

Composite #10: Climate Emergency

(incorporating Motions 64, 66, 69, 70 +A and 73)

Finance & Legal NISC
Road Transport Commercial, Warehousing & Logistics NISC
East Midlands/DE51 Chesterfield CMA Branch
East Midlands/NN14 Barclays Works Branch
North West/389 Manchester Social Action Branch
East Midlands/Finance & Legal RISC (A)
East Midlands/NN14 Barclays Works Branch (A)

Conference welcomes:

- the energy, principles and commitment of the school students striking over the climate emergency. We note that the science is unequivocal on the reality of climate change, and the reality that human economic activity is the driving force;
- the school students' movement as a profoundly democratic and collective initiative, and recognises these young people as the trade unionists of the future.

Conference notes that:

1. the Earth's temperature has already risen by 1 degree above pre-industrial levels;
2. the urgent need for action on the climate emergency, both in response to existing negative impacts such as extreme weather, fires, droughts, floods and loss of habitat and species; and to avoid the catastrophic and irreversible climate damage which we increasingly realise the world is on course for, after the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report;
3. the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2018 warned that we only have 12 years to keep global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees. Carbon emissions need to be cut by 45% by 2030, and reach zero carbon by 2050 in order to avoid a dangerous tipping point;
4. the tremendous impact of the school students' strikes initiated by Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion (XR) rebellions in shifting government complacency over climate change forcing them to amend the 2008 Climate Change Act;
5. the shift in public attitudes to climate change, as quoted in the Government's Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 2019 public attitudes tracker: "In March 2019, 80% of the public said they were either fairly concerned (45%) or very concerned (35%) about climate change...the highest since the survey started in 2012...Seven in ten people (69%) said that climate change is already having an impact in the UK";
6. Unite is a signatory to the 'One Million ~~Green~~ Climate Jobs' report produced by the Campaign Against Climate Change trade union group;
7. the urgent need for action on the climate emergency, in response to existing negative immediate impacts such as extreme weather, fires, droughts, floods and loss of habitat and species;
8. climate change is already impacting all aspects of our lives; from more extreme weather conditions, to reduction of species biodiversity, to the plight of climate

refugees to air pollution. Fires in Australia in December 2019 and flooding in Jakarta, Indonesia in January 2020 have again highlighted what the stakes are and the urgency;

9. the participation of workers in the 'Earth strikes' including solidarity strikes, rallies and protests—most notably in Britain on 20 September 2019;
10. that the 2019 TUC Congress passed a resolution initiated by members of the University and College Union (UCU) calling for workplace action and solidarity with the Earth Strike on 20 September 2020—which was supported by Unite;
11. that school students have continued to call national strikes;
12. That the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP) (also known as COP 26) is scheduled to take place in Glasgow in November 2021. Importantly this will review UN member states effectiveness in implementing the Paris Agreement from the COP21 talks in 2015;
13. that an estimated 500,000 people joined protests at the COP25 talks in Madrid after the summit was moved from Chile;
14. that UN 'COP' Climate Change Conferences have become a major focus for campaigners.

Conference believes:

1. the issue of climate change is affecting and will continue to affect our members' lives; we need strong policies to support our members on this. It is a trade union issue;
2. that our trade unions can make a big difference to the movement against climate change and that a fightback in the workplace is a crucial part of the fight to reduce carbon emissions;
3. that the brilliant stand of the school students deserves our full solidarity. They have given us all hope for the future;
4. the school students' "Fridays for Future" protests have been significant in dragging the arguments over climate change, and the threat it poses to millions of people, to the centre of political discourse, not just in Britain but globally;
5. that the COP26 summit in Glasgow in November offers an important and unprecedented opportunity in Britain for protests that can pile pressure on governments around the world - not least our own - to take action on climate change;
6. the future of our planet is at risk if we do not organise to force governments to cut emissions at least in line with the 2018 IPPC report;
7. that the harshest impact of climate change will fall (is already falling) on those least able to protect themselves - the poor and the dispossessed. Conference therefore believes that governmental action is essential if there is to be any hope of minimising this impact and, as the transport sector is responsible for over 20% of the carbon released to the atmosphere, any climate solution will inevitably impact on our members in the transport industries;
8. opposing climate change is a trade union issue;
9. that many pension schemes and employers, especially the banking sector, continue to invest heavily into fossil fuel without any visible plan to switch this investment out of fossil fuels to renewable energy;

10. that Unite has a responsibility to engage with employers about the issue of climate change and their duty to act responsibly vis-à-vis climate change
11. that we cannot longer wait for our government of choice to implement policy to tackle climate change. We believe that a radical refocus on to environmental demands in the workplace is necessary to tackle the impending crisis and to ensure a just transition to a decarbonised economy, protecting jobs and livelihoods.

Conference recognises that a 'just transition' (that protects the lives, livelihoods and rights of working people, the poor and the disadvantaged) to a decarbonised economy is not only right, but is the only way the movement against climate chaos will secure the mass support needed to win, and avoid a rich minority protecting themselves at the expense of the planet and the vast majority of people.

Conference joins our Assistant General Secretary Steve Turner in congratulating the school students striking around the world for real climate action and welcomes the decision of the 2019 TUC to support those school students and to call for a solidarity action.

Conference has no confidence that governments dominated by millionaires and industrialists will seek solutions in the interests of the poor or dispossessed - the vast majority of working people.

Conference instructs the EC to:

1. consider affiliating/reaffiliating to the Campaign Against Climate Change which initiated the 'One Million Climate Jobs' campaign;
2. fully involve Unite in arrangements for the protests in Glasgow in November, including by providing adequate transport (chartered train, for example);
3. publicly state our support and solidarity with the climate strikers and with the wider movement for rapid and effective climate action;
4. encourage all units of our union to invite climate strikers and/or speakers from the Campaign Against Climate Change Trade Union Group to speak at their meetings within the next 12 months;
5. encourage all units of our union to give practical peaceful support to the climate strikes, without adults taking it over, e.g. promoting the strikes on social media, encouraging members to attend, and taking our flags or banners to such events if agreed with the school strikers;
6. actively seek contact with the school students' "Fridays for Future" campaign, with the object of initiating dialogue to seek an environmentally-friendly transport policy, which reflect their concerns and our members' interests;
7. call on all units of our union to organise to make COP26 in Glasgow a major focus of campaigning for effective action on the climate emergency;
8. call on employers and local authorities to declare a climate emergency and involve workers and communities in planning, implementing and monitoring to rapidly achieve zero carbon emissions, including ending investments in fossil fuels;
9. call on employers to recognise Unite green/environmental reps and give them work time for their activities;

10. campaign for legal recognition of Green/Environmental reps similar to that of Health and Safety Reps;
11. provide adequate training for reps including carbon literacy training and training to scope supply lines;
12. create climate action groups or subcommittees at workplace level and within our structures;
13. carry out a major exercise, along similar lines to the work on automation, to understand the potential impacts of the climate crisis, and the responses to it, on employment in each Unite region and sector;
14. produce a set of guidelines and a model policy that reps and officers can agree with employers regarding employer investment strategies;
15. encourage union reps and union members to become member-nominated pensions trustees. Once elected they should be encouraged to join the Association of Member Nominated Trustees who have already significant information available to encourage more ethical investments within pension funds;
16. encourage reps and officers to raise this with employers and demand that as soon as possible they create and act on a time-scaled plan to disinvest from fossil fuel producers consistent both with a 'just transition' and with the scale of the climate emergency facing humanity;
17. develop a campaign to call for support for this within our membership;
18. ensure that Unite as an organisation continues to focus on its carbon footprint and how that can be minimised;
19. produce guidance on what climate-related demands to include in collective bargaining, including ones which could be the basis of a lawful "trade dispute" under current legislation;
20. campaign for a legal right to strike and to repeal all legislation that makes it harder to strike over climate;
21. start collating victories and good practice in workplaces via Work Voice Pay, providing good practice and benchmarks for employers across all industrial sectors;
22. ensure that our union is visible and seen as a relevant and useful organisation within the climate movement and that participants in the climate movement are encouraged to join our union;
23. campaign for massive public investment in the jobs required to address climate emergency, including massive improvements in renewable energy, housing improvements (e.g. increased insulation) and public transport;
24. campaign for the return of a Labour government committed to working for the many, not the few, as a necessary first step to ensuring governmental industrial and environmental policies protect our members as well as the environment;
25. actively seek contact with other unions to develop and promote the above to make clear that an economic system driven by a 'buy cheap, sell dear' philosophy will inevitably lead to a degradation of the environment - globally, but also in the workplace.