**UNISON Current Policy Positions on Climate Change** – Updated June 2023

(as set by past and present motions carried at UNISON’s annual National Delegate Conferences’ – our national policy setting conference)

UNISON is aware that the climate emergency is real, urgent and that dramatic changes are required by UK and global governments to address these issues. While conference understands that there are no jobs on a dead planet, a just transition to a greener economy is the only way forward for workers.

UNISON has members across all public services and that all are affected directly or indirectly by climate change - whether it’s in the health service managing the increased health impacts of excess heat or pollution, or the environment agency where our members role is to respond to the floods and droughts and other direct environmental impacts that erupt up and down the nations on an increasing frequent basis – they are absolutely at the frontline of what this means in the UK – and all sectors are working with massively reduced and inadequate funding.

UNISON understands that climate change affects the most disadvantaged people and communities the most and that those that are most harmed are also those with the least voice and the least power to change the situation. That is true globally but also within the UK. Women still take on a disproportionate burden of care giving –feeding, housing, and warming their families - all of which is becoming unaffordable directly linked to the global impacts of the climate crisis and, currently, people in poorer urban areas are disproportionately made chronically unwell from climate change related harms such as air pollution,

Public Services directly emit around 8% of the UK’s greenhouse gases and that is without including public transport. When you add in their influence on procurement, construction, social housing etc the impact is even bigger.

UNISON is absolutely clear that Climate change policy in public services is inextricably linked to policies on public health, the cost-of-living crisis, education and skills and almost all other areas of public policy.

While individual action has a role to play in tackling climate change, collective action and social change are essential if man-made climate change is to be tackled effectively and public services will be crucial to doing so.

UNISON believes that the UK government can only meet its Just Transition commitments, as part of its UK Climate and Net Zero commitments, by implementing a social dialogue and partnership “between governments and the representative organisations of workers and employers”.

UNISON believes that whilst promoting individual action to combat climate change is important, collective action and social change are essential if man made climate change is to be tackled effectively and public services will be crucial to doing so.

UNISON supports the UK and global trade union movements participation in the United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties. Including supporting taking an active role as part of the International Trade Union Congress (ITUC) UK's observer delegation to the conferences and playing an active role in the COP Coalitions’ trade union initiatives.

UNISON supports our Energy Service Group Executive in developing and promoting decarbonisation of the energy system in a way that ensures it is affordable for all, and in ensuring a Just Transition for energy members.

UNISON supports the need for affordable and public ownership of energy and water and the need to engage with employers, service users and elected representatives in developing inclusive Just Transition boards for all public service sectors.

UNISON opposes new coal mines, the issuing of new licenses for oil and gas exploration in UK waters and also opposes the financing of gas and oil exploration abroad.

UNISON actively supports pension divestment from fossil fuels and has updated guidance on negotiating on this for Local Government pension funds. [Local Government Pension Funds – Divest from carbon campaign – a UNISON guide.](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2018/01/Divest-from-carbon-campaign.pdf)

UNISON opposes new Nuclear and has serious concerns about the cost, speed of delivery and the unresolved risks of all currently proposed nuclear options.

UNISON believes that while carbon capture is an important strand of necessary innovation, investment in energy capture and storage is essential to avoid unnecessary reliance on fossil fuels or new nuclear facilities.

UNISON supports the global trade union movement’s four clear demands:

1. Raise climate ambitions with Just Transition policies;
2. Complement inclusive climate policies that respect and promote human and labour rights;
3. Provide climate finance for the Global South;
4. Implement funded plans that would achieve the transition to net zero economies.

UNISON agrees that, in this context, it is essential that all countries revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets in their Nationally Determined Contributions as necessary to align with the Paris Agreement temperature goal by the end of 2022.

UNISON supports the UK's Just Transition commitments and those embodied in the Glasgow Climate Pact, agreed by the UK government at COP 26 which “recognises the need to ensure just transitions that promote sustainable development and eradication of poverty and the creation of decent work and quality jobs”.

UNISON’s position is that public and not private investment is the solution. Relying on private investment has already meant delay and will only increase extra taxes and financial burden for those least able to pay. The government must invest now to help public services over the green line to net zero. Otherwise, the cost of transitioning will be anything but just.

UNISON’s has published its own ground breaking report [Getting to Net Zero in Public Services: The Road to Decarbonisation](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2021/11/26609.pdf). Based on the evidence and research, the report concluded that without significant and immediate government funding, public services still reeling from a decade of austerity, will struggle to decarbonise.

The UNISON report sets out that getting public services to net-zero needs £140billion government funding by 2035. In the absence of a significant capital injection of funds, public services would only be able to move slowly towards its decarbonisation targets, taking resources from already stretched budgets, with disastrous consequences.

In advancing UNISON policy, UNISON endeavours to:

* continue play a key role in the international and national policy debates about the best and fairest way of achieving decarbonisation; the civil society movements that will keep leaders and governments on track and the social dialogue and workplace negotiations needed to deliver just transition across all workplaces.
* continue to work closely with the ITUC, TUC, Scottish TUC, Welsh TUC, Irish Congress of Trade Unions on the roll out of the Glasgow Climate Pact (GCP) and the COP26 Coalition;
* Continue to work with the TUC TUSDAC (Trade Union Sustainable Development Action Committee) in developing and campaigning for public service sector climate plans and funding for the climate transition;
* Continue to work with service users, community, NGO and green alliances on public sector workplace climate policies as they are developed and announced, calling for greater public investment to secure a Just Transition;
* Support the development of a green bargaining and negotiating agenda by producing guidance and training on the role of the Environmental (green) officer in UNISON and nationally campaign for facility time for green branch reps;
* Support and update guidance for branches and green reps with case studies of good practice initiatives, funding opportunities and examples of successfully negotiated decarbonisation and Just Transition plans;
* Maintain the national UNISON Green network database to ensure regular updates and contact on national green news and initiatives;
* Support each region to co-ordinate regional branch Environmental Officer network meetings and activities;
* Work with Young Members, Retired members and Self Organised Groups on this agenda;