



GOING **GREEN** IN THE WORKPLACE

Introduction

Given the scale of the threat posed by climate change – to our livelihoods and communities – workers are a key voice in negotiating reductions in workplace greenhouse gas emissions. Being green isn't an optional extra; it's a vital part of our trade union agenda.

Chris Baugh PCS assistant general secretary

In 2014, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a number of reports which provides the most comprehensive assessment of climate change ever undertaken. The IPCC findings starkly set out the need to reduce our carbon emissions to near zero if we are to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius on pre-industrial levels.

This includes in the workplace. All workplaces consume precious resources, produce waste and burn energy which makes them major emitters of dangerous greenhouse gases. Therefore whilst we need global agreements to cut carbon emissions, we also need to address environmental and sustainability issues in the workplace.

Why climate change is a trade union issue

PCS has long recognised that climate change is a trade union issue as it impacts how we work and the type of work we do.

Unions have an important role to play – whether by campaigning, lobbying government, educating or negotiating with employers for greener workplaces. As a union representing those who work in government departments, agencies and privatised contracts, we have a key role in getting government to recognise its part in reducing workplace carbon emissions, waste, and increasing energy efficiency of its estate and operations.

- There are many examples of struggles around the environment in trade union history. What is new is rapid climate change and the need to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels – every workplace must cut its carbon emissions.
- Workers are on the frontline of climate change impacts. The winter of 2013/14 was the wettest on record with severe flooding causing major disruption to communities, business and transport. But emergency responders to extreme weather events, such as firefighters are expected to deal with these crises with resources – physical and material – severely cut, impacting on their own health and safety.
- Greening Government Commitments are a commendable set of targets such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions by

25% by 2015 on a 2009 to 2010 baseline, and others on cutting domestic flights and reducing waste. Trade unions are vital in holding government and employers to account and in establishing bargaining rights on environmental policies at a national and workplace level.

- PCS has consistently argued that key to delivering the government's sustainability agenda – in both public and private sector workplaces – is the provision of statutory rights for workplace environmental reps and formal consultation structures.

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The Union Effect – greening the workplace

The TUC say that:

- offices, factories, schools and hospitals account for more than a fifth of Britain's carbon emissions;
- our businesses and organisations produce 93% of all the UK's waste;
- UK workplaces are missing out on more than £300 million a year in energy efficiency savings.

See: <http://bit.ly/1OeF6c1>

In 2014, the TUC produced a report The Union Effect – greening the workplace. This shows the central role union representatives have played in green workplace initiatives. It details the experiences of six organisations from the public and private sectors and a range of industries in their efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of their operations.

It includes a case study of a workplace environmental audit pilot at the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) office in York. This was part of a cross Whitehall programme agreed with the Whitehall Sustainable Practitioners Forum and civil service unions – PCS, FDA and Prospect – and supported by the TUC. A joint initiative, it aims to develop a standard practice across the civil service and highlights the importance of including trade union green reps at a local level.

The report can be downloaded at:

<http://bit.ly/1IHxhJB>

Campaigns we support

- **Statutory rights for workplace environmental reps**

PCS will continue to campaign alongside the TUC and other unions for formal recognition of workplace environmental reps.

- **No to Fracking**

PCS is opposed to shale oil and gas extraction – or fracking. We have been working closely with groups such as Friends of the Earth (FoE), Reclaim the Power and Talk Fracking to campaign against the development of a UK shale gas industry. We are also working with the global Trade Unions for Energy Democracy initiative to oppose fracking. We call for a ban on fracking and investment in renewables and democratic control of energy.

- **Aviation**

In 2008 PCS national conference passed a resolution to oppose the third runway at Heathrow. Plans previously taken off the table are back on. The Airports Commission, tasked by government to look at expanding UK airport capacity, propose additional runways at Gatwick or Heathrow. PCS produced a report Aviation Review: Protecting jobs; Protecting the planet which showed that we can maintain some aviation and retain jobs by investing in integrated public transport systems.

- **Fuel Poverty**

As the dominance of the Big Six energy companies has taken hold, fuel poverty – where people cannot afford to heat

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their homes – has increased. Fuel poverty is linked to poor energy efficiency, high bills, pay and low income. PCS is working with groups such as Fuel Poverty Action to highlight the issue.

- **No to nuclear**

We oppose plans for another generation of nuclear power stations in the UK such as planned for Hinckley Point C in Somerset. We also oppose the intention to renew Trident nuclear submarines. Money – estimated to be around £100billion – which should be invested in public services.

- **One million climate jobs**

We are working with the Campaign against Climate Change as part of a national campaign with other unions to create one million 'climate jobs'. The third edition of the One Million Climate Jobs pamphlet was launched in September 2014. It sets out a proposal to tackle the twin environmental and economic crises. See overleaf for more details.

- **Fairtrade and workers' rights**

PCS has for a number of years promoted fairtrade products (including in our own workplace). We support the international boycott of Coca-Cola as well as the long-running boycott of Nestlé.

- **NO TTIP; NO trade deals**

Trade deals are sold to their publics with promises of jobs and increased prosperity. But the reality is very different. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) saw an estimated million jobs lost in the US. The proposed EU/US trade deal – or Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership – will likewise not guarantee jobs. It will also not guarantee environmental standards as it seeks to negotiate a race to the bottom on regulations and expose Europe to the import of extreme energy such as US fracked gas or Canadian Tar sands oil.

**For more information
about these campaigns
please visit [pcs.org.uk/
greencampaigns](https://pcs.org.uk/greencampaigns)**

Workplace environmental reps and workplace environmental audits

PCS promotes the role of workplace environmental reps (WERs), campaigning and lobbying for statutory recognition similar to union learning or health and safety reps. WERs have a vital role to play in identifying measures in the workplace to save energy, reduce water, and address procurement policies among others.

One way we have sought to do this is through workplace environmental audits (WEAs). This enables reps to apply a systematic approach to measure environmental impacts in the workplace and to agree a plan to address them with the employer. Sometimes these are referred to as environmental action plans.

This can be a useful way to see where improvements can be made. For example can heating be controlled, is the building insulated, are lights left on when not needed?

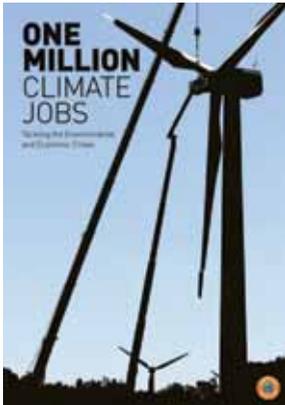
These may seem small measures but they can have a significant impact on workplace emissions. It can also save money as saving energy means less on energy bills.

One million climate jobs

If Mother Earth was a bank, they would already have saved her!

Jonathan Neale

Editor One Million Climate Jobs



The third edition of the One Million Climate Jobs pamphlet has been fully revised, updated and expanded. It has the backing of more trade unions being supported along with PCS by: Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union; CWU; FBU; TSSA; UCU; Unite; and the National Union of Students (NUS).

As a response to both austerity and climate change its central idea is simple. By establishing a National Climate Service to create jobs that will tackle climate change, a million people will be put to work: building wind turbines to replace power stations that burn coal and oil; retrofitting or insulating homes to make them more energy efficient; investing in an integrated transport network run on clean fuel.

What can you do in the workplace to support the campaign?

There are many things but as Gil Scott-Heron quoted in the pamphlet says:

“Nobody can do everything; but everybody can do something.”

- 1.** Raise green issues in your workplace. If your branch does not have a green rep, consider becoming one. We can provide support for your role including training.
- 2.** Speak to your green rep or learning rep about helping to organise an awareness raising event with a green theme. There are many opportunities throughout the

year: fairtrade fortnight (March), learning at work day (May), world environment day (June), cycle to work day (September). Contact green@pcs.org.uk for more information or materials.

- 3.** Sign-up to our green e-group to receive regular news and campaign updates. Email green@pcs.org.uk.
- 4.** Help promote the one million climate jobs campaign and other campaigns we support in your workplace – see pcs.org.uk/green or email green@pcs.org.uk.
- 5.** Book a speaker/organise a stall to sell copies of the One Million Climate Jobs pamphlet. See also the climate jobs website for more information: climate-change-jobs.org.
- 6.** Finally, if you are reading this leaflet and are not a union member, JOIN A UNION. Details of joining PCS can be found on the website at: pcs.org.uk/join or use the TUC WorkSmart guide to find the appropriate union for you: <http://bit.ly/1E3Prxo>.

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Our approach

The approach PCS takes to becoming a greener union is to:

- support our activists and branches in bargaining for greener workplaces
- work with green groups such as the Campaign against Climate Change and Friends of the Earth to take forward our policies on environmental issues
- get our own house in order and ensure that PCS as an organisation is taking steps to become a green employer: we have established a joint environment committee (JEC) with the staff side union GMB to develop environmental action plans across all PCS offices.

Further information

Useful websites

PCS green workplaces
www.pcs.org.uk/green

TUC environment
tuc.org.uk/environment
Campaign against Climate Change
campaigncc.org

Friends of the Earth
FoE.org.uk

Fuel Poverty Action
fuelpovertyaction.org.uk

Global Justice Now

globaljustice.org.uk

No dash for Gas/Reclaim the power

nodashforgas.org.uk

Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED)

unionsforenergydemocracy.org

PCS NEC Climate Change and Environment Committee (CCEC)

The NEC has established a sub-committee to progress the green agenda within PCS. This is made up of members of the NEC and supported by a Green Forum Advisory Group which consists of five PCS green reps elected by the annual Green Forum. Further information on members and their roles is available at www.pcs.org.uk/green

Publications and resources

Becoming a greener union

PCS reports to annual delegate conference

PCS Aviation review- protecting jobs; protecting the planet

Aviation and the environment summary booklet

How to 'green' your workplace

A brief TUC guide to greening your workplace

Go Green at Work

An in-depth handbook for green reps

The Union effect

Greening the workplace

These publications can be downloaded at:

pcs.org.uk/green

For printed copies, please email:

green@pcs.org.uk

The Carbon Trust also has a range of tools, guides and reports on addressing climate change in the workplace

carbontrust.com/resources

For any further information on PCS work on green issues, please write to

green@pcs.org.uk

Public and Commercial Services Union,
160 Falcon Road, London SW11 2LN
Telephone: 020 7924 2727
pcs.org.uk

Printed on 100% recycled paper April 2015
7618_04/15 Illustration components: Shutterstock