

Briefing #8: Just Transition

What do we mean by Just Transition?

Climate Chaos

We face an existential threat. Unless there is a rapid transition to a low/no carbon economy there will be catastrophic climate change. The recent UN Climate report underlined how little time we have. In years to come our children and grand children may ask why, when the danger, was clear, we did nothing.

Market solutions have failed

Carbon dioxide is the most important of the green house gases that are causing global warming. At the end of 2018, 24 years after the first world climate summit, the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was higher than it has been for 10 million years. And the rate of increase was also the highest it has ever been. Ever since the first climate summit in Rio, governments around the world have relied on the market to meet carbon reduction targets. This strategy has failed. So what is the alternative?



Climate Jobs

We have the technological knowledge to make the rapid transition to a sustainable economy that is required. What's missing is political will. The politics of transition is as critical as the technology.

Nearly a decade ago the Campaign Against Climate Change (CACC), working with trade unionists and

environmental activists, developed a programme for the UK to transition to a low carbon economy. The full details are available on its website and an overview can be found in the 'One Million Climate Jobs' pamphlet.

This is what CACC has to say about 'Climate Jobs'. *'Climate Jobs' are not the same as 'green jobs'. Some green jobs help the climate, but 'green jobs' can mean anything – park rangers, bird wardens, pollution control, or refuse workers. All these jobs are necessary, but they do not stop climate change.*

Climate Jobs are jobs that lead directly to cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases, and so slow down climate change. For instance, workers who build wind farms replace power stations that burn coal or oil. Workers who insulate buildings reduce the oil and gas we burn. Bus drivers reduce the amount of oil we burn in cars.

Order the Million Climate Jobs pamphlet from the Campaign Against Climate Change or read it online at www.campaignccc.org

100,000 new jobs in Scotland

In Scotland we have a unique set of circumstances; a strong skills base; abundant resources for sustainable energy production and an opportunity to develop a strategy that puts jobs and environment at the heart of economic strategy. If the framework for transition developed by the Campaign Against Climate Change were adapted for Scotland it would mean 100,000 new climate jobs and many more indirectly.

Just Transition

Implementing a climate jobs programme would ensure a Just Transition. Large-scale investment would guarantee job security (and paid retraining if required) for engineering workers in the construction and defence sectors as they switch to climate jobs.

This would be hugely popular in these sectors, which are rife with rotten agency staffing. There would be an expansion of places in further and higher education to support and further develop skills for a sustainable future. There would be a programme of home insulation for every building that would end the illness and anxiety caused by the high levels of fuel poverty that exist in Scotland and disproportionately impact on the old, the poor and many people in rural areas. A free, national, integrated, electrically powered system of bus and train transport would transform the way we move around. Taken together with democratic control and mass engagement these steps to reduce carbon emissions would also have a transformative impact on the quality of people's lives. In short we learn from the past. The end of coal wrecked tens of thousands of lives and many communities have still not recovered. A just transition is one that ensures no individual or community suffers economically or socially as old jobs end and new jobs are created.

Practical and realistic

Your first reaction may be that all of this is unrealistic. Looking back you might say the same about the immense changes that happened in short period during both the first and second world wars. Business as usual is failing and the stakes are higher than any war. Averting catastrophic climate change requires global action, but in Scotland we are well placed to take a lead. What we do locally could be an inspiration for action worldwide.



Urgent action

Economic transformation at time of war has always been top down and aimed at protecting the status quo. Climate change will disrupt the way we do things and for that reason politicians will be hesitant to act. To force the pace a mass campaign is needed to drive a push for climate jobs now.

About Scot E3

E3 is a group of rank and file trade unionists, activists and environmental campaigners. In 2107 we made a submission to the Scottish Government's Consultation on a Scottish Energy Strategy. Since then we have been busy producing and sharing leaflets and bulletins. We held a well-attended conference on 17th November 2018 that produced a draft manifesto for a Just Transition in Scotland.

You can read and respond to the draft manifesto at www.scote3.wordpress.com

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