



2015

BECOMING A GREENER UNION



Public and Commercial Services Union | pcs.org.uk

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Introduction



In the last year there has been a significant shift in the fight against climate change. Whilst powerful fossil fuel interests pour barrels of money into PR campaigns to defend business as usual, campaigners, community groups and trade unionists are increasingly working together to build a global movement against climate change and the capitalist system that underwrites it.

Following the 2007/08 financial crash energy company profits have soared whilst ever greater numbers face fuel poverty; global inequality has increased whilst global wealth is concentrated in ever fewer hands. Meanwhile jobs are cut as so called austerity measures threaten public services, welfare support, employment and trade union rights across the globe. And parallel to this, it is no coincidence that greenhouse gas emissions have also increased as deregulatory policies have opened the fossil fuel tills for the “richest industry in human history.”

In September 2014, I was proud to represent PCS at a series of events to coincide with the United Nations Climate Summit in New York. This included joining the trade union contingent on the People’s Climate march where an estimated 500,000 people formed the biggest climate protest in history.

PCS has long recognised that climate change is a trade union issue as its impacts will affect not just how we work but the type of work we do. Participation in initiatives such as Trade Unions for Energy Democracy has helped to build a

“The richest industry in human history wants to keep on their current path for a few more years, even if it means dragging the whole planet over a cliff.”

Bill McKibben author and environmental activist Guardian 9 March 2015

network of global unions that links the work we do in PCS on green issues to a global agenda.

This report illustrates the range of activities PCS has been involved in the past year as an employer, within PCS workplaces, and through our wider campaigning. It also updates on the re-launch of the one million climate jobs campaign in September 2014, central to PCS’s alternative to austerity. Finally it looks forward to the work we will be doing in the coming months as the world’s attention turns to the Paris climate talks in December, seen as a last chance to reach a global deal on greenhouse gas emissions.

There is little optimism for Paris but great optimism can be derived from the shift in the debate which is mobilising labour and campaign groups on an agenda of system change not climate change. As Bill McKibben quoted above says, it is what happens before and what happens after that is important.

Chris Baugh
Assistant General Secretary

Green workplaces

PCS as an organisation

The PCS/GMB Joint Environment Committee (JEC) meets on a regular basis to take forward work in this area. In addition to this, the Accommodation Services Manager and a GMB Green Officer meet every few months to review progress on the annual environmental action plan. GMB green reps also continue to monitor and raise environmental issues across the PCS estate.

Energy and water usage

Due to a milder than average winter in 2013/14 followed by average summer temperatures, the figures for both electricity and gas usage at PCS HQ have been reduced considerably when compared to the previous year.

Work has already begun to identify where additional savings can be made for 2015 despite that we are working with a plant room built 30 years ago. Due to ongoing daily/weekly energy monitoring and building management control adjustments we have managed to reduce energy consumption.

Water usage consumption rose slightly due to a fault with one of the water saving devices. However, through our weekly utility monitoring the fault was identified quickly by Facilities staff and rectified immediately.

Waste and recycling figures

Our waste and recycling figures continue to be reduced year on year and this has shown that since the recycling scheme commenced in January 2011 we have managed to reduce waste by 18.5%. We are confident that a further reduction of 2.5% can be achieved in 2015.

Green procurement

The JEC is currently reviewing the need to renew our membership with LRS environmental consultancy who works



with organisations on sustainable resource management.

Green staff travel plan

Progress on drafting a green staff travel plan has been slow due to other priorities, but the evidence gathered from the results of the travel survey carried out in 2013 suggested a cycle to work scheme would be welcome. The JEC met with Cycle Solutions, who provide cycle to work schemes for the Department of

Business, Innovation and Skills, Energy Saving Trust and London Fire Brigade, amongst others, and agreed to implement a scheme in spring 2015.

The scheme, which is fully HMRC compliant, is open to all PCS staff and it is hoped it will prove popular as staff can save between 25%–35% on the cost of a bike. PCS will also benefit from savings in Employer National Insurance contributions of 13%, so it is a win, win situation.

PCS workplaces

Consultation machinery on sustainability

We have noted previously assurances that the sustainability forum wasn't "dead but only sleeping". Two years on, we are still trying to reawaken this forum and other consultation machinery on sustainability issues through the Civil Service Forum. Unfortunately under the Tory led coalition government bargaining on sustainability or green issues has largely ground to a halt.

PCS along with Prospect and the TUC have been pursuing the implementation of the workplace environmental audit pilots (WEAs). Following an initially helpful meeting to progress the pilots with the Head of Sustainability at Defra (leading on Greening Government Commitments (GGCs) across the civil service), we were later informed in November there would be no further progress on joint working on the GGCs. To date only the audit at Defra York has been successfully completed. This was featured as a case study in the TUC "The Union Effect: greening the workplace."

The GGCs are targets set across the government operations and procurement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), domestic flights, waste, paper and water. The third and final report of the Government's progress against achieving the GGCs in this Parliament was issued in February. Whilst reporting commendable reductions, it is clear a number of targets by their own admission have been reached due to "estates rationalisation" such as relocation to smaller premises or sharing buildings rather than real efficiency measures.

This is a point we have highlighted to the Environmental Audit Committee and not least reinforces the need for workplace environmental reps and formal structures at departmental level. In January we coordinated the co-signing of a letter to Ed Miliband by a number of trade union

General Secretaries calling for a manifesto commitment for statutory rights for workplace environmental reps. This is supported by the TUC and PCS has been putting the case since as far back as 2007 when John McDonnell agreed to table a Parliamentary amendment to the Employment Act 2008.

There has also been little sign of The Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC) policy group – a joint government (Defra)/TUC body – meeting since its last gathering in July 2012. Owen Paterson wrote to this body in March proposing that the high level policy group meetings were replaced with three face-to-face meetings each year with a Defra Junior Minister. To date no meetings have taken place.

The Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) launched an inquiry "2010–2015 Progress Report" to which PCS submitted evidence on embedding sustainability structures in government operations and procurement. It makes for depressing reading as this period shows just how far the Tory led coalition has retreated from being the greenest government ever to one set about dismantling important structures aimed at embedding sustainable development across government. Alongside formal consultation structures with the civil service unions, this includes the abolition of the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) in 2011.

Green workplaces

Despite these setbacks green reps remain active in their workplaces on sustainability issues and the following give a few examples of the range of activities members have been undertaking.

Keeping it green in Loughborough

The Keep It Green Committee – HMCTS Crown House Loughborough is a staff side committee with union members and has existed since the Crown House centre

opened in 2000. It aims to promote a greener lifestyle both within the office and at home. Meeting on a regular basis the Committee looks at ways of increasing recycling and energy efficiency measures in the workplace. It also undertakes activities to protect the biodiversity of the estate as well as promoting activities through their regular Keep it Green newsletter. Recent activities included taking part in the RSPB Feed the Birds days on 25 and 26 October, raising funds locally to buy bird boxes for nesting.



The Greater Manchester Cycling Challenge

Michael Hepworth, Green rep for DWP Bolton and Bury Branch used the Grand Depart of the Tour de France from the North of England in 2014 to promote cycling. This included details about how to obtain a salary advance of up to £1,000 as an interest free loan to purchase a bicycle and safety equipment, as well as workplace facilities for cyclists.

Michael also advertised the Transport for Greater Manchester Better by Cycle Challenge aimed at encouraging workplaces across Greater Manchester to get involved in cycling.

Recycling and reusing

In DWP Bootle North Merseyside, a new recycling scheme has been implemented to comply with changes to waste

PCS workplaces

management regulations in England and Wales. This entails greater separation of waste to avoid going to landfill and posters have been put up to identify the waste management changes and what can be put into which bins.

At Sport England, London, following a recent office move green measures have been implemented which includes the removal of individual waste bins and further provision of recycling bins.

Finally PCS members at Defra York have set up a recycling facility for textiles, shoes etc with a collection point outside of the union office. Items are then sold on to raise funds to pay for awareness raising events such as Fairtrade fortnight. Food is also collected at the union office for onward donation to the York food bank.

Supporting green reps

E-News: There are currently 394 members signed up to receive the Green e-news. This includes notifications for events and updates on news related to green issues. These are sent on a regular basis as well as targeted information to green reps for events or activities in their region. To sign-up for the green e-news please write to Green@pcs.org.uk.

Green Courses: Last year we had hoped to complete the online green course for members and reps, and were certainly ambitious in aiming to showcase this at Annual Delegate Conference 2014. Unfortunately a number of setbacks meant we've been unable to complete this work – not least the priority of the DD campaign – and are now taking forward as part of the wider Trade Union Education Review agreed at ADC 2014.

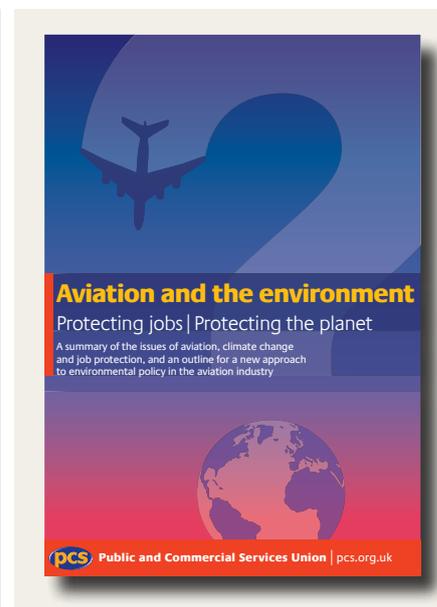
Website: A similar situation has arisen with regard to the website although we have tried to keep the latest news section up-to-date. We are also looking at creating a separate green Twitter

account and information on this will be advertised to the green e-news network once confirmed.

Events: Funded places were offered to reps for two events in the past year. The first was the TUC Greening the workplace – building the “union effect” on 11 July. Six green reps attended and we were pleased that Sarah Broad (formerly HMRC green rep) represented PCS on a panel discussion on building green reps networks. PCS also supported reps to attend the launch of the updated One Million Climate Jobs pamphlet at the International Fight for Climate Jobs conference in London on 20th September.

Members also walked behind the new PCS green banner (see below) at the Time to Act climate demonstration which saw 20,000 people take to the streets of London on 7th March 2015.

Materials: Last August the NEC Climate Change and Environment Committee (CCEC) discussed a paper on updating resources for green reps. A list of written materials were identified which either needed to be updated or produced.



These include the “Going green in the workplace” pamphlet which is now out-of-date, a leaflet on fracking, and a leaflet on the one million climate jobs campaign. In November 2014, a summary pamphlet to support the Aviation Review was produced ready for the Green Reps Forum. This provides an outline for a new approach to environmental policy in the aviation industry.



Campaigning on green issues

Shale gas extraction – fracking

Motion A30 passed at ADC 2014 called on the NEC to work with the TUC on taking forward policy on the precautionary principle, engage in anti-fracking campaigns, and to commission academic research on the economic case for climate jobs versus fracking jobs focussed on the North West.

PCS has been involved in a number of events and activities in the past year, forging close links with a range of anti-fracking groups including Friends of the Earth and Talk Fracking. In June PCS attended a special seminar on shale gas fracking organised through TUSDAC. The event was intended to present the evidence on the science, regulation, and health and safety of fracking to a range of union participants.

The issue is still the subject of debate in most unions with only PCS and Unite having a position of outright opposition to fracking. PCS however believes more needs to be done to further the debate within unions on fracking and to look at overall energy policy within the TUC. A step towards this was agreement of our TUC Congress amendment to an FBU motion on flooding. This calls on the TUC to consult TUC affiliates on a just transition to a low carbon economy, including a moratorium on fracking.

In January we were pleased to publically support a new report by Friends of the Earth “Making a better job of it”. This sets out to debunk industry claims about the number of jobs that will be created from fracking. Welcoming the report, PCS AGS Chris Baugh said:

“As this report shows, the arguments do not stack up in the face of the evidence and PCS is clear that investment in climate jobs – helping to reduce carbon emissions – is vital if we are to seriously address

interrelated economic, energy and environmental concerns.”

As the government has tried to accelerate the shale gas industry in the UK, we have participated in a number of consultations including in relation to fracking clauses within the Infrastructure Bill. As part of the Bin the Bill coalition we have participated in lobbies and actively put the case against fracking. In the important last reading of the Bill in the House of Commons on 26th January, the Environmental Audit Committee released a report calling for a moratorium on fracking. A motion tabled on the moratorium was lost as Labour shamefully



abstained from voting in return for the Coalition government accepting their amendments on strengthening the regulations – amendments which as we anticipated were subsequently watered down in the Lords. The bill passed into law on 12th February becoming the Infrastructure Act 2015.

This is a setback but with Scotland and Wales announcing moratoriums there is increased pressure on the rest of the UK

to follow suit. There is also heart to be taken from the decision of Lancashire County Council (LCC) planning officers to recommend the rejection of two planning applications from Caudrilla to frack at Roseacre and Little Plumpton. Whilst the final decision is still pending at time of writing, this illustrates the level of opposition to fracking and a sustained campaign opposing fracking in Lancashire continues.

Fuel poverty and energy efficiency

The crisis of affordable energy and poor energy efficient housing stock has become a headline issue in the past year. Low incomes are often a cause of fuel poverty and for the first time, it is also recorded as being a factor in the increased numbers using food banks. Energy bills have risen threefold since 2010 but as wholesale gas prices have fallen, little of this reduction has been passed on to consumers.

Cold homes are a major cause of preventable deaths among older people during the winter months through increased risk of flu, chest infections and other respiratory or circulatory/ cardiovascular diseases. Winter fuel payments to the elderly have been cut despite only costing the Treasury £2.15 billion in 2011–12. The cost to the NHS of cold homes in England is estimated to be £1.36 billion annually.

Under the 2010–2015 Coalition government, spending on energy efficiency markedly decreased and particularly for the most vulnerable. What policies there have been on energy efficiency have been deemed an “unmitigated disaster”. For example, the Green Deal initiative saw no investment targeted to those on low income or the most energy inefficient homes. By the end of 2013, it was expected that at least 10,000 Green Deal funded retrofits

Campaigning on green issues

would have been undertaken; only 626 were completed.

PCS has supported Fuel Poverty Action and Chris Baugh spoke at the launch of their Energy Bill of Rights in the House of Commons in November on the link between fuel poverty and pay. The Bill of Rights includes the right to affordable energy and not to be disconnected from gas and electricity, particularly where linked to a pre-paid meter. It also asserts the right to clean, affordable publicly owned energy and a safe climate. A copy of the full bill can be accessed from the Fuel Poverty Action website at: www.fuelpovertyaction.org.uk/energy-bill-of-rights-2/

A properly targeted energy efficiency scheme would save money, increase health and wellbeing of the elderly, and reduce carbon emissions from energy use. And will also create jobs – see Section 3 on the one million climate jobs campaign.

International Issues / Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

As reported last year, we have been increasingly trying to link up green issues with our international work. We have been an active participant in the Trade Unions for Energy Democracy initiative and through their invitation Chris Baugh attended a series of meetings and events in relation to the Climate Summit in New York in September 2014. Meetings are conducted via Skype conference call and discussions have ranged from calls for a global fracking ban to preparations for the COP21 climate talks in Paris.

In 2014 we formally joined the NO TTIP coalition which is made up of other trade unions and international organisations to which we affiliate or work closely with such as the Trade Justice Movement, War on Want, Friends of the Earth and Global

Justice Now (formerly World Development Movement).

Collectively the coalition seeks to share information on developments in the TTIP negotiations – a secret trade deal between the EU and US – and input to actions and events raising awareness of the deal and its inherent dangers to both citizens and workers. Notably a deal that is less about removing trade barriers and more about deregulation across a wide range of economic sectors including the public sector (NHS and education), and environmental standards, in favour of corporate interests.

Another concern in such deals is the inclusion of an Investor to State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism. This enables companies to sue governments in secret courts over policies that they deem restrict their rights – or in reality their profits. For example if this and other similar trade deals were agreed, any government seeking to re-nationalise the NHS could be sued in a secret court for the loss of profits.

In 2011 Quebec Province in Canada declared a moratorium on unconventional shale gas extraction (USGE) following public health and environmental concerns being raised. Lone Pine Resources, an oil and gas company which had obtained licenses to extract oil and gas in the Province, sought to sue the Canadian Government for CDNS250 million under the terms of the North Africa Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In particular the company claimed that the Government of Quebec has violated their obligations under articles in NAFTA which gave them the right to mine for oil and gas.

Such clauses – also being introduced in the TTIP deal – serve to undermine the rights of national governments and their citizens to adopt environmental or other policies in the protection of the public

Another concern in such deals is the inclusion of an Investor to State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism. This enables companies to sue governments in secret courts over policies that they deem restrict their rights – or in reality their profits.

interest. Ultimately this puts the rights of corporations over the rights of the public.

The TUC Congress in September 2014 passed a unanimous motion calling for outright opposition to TTIP. However some still believe that TTIP may be acceptable if ISDS clauses are removed, regulatory limits are put in place to safeguard workers, consumer and the environment, and if there is genuine and open transparent consultation with trade unions and other civil society organizations.

PCS does not agree. Such trade deals are incompatible with climate change objectives as they would foster increased movement and production of goods and services based on a fossil fuel economy.

One million climate jobs

The formal launch of the updated “One Million Climate Jobs” pamphlet took place in September 2014. This was timed to coincide with the Peoples Climate March in New York and demonstration in London. This fully revised version includes a new chapter on agriculture and waste and a case study on climate jobs versus fracking jobs in Salford and the Fylde.

Forming part of PCS’s alternative to austerity, the one million climate jobs campaign is a response to both an economic and environmental crisis. It sets out a proposal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) leading to global warming and climate change based on:

- Investment in clean renewable energy

- Making our homes and buildings more energy efficient
- Increasing availability of public transport
- Training people in green skills

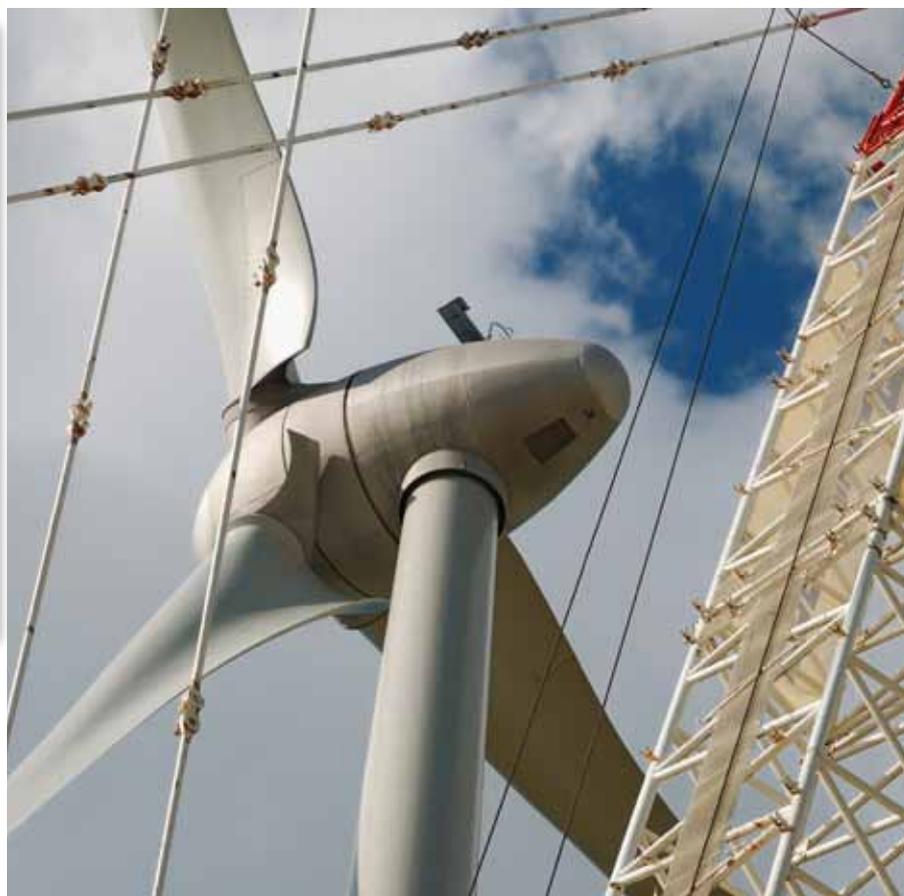
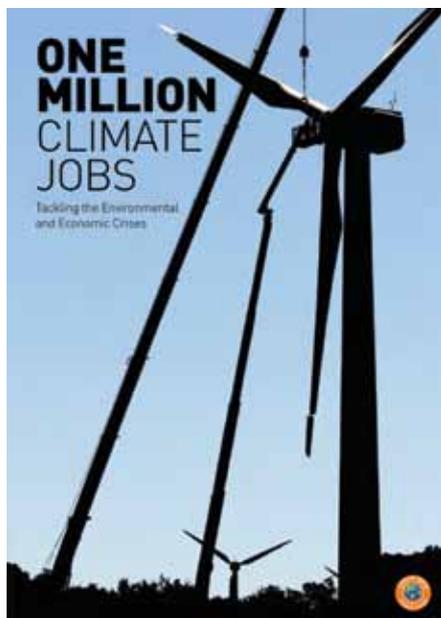
Climate jobs are not green jobs. Climate jobs are new jobs which reduce greenhouse gas emissions; green jobs can do this too but may also include jobs in environmental services such as park keepers or road sweepers.

The creation of climate jobs will be overseen by a national climate service, similar to the establishment of the National Health Service after the Second World War. This universal service to tackle climate change will put people to work by:

- Building wind turbines to replace power stations that burn coal or oil
- Developing the railways and buses reducing dependency on cars burning oil and gas
- Retrofitting and insulating homes and public buildings

There are now one million climate jobs campaigns in the UK, Norway and South Africa. Whilst unions in New York having heard about the campaign during the People’s Climate march are also looking at developing something similar for New York state.

For more information or copy of the One Million Climate Jobs pamphlet contact green@pcs.org.uk or www.climate-change-jobs.org



PCS Green Forum 2014

No to Austerity – Yes to One Million Climate Jobs Why climate change is a trade union issue

The fourth national PCS Green Forum chaired by Sue Bond, NEC VP, took place in Manchester from 22 to 23 November 2014, and attended by over 40 delegates and participants. The forum was themed around the one million climate jobs campaign and practically focussed on looking at how to relate the issues raised in the pamphlet back to the workplace.

Opening with a panel discussion, the forum heard from Ewa Jasiewicz for Reclaim the Power/No Dash for Gas on the threat of extreme energy and climate change. Jonathan Neale, from the Campaign Against Climate Change editor of the “One Million Climate Jobs” pamphlet provided an overview of the campaign. Poignantly he pointed out that “if Mother Earth was a bank they would have already saved her!” Christine Haigh from Global Justice Now, a guest at the forum elaborated on the role of the finance sector in bankrolling the fossil fuel industry.

The forum elected the following green reps to the Green Forum Advisory Group:

Austin Harney – MoJ
David Goodwin – HMRC
Jawid Iqbal – DfT
Sue Lloyd – DWP
Jamie Vincent – CMSOA

This group will assist the NEC Climate Change and Environment Committee (formerly Greening the Workplace Task Group) in taking forward the union’s green agenda.

Key conclusions and recommendations from the forum

- 1) To provide more information on green/renewable energy, buildings and energy efficiency, setting out the advantages and where can save money.
- 2) Work with and promote campaigns on trade justice, food sovereignty, climate coalitions, anti-fracking groups, renewables such as the FoE Run on the Sun campaign.
- 3) Need to raise green issues in the workplace (in a positive way) tying it in with the one million climate jobs campaign; identify where there may be green jobs in the civil service.
- 4) Organise outreach events, desk-topping and feedback, to get “buy-in” and to use green issues to raise awareness of the importance of green issues in industrial relations and recruitment of members.
- 5) Build awareness through education on climate change and using example of 2013/14 winter floods to highlight climate change.
- 6) Provide information that is accessible, including technical briefings, to green reps and to share knowledge across departments, including monitoring of green policies already in place and to identify where training may be required.
- 7) Use session in forum to share what is happening across different parts of the union.
- 8) Develop more advice/help for new green reps such as list of responsibilities and checklists including booklet of guidelines for reps.
- 9) PCS need to provide information service for green reps including through the website, social media and HQ contact.
- 10) Need to link economic issues, including “growth”, to climate change debate.
- 11) Union should have an integrated transport group.
- 12) Keep in contact with regions and create local activist green groups.
- 13) Submit motions to conference such as green officers on regional committees.
- 14) Election pledges for prospective parliamentary candidates.

The year ahead

The coming year will be critical for the future of energy policy and action on climate change. A new government will be elected in the UK and world leaders will meet in Paris in December 2015 to agree a deal on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. More importantly, the call to keep fossil fuels in the ground, a just transition to a clean energy economy, and system change not climate change will frame the policy debate and actions.

In 2014 we received a record number of motions on green issues and anticipate similar at ADC 2015 which reflect the priority members give to this issue and the evolving debate. In the context of this and conference policy, PCS will focus work on the following areas:

Bargaining and consultation machinery

A priority for the union will be agreeing central and delegated bargaining and consultation mechanisms to raise sustainability issues. This includes replicated structures in the Commercial Sector. We will also look at how we can revive the pilot workplace environmental audits exercise and to embed the audits as established practice across the government estate, and through third party or outsourced services.

Alongside this we will be putting the case for a body similar to the disbanded Sustainability Development Commission to be established with responsibility for embedding sustainability across all government operations and procurement processes.

Finally we will continue to argue for statutory rights for workplace environmental reps and to ensure that wider trade unions campaigns and bargaining are linked to our green agenda, for example around tax justice or office rationalisation programmes often promoted as green measures. This also



includes the protection of jobs in those civil service departments and bodies which oversee environmental regulation or sustainability policy.

supporting green reps

Following the outcomes of the TUED Review we will be seeking to finalise both an online and face-to-face training course for green reps. We are also looking to re-launch the Green website pages as a more accessible resource for information and materials. This will be accompanied by provision of a range of leaflets and other promotional materials that can be used in the workplace to engage members on green issues.

The annual Green Forum will also provide an opportunity for reps to participate in

PCS will put the case for renewable energy and work through the TUC with other unions to elaborate a more detailed plan for a just transition – one that protects workers and protects the planet.

workshops on green issues and share information/experiences with others.

Climate change and equality

As climate change is a global issue it is also one which links closely with issues of

equality. We will therefore be looking to build our knowledge and tie in with PCS's equality work. For example, it is well documented that climate change impacts differently across the globe with those creating the least emissions being more adversely impacted than the worst polluters. However, even in polluting countries such as the US, vulnerable low income or minority groups are often more heavily impacted by extreme weather events as a result of climate change. This is because they tend to live in the poorest housing and often lack the means to mitigate climate related events such as flooding for example through access to transport to evacuate affected areas.

Campaigns

Campaigning against extreme energy and fracking will remain a priority campaign until we are able to achieve not just a moratorium but a global ban on fracking. Alongside this we will be putting the case for renewable energy and pursuing the dialogue through the TUC for a movement wide consultation on a just transition to a low carbon economy.

Central to this will also be the one million climate jobs campaign. One drive for the campaign is to increase the numbers involved in the campaign particularly within the trade union movement. Therefore PCS members should be raising the campaign in their workplaces, trades councils, or anti-cuts/other groups they are involved in.

Finally as the Airports Commission looks to announce on additional runway capacity, PCS will continue to engage with groups such as HACAN (Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise) to oppose airport expansion. Alongside this, we will also work with campaigns such as Action for

Rail to put the case for a publically owned integrated transport system.

Details of campaign activities linked to the PCS green agenda will be circulated to reps via green e-news updates, branch briefings, published on the website or where possible through social media.

International links

PCS will continue to participate in the Trade Unions for Energy Democracy initiative, looking to widen support for the call for an energy system based on energy democracy and social justice. In a globalised world and economic system we need to work more internationally within our green agenda to ensure that the policies and campaigns we support are based on social, environmental, economic and political justice.

For example as the scramble to secure new, alternative, energy sources grow, we need to ensure that this does not replicate the old fossil fuel energy privatised model driven by profit motive.

Energy policy and consultations

PCS will continue to pro-actively provide submissions to government consultations on energy policy or sustainability issues. We will continue to participate in actions to oppose TTIP and other trade agreements that seek to weaken environmental regulation. Linked to this we will be closely watching the developments of an EU energy union that is looking to advance shale gas fracking as a central plank of EU energy policy.

As part of the one million climate jobs campaign and more broadly, PCS will put the case for renewable energy and work through the TUC with other unions to elaborate a more detailed plan for a just transition – one that protects workers and protects the planet.

It needs to be clear that actions and policy measures to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions will not be enough if it does not also address the systemic inequality of the global capitalist system.

Paris 2015

At time of writing we await the outcome of the 2015 UK general election and the details of the next global agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. There is little optimism that either will result in the kind of change the world desperately needs if we are to avoid climate catastrophe.

A change that many see is not only linked to global agreements or local energy policies but to wider system change. Since the world financial system collapsed in 2007/2008 an elite group of leaders have been meeting behind closed doors to redefine the capitalist system to ensure a greater redistribution of wealth upwards. Austerity has been the name of the game whilst the Bix Six energy company profits have increased tenfold.

As world leaders meet in Paris in December 2015, it needs to be clear that actions and policy measures to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions will not be enough if it does not also address the systemic inequality of the global capitalist system. As groups mobilise in ever greater numbers to fight climate change, in the words of the author and activist Naomi Klein, climate change also “enflames our vision of a better world with existential urgency.”



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