

# Briefing

December 2021

## Responding to the climate emergency



Prospect has always been led by evidence, and the evidence shows that the world is facing a climate emergency that requires significant and urgent action. This is an important issue for us. Not only because we are the leading trade union for the science, engineering and the environmental workforce, but because of the work our members do and because the science demands more ambition to deliver on the UK's carbon obligations. We are proud that our members include climate scientists and environmental professionals and workers in the energy and transport sectors. We believe this gives our union a unique insight into the challenges we face and how we can overcome them.

This briefing provides an update on Prospect's climate work over the past year or so. You can find further information at <https://prospect.org.uk/climate-emergency/>

### Green Jobs Task Force

Senior Deputy General Secretary Sue Ferns and the TUC's Deputy General Secretary Paul Nowak represented trade unions on the government's Green Jobs Task Force, established in November 2020. Prospect's input to the Task Force was informed by very useful round table discussions with representatives.

The Task Force reported on 14 July. Sue Ferns participated in the launch event, hosted by the Aldersgate Group and a Prospect blog was published by Labour List. The report is published at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/green-jobs-taskforce> There is a useful summary of recommendations and next steps on pages 73-76. The main themes of the report are:

- Driving investment in green jobs and skills in the UK
- Building pathways into good green careers
- Ensuring a just transition for workers in high carbon sectors

The report sets out the importance of ensuring that green jobs are high quality and accessible to a diverse workforce. It also emphasises the role of unions in securing a just transition, including as part of a permanent implementation body.

The government's net zero strategy responds to some of the Task Force recommendations but is silent on the next steps for just transition. Prospect, along with other Task Force members, has written to the Secretary of State to press for early action to set up the 'implementation body'.

## Just Transition Commission

National Secretary Richard Hardy completed his term on Scotland's Just Transition Commission with the publication of the Commission's report in March 2021. Richard spoke at an event to launch the report.

The Scottish Government published its response to the report in September. Prospect's response welcomed the statements around transition plans, fair work and especially the skills guarantee. It also expressed concern that the response lacked any clear strategy for creating new high-quality jobs and reiterating trade union calls for a more interventionist approach on this key issue.

In December the Scottish government announced the formation of a permanent Just Transmission Commission to oversee progress in implementation. Richard Hardy has been appointed to the new body as one of two trade union commissioners.

## Resources

A range of new resources have been produced, including:

- A branch checklist 'Workplace action on the climate emergency' - <https://library.prospect.org.uk/download/2021/00489>
- 'A just transition plan for the UK power sector' – <https://library.prospect.org.uk/id/2020/01052>
- A Just Transition? Managing the challenges of technology, trade, climate change and COVID-19' jointly with Community union - <https://www.ferryfoundation.org.uk/news/a-just-transition>
- A briefing on 'Protecting workers' health and safety in renewables' – <https://prospect.org.uk/news/protecting-workers-health-and-safety-in-renewables/>
- Nature-based case studies, showcasing the professional expertise of Prospect members including:
  - How vital work in the Welsh seas is helping to combat the climate emergency <https://prospect.org.uk/news/vital-work-in-the-welsh-seas-helping-to-combat-climate-emergency/>
  - The role of hydro power on the road to net zero <https://prospect.org.uk/news/with-right-support-hydropower-can-play-a-bigger-part-in-road-to-net-zero/>
  - The role of the Wildlife and Wetlands Trust is protecting the eco-system <https://prospect.org.uk/news/climate-emergency-is-a-trade-union-issue/>



## Training and information sharing

The aim is  
**Net Zero**  
reducing  
carbon  
footprint of...



Three online training courses for environment reps on ‘Bargaining for a sustainable workplace’ have been completed, and a new bitesize course developed for members who want to take initial steps to explore the workplace environmental agenda. In the light of feedback received from course participants and tutors, the existing course has been remodelled to give a greater focus on workplace action with participants getting involved with discussions on why the environment is a union issue, how to overcome barriers to change at different levels and how to get the climate crisis on the branch and negotiations agendas. The course also gives extensive training on effective campaign planning. The next Bargaining for a Sustainable Workplace course is scheduled for March 2022 and representatives can access the training via their organiser.

A series of member webinars have been held, for example on the climate emergency during Heart Unions week in February 2021. Environmental representatives from across the union have shared their experiences at webinars on World Environment Day and to mark the International TUC’s Climate and Employment Proof our Work (CEPOW) campaign in September. We have committed to an environmental forum hosting a regular programme of webinars, enabling representatives to share experiences and promote success.

In addition, Prospect staff have spoken at a number of external events, including an ICTU event on Just Transition, the Yorkshire Post’s Great Northern Conference on sustainable infrastructure, and at an event for environment reps in the TUC’s South West region.

Sue Ferns gave oral evidence to the Environmental Audit Select Committee inquiries into green jobs and to ‘Growing back better: putting nature and net zero at the heart of our economic recovery.’

# COP26

COP26 was held in Glasgow from 2-12 November.

In preparation on 8 October an interactive webinar on preparing for COP26 featured contributions from General Secretary Mike Clancy, Sue Ferns and Richard Hardy. This followed a panel debate at Prospect's Energy Sector Conference on the theme 'Will COP26 help to deliver good green jobs?' Richard Hardy also spoke at Scotland's Countdown to COP26 conference.

Sue Ferns and Richard Hardy were both part of the ITUC observer delegation to COP26.

Richard Hardy spoke at three COP26 fringe events at the invitation of a wide range of stakeholders including the ITUC, Just Transition Partnership and STUC. He also led the ITUC delegation in a meeting with facilitating ministers in relation to the lack of ambition on Just Transition and on carbon reduction action at COP26 and spoke on behalf of the Trade Union NGO constituency (210 million workers in 163 countries) at the closing plenary session of COP26.

In addition, Prospect:

- Held two successful webinars held during Union Week – the first week of COP26 – see [COP26: Prospect panel tackles challenges of a Just Transition | Prospect](#)
- Participated in a panel debate in Glasgow focusing on Just Transition in the energy and steel industries, organised by Community union.
- Took part at the Global Day of Action in Glasgow on 6 November and the "People's Plenary" protest inside and outside the COP on 12 November.

## Prospect's carbon footprint

Prospect has completed a baseline carbon footprint audit following consultation with a cross-union working group of representatives. Our agreed principles are that:

- Action should prioritise areas and activities with the greatest potential impact.
- Carbon measurement may not always be the most effective use of resources, particularly where data is not readily available, but such elements should where feasible be addressed as part of a broader action plan.
- The carbon reduction journey will take several years, but it will be useful to identify milestones.

Prospect already collects data on energy and water consumption, has a digital first strategy to reduce paper consumption and only uses paper from sustainable sources. We have moved to cloud-based computing to reduce the carbon impact of our IT systems. At present Prospect has a number of leased offices, over which we have limited environmental control, but this will be reviewed as leases expire and post-pandemic working patterns become more settled.

We have committed to report on public transport use in 2022 and to a review of our car fleet in 2023. Branches are asked to make every effort to hold in-person meetings in venues with good public transport access. However, the NEC and branches have been consulted on moving to a hybrid approach for meetings, including more meetings and events being held online. We will report on travel to centrally organised events in 2022, though this is still significantly reduced compared with pre-pandemic travel patterns.

As far as investments are concerned, we are working with our advisers for more clarity on the ESG of the companies we invest in. The trustees of Prospect's pension schemes do ensure that the investments are compliant with the regulators' recommendations in respect of the ESG criteria of investments of the assets of the scheme.

The full report of the 2020 carbon footprint audit is on the website at <https://library.prospect.org.uk/id/2021/01247> and work is in progress to collate and analyse the data for the 2021 report.