

# Briefing

## Responding to the climate emergency



### An update on Prospect's work programme

A series of motions to the 2020 national conference relating to the climate emergency set out a comprehensive platform to build on the union's existing work programme – see <https://library.prospect.org.uk/download/2019/01176>

This is an important and multi-faceted agenda for Prospect, as outlined below:

#### Supporting workplace activity

##### *Environmental training*

Three training courses for environment reps have been delivered in the last 18 months, training nearly 40 reps. Of necessity, the training has now been adapted for online delivery. The first online course on 'Bargaining for a sustainable workplace' was held in September. A further course will follow in November and others in the New Year. These courses will equip attendees to become environmental representatives. They address major issues including climate change, plastic waste, urban air pollution, and biodiversity. They also explore the real challenge of changing behaviours and attitudes, turning trade union advocacy to the environmental agenda.

A short 'taster' session on why climate change is a trade union issue has been developed to introduce branches to campaigning on climate change in the workplace and building union influence. This one-hour session is suitable for online or in-person delivery, to audiences that may include reps, members, and potential members.

### ***Guidance for reps***

We want to provide guidance for reps, sharing environmental policies and good practice, to help support practical workplace action. To enable us to do so, we would welcome information from Branches. Please get in touch with Jenny Andrew [jenny.andrew@prospect.org.uk](mailto:jenny.andrew@prospect.org.uk) if you are able to assist.

### ***Legal rights for environment reps***

Prospect has previously worked with the TUC to lobby for statutory rights for environmental representatives. Although these initiatives were not successful, heightened awareness of the climate emergency and focus on achieving net zero create new opportunities to do so. Lobbying content is being developed in consultation with participants on our environmental training programme, but other contributions are welcome too. Please email Jenny Andrew if you would like to input to this work.

## **Just Transition**

The TUC's Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee, led by Prospect, produced a report in August 2020 'Voice and Place: How to plan fair and successful paths to net zero emissions' setting out how to achieve a just transition across the regions and nations of the UK – see <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/voice-and-place-how-plan-fair-and-successful-paths-net-zero-emissions> Prospect has published a discussion paper on 'A just transition plan for the UK power sector' – <https://library.prospect.org.uk/download/2020/01052> and work is in progress on a project with Community union to identify lessons from the transitions from coal and steel. This project is due for completion by the end of the year.

## **Policy work**

### ***Ecology***

Conference motions called for a focus on the ecological emergency alongside other impacts of climate change. In response, work is in progress with relevant branches to develop resources on the importance of nature/ecology to climate and for adequate public funding to support public sector expertise in this area. If your branch would like to contribute to this work but is not yet involved, please contact Sue Ferns [sue.ferns@prospect.org.uk](mailto:sue.ferns@prospect.org.uk)

### ***Energy sector***

There is an ongoing and increasingly urgent debate about the composition of an energy system to deliver net zero and a green recovery. This is evident in current regulatory consultations and is expected to be the centre point of an overdue Energy White Paper. In August we launched 'A green recovery plan for the UK energy sector' - <https://prospect.org.uk/get-involved/green-recovery-plan-for-the-uk-energy-sector/> in order to influence this debate.

## **Communications**

Prospect's website features a hub to promote content around Prospect's response to the climate emergency, to highlight the work of our members and to encourage support for climate, energy and ecological policies - <https://prospect.org.uk/get-involved/green-recovery-plan-for-the-uk-energy-sector/>.

### **Prospect's environmental footprint**

During lockdown our use of support merchandise and publications for branches has reduced. We are no longer procuring single-use plastic items for use by branches and are either reducing our print or increasing its recyclable content in line with our digital-first and environmental objectives.

Conference motions called for an audit of Prospect's carbon footprint with a view to significantly reducing it. The National Executive Committee has convened a working group, including representatives from each of the union's major sectors, tasked to develop an agreed methodology for a baseline audit of the union's carbon footprint. The working group's objective is to agree an approach by the end of the year in order to commence an audit in early 2021. The results of the audit will inform decisions on next steps.

## **Energy Switch**

National conference motions also called for a review of Prospect's energy club, with a view to it promoting either entirely low carbon or entirely renewable tariffs. Investigations revealed that, due to regulatory constraints, provision of a tailored service would require considerable financial investment and technical support. As a very small proportion of members indicating an interest in the energy club actually switch their provider, the NEC decided to close the energy switch scheme.

## **Upcoming events – Union Week**

We are holding several webinars on climate-related themes, including:

Tuesday 3 November, 1-2pm: *How do we hit net zero carbon? Tackling the challenge of connecting more renewables to the electricity grid.*

Wednesday 4 November, 1-2pm: *How do we hit net zero carbon? Are government targets for offshore wind achievable?*

Look out for further information on how to register for these events.