successes across London, with employers such as Kingston Hospital agreeing to reimburse ULEZ charges for any staff that need to use their car for work purposes.

Source: Labour Research, November 2023

Yet, in spite of the pollution problem, there is still an over emphasis on car travel. Those without this mode of transport – those on a low income, many women, young people and disabled people – are subsequently disadvantaged within the workplace.

Want to know more about air pollution issues?

The Trade Union Clean Air Network (TUCAN) has produced

'Guidance on air pollution for union reps' and

'Workers guide to action on indoor workplace air pollution'.

Global Action Plan's Action for Clean Air has a Clean Air Hub, an information source on air pollution, bringing together reliable, easy-to-understand facts and advice in one place, as well as clean air tools to help you understand your impact and reduce your exposure.

Additionally, it has specific resources for people working in business, for the health sector and schools.

'Air Quality – a trade union issue' free online training from the Greener Jobs Alliance is made up of 3 modules:

Module 1: The Causes and Health Impacts of Air Pollution

Module 2: The Law and Government Policy

Module 3: Trade Union Responses and Campaigns

A green travel plan

A green travel plan will need to consider encouraging more active travel and use of public transport.

For example, this may mean negotiating with employers to secure fare subsidies along with salary advances for the purchase of season tickets. The employer can also raise awareness about the available routes and fares, rail services, timetables and any discounted fares available.

However, the employer will also need to take account of the type and level of public transport available. The cost may be prohibitive to those on low wages, or the provision may be too limited to make it a viable option, particularly for those living and working in rural areas.

Distances may also be just too far for many in the workforce to walk or cycle. So the aim of any green travel plan is to be of benefit to workers as well as to employers and the environment.

For example, in order to discourage car use, it would not be of benefit to the workforce if parking is restricted or costs increased without some compensatory incentive to reduce car use.

And as always, equality impacts must be considered and adjustments made so that particular groups of people are not disadvantaged by the plan.

Therefore, the organisation may need to consider encouraging other options to contribute to a green travel plan that work for all.

For example:

A council received a sustainable transport grant to purchase 4 e-bikes and 2 conventional bikes. They were initially used by Covid Enforcement Officers, then by other staff such as the dog warden. However, the council's insurance provider had restrictive requirements for e-bike storage and charging (mainly to do with fire safety) which discouraged usage. This also meant that staff were not allowed to store their own e-bikes used for commuting, securely at work.

Alternative external storage was not possible as it presented more risk of theft and difficulties with recharging of the council-owned bikes. E-bikes are also sensitive to extremes of temperature and external storage was inadequately insulated.

Through patient negotiation from UNISON, the council eventually purchased fireproof charging cabinets where e-bike batteries can be stored, meaning that all e-bikes could be securely left at the workplace. Additional e-bikes were purchased by the council and storage and charging issues were similarly resolved at another workplace. The UNISON branch's work has also led to e-bike training for staff, an e-bike demonstration day and the hope that the cycle-to-work scheme will be reinstated in the near future.

All of these initiatives have raised the profile of sustainable transport for business use and commuting, and encouraged employees to move away from car use wherever possible.

Other options to consider include:

- Taking advantage of technology to reduce business travel, implementing scheduling systems that prioritise geographical proximity between workers and meetings or service users, as well as logical route planning and holding more virtual meetings where appropriate

- Using rail travel rather than air travel for longer business journeys where feasible
- Allowing an option of hybrid or homeworking as part of flexible working, although employers shouldn't see homeworking as an easy way to reduce costs and outsource emissions. Employers may also need to provide help to homeworkers to cover additional energy usage at home
- Promoting the health benefits of walking and cycling whenever possible with the provision of appropriate facilities such as showers, lockers, secure and weatherproof bike stands, basic equipment such as a bike pump and some tools, cycle training to increase confidence, cycle mileage allowances when staff use their bikes for business travel, and information such as walking and cycling maps with safer routes
- Introducing a cycle to work salary sacrifice scheme to make the purchase of a bike and accessories more affordable
- Encouraging the use of electric bikes that make cycling longer distances much easier, perhaps as part of the cycle to work salary sacrifice scheme
- Introducing a car sharing system and other shared transport schemes as promoted by the charity, CoMoUK
- Providing workers with a combination of financial and other incentives to use alternatives to sole car use before they are presented with additional costs such as parking fees
- Encouraging the use of electric vehicles including the provision of charging facilities for electric vehicles (although it should be recognised that there are some concerns over workers' and human rights abuses in the mining of materials for batteries. Additionally, the cost of electric cars still excludes most workers)
- Including information on sustainable travel to work in induction materials and welcome packs.

The employer should also consider the vehicles they use within the organisation.

For example:

The Northern Care Alliance, which runs local hospitals and services across Oldham, Bury, Rochdale, and Salford, is the first NHS organisation to trial the first fully electric heavy goods vehicle (HGV) for its services. The two fully electric HGVs produce zero nitrogen dioxide. This compares with fleet vehicles which produce an estimated 557mg of nitrous oxide per kilometre.

Elevated levels of nitrogen oxides can cause damage to people's respiratory tracts and increase their vulnerability to developing or worsening respiratory infections and asthma. It's estimated the two vehicles at Northern Care Alliance could save 834,386mg (834 grams) of nitrous oxide emissions every week.

Ideally, all new vehicles should be hybrid or electric, including fleet vehicles and as part of service delivery such as patient transport, courier services, deliveries, and the transportation of goods and services.

Want to know more about greener transport?

Wales TUC's 'A trade union bargaining guide for greener, healthier and fairer travel' explores why sustainable travel is an important issue for trade unionists, and looks at what action can be taken in the workplace. It also provides a sample transport survey to find out how your members travel and the barriers they face in making more sustainable choices before you start making a case to management.

The Energy Saving Trust has more details on **business transport** including switching to electric vehicles.

A useful guide on how to write a travel plan is available on the TravelKnowHow Scotland website and includes a template plan. The aim is to provide a package of practical measures tailored to the needs of individual sites that will promote more sustainable travel choices and reduce reliance on the car for both commuting and business journeys.

Checklist for greening transport and reducing pollution

- ☐ Carry out a travel survey with members. Or across all staff with the co-operation of other unions and the employer. (See Wales TUC's ' A trade union bargaining guide for greener, healthier and fairer travel' for an example survey).
- ☐ Check if the employer carries out any air quality measurements and liaise with the safety rep to discuss a joint approach to mitigate any risk.
- ☐ What alternative sustainable options for travel are there for staff whether as part of work, or getting to and from work: walking, cycling, public transport, electric cars, car sharing etc?
- ☐ What alternatives would they welcome?
- ☐ Would the employer support the workforce in making fewer journeys in cars?
- ☐ Draft a travel plan based on the evidence collected, working with branch colleagues such as the health and safety rep and the equality officer, to put to the employer f or negotiations. Don't be over-ambitious a t first. The aim is for the plan to clearly s how benefits to workers as well as to e mployers and the environment.
- ☐ Encourage the employer to improve route planning and assigning of journeys for service delivery and business travel, aided by technology to reduce unnecessary travel.
- ☐ Encourage the employer to secure fare subsidies along with salary advances for the purchase of season tickets, as well as to raise awareness about the available routes and fares, rail services, timetables and any discounted fares available.
- ☐ Encourage the employer to consider some compensatory incentive to reduce car use, more virtual meetings rather than in-person meetings requiring lots of business travel, opportunities for those who wish and are able to work from home, and avoiding air travel for work-related travel.
- ☐ Encourage the employer to promote the health benefits of walking and cycling whenever possible with the provision of appropriate facilities, a cycle to work salary sacrifice scheme, a mileage allowance for bicycle users.
- ☐ Encourage the employer to introduce a car sharing scheme, provide electric car charging facilities and to replace all business and fleet vehicles with electric or hybrid vehicles.
- ☐ Ensure the employer provides appropriate training and awareness raising.
- ☐ Ensure that any change of policy doesn't create negative impacts on workers. All changes should also be fully assessed for equality impacts with thorough consultation.

Greening energy and water

See also '**Greening land use and buildings**' below for more information on environmentally friendly buildings and retrofitting to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

One simple area to review and help improve energy use is in the type of lighting and electrical equipment used within the workplace.

Lighting and electrical equipment account for a large part of the energy use in a building and replacing legacy light sources with LED technology can reduce lighting energy costs by 70%. This saving can be further increased if motion detection lighting and taps, and automatic power down procedures for machines not needed 24/7 are used.

For example:

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust tested and implemented new software that automatically turns off idle computers overnight, saving 590 tonnes of carbon and £440k annually without any impact on computer security or patient or staff experience.

Additionally, heating, ventilation and air conditioning can account for the majority of money spent by an organisation on energy. Even small adjustments to these systems can significantly improve the working environment and at the same time save money.

While digitisation of the workplace and increased use of artificial intelligence (AI), may bring some efficiencies that can contribute to decarbonisation, it should be remembered too, that AI can use more energy and materials than normal computing.

For example, Google searches using generative AI have been found to use 23–30 times the energy of a normal search. This energy use is 'hidden' in remote data centres. Therefore, the increasing use of AI in the workplace may potentially add to carbon emissions if energy efficiency is not also taken into account.

Want to know more about greener lighting, heating, ventilation, air conditioning and computing?

The Carbon Trust has a lighting overview guide that provides energy efficient lighting advice for organisations, including guidance on energy-saving LED lighting.

The Carbon Trust's heating, ventilation and air conditioning guide introduces energy saving opportunities for businesses, and demonstrates how simple actions can save energy and cut costs. These include reducing the need in the first place, such as providing natural ventilation in buildings (windows that open), understanding and using controls more efficiently, and regular maintenance of equipment.

Ecosia is the world's largest not-for-profit search engine, dedicating 100% of its profits to climate action, primarily through reforestation projects worldwide.

Green Compute website is a repository for Green Software Engineering (GSE) covering best practice and current research into the environmental footprints of ICT and reducing it.

Crown Commercial Service, in partnership with PUBLIC's 'Buying Greener Technology in the UK' guide is designed to help public sector buyers make environmentally conscious purchases.

In addition to improving the energy efficiency of workplace premises themselves (such as by improving insulation and retrofitting

buildings), larger employers may be willing to develop a **renewable energy plan** as part of the workplace agreement. It could play an important part in achieving net zero and reduce the use of finite fossil fuels. Renewable sources of energy occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment such as hydro-electric power, wind, solar, wave and tidal flows, and from some human activities such as biofuels.

Although renewable energy may require considerable investment to introduce within an organisation, the technologies required are becoming cheaper. Activities can soon start to save money, particularly in contrast to the rising fossil fuel prices.

As Wales TUC's 'Greener workplaces for a Just Transition' toolkit highlights "Workplaces are some of the best sites for renewable energy generation. They are less likely to be in residential or very scenic areas, where planning permission can be difficult to obtain. They can install renewable energy on a larger, more efficient scale, and by building renewable energy on or near the site ('decentralised energy'), a lot of the problems associated with centralised power generation (losses in transmission, impacts on wildlife) can be avoided...

From a trade union point of view, renewable energy has other benefits besides the obvious environmental ones: it can create more jobs on site or in the UK renewable energy industry, and the investment a company makes is a good indication of its greater commitment to the future of the company."

For example:

In the oldest parts of Milton Keynes University Hospital (MKUH) much of the roofing was coming towards the end of its manufacture life leading to water seeping into parts of the hospital. New roofing was installed and the Trust used this opportunity to improve the roof insulation, enabling them to better optimise energy use, reduce costs and carbon emissions. In addition, as the hospital has a flat roofing structure, solar electricity panels could be fitted to generate significant energy on-site. 2,586 solar panels were installed, producing 853MWh (megawatt hours per year) which is equivalent to powering over 200 average homes for a year, or around 8% of the Trust's total electricity requirement.

Whilst renewable energy generation may not be feasible for smaller organisations initially, employers could nonetheless be encouraged to switch to or seek out **green tariffs from energy suppliers**.

These tariffs are labelled as green if some or all of the units of electricity are 'matched' by units generated from a verified renewable energy source such as a wind farm, solar array or hydroelectric power station. They can be a positive way to support renewable energy and potentially reduce emissions.

However, it is worth noting that how green these tariffs actually are will vary. Some are genuinely all-renewable, others are something of a half-way house, and others aren't really green at all.

As the national charity 'The Centre for Sustainable Energy' warns "To ensure your energy genuinely comes from renewable sources, look at the small print of the 'green' tariff."

Want to know more about green tariffs?

The Centre for Sustainable Energy, explains where so-called green tariffs may be accused of 'green washing' in their section on green electricity tariffs.

The Big Clean Sweep provides services to businesses including a price comparison service of UK's most trusted green energy suppliers so you get a great deal - and help the planet at the same time.

Fuel Poverty Action is calling for an alternative, fairer and greener system, Energy For All, where each household would receive enough energy to cover the needs of the people living there. Their campaign calls on the government to ensure that everyone can access the bounty of renewable energy, with suitable means of storing energy for times of greatest need.

We all recognise that we need to safeguard water resources, water supply and water quality in the UK.

An obvious area for discussion on greening the workplace with your employer is on **water consumption and wastage**. And this may help to save costs for the organisation as well as benefit the environment.

Want to know more about water saving?

Waterwise is the leading independent voice in the UK for using water wisely, for the benefit of people and the planet.

They report that the average person in the UK uses around 143 litres of water a day at home. But they also use water when they are out and about, including at work.

Office and facilities managers can make small but effective changes to reduce the water used in the workplace. Saving water will save money on water bills if the workplace is on a water meter (which most businesses are) and saving hot water will reduce energy bills and the carbon footprint too.

The Waterwise guide for offices provides some simple suggestions for saving on water in workplaces, along with posters.

Water saving ideas can be simple and effective such as regular checks and maintenance reducing pipe leaks and dripping taps, cutting back on the use of sprinklers and hoses, or by using displacement devices in toilet cisterns to reduce the amount of water in the flush.

As the water industry contributes to the UK's total carbon emissions with their energy and chemical intensive water treatments, reducing water use will have a considerable impact on the environment. The amount of energy attributable to the water collection, treatment and supply of services is considerable.

The joint environment and Just Transition committee, if your workplace has one, would ideally review water usage each year and produce plans to reduce consumption.

They should also consider the heating and cooling of water in the workplace which contributes to energy consumption.

Checklist for greening energy and water

- ☐ Inspect the Display Energy Certificate (DEC) for each building. This will give you an idea of the performance standard rated from A (very efficient) – G (least efficient).
- ☐ Check whether your workplace was registered with the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Energy Efficiency Scheme.
- ☐ Does the joint environment and Just Transition committee, if your workplace has one, review energy usage each year and produce plans to reduce consumption?
- ☐ Have there been any complaints from staff about comfort conditions or reports of over or under-heating issues? Can staff individually control heating, cooling and lighting in their workplace?

- ☐ Are all bulbs low energy (LED or compact or modern fluorescent)? Is lighting on in areas, or at times of day, when there's enough daylight? Do all staff turn off lights whenever and wherever they're not needed? Are motion sensor lights used in low-use areas?
- ☐ Is electrical equipment regularly serviced and clearly labelled? Is any equipment left on unnecessarily when not in use? Are the energy saving features activated such as automatic power down of PCs after working hours?
- ☐ Are staff fully trained in the best use of equipment and energy saving features?
- ☐ If the use of AI is introduced, is the energy usage taken into account when selecting options? For example, will the employer select AI produced by companies that source green data centres that use renewable and sustainable energy as well as choosing energy-efficient hardware designed computers and smartphones?
- ☐ Is equipment labelled with the amount of energy it uses? Does equipment have an energy monitor? Is new equipment installed in a way that makes it easy to use its eco-features?
- ☐ Are heaters, boilers and air conditioning units regularly serviced, cleaned and maintained?
- ☐ Are the thermostats for heating and air conditioning programmed to switch on/off at the right temperature?
- ☐ Are there any obstructions in front of radiators, heaters and air ducts? Are doors or windows closed when the heating or air conditioning is on?
- ☐ Is your building properly insulated and draught-proofed?
- ☐ Does your workplace generate any renewable energy?
- ☐ Are there opportunities to install or increase the existing amount of renewable on-site generation?
- ☐ Does your employer purchase their energy supply from companies that support renewable energy?
- ☐ Would the employer consider switching their default search engine to Ecosia?
- ☐ Would the employer consider switching their mobile phone network supplier to Ecotalk? Ecotalk uses its profits to invest in projects run by the Green Britain Foundation that buy land to give back to nature and restore Britain's indigenous plants, animals and ancient ecosystems.
- ☐ Does your employer make regular checks and undertake to reduce pipe leaks and dripping taps promptly?
- ☐ Do staff know how to report leaks?
- ☐ Can the employer use collected rainwater or 'greywater' from sinks, showers etc within the workplace?
- ☐ Does the employer cut back on the use of sprinklers and hoses?
- ☐ Will your employer consider reducing water used with displacement devices in toilet cisterns to reduce the amount of water in the flush, using percussion taps (that turn off after a set period) for washing facilities, using water and energy- efficient washing machines and dishwashers with an 'A' rating and other water- saving options?
- ☐ Does the joint environment and Just Transition committee, if your workplace has one, review water usage each year and produce plans to reduce consumption?
- ☐ Is water usage measured with meters? Are readings regularly taken and are targets set to reduce the amount of water used?

- ☐ Do all staff have access to drinking water, without the need for bottled water in single-use plastic bottles?
- ☐ Are staff aware of the importance of minimising water use and how to use water efficiently?
- ☐ Ensure the employer provides appropriate training and awareness raising.
- ☐ Ensure that any change of policy doesn't create negative impacts on workers. All changes should also be fully assessed for equality impacts with thorough consultation.

Greening waste

Reducing waste and being more efficient with resources can make a significant contribution towards achieving net zero and help protect nature and wildlife.

For example, cutting back on single-use plastic will help to reduce the amount of plastic waste ending up the oceans. Additionally, the manufacturing of new plastic is energy intensive, and it can be hard to recycle with much of it being shipped overseas.

The joint environment and Just Transition committee, if you have one, should consider whether all work activities can be designed to use fewer resources in the first place. They can also explore whether more used items can be recycled or better still repaired, refurbished and re-used.

Want to know more about resource efficiency and recycling?

WRAP (the Waste and Resources Action Programme) is a climate action NGO working around the globe to tackle the causes of the climate crisis and give the planet a sustainable future. Their site 'The business of recycling', while focusing on England and Wales, provides resources useful across the UK, including recycling posters and a waste audit guide.

Wales TUC's 'A trade union bargaining guide on resource efficiency' is aimed at trade union green or environmental reps and other trade union representatives who want to work with employers and members to reduce the environmental impact of their organisation through reducing waste and improving resource efficiency.

It's also worth noting that a recycling law came into effect on 6 April 2024 in Wales that applies to all workplaces. It means all workplaces such as businesses, public sector and charities need to separate their recyclable materials in the same way most households already do.

A waste audit can be a useful tool for environmental officers/green reps to help identify where waste is being generated within the workplace and from its operations, how much waste and whether it is being recycled. It can provide the evidence for the joint environment and Just Transition committee to help understand where the issues are and identify areas for improvement in waste management.

Want to know more about waste audits?

WRAP has information on how to carry out a waste audit in the workplace to collect, sort and measure waste in order to understand where the issues are and identify areas for improvement.

Any waste audit needs to include **food waste.**

According to WRAP globally, 25– 30% of total food produced is lost or wasted, and food waste is estimated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to contribute 8-10% of total man- made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. If food waste were a country, it would be the world's third largest emitter after China and the USA. Although great progress has been made in the UK, food waste from all sectors is still around 10.7 million tonnes.

Therefore, it would be important to check on the amount and type of food waste from the staff canteen and staff personal use within any waste audit, as well as whether staff have facilities to store and use food from home.

As well as considering food waste produced by the workforce and visitors and service users, it would be important to consider where food is sourced. Ideally food will be sourced locally to reduce its carbon footprint (for further information see below in **'Greening suppliers and procurement'**).

Reducing waste may also be more cost-effective for the organisation leading to a reduction in purchasing of throw-away supplies, as well as reducing the cost of waste disposal.

The employer should also be encouraged to **invest in good quality materials and supplies** so that they last a long time and are not likely to break down and be discarded. Goods will need to be properly maintained, cleaned and stored to enhance their usage life.

Workers will inevitably be well placed to identify ways to reduce unnecessary waste, as well as potential repair and re-use.

But it will be important to get the agreement of the employer, ideally through negotiations in the joint environment and Just Transition committee, to reinvest any savings made into their workforce, developing skills and retaining jobs.

The long-term goal for society is to reach zero waste by creating a **'circular economy'** whereby a product or material is not just thrown away at the end of its use but is recovered and regenerated for another cycle of use. This approach recognises that we have finite resources on our planet.

A circular economy can also contribute to creating new, green jobs such as those involved in reconditioning, remanufacture, servicing and repair of resources.

Whilst better recycling and re-using is the ambition for all our resources, in the short term the emphasis in the workplace may be on clean waste and managing waste better. This could include options such as using anaerobic digestion and incineration with energy recovery and could be an area to explore with the joint environment and Just Transition committee if you have one.

It could also mean the introduction of simple schemes into the workplace, such as reducing paper use by encouraging more secure online recording, sharing and storage of information. Another scheme could reduce the use of single-use plastic whether in the staff canteen or service delivery, as long as plastic alternatives do not have worse environmental impacts or be unfit for purpose.

For example:

(as listed in the Wales TUC 'Greener workplaces for a Just Transition')

Mark Otten is the UNISON environmental officer at Swansea Council. He has taken action to reduce single-use plastics in the authority: "As an environmental officer for UNISON Swansea Council, I am always looking for ways to work with the employer to reduce our carbon footprint.

Dealing with a very large turnover of a variety of stock opened my eyes to the amount of single use packaging that was going through our stores.

To tackle one item alone, bottled water, would mean a huge reduction in single use plastic going through the stores. To give an indication of what I mean, during the period of March 2018 – March 2019, the procurement of bottled water (single use plastic) for staff who were on sites or mobile was recorded at 990,000 bottles. Year on year, the issue of spend on bottled water had continued to raise its head, mainly due to the cost. My concern was that of the impact it was having environmentally.

During a health and safety meeting at the end of 2018, the suggestion of personal drinks bottles was put forward. I highlighted that to go along this route would benefit both our environment and reduce cost.

Over the next few months, a variety of bottles were sourced and tested out. On the 20th March 2019, 500 one litre aluminium bottles were procured and issued out to staff. In total to date (19/11/2020), 900 bottles have been procured and issued out to staff.

During this time, there has been a saving of £10,000. More so, the staff themselves feel happy that they have helped in tackling a part of our eco problem which is, plastic pollution. In addition to this, other sections within the local authority have followed this up by adopting the same practice."

Checklist for greening waste

- ☐ Undertake a waste and recycling audit and review any existing relevant data or policies the employer may have on waste, procurement or suppliers. Identifying potential cost savings will be vital in making a business case for action during negotiations.
- ☐ Find out who has responsibility for resource/waste management in your workplace. What is the cost of waste disposal for your employer? Is there a target for waste reduction? Identify and target high impact actions to discuss with the employer as found through your audit.
- ☐ Will the employer agree to apply the waste hierarchy to reduce waste going to landfill developing a long-term plan for reaching 'zero waste' and moving towards a 'circular model' of resource management?
- ☐ Can activities be carried out with fewer resources or more environmentally friendly resources such as avoiding single-use plastic and using compostable materials or encouraging more secure online recording, sharing and storage of information rather than using paper copies?
- ☐ Pull together any ideas from the working group for a waste management action plan to discuss with the joint environment and Just Transition committee if you have one, with targets for waste reduction – it may be helpful to focus on some quick wins, as well as longer-term goals.
- ☐ To reduce the environmental impact of food encourage the employer to provide locally sourced catering that is not over-packaged or overprocessed, which is very carbon intensive.
- ☐ Ask the employer for staff access to facilities that enable them to prepare drinks and snacks in an environmentally friendly way rather than relying on drinks and snacks in disposable packaging (for example, drinking water taps, washing-up facilities for mugs).
- ☐ Do staff have facilities to bring in food from home, including re-heating leftovers? Are there facilities for staff to safely store their own food including in fridges? What happens to food waste from staff and from the workplace canteen? Can it be composted or recycled?
- ☐ Will the joint environment and Just Transition committee explore options such as using anaerobic digestion and incineration with energy recovery if feasible?
- ☐ Will the joint environment and Just Transition committee continually seek ways to minimise the use of resources including energy, equipment and goods such as non-recycled raw materials such as paper, packaging and disposable items, particularly when new systems, practices or locations are introduced?
- ☐ Are staff aware of the importance of reducing waste and how to use resources efficiently?
- ☐ Ensure the employer provides appropriate training and awareness raising.
- ☐ Ensure that any change of policy doesn't create negative impacts on workers. All changes should also be fully assessed for equality impacts with thorough consultation.

Greening suppliers and procurement

Ideally, all organisations should be developing ethical procurement policies. Importantly, these should take account of environmental issues and sustainability as well as other key issues such as modern slavery and child labour.

What is sustainable procurement?

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) describes sustainable procurement as the process of making purchasing decisions that meet an organisation's needs for goods and services in a way that benefits not only the organisation but society as a whole, while minimising its impact on the environment.

This is achieved by ensuring that the working conditions of its suppliers' employees are decent, the products or services purchased are sustainable, where possible, and that socio-economic issues, such as inequality and poverty, are addressed.

The central role of the public sector in procurement provides opportunities for driving decarbonisation through tendering, monitoring and sustainable procurement.

For example:

From April 2027, all suppliers to NHS England with contracts for goods, services, and/or works for any value, will be expected to publish a carbon reduction plan that takes into account the suppliers' direct and indirect emissions.

By the end of the decade, suppliers will only be able to qualify for NHS contracts if they can demonstrate their progress through published progress reports and continued carbon emissions reporting through the supplier framework.

But as UNISON's guide 'Clean/dirty energy: Sourcing solar energy without Uyghur forced labour' points out, while sustainable procurement may focus on the climate impacts of purchasing, "they have often failed to adequately consider the human cost of these decisions.

From electric cars to solar panels, the production of green alternatives often exploits labour, land and communities in the Global South. Public bodies must ensure that their responses to the climate emergency do everything possible to avoid the exploitation of workers."

For example:

95% of the world's solar panels rely on the primary material 'polysilicon'. Over 45% of the global supply of this component is manufactured in the Uyghur region.

The Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice found that all polysilicon manufacturers in the Uyghur region have participated in forced labour transfer programmes and/or are supplied by raw materials manufacturers that have.

Finding alternative suppliers is both a humanitarian and an environmental priority. China is the planet's biggest polluter, and the Uyghur region is the government's national hub for oil, gas and coal. Not only is forced labour rife but lax national environmental standards allow companies to drill into the Uyghur people's natural resources and fuel their factories with cheap coal. Consequently, solar panels made in the region have higher carbon footprints than those manufactured elsewhere in the world.

UNISON is committed to the principles of equality, solidarity and justice everywhere.

These values can be embedded into procurement practice by ensuring that supply chains are not tainted with egregious human rights violations and genocidal crimes. By prioritising socially and environmentally sustainable procurement, local governments can create ripple effects across the solar industry.

Further information including 'four steps to create ethical procurement policies' can be found in UNISON's 'Clean/dirty energy: Sourcing solar energy without Uyghur forced labour'.

The TUC has also highlighted how the production of minerals such as lithium, graphite and cobalt could increase by nearly 500% by 2050 to meet the growing demand for clean energy technologies. At present, evidence indicates a concerning trend in human rights violations and environmental harms linked to critical minerals and clean energy technology. For example, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) holds 60% of the world's cobalt supply, but many mines are unregulated - with the use of child labour and many miners working without basic health and safety equipment. The US Department of State has also expressed concern about the role that the illicit trade and exploitation of certain minerals from the African Great Lakes Region continues to play in financing the conflict in eastern DRC.

That is why the TUC is calling for new legislation that would give organisations including public authorities, greater legal responsibility for preventing labour and human rights abuses and environmental harms in their global value chains.

The purchasing function of any organisation can play a key role in its social responsibility. It can enhance its reputation and improve stakeholder relations including with the workforce.

For example, the employer may agree to avoid materials that are sourced from countries where rainforests are not sustainably managed and are destroyed to produce commodities such as palm oil.

Another area often neglected by employers when considering green procurement is in their technology choices. The 'Buying Greener Technology in the UK' guide from Crown Commercial Service, in partnership with PUBLIC reports that "ICTs account for 8-10% of European electricity consumption and up to 4% of its carbon emissions". They highlight, for example how the purchase of 100 refurbished laptops instead of 100 new ones, would make CO2 savings equivalent to the energy needed to power 4 homes for 1 year.

For example:

Another simple way of contributing to climate action is by switching to using Ecosia as your default search engine, as did Bangor University. Ecosia, is the world's largest not-for-profit search engine, dedicating 100% of its profits to climate action, primarily through reforestation projects worldwide.

Want to know more about ethical procurement?

UNISON's 'Branch guide to ethical procurement' highlights how influencing employers to take a lead in ethical procurement and using their buying power can provide a genuine chance to improve the lives and working conditions of many millions of working people.

UNISON's guide to Responsible Buying in Public Services is for branches working to eradicate abuses in global supply chains.

UNISON has also developed an ethical procurement policy guidance with the support of Labour behind the Label in order

to make better purchasing decisions for Pride events. It can be easily adapted for making other types of purchasing decisions within the workplace.

It includes a model policy that has the following statement:

"Climate Crisis and Human Rights

The current rates of consumption have an adverse effect on global human rights and the climate crisis. Therefore, we commit to only purchasing products or merchandise when deemed necessary to fulfil campaign aims. *[could be changed to 'operating needs']*

All quotes for products will be compared based on their environmental and social impact, as well as price. Environmental and social impact will be given highest priority in sourcing.

Organic, fair trade and recycled products shall be sourced where available and not prohibitively expensive."

ISO 20400, Sustainable procurement guidelines provides guidance for organisations wanting to integrate sustainability into their procurement processes. It is a sector-specific application of ISO 26000, (guidance on social responsibility), which it complements by focusing specifically on the purchasing function.

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) works together with trade unions, businesses and voluntary organisations to tackle the many complex questions about what steps companies should take to trade ethically, and how to make a positive difference to workers' lives. Their information includes 'Supply chain worker rights and climate change – how do we connect the two?'

Crown Commercial Service, in partnership with PUBLIC's 'Buying Greener Technology in the UK' guide is designed to help public sector buyers make environmentally conscious purchasing decisions. The easy-to-use guide simplifies green criteria and adapts them for the UK context. It includes:

- tailored guidance for 4 tender types: refurbished hardware, new hardware, end-of-life management, and software applications
- customisable tender language
- ready-to-use specifications and award criteria for hardware and software procurements
- practical instructions to embed environmental standards aligned with existing policies, including social value and CCS technology frameworks.

There may be other simple actions that the organisation can do, perhaps prompted by action on reducing waste (see above **'Greening waste')**.

For example, there could be an emphasis on sourcing products for the workplace that use less packaging and more recycled or recyclable materials, as well as using items that can be re-used and repaired.

If recycled or reclaimed materials are not available, the products could at least use materials meeting recognised standards to minimise their environmental impact such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood.

It may also be possible to try to focus on sourcing some products more locally to reduce their carbon impact, for example food for the staff canteen using more locally grown vegetables.

Want to know more about sustainable food?

People & Planet student network focuses on sustainable food issues for universities but the information can easily be adapted for other workplaces.

Additionally, moving towards 100% plant-based catering for internal meetings and events and staff canteens can help towards mitigating climate change. According to the United Nations, switching to a plant-based diet can reduce an individual's annual carbon footprint by up to 2.1 tons with a vegan diet or up to 1.5 tons for vegetarians. The world's food systems generate one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions, higher than the global aviation sector, and animal-based diets have a particularly high impact on our planet.

Want to know more about the benefits of a plant-based diet for climate action?

Plant-Based Councils focuses on bringing together, training and supporting teams of volunteers to campaign for change in their local council to provide 100% plant-based catering.

Any sustainable and ethical procurement policies should be backed up by finance and business plans, as well as training for those directly involved in making decisions and choices. These decision-makers should be given the resources and access to expertise in order to fulfil the policy, to properly assess sustainability risks and opportunities, and make fully informed purchasing decisions.

Staff generally should be made aware of the sustainable and ethical procurement policy.

The policy should also support the sourcing of goods and services from more local organisations where possible. It may even provide an opportunity to make the case for bringing services back in-house to ensure they are more sustainable.

Checklist for greening suppliers and procurement

- ☐ Negotiate with the employer on developing an ethical procurement policy that addresses both environmental and social responsibility. Does it support a Just Transition?
- ☐ How can the organisation use its individual or collective purchasing power and decisions to reduce carbon embedded in the supply chains? Can the organisation work with suppliers to make improvements – eg procuring products that use less packaging and goods that can be re-used and repaired, using more recycled and recyclable materials?
- ☐ Does the policy and practice support the sourcing of goods and services from local and regional businesses to help reduce their carbon footprint?
- ☐ Ideally it should set ambitious long-term goals for improvement and measurable interim targets. Set a date to review the policy with the joint environment and Just Transition committee, if you have one, and progress.
- ☐ Do companies in the supply chain report on their environmental policy, including their carbon emissions? Are they accredited under environmental management systems?
- ☐ Are purchases meeting the latest energy and environmental standards, sourced from suppliers with good employment and environmental standards, and easy and safe to use?
- ☐ Are the rights of workers in the supply chain protected and is the toxicity of products and the health impacts on the workers considered?
- ☐ Is there an agreed sustainability risk evaluation template and questionnaires to ask any potential supplier to complete?
- ☐ If applicable, how can the employer reduce the carbon emissions from the food made, processed or served within the organisation?
- ☐ How can existing digital technology and systems be used to streamline service delivery and supporting functions while improving use of resources and reducing carbon emissions?
- ☐ Are technology choices also included in the consideration of green procurement?
- ☐ Is there an opportunity to make the case for bringing services and the production of some goods back in-house?
- ☐ Will the employer consult with staff before any major purchasing decisions such as changes to layout, equipment or systems which may have resource use implications and could result in wastage if changes need to be re-done or undone?
- ☐ Are staff aware of the importance of using environmentally ethical suppliers and how to source sustainable resources?
- ☐ Ensure the employer provides appropriate training and awareness raising.
- ☐ Ensure that any change of policy doesn't create negative impacts on workers. All changes should also be fully assessed for equality impacts with thorough consultation.

Greening land use and buildings

UNISON recognises that necessary rebuilds and retrofit, along with any new build infrastructure is likely to use cement and concrete and that, traditionally, the cement industry is one of the main producers of greenhouse gasses. However, there are new innovations in low carbon concrete and cement mixes that may be worth exploring with your employer - they may be unaware of them.

Whilst environmentally friendly buildings cost 2% more to build than conventional buildings, they reduce energy use by an average of 33% according to the Energy Saving Trust, considerably offsetting the initial extra building costs.

There are a number of tools that can provide information for the environmental officer or green rep to help assess the green credentials of the buildings used by the employer.

For example, any new build or refurbishment of buildings should ideally be BREEAM assessed.

A BREEAM assessment uses recognised measures of performance, which are set against established benchmarks, to evaluate a building's specification, design, construction and use. The measures used represent a broad range of categories and criteria from energy to ecology.

Each category focuses on the most influential factors, including reduced carbon emissions, low impact design, adaptation to climate change, ecological value and biodiversity protection.

Another example of information to look out for is the Display Energy Certificate (DEC). Public authorities must have a Display Energy Certificate for a building if all the following are true:

- it's at least partially occupied by a public authority (eg council, leisure centre, college, NHS trust)
- it has a total floor area of over 250 square metres
- it's frequently visited by the public.

DECs are designed to show the energy performance of public buildings. They use a scale that runs from 'A' to 'G', 'A' being the most efficient and 'G' being the least.

It's worth pointing out to the employer that improving the energy efficiency of premises will boost the value of an organisation's assets.

Retrofitting buildings

To improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions arising from the buildings, the employer may need to consider **retrofitting their buildings**.

Retrofitting is the introduction of new materials, products and technologies into an existing building to reduce the energy needed to occupy that building. This will mean considering how insulation can be improved, as well as how heating, cooling and ventilation are addressed in the workplace.

Want to know more about building retrofits?

TUC Retrofit explainer on YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=vb9_XFxLkgA

The TUC guide to building retrofit at work provides suggestions for trade unionists on why and how to start advocating for building retrofit at work.

It can be useful to collect information from the workforce about their comfort and health within the workplace. If incidents or ill health are reported to your employer and recorded

in the accident book, they can strengthen the argument for retrofitting the building.

Responding to extreme weather events and heatwaves may also provide an organising opportunity.

For example:

The Heat Strike campaign is planning a day of action for when it gets too hot to work, that will include a number of workplace activities trade unions can engage with. **More information** in the video recording https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbTq-bHOsXE

The lack of Health & Safety regulations in the UK means that there are laws on minimum workplace temperature but not on maximum workplace temperatures. In some countries, heatwaves have led to the death of workers either in the outdoors or in extremely hot workplaces and we need to prevent this from becoming the norm in the UK. **More information** in the TUC's 'Cool it! A TUC guide for trade union activists on dealing with high temperatures in the workplace'

Overheating, drafts, mould, damp, and poor air quality are often a result of poor maintenance and lack of insulation, which can contribute to ill health including respiratory conditions & allergies.

If the employer is considering relocating or refurbishing premises, or if major repairs and maintenance are due to the workplace building, then this is an ideal opportunity to ensure that the employer considers climate change resilience at the design stage and minimise disruption.

Want to know more about building retrofits?

The UK government's 'Retrofit for the Future: a guide to making retrofit work' provides practical information for all parties working to reduce energy use and carbon emissions in existing homes through retrofit.

Carbon Trust's Heating, ventilation and air conditioning guide introduces energy saving opportunities for businesses, and demonstrates how simple actions can save energy and cut costs. These include reducing the need in the first place, such as providing natural ventilation in buildings (with windows that open).

Refurbishments and retrofits will also need to consider if buildings for staff and service delivery are able to withstand extreme wind, rainfall and surface water flooding and other extreme weather events.

Want to know more about climate hazards in the workplace?

UNISON Scotland, STUC and Adaptation Scotland's handbook and workbook for trade unionists on 'Climate Hazards & Resilience in the Workplace' has numerous suggestions of potential actions which can be taken to reduce the risk or vulnerability of an indoor or outdoor workplace (including home working and travelling for work) to specific climate hazards such as rainfall/flooding, extreme heat and cold, snow and ice, high winds/storms, drought, subsidence and landslide (see Table 3 starting on page 31 of the workbook).

Biodiversity management

The charity, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) explains that biodiversity means the variety of plants, animals and ecosystems that support the flow of vital ecosystem services on which we depend: to feed and clothe us, to provide us with clean water and air, to give us resilience to disasters and

climate change, and to give us natural spaces to live in and enjoy.

Workplaces and work-related activity can have a huge impact on the surrounding land, air or water environments as well as the wildlife that inhabit them, particularly in relation to land use and waste generation (see **'Greening waste'** above).

In addition to climate change proofing the actual workplace buildings and sites, organisations can do much to promote and support nature, green spaces and the wider biodiversity within the community.

Having access to green spaces at work can also have a positive impact on staff wellbeing, providing areas for relaxation, community gardening, exploring and supporting nature and wildlife.

For example:

Workplace union rep Stuart Egan came up with the idea of creating an orchard and community wildlife garden in a disused area at Llandough hospital as highlighted in the Wales TUC 'Greener workplaces for a Just Transition'

Over 150 trees were planted in the orchard after a huge fundraising drive supported by UNISON members, the hospital and the local community. It's become the first of its kind in the UK, offering huge benefits for wildlife, plants and people.

Hospital worker and UNISON branch chair Stuart first came up with the idea after talking to colleagues. He explains: "It was during a conversation with some public health nurses that the health benefits of trees came up. In my 30 years-plus at Llandough, I've seen the original hospital site expand to the extent that all the green spaces which might have been used by staff and visitors for peace and reflection have gone.

I knew there was a parcel of land right down at the end of the hospital site. It was a greenway that couldn't be built on. I could see the potential for an orchard and green space to offer huge benefits for mental and physical wellbeing for staff, patients and the wider community. I decided to look into the idea more and gather as much information as I could."

Putting a plan together Stuart put together a proposal which he took to the hospital board. It won the unanimous support of the senior executives. A project group was set up and a garden designer was commissioned.

The project, named Ein Berllan (Our Orchard) covers 15 acres and cost £250,000. It had to be entirely funded through charitable donations. A huge fundraising drive was made by the Cardiff and Vale Health Charity and by UNISON members who got involved with everything from cake sales to sponsored head shaving.

Stuart is proud of what the project has achieved: "We want the world to know about the orchard we are creating at Llandough Hospital to benefit staff, patients and their families. The orchard will be a haven to relax, have a cry or drink a coffee and you can even volunteer to help with the gardening. It will be the first of its kind in the UK, offering a place where you can get away from noisy wards, and be outside in the fresh air.

There'll be allotments growing vegetables for use in the hospital canteens and we're keeping bees. In a pioneering partnership with Cardiff University, the honey produced – and the antibacterial properties contained – will be used as a basis for research into antibiotics to help save lives."

Stuart says: "It's definitely something I'd encourage others to do in their workplace. If you can see an area of land with potential do some research and come up with a proposal.

The support we've had has been fantastic and it's something that will be of huge benefit for generations to come."

More examples:

'GreenWorks: TUC GreenWorkplaces Project Report 2008-10' includes case studies for Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, London, Leicester City Council and United Utilities, all projects initiated by UNISON.

Longer-term, the Wales TUC 'Greener workplaces for a Just Transition' toolkit suggests that union reps should push for a broader approach to supporting nature, calling on the employer to carry out **biodiversity footprinting** and to develop a biodiversity management plan.

Biodiversity footprinting helps organisations to understand the impact of their operations on the natural environment. It can help to identify changes needed to reduce harm and increase positive impacts.

Want to know more about biodiversity management?

WWF has a 'biodiversity risk filter' which is a screening tool to help companies and investors to prioritise action on what and where it matters the most to address biodiversity risks for enhancing business resilience and contributing to a sustainable future.

The Local Ecological Footprinting Tool (LEFT) from the University of Oxford supports cost effective decisions for environmental risk management.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Netherland's Committee report 'A Compass for Navigating the World of Biodiversity Footprinting Tools' guides its readers through the world of biodiversity impact measurement.

Checklist for greening land use and buildings

- ☐ Are there any new build or major refurbishment projects scheduled? If so has the employer considered climate change resilience at the design stage?
- ☐ Has consideration been given to the use of plants both inside and outside the working environment (including 'green roofs') to improve CO2 absorption, air quality, flood risks, natural shading and cooling, biodiversity, and a more pleasant working environment?
- ☐ Have workplace buildings received a BREEAM assessment?
- ☐ Inspect the Display Energy Certificate (DEC) for each building. This will give you an idea of the performance standard.
- ☐ Talk to workers. Have they been too hot or cold at work, or had problems with ventilation or damp?
- ☐ How are buildings for staff and service delivery insulated? Can investment in insulation reduce energy demand?
- ☐ How do buildings for staff and service delivery prevent overheating?
- ☐ Will the employer consider other types of retrofit to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions?
- ☐ If the employer is a tenant rather than a building owner, will it work with the landlords to ensure environmental considerations are taken into account?
- ☐ Will the employer promote and support nature and green spaces within the community? And provide green spaces at work?
- ☐ Is the employer willing to carry out biodiversity footprinting and to develop a biodiversity management plan?
- ☐ Are staff aware of the importance of

environmentally friendly buildings and how to maintain them as well as identifying and reporting any risks?

- ☐ Ensure the employer provides appropriate training and awareness raising.
- ☐ Ensure that any change of policy doesn't create negative impacts on workers. All changes should also be fully assessed for equality impacts with thorough consultation.

Greening pension funds and investments

Finance and investment choices will also impact on net zero objectives.

Most public sector organisations should already have **ethical investment policies** sometimes called responsible or socially responsible investment policies.

Responsible investment involves considering environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues when making investment decisions and influencing companies or assets (known as active ownership or stewardship).

Want to know more about responsible investment?

Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) is the world's leading proponent of responsible investment. It engages with global policymakers but is not associated with any government; it is supported by, but not part of, the United Nations. It has a number of introductory guides to responsible investment including covering climate change and biodiversity. In addition, their guide 'Climate change and the Just Transition: a guide for investor action' sets out how investors can pursue the goal of a Just Transition as part of their core operating practices.

ShareAction is a registered charity aiming to unleash the positive potential of the investment system. By setting ambitious standards for truly responsible investment, utilising their AGM activism programme to hold company boards and executives to account, and advocating for financial regulation in the UK and EU that will protect people's best interests, they deploy a range of ways to influence the investment system.

Environmental officers or green reps should check to ensure their employer's ethical investment policy includes environmental and Just Transition commitments, and ask for opportunities to engage with the aims and delivery.

Alongside this, the union can ask the employer to develop an **ethical banking policy**, holding their accounts with banks that themselves have an ethical investment policy which supports climate action and delivers positive social impact.

Importantly, the employer can also aim to invest in net zero aligned schemes in relation to **pensions**. Pension funds own almost a fifth of British companies so could potentially have considerable influence over environmental and social issues.

For example: local government pension funds – divest from carbon campaign

Local government branches can make a difference by campaigning for their LGPS pension fund to pull all investments in fossil fuels, commonly known as divestment.

In 2017, UNISON's national delegate conference passed a dis-invest from carbon motion. It commits the union to support the campaign to ensure that your pension fund and of course the companies we all invest in take climate change seriously.

The motion ensured that any campaign demand from UNISON had to include alternative investment proposals to address climate change and replace the assets

pension funds will be selling.

More details from 'Climate change and your pension: divestment guide' and 'Responsible investment in LGPS'

The LGPS is a pension scheme that uses these investments to make money to help towards paying pensions. The rest of the public sector pension system, like the NHS, does not. The entire NHS pay and pension budget comes from government spending.

However, pension schemes used by many private and community and voluntary sector employers will also continue to use our pension funds to support companies producing fossil fuels.

It's our members' money in the pension funds that buy corporate bonds and shares in companies producing fossil fuels like coal and oil, even when alternatives like renewable energy are available.

If your pension fund does not have a position on divestment from carbon, you may need to campaign for one.

Want to know more about responsible investment in pensions?

FairPensions is the UK's only charity devoted to campaigning for responsible investment in the pensions industry. Their work is based on evidence that investors who consider human rights, business ethics and the environment in their policies are not only doing what's morally right, but what's financially prudent.

More information too in ShareAction's Pension Power: What world is our money building?

The charity Size of Wales is running a campaign highlighting the need for deforestation free pensions. Pension funds are exposed to deforestation, land conversion and associated human rights abuses, especially facing Indigenous peoples, through the sectors and industries they invest in. As a result, they have a unique ability to help drive change, both within their own investments and across the finance sector more broadly.

Checklist for greening pension funds and investments

- ☐ Does the employer's ethical investment policy or their other investment documents make specific reference to taking action on climate or other environmental and social considerations, including a commitment to a Just Transition?
- ☐ Does the employer have an ethical banking policy? If not, will they agree to developing one, holding accounts only at banks that themselves have an ethical investment policy which supports climate action and delivers positive social impact?
- ☐ Do you know the investment policy of your pension fund? Is it invested in net zero aligned schemes? Is there a policy of a commitment to divestment from carbon?
- ☐ Has your organisation on environmental, social or governance grounds a) divested b) invested c) engaged with companies as a shareholder?
- ☐ Are there opportunities to raise membership awareness on the importance of this issue?

TEMPLATES AND MODEL DOCUMENTS

The following templates and model document can be used in the workplace to help support environmental officers or green reps and branches in their negotiations.

Please note that the text in square brackets ***[...]*** indicates where you need to complete information specific to your workplace, or else are notes for you to consider in relation to your negotiations.

For help in drafting and negotiating surveys, letters and agreements, contact your regional organiser.

Model green survey

This model green survey could provide the environmental officer or green rep and their working group with a wide range of suggestions about how their employer could invest and make changes to help reduce carbon emissions. It may also be useful as a recruitment and organising tool, highlighting the importance of the issue to UNISON.

This model survey is based on the 'greener workplaces survey' available in the resources section of Wales TUC's 'Greener workplaces for a Just Transition' co- authored by Graham Petersen, Chris Roberts and Jo Rees.

UNISON ***[branch name]*** is building up a case to put to ***[employer's name]*** to improve the impact that ***[organisation's name]*** has on the climate and environment.

In order to ensure our negotiations are firmly based on your experiences and views, we would greatly appreciate if you could spare the time to complete this survey.

The survey covers just ten questions and would normally take only around five minutes to complete.

All responses to this questionnaire are anonymous and will be treated as confidential. It will not be possible to identify any individual from information used for assembling the case we put to ***[employer's name]***.

1. Are you aware of any action on climate and the environment that has been taken within the organisation?	
Yes	No
If yes, please state what action has been taken *[amend or delete this as relevant to your workplace]*	

2. How good do you think *[organisation's name]* is at reducing its environmental impact? (for example, its travel, resource use/waste management, support for nature, procurement, energy and water use)	
Very	Quite
Average	Not very
Don't know	

3. How good do you think your department/team are at reducing its environmental impact?	
Very	Quite
Average	Not very
Don't know	

4. How good do you think you are at reducing your environmental impact at work?	
Very	Quite
Average	Not very
Don't know	
5. Are you aware of [organisation's name]'s climate and environmental policies?	
Yes	No
Thinking about the impact of your workplace's activity on the climate and environment, such as travel, resource use/waste, support for nature, procurement, energy and water use, we'd like to know...	
6. ONE thing you think you could do at work to be more 'green'?	
7. ONE thing you think [employer's name] could do to be more effective on climate and environment?	
8. Are you a member of UNISON?	
Yes	No
9. If yes, what ONE thing do you think UNISON could do to be more effective on climate and environment?	
10. Finally, if you are a UNISON member, would you be interested in becoming more involved in making a greener place to work – for example, by attending some training at work, or joining a green working group with other members of staff?	
Yes	No
Maybe	
If yes, please leave your contact details (name, email, mobile number)	

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it to: [complete details] by [date]

Important advice about undertaking surveys

Please note: always make sure that the data you submit to the employer protects your members' identities.

The best method for protecting confidentiality and for reducing the time necessary to analyse results is to conduct an online survey. The recommended online survey service is set out below. However, if the survey is sent out to email addresses, care has to be taken that this is compliant with the data protection legislation.

Distribution should take place through UNISON's Merlin system, to ensure that the emails used for members are those that they have provided for such purposes to the union.

Consider alternative ways to gain the benefits of an online survey without the restrictions of email distribution. For instance, you could place the survey link on social media if you are confident that it would be accessed
by sufficient staff without notifying emails. Alternatively, you could seek to develop a joint survey with the employer (if that did not mean too many compromises on questions asked), which the employer could then distribute to staff.

If you decide on manually distributing a hard copy survey, ensure that the survey can be returned as confidentially as possible. Like the examples above that do not rely on union email distribution lists, the advantage to this method is that it can go wider than UNISON membership if agreed with any other unions representing staff. In this way, it may both gather a wider section of staff views that carries more weight with the employer and assist in recruiting members by highlighting the role of the union in advancing staff terms and conditions.

Online survey providers

When it comes to online survey providers, UNISON recommends Alchemer (formerly SurveyGizmo) because you can request the data be hosted within the EU, making it compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018).

There is a free version of Alchemer which will handle up to 100 responses before extra charges are applied. However, if you wish, explore the paid packages which allow for unlimited surveys and responses, while allowing for anonymity in those responses, pricing starts at £45 per month.

You can sign up for Alchemer here: https://www.alchemer.com/ When setting up an account you need to make sure you choose the appropriate data centre to ensure that data is processed on the EU data centre.

The Alchemer support website carries these useful links:

- Tutorials: https://www.alchemer.com/tutorials/
- Building accessible surveys: https://help.alchemer.com/help/survey-building-faq
- Alchemer Support team: https://help.alchemer.com/help/alchemer-support-hours
- How to make voting anonymous: https://help.alchemer.com/help/anonymous-surveys

For every Alchemer account that contains UNISON member data, a branch elected official must notify their Regional Head.

When collecting personal data, the UK GDPR states:

- You must tell individuals what you are going to do with it.
- You must keep the personal data secure.
- You must only do what you have told

individuals you are going to do with the data. You cannot use the data for other purposes once you have it.

When conducting surveys, ensuring the following are clear in the body of the survey will ensure that you meet the standards set by the UK GDPR:

- The purpose of the survey and that it is UNISON collecting the data.
- What data you are going to collect and what you are going to do with it. Only ask for information you need to meet the purpose, do not collect excessive data.
- If you are going to share the data with a third party, ie organisation outside UNISON.
- How long you will keep the data.

To ensure that participants know what their rights are and have a general understanding of how UNISON uses their data, you must always include a link to the UNISON privacy policy - https://www.unison.org.uk/privacypolicy/

If you need any help making your survey compliant, please contact UNISON's Data Protection Team on dataprotection@unison.co.uk

Green workplace inspection proforma

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Employer name:	
Inspection date:	
Inspector name:	
Department/area being inspected:	
Employee contact (optional):	
Does the organisation have a carbon/ environmental/Just Transition management plan?	
If yes, have the recognised trade unions had any involvement in its development?	
ENERGY USAGE AND EFFICIENCY	
1. Lighting:	
Are energy-efficient bulbs (eg LED) used?	
Are lights turned off in unoccupied areas?	
Are natural light sources utilised effectively?	
2. Office equipment:	
Are computers, monitors, and other office equipment set to energy-saving modes?	
Are devices turned off or unplugged when not in use?	
Are employees encouraged to use energy-efficient settings on equipment?	
3. Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC):	
Are HVAC systems regularly maintained and serviced?	
Are thermostats set at appropriate temperatures for comfort and energy efficiency?	
Are doors and windows properly sealed to prevent energy waste?	
WASTE MANAGEMENT	
1. Recycling:	
Are recycling bins available and clearly labelled for varied materials (paper, plastic, glass, etc)?	

Are employees educated about recycling practices?	
Are recycled materials collected and sent to appropriate facilities?	
2. Waste reduction:	
Are efforts made to minimise single-use items (eg, cups, cutlery, etc)?	
Is there a policy to reduce paper usage (eg, double-sided printing, digital communications)?	
Are alternatives to hazardous materials considered?	
3. Electronic waste:	
Is there a process in place for proper disposal of electronic waste (e-waste)?	
Are old electronics recycled or refurbished if possible?	
WATER CONSERVATION	
1. Fixtures and appliances:	
Are water-efficient faucets, toilets, and appliances installed?	
Are there any leaks in plumbing or fixtures that need repair?	
2. Water usage awareness:	
Are employees encouraged to be mindful of water usage (eg turning off taps when not needed)?	
Are water-saving measures communicated to staff?	
TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUTING	
1. Commuting practices:	
Are alternative commuting options encouraged (eg cycling, public transportation, carpooling)?	
Is there any provision for remote work to reduce commuting frequency?	
2. Company vehicles:	
Are company vehicles well-maintained and tuned for fuel efficiency?	

Is there an effort to use low-emission or electric vehicles where possible?	
ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS	
Employee training:	
Are employees educated about the company's green initiatives and practices?	
Is there an active programme to promote environmental awareness?	
Does the organisation understand and explain its carbon footprint?	
Environmental impact:	
Does your organisation publish environmental indicators?	
Does your employer map the environmental impact from their supply chains?	
Green Certificates:	
Has the organisation obtained any green certifications (eg, ISO 14001) or awards?	
CONCLUSION	
Summarise the overall environmental performance of the workplace and highlight any areas for improvement. Include action items and recommendations to enhance the company's sustainability efforts.	

Please note that this is a general template, and you may need to modify or expand it based on the specific requirements of your workplace and the nature of your green initiatives. Additionally, it is essential to keep the pro forma updated as new environmental practices and regulations emerge.

Model letter requesting consultation

[Branch logo

Branch secretary name

Branch address

Branch phone number/email

Date

Name of employer contact – needs to be a senior manager

Employer name

Employer address]

Dear ***[name],***

Transition plans for achieving net zero in public services

I am writing to you on behalf of UNISON members because we are aware that the UK government has made a legally binding commitment to get public services to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Its targets assume that a great deal of the adaptations and mitigations transition will be in place by 2030.

Given the scale of transformation this will require, and the increasing direct impact of climate change on some of the services our members deliver, we know you will already be planning for the necessary changes, mitigations and adaptations to service delivery and infrastructure changes to meet that target.

We are writing now to ask when you will be consulting with the staff unions on any transition plans. We are very keen to engage with you on the Just Transition to net zero, in the spirit of co-production and partnership working.

Staff unions, and the workers we represent, will add substantial value to these discussions. We share the goal of ensuring quality services can remain efficient, adaptable and affordable throughout a fair transition to greener working practices and the necessary infrastructure changes you may be considering.

Ahead of any information you can give on wider planning and staff union involvement, we attach a suggested basic green workplace audit ***[you can use the green workplace inspection proforma above]*** that might be helpful to inform an initial discussion.

[You may also want to refer to any evidence or ideas collected so far, that you are keen to share.]

We request a response to this letter within ten working days ***[this is a suggested timescale but amend as applicable for your workplace].***

I look forward to hearing from you and working with you.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[Name of branch] **branch secretary**

cc: ***[for example, the environmental officer or green rep, regional organiser]***

Model workplace climate change agreement

The agreement or policy should include the terms of reference of a joint environment and Just Transition committee, as well as recognising the role of the environmental officer or green reps, ideally with facility time. It should cover the main issues such as waste management, but it should also cross reference to other more detailed policies that exist which may include specific targets and action points.

The agreement should be developed with the backing of the branch, whose branch secretary should be involved in negotiations to introduce it.

This model agreement is based on the 'joint model environment and climate change agreement' available in the resources section of Wales TUC's 'Greener workplaces for a Just Transition' co-authored by Graham Petersen, Chris Roberts and Jo Rees.

1. General principles

Both ***[name of employer]*** and ***[UNISON branch]*** recognise the climate and nature emergency and that climate change and environmental concerns are among the most pressing concerns facing us all.

Both ***[name of employer]*** and ***[UNISON branch]*** are committed to developing a shared approach to addressing climate and environmental issues through this agreement.

A strategy for achieving net-zero carbon emissions and supporting biodiversity will be agreed with UNISON. The targets and actions adopted will be influenced and reviewed against Just Transition principles.

Just Transition principles include collaborating with the recognised union through the Joint environment and Just Transition committee, a commitment to no compulsory redundancies, funding for training and paid time-off for workers to upskill or transition into alternative jobs, as well as a commitment to full redeployment support.

[Name of employer] as both an employer and public service provider, commits itself to 'leading by example' among staff and other stakeholders.

[Name of employer] will comply at all times with relevant environmental legislation and will work to influence the wider environmental agenda with the use of best practice and examples.

[Name of employer] notes UK government policy to reach net-zero by 2050, reduce reliance on carbon-based energy sources and to promote energy efficiency. With this in mind, ***[name of employer]*** aims to:

- reduce ***[name of organisation]'s*** carbon and environmental footprint
- work with staff, management and stakeholders on training and awareness raising
- monitor performance against achievable but challenging targets.

[Name of employer] aims to be open and receptive to suggestions from staff and other stakeholders on how it can make better use of energy, reduce its environmental and carbon impact and improve its management of these areas and, in doing so, to reduce CO2 emissions in line with UK statutory and international obligations.

[Name of employer] and UNISON will encourage managers, staff and environmental officers/ green reps to share responsibility for 'greening' the workplace.

As part of this ongoing work and commitment, ***[name of employer]*** and ***[UNISON branch]*** will support the creation of a joint environment and Just Transition committee (JEJTC) to engage in constructive dialogue between the employer and the union on how to achieve these goals.

[Name of employer] accepts that the necessary changes will not happen all at once but ***[name of employer]*** and ***[UNISON branch]*** commit to working together on a programme of continuous improvement, backed by regular monitoring of environmental impacts and issues, particularly carbon impacts, which will be reported to the JEJTC.

The proposals formed within this agreement are not an exhaustive list and we will seek to develop this agreement further as our knowledge and experience grows.

Such developments will be fed into the production of an annual net zero action plan (see below).

As part of this strategy, ***[name of employer]*** aspires to having all its workplaces accredited for environmental management via (for example) schemes such as ISO14001, EEAS, and EMAS. ***[amend as applicable to your workplace]***

2. Scope of policy

This policy is agreed between ***[name of employer]*** and ***[UNISON branch]***. It applies to all full- and part-time employees and workers (including agency and temporary workers) and covers ***[all sites/specific sites/ bargaining units as appropriate].***

This policy is supported by and developed with the trade unions representing the employees.

This agreement does not supersede or take precedence over any existing negotiating procedures or staff-management arrangements other than those specified in this agreement unless specified and agreed in full by the joint negotiating committee (JNC) of ***[name of organisation]***.

3. Joint environment and Just Transition committee (JEJTC)

The main responsibilities of the JEJTC will include reaching agreement on how minimising environmental impacts can best be achieved through the net zero action plan, while adhering to Just Transition principles.

Environmental impacts

The JEJTC will consider the environmental impacts of all the organisation's internal operational policies and service delivery, to identify areas where action is needed to minimise

environmental impact, in particular:

- addressing the issues of energy conservation, resource/waste management, and the prevention of pollution
- measuring the total 'carbon footprint' and seeking to reduce wastage, with time-bound targets for continual emissions reductions
- measuring the 'biodiversity footprint' of the organisation and seeking to reduce direct and indirect (supply chain) impacts on biodiversity and taking steps to support nature and green spaces
- ensuring that those purchasing equipment, heating, lighting, waste systems and other materials take full account of environmental impacts and particularly energy and resource use and support the introduction of environmentally friendly technology
- ensuring that those using equipment and systems seek to do so in a way that reduces excessive consumption of energy and materials and promotes re-use and recycling wherever possible.

More detailed areas of consideration (which also form part of the action plan) are given below.

Net zero action plan

The JEJTC will produce a realistic net zero action plan, which sets goals and targets for environmental improvement within ***[name of organisation]***. It forms part of the annual operational plan and includes a specific carbon and biodiversity management element, as well as being reviewed against Just Transition principles.

Where appropriate, the action plan will be developed in conjunction with expertise from local and national organisations including ***[eg the local authority, relevant trade bodies, the Carbon Trust, Waterwise etc, amend as appropriate to your workplace]*** building on existing recommendations where some work has already been undertaken with such organisations.

The JEJTC will also be invited to comment on any externally facing sustainability action plans and policies that are aimed at other stakeholders (for example, service users).

This action plan will include:

- the business case for change
- clear targets that are understandable, tangible and up to date
- a plan for delivery
- a way of prioritising projects, including an assessment of payback times
- responsibilities for delivery;
- systems for communicating and monitoring impacts through work with staff, managers and environmental officers/green reps
- a system for monitoring performance against this action plan, including an annual review and update of the plan.

The net zero action plan can be found ***[include a link to where the action plan can be viewed.]***

Employee engagement

The JEJTC will ensure that all staff are involved in this initiative, by:

- disseminating to staff all information on matters relating to 'greening ***[name of organisation]***
- ensuring all staff are made aware of the environmental agreement and the work of the JEJTC, including through the website, staff inductions and appropriate training courses and awareness-raising events

feeding recommendations upwards to the senior management team and reporting back on outcomes.

Energy and environment audits

The JEJTC will carry out joint 'green' audits using UNISON's green workplace inspection checklist and/or or those provided by organisations such as the Carbon Trust.

It will incorporate the results of these audits and any climate change risk assessments carried out, into the net zero action plan (see above).

The partners agree that any analysis of environmental issues and impacts (for example, audits) will be undertaken with the full co-operation of all partners, and that such analysis will be solely for the purposes of environmental improvement.

Any analysis will not be used in relation to other issues such as pay, performance appraisal, disciplinary procedures, etc.

The structure of the joint environment and Just Transition committee

[Name of employer] and ***[UNISON branch]*** agree to ensure that ***[all departments/ sites/ regional offices]*** are represented on the JEJTC, and that members of the JEJTC are provided with all relevant information concerning the environmental issues within the workplace and their duties/ responsibilities as members of the committee.

Although participation by staff will be on a voluntary basis, the unions agree actively to encourage their members to participate fully in all environmental initiatives and opportunities, and encourage union reps and other interested members to put themselves forward as environmental officers/green reps.

[Name of employer] will ensure that ***[a senior management champion, ideally directors responsible for both facilities/energy management and HR]*** remains on the JEJTC, in order that the committee is able to take effective decisions.

[Name of employer] will ensure that other management-side representatives attend the JEJTC on a regular or ad-hoc basis as may be required by the partners, including for example IT and contractor representatives.

Where there are environmental concerns regarding policies that form part of the existing Staff Handbook or other policies negotiated with the JNC (for example, HR policies on working time or homeworking policy), the JEJTC will work with the JNC to address any concerns.

Similarly, where there are areas of overlap with health and safety policy, the JEJTC will work

with the health and safety committee to come to agreed solutions.

The JEJTC will meet at least four times a year to carry out the tasks outlined in this agreement, and will annually agree a chair and secretary, to be alternated between the management side and the union side.

Standing items at these meetings will include the net zero action plan and quarterly energy usage figures for ***[the organisation/list of sites as applicable].***

4. Trade union involvement

Consultation will take place with the recognised trade union on the implementation, development, monitoring and review of this policy.

[Name of employer] recognises that union reps play a key role in encouraging employee engagement in climate and environmental initiatives, and so help develop good practice in areas such as transport, energy and resource use at ***[name of organisation],*** in line with this agreement.

They will also assist more broadly in supporting the implementation of ***[name of employer]***'s environmental policies.

Environmental officers/green reps will be allocated reasonable facilities time (not less than ***[X days per month/X proportion of their working time – amend as applicable]*** plus an additional ten days of related training per year) to carry out their duties in relation to environmental issues, including attending meetings with management, and with the union, on green issues, consulting with colleagues, attending training, preparing paperwork and materials.

Union reps will be given training equal to that of managers and supervisors and sufficient time to carry out their duties.

5. Environmental issues to be considered

The JEC shall consider what action needs to be taken to address the following areas.

Reducing emissions and energy use

[Name of employer] and ***[UNISON branch]*** undertake to work together towards:

- putting in place a plan to reduce emissions at least in line with UK government targets and ideally in line with internationally recognised targets set by the Conference of Parties Climate (COP) agreements
- ensuring purchases meet the latest energy and environmental standards, are sourced from suppliers with good employment and environmental standards, and are easy and safe to use
- ensuring eco-options are enabled and staff are trained on using equipment in an eco-friendly way

- ensuring equipment is regularly serviced, and clearly labelled with energy ratings / the amount of energy it uses / whether it can be turned off
- exploring automatic options like motion sensor lights in low-use areas, and automatic power down of PCs after working hours
- ensuring all lighting is sustainable and energy efficient
- ensuring building management systems (BMSs) are optimised for efficient energy use, for example in the timing and local and/or thermostatic control of heating and cooling systems
- the sourcing of electricity from a 'green' tariff
- where appropriate, on-site renewable alternatives in particular solar water heating and combined heat and power (CHP)
- particularly encouraging energy-saving measures in those aspects of the operation that are most energy intensive

and other relevant actions identified in the net zero action plan.

Resource use and purchasing

[Name of employer] and ***[UNISON branch]*** undertake to work together towards:

- continually seeking ways to minimise the use of resources including energy, equipment and goods such as non-recycled raw materials including paper and packaging, and disposable items, particularly when new systems, practices or locations are introduced
- carrying out regular waste audits and applying the waste hierarchy to reduce waste going to landfill developing a long-term plan for reaching 'zero waste' and moving towards a 'circular model' of resource management
- purchasing supplies from sustainable sources – ie sources that are local where possible, accredited under environmental management systems
- increasing the purchase of supplies that are reused, re-usable, recycled or recyclable (in that order of priority)
- working with suppliers and partner organisations to obtain the lowest environmental impact, eg obtaining life-cycle assessments
- considering the toxicity of products and the health impacts on the workers producing them, before purchasing
- consulting with staff before any major purchasing decisions such as changes to layout, equipment or systems which may have resource use implications and could result in wastage if changes need to be re-done or undone
- using outside or community agencies for old or redundant equipment
- implementing low-cost water saving initiatives and investigating payback times and feasibility of larger-scale water saving measures such as low flush toilets

and other relevant actions identified in the net zero action plan.

Food

[Name of employer] and ***[UNISON branch]*** undertake to work together towards:

- providing catering options that have a lower environmental impact (eg are locally sourced and not over-packaged or overprocessed, which is very carbon intensive, and where possible are freshly prepared and 100% plant-based)
- ensuring staff have access to facilities that enable them to prepare drinks and snacks in an environmentally friendly way rather than relying on drinks and snacks in disposable packaging (for example, drinking water taps, washing-up facilities for mugs)

and other relevant actions identified in the net zero action plan.

Transport

[Name of employer] and ***[UNISON branch]*** undertake to work together in full consultation with the JNC to design a travel plan that encourages sustainable modes of transport. Such a plan ***[will seek to engage local authority and other local transport providers where appropriate (if applicable to your workplace)],*** and will look at options such as:

- a car sharing scheme
- the provision of a low-cost cycling scheme including either a mileage allowance for bicycle-users, a tax-free scheme for the purchase of bicycles for work-related use, or both
- fuel performance of car fleet/essential car user schemes
- encouraging the use of video conferencing and teleconferencing
- discouraging the use of air travel, particularly for short-haul journeys within the UK/ Northern Europe
- other integrated transport provisions
- and other relevant actions identified in the net zero action plan.

Other environmental considerations will be given due regard when decisions are made to move, refurbish or improve access to premises, including all regional and satellite offices.

Where ***[name of employer]*** is a tenant rather than a building owner, it will work with the landlords to ensure environmental considerations are taken into account.

Consideration will be given to the use of plants both inside and outside the working environment (including 'green roofs') to improve CO2 absorption, air quality, flood risks, natural shading and cooling, biodiversity, and a more pleasant working environment.

Consideration will be given to the ethical and environmental dimension of ***[name of employer]***'s investments including its pension scheme.

Consideration will be given to whether the workforce are given appropriate opportunities for development of skills and training and progression, to help ensure the resilience of service delivery, the capacity of the workforce to adapt to change, and whether the valued resource of the workforce is being used efficiently and proportionately, taking account of staff physical and mental health.

6. Review and monitoring

[Name of employer] will ensure that all new employees, supervisors and managers will receive induction on the policy.

Adequate resources will be made available to fulfil the aims of this policy. The policy will be widely promoted, and copies will be freely available and displayed in ***[name of employer]*'s** offices and through the staff intranet ***[amend as appropriate to your workplace].***

This policy will be reviewed jointly by unions and management, on a regular basis.

7. Signatories

This agreement comes into force on:

Date:.....

This agreement will be reviewed on:

Date:.....

SIGNED for ***[employer's name]***

DATE .....

SIGNED for ***[UNISON branch]***

DATE .....

Model re-skilling and training survey

In order to ensure a Just Transition to net zero and climate resilience, re-skilling and training must play an important role for the workforce.

There will undoubtedly be risks for current staffing arrangements and every job will require 'green skills'. These will be needed across all sectors and at all levels.

Therefore, a provision to retrain and upskill in good time must be built into all jobs and sectors at risk.

It may be worth undertaking a survey on the views of members about the jobs and skills required over the next ten years, to help generate data that could be used in discussions with managements on a Just Transition.

Please note the **advice about undertaking surveys** above.

UNISON ***[branch name]*** is building up a case to put to ***[employer's name]*** to identify potential changes to jobs and skills required over the next ten years in order for there to be a Just Transition to net zero and climate resilience that will take into account the fair treatment of the workers most affected.

To help ensure our negotiations are firmly based on your experiences and views, we would greatly appreciate if you could spare the time to complete this survey.

The survey covers just nine questions and would normally take only around five minutes to complete.

All responses to this questionnaire are anonymous and will be treated as confidential. It will not be possible to identify any individual from information used for assembling the case we put to ***[employer's name]***.

1. How important do you believe it is for ***[name of employer]*** to change and adapt the way it works because of climate change?	
Very	
Quite	
Average	
Not very	
Don't know	

Regarding your current role, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	
2. My skills and knowledge are updated regularly for my work.	
Strongly or moderately disagree	
Slightly disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Slightly agree	
Strongly or moderately agree	
3. I am encouraged to act on climate and be more sustainable at work.	
Strongly or moderately disagree	
Slightly disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Slightly agree	
Strongly or moderately agree	
4. I know where to go to learn more or start taking action on climate and sustainability within my role.	
Strongly or moderately disagree	
Slightly disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Slightly agree	
Strongly or moderately agree	
5. I am ready to undertake training and development to prepare for a Just Transition to net zero and climate resilience.	
Strongly or moderately disagree	
Slightly disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Slightly agree	
Strongly or moderately agree	
6. I have a clear sense of how the skills required to do my job will change in the next ten years.	
Strongly or moderately disagree	
Slightly disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Slightly agree	
Strongly or moderately agree	

7. I feel supported by ***[name of employer]*** with appropriate training for skills development.	
Strongly or moderately disagree	
Slightly disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Slightly agree	
Strongly or moderately agree	
8. Are there any particular 'green' skills or knowledge you have identified that will be needed for your job role in the future? Please specify.	
9. Do you plan to move jobs due to environmental impact concerns?	
Yes	
No	
Maybe	

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it to: ***[complete details]*** by ***[date]***.

ORGANISING TO WIN

The outcome of any negotiation is in large part determined by the relative bargaining power of the parties involved. The most skilled, experienced, and informed UNISON officer, representative or organiser will only get so far without the backing of an organised and engaged membership and a readiness to deploy tactics designed to influence and persuade the employer.

Ultimately bargaining power is the ability to get an employer to do something they would not otherwise do – in this case, reach collective agreement with terms more favourable to UNISON members than would otherwise have been the case.

Bargaining on its own is not organising, until there is active engagement with members as a collective.

Every bargaining aim must be seen as an organising opportunity, to build the union and achieve better bargaining outcomes.

The UNISON 5 Phase Plan to Win sets out the 5 phases of successful strategic organising campaigns to support a bargaining aim:

1. Research and development
2. Union base building
3. Launch issue-based campaign
4. Resolve the issue (and go to 5) or escalate and create a crisis (for the employer or ultimate decision maker)
5. Win, celebrate, review and sustain.

A resourced and credible plan to win shifts the balance of power in negotiations in favour of UNISON. It enables the bargaining team to negotiate with confidence and win for members.

Where the plan requires member participation and supports the identification and development of activists, significant organising outcomes can be achieved to build the long-term strength of the branch.

Ideally, bargaining goals can be achieved without the need to escalate campaigns to dispute. Where there is member support for escalation to deal with employer intransigence, further advice must be sought from the **regional centre.**

UNISON activists can access the resources via the Organising Space – UNISON's online space for activists. Visit the Organising to Win tile at OrganisingSpace.unison.co.uk or contact your Regional Organiser for guidance and support.

Had an organising win? Let's learn the lessons and celebrate! Send a summary to WIN@unison.org.uk and we'll be in touch.

Further detail is outlined in the **5 Phase Plan to Win guide and template**, which is available as one of the resources of the Organising to Win series.

GREEN UNISON

Doing our bit to make public services greener

UNISON

the public service union

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