

30 November 2023

PCS Green Forum: building a workers plan for sustainable workplaces

The event on Saturday 18 November 2023 gave attendees a wealth of learning, best practice and case studies to inspire action on green issues.

PCS is a leading union on climate and environmental issues and our Green Forum discussed the collective action needed to transition to a greener economy.

The opening panel focussed on the idea of a 'Just Transition' This is a trade union term used to ensure that in moving to a zero-carbon economy, workers' jobs, pay, pensions and other terms and conditions are protected.

Rosie Hampton (Friends of the Earth Scotland) was clear that job creation is completely possible, pointing to the [demands of off-shore workers](#). Wales TUC's Joe Allen spoke hopefully of recent legislation in Wales and commended the TUC's toolkit [Greener workplaces for a just transition](#). Speaking of the many public bodies who have declared net-zero aspirations, Liz Wheatley (Unison) argued that while long-term impacts save money, the necessary capital is held by the wealthy, who themselves create a disproportionate impact.

The first afternoon session saw a presentation and discussion on PCS's proposed [National Climate and Biodiversity Service](#). Work is even more urgent with the government roll-backs on climate action and the lack of a coherent plan to meet decarbonisation targets. At its heart is the need for a radically different civil service that is fully resourced to deliver action on climate change.

Next, three green reps shared some examples of good practice. Russ joined his local [Extinction Rebellion \(XR\)](#) group for ideas and enthusiasm and is taking small steps to steadily build awareness: a green issues noticeboard and monthly newsletter, liaising with the designated sustainability officer and an awareness day with free lunch. Karen noted that alongside specific green items on her agenda she looked at every item to see if it's relevant. For example, H&S reps

can be asked to look at environmental issues. Katrine urged for coordination between branch and group levels so that there is good strategic direction for reps on the ground.

Finally, the forum heard from two other unions about green bargaining claims. Ben Crawford (Institute of Employment Rights and UCU) talked about their 'Green New Deal' work with the University of Liverpool whose climate commitment seemed cosmetic. Instead, UCU demanded a more expansive approach - for example, looking at the content of subject teaching, deciding which firms could promote career opportunities to students, and linking precarious working to reduced quality of teaching and research in climate-related areas.

Sam Swann, chair of Equity's Green New Deal Network advocated concentrating on a network of enthusiastic members to spread the message, and regularly rotating chair and vice chair to build learning and maintain energy. The group is now stronger and more dynamic and is building influence by encouraging members to stand in other committees.

What you can do

Contact green@pcs.org.uk to get involved and learn more. A full report of the forum will be available shortly.

Sign up for some training: Green Reps & Climate Justice (Thursday 7 December 2023, 9:00 to 15:00). Go to [the courses page on the website](#) and search "green".