

Bargaining for a 'Just Transition'

Adapting to and mitigating against climatic changes will in the long term, but clearly visible now from the global commitments, usher in fundamental changes to the way we conduct our everyday lives, the sectors we work in and the way we work.

The Just Transition concept for trade union members is not new – it represents our core values of defending workers in a changing world. It encapsulates ensuring quality employment, safe workplaces, informing and educating members and bargaining for the retraining and up-skilling of workers to meet the demands of a changing world.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT ME?

At an industry and work level, apart from the obvious impact from the economic upheaval and political change in the last five years, we are witnessing change in many sectors. The Carbon Disclosure Project report concludes that 80% of FTSE 100 companies identify substantive risks to their business as a result of climate change – with the utilities sector identifying the highest proportion of high significant risks. In broad sector terms this includes:

- 1. Electricity production and supply:** The energy sector is both a major contributor to climate change through carbon emissions and a sector that climate change will disrupt on multiple levels according to the World Energy Council. On one hand energy demand is increasing globally due to economic growth and the rising population. On the other hand the industry is faced with decarbonisation targets, impact of energy efficiency targets, new technologies and lack of investment. Energy transmission infrastructure is at risk from predicted severe weather patterns whilst adapting to intermittency of supply from new forms of electricity production.
- 2. Communication & digital:** Digitalisation brings many opportunities for innovating processes and practices both at work and at home. However there is increasing demand for information technology, automation, infrastructure and skilled technical and design professionals.
- 3. Aviation:** Produces around 2% of the world's manmade emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂). The [Aviation and Climate Change](#) body outlines that the industry is changing by:
 - a. addressing technology innovation through fuel efficiency, finding new sustainable fuel sources and aircraft design reform;
 - b. Making operational improvements through lighter and more efficient fleet and using new air traffic control techniques;
 - c. infrastructure efficiencies such as shortening flying times and reformed air traffic management systems; and
 - d. Applying smart economic measures including working with Governments to design a global market-based measure that accounts for emissions only once and ensures that passengers do not face multiple layers of taxation.

WORKPLACE BARGAINING

As we see changes at work being implemented – ranging from entire sector remodelling (for example closure of fossil fuel energy production) to waste reduction, the Just Transition principles should be applied – these include:

1. Proper consultation taking place through the elected trade union structures,
2. Where jobs or work processes are changing, with a direct line of sight to a climate change target (for example reducing greenhouse gases, waste reduction targets, environmental performance), staff are consulted, educated and included in the decision making processes, and
3. Where entire sectors are remodelling, thorough consultation with employees on sector changes, reskilling for changes and career pathways from the old to the new.

Prospect policy and work on skills, apprenticeships, nuclear new build, health & safety, homeworking and ethical investments already address and give guidance to many of the challenges linked to a changing environment.

WORKPLACE CHANGES OF WORK PROCESSES AND BEHAVIOURS

Some of the examples of current and expected experiences listed below reflect the workplace changes of work processes and behaviours as a result of new low carbon technologies and carbon reduction initiatives. The bargaining position is always framed by how change of any sort affect and/or impact the workforce.

Energy efficiency initiatives:

Energy audits and mandatory reporting of environmental performance and energy consumptions has resulted in changing work patterns. This includes large scale changes and including:

- Lighting (switch-of, low level, timed) with impact on access to buildings, risk areas on large sites and shift patterns.
- Heating & cooling of buildings (timed day/night & seasonal).
- Electronic equipment (default settings, energy ratings, charging of batteries, new low carbon machinery like new model photo-copiers).
- Dependency on ICT (ie, no paper, smart metering etc).
- Personal carbon budgets. These are established from a base line and set for an individual normally for a twelve month period. The impact of this is seen on decisions on travel, printing, etc.

Negotiating considerations for energy efficiency:

In each of these there are direct implications on employees work behaviour and productivity. In all instances consultation with staff is paramount, briefings and information important. Where there is new equipment – re-training is vital.

On personal carbon budgets – the budget set should not impede the persons output and be flexible enough to absorb unusual events. Penalties for being over budget should be avoided.

Home working:

According to [The Carbon Trust](#), increasing numbers of UK employees working from home can cut costs by £3 billion a year for UK employers and employees and save over 3 million tonnes of carbon a year.

Homeworking reduces employee commuting, resulting in carbon, money and time savings. If office space is properly rationalised to reflect this, homeworking can also significantly reduce office energy consumption and rental costs.

Workplaces that can realise the greatest immediate environmental benefits from a shift to homeworking tend to be those with long average employee commutes, especially by car, and where employers are contemplating a move to new premises.

Negotiating considerations for homeworking:

- **Consultation and perhaps mapping of feasibility of individuals but important that this option is voluntary for staff.**
- **A risk assessment of home and work pattern is critical.**
- **Equipment, insurances and costs. Employees need to be supported in being able to set up for effective home working that does not incur costs to them.**
- **Isolation can be a problem whilst working from home. The organisation will need to develop protocols for monitoring people and assuring employees are socialised.**
- **Clear policy with protections for the individual on data protection and secure technology needs to be negotiated. Mapping of liability and risk associated with data security would need to be done.**

Flexible working patterns:

Communications technologies are enabling many employees to take a more flexible approach to working. There is every indication that this trend is set to continue as broadband and mobile Internet get faster and more accessible and more data and systems are hosted in the cloud.

It has a particularly strong impact where employees commute by car and where there is the potential to rationalise office space. However, it should be noted that in some circumstances, particularly where offices are energy and space efficient and where staff generally commute by public transport (for example in central London) home-working could actually lead to an overall increase in carbon emissions. It is therefore vital to examine the specific situation of a business and its employees in order to properly understand the potential impacts.

Negotiating considerations for flexible working patterns:

- **These are similar to home working where consultation and feasibility mapping with employees is first step.**
- **Office space may be down-sized or rationalised due to the organisation reducing its carbon footprint and energy consumption.**

Travel:

Road transport is one of the biggest sources of pollution in the UK, contributing to poor air quality, noise disturbance, congestion and climate change. Air pollutants from transport include nitrogen oxides, particles, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons. All have a damaging impact on the health of people, animals and vegetation locally.

Whilst travel by car is often the only practicable option, organisations have to consider travel as part of their energy audits, climate change reporting and carbon footprint.

Negotiating considerations for travel: Travel Plans and policy: Make sure any proposals affecting transport have clear benefits for employees whilst reflecting carbon reduction commitments. A strategic travel and transport policy could include:

- **Commuting by public transport**
 - **Consultation with staff and feasibility studies would be an initial step.**
 - **In the case of buses, access to routes provided by local authorities could be a barrier to staff commuting by public transport.**
 - **Advocating for dedicated bus services or re-routing may be an option if numbers can support this.**
 - **Cycling schemes**
 - **Promotion of cycling schemes, access to information on help to buy schemes and personal cycling safety are important.**
 - **Negotiating for cycle sheds, shower facilities and mileage rates if cycling for work activity are first steps.**
 - **On site commuting**
 - **A number of large sites, in an attempt to reduce their carbon foot print, are restricting car parking for employees and introducing work buses.**
 - **Consultation of staff is paramount and should take into consideration frequency of stops, accessibility to all parts of the site and effect on shift workers or shut-down periods.**
 - **Car share schemes**
 - **Does the organisation facilitate this via staff networks?**
 - **For “pool” cars in particular, are staff aware and properly trained on existing systems**
 - **Green Fleets**
 - **It would be important ensuring that drivers are given guidance on how to reduce environmental impact through driving behaviours.**
 - **If there has been a switch to electric cars:**
 - **Does the electric car serve the distances expected to travel?**
 - **Are there sufficient charging points on site?**
 - **Air travel**
 - **Clear protocols on air travel should be available to all staff. This can be based on distance parameters but should also take into consideration time taken to travel.**
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