

24 September 2024

PCS Climate Change Week: launch event urges action

Guest speakers joined our online event calling for decarbonisation to be driven by and informed by unions.

Jackie Green, PCS vice president and chair of the environmental committee, welcomed reps and members from all over the UK to the online meeting yesterday lunchtime (23) to launch PCS Climate Change Week.

Decarbonisation and wealth redistribution

The first guest speaker was Daisy Pearson of Global Justice Now. She explained the need for fossil fuels to be phased out as rapidly as possible, altering national and international economic systems, and questioning the idea that the market knows best. Daisy spoke of the failure of the UN Conference of the Parties (COP) which, after nearly 30 years of global conferences on climate change, only last year proposed decreases to fossil fuel consumption.

Daisy stressed that fossil fuels need to be phased out fairly. The poorest countries are those most affected and they need to be given help to invest in transition, especially through debt cancellation.

She said that the core of the problem is fossil fuel backers, the elites and economic structures that perpetuate climate change and who profiteered in the cost-of-living crisis. There must be regulation, taxation, redistribution, and public spending and ownership. Trade unions are key to the Just Transition from fossil fuels, in building awareness and support, and putting pressure on governments.

The rights of nature

The second speaker was Declan Owens, trade union lawyer for Thompsons, founder of Eco Justice Ireland, and chair of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers. Declan urged that trade unions were vital in bringing forward issues and combining industrial will with political sensibilities. Eco Justice Ireland examines the impact on local communities of fossil fuel projects from an eco-socialist

perspective.

Declan advocated the 'rights of nature' which is akin to the rights enjoyed by corporations. Legislating this would redefine our relationship with the natural world to one of reciprocity and care, undermining global capitalism and preventing environmentally damaging projects.

National climate service

John Moloney, PCS assistant general secretary, also spoke and reinforced the need for a national climate service. The civil service has the expertise and enthusiasm to deliver net zero but cannot do so when responsibilities are split across multiple departments. The various elements of the climate change battle need to be in one service, centrally managed, working at devolved and local levels.

John recognised the fear amongst industrial unions that decarbonisation will lead to de-industrialisation. This underlines the need for fully developed Just Transition plans so that no worker is left behind. This was covered by [our motion to TUC Congress earlier this month](#).

John also suggested that, given the severity of the crisis, unions would eventually look to industrial action over climate issues.

A follow up meeting organised by the Campaign against Climate Change trade union group, [Building on a win at TUC - taking the climate struggle forward](#), takes place on Zoom at 7pm, Thursday 3 October. All are welcome.