



NATIONAL
POLICY
FORUM
2021
Environment,
Energy
and Culture

MEMBERSHIP 2021

HM Opposition

Ed Miliband MP*

Luke Pollard MP

Jo Stevens MP

Daniel Zeichner MP

NEC

Margaret Beckett MP*

Johanna Baxter

Pauline McCarthy

CLPs and Regions

Mike Bird – Welsh Labour Party

Andrew Bustard – Scottish Labour Party

Alex Chapman – South East Region

Simon Henig – Northern Region

Holly Jarret – South West Region

Dilys Jouvenat – Welsh Policy Forum

Ivan Monckton – Welsh Labour Party

Aisling Musson – Yorkshire and Humber Region

Jenny Rathbone – Welsh Policy Forum

Wendy Simon – North West Region

Affiliates

Gail Cartmail – Unite

Tracey Fussey – CWU

Gloria Mills – BAME Labour

Laurence Turner – GMB

Elected Representatives

Mike Ross – COSLA

*Co-convenor



The work of the Environment, Energy and Culture Commission

Our Digital Future consultation

In autumn 2020 the Commission took submissions on the Our Digital Future consultation. The aim of this consultation was to agree the principles that should govern Labour's approach to digital technologies – not just for the next election cycle but for the long-term. Jo Stevens MP provided updates on the consultation's progress at several Commission meetings, offering representatives the opportunity to discuss how Labour can build a digital future that is safer, fairer and more inclusive.

Green Recovery

In February the Commission met to discuss the work being carried out to build on and expand Labour's green recovery proposals – originally published last November in response to a consultation ran through this Commission. Shadow Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Secretary Ed Miliband MP provided an update on this work and discussed future priorities with members of the Commission. This was followed, in March, by a major announcement on how Labour would bring about an 'electric car revolution', further fleshing out our Green Recovery proposals.

Just Transition

In January 2021 the Commission held an evidence session on the topic of Just Transition. The Commission heard from grassroots activists in major energy unions about what would be needed from government and policymakers to guarantee a "just transition" for workers. This is a priority area both for the Commission and the frontbench, with further evidence sessions planned on the topic in the coming months.

In June the Commission held a members roundtable event to discuss the consultation topic – "A Just Transition". Several members with lived experience and interests in affected industries (such as energy and manufacturing) attended.

Rural England policy review

At the beginning of April, the Commission met to discuss Labour's Rural England policy review, an initiative announced in Keir Starmer's February speech to the National Farmers' Union. Spearheaded by Shadow Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Secretary Luke Pollard MP, the review is working across Policy Commissions to explore how Labour can reconnect with rural communities.

Principles

In December 2020 the Commission set out 10 principles that would underpin Labour's policy development on climate and nature over the coming years. These were intended to reflect views expressed in responses to the 2020 NPF consultation, and published in the 2020 NPF Interim Report. These principles have now been amended on the basis of further engagement and consultation during the first half of 2021, and can be found below.

1. The climate and nature crisis is an urgent and unprecedented challenge – not only for the UK, but for the world. **Reducing our carbon emissions and restoring our natural world are equally important and mutually reinforcing goals.**
2. To prevent the worst effects of climate change, we must strive to keep global temperature rises below 1.5°C. **The pace and direction should be as ambitious as necessary and feasible, aiming for the substantial majority of emissions to be cut over the coming decade.**
3. Tackling this crisis is the ultimate collective action problem, and will require a truly national effort. **Labour will bring together workers, unions, businesses and communities across the UK to find common solutions to build a more sustainable and secure economy for all.**
4. Economic prosperity and environmental justice are one and the same. **Labour's Green New Deal will be based on a credible, government-led economic plan that delivers a sustainable, high-productivity, and dynamic national economy, while also fixing long-standing inequalities that scar our society.**
5. This is a once in a generation opportunity to provide good jobs and apprenticeships across the country, from the car worker to the care worker. **Labour's Green New Deal will provide jobs that bring pride to communities and improve living standards, building a Britain that is low in carbon, rich in biodiversity and has an abundance of well-paid, unionised jobs for all.**
6. The UK is the most regionally imbalanced economy in Europe, and many of our communities still bear the scars of forced deindustrialisation: never again should workers be forced to bear the costs of transition and reap none of its rewards. **Labour will deliver a "just transition" that rectifies regional imbalances, levels up and ensures that no workers or communities are left behind.**



7. Tackling the climate and nature crisis will involve transforming the way we live, from the food that reaches our tables to the vehicles we use to get around. Such changes, where possible, should be determined at a local level by institutions accountable to their communities. **Properly funded devolved, regional and local administrations will play a key role in shaping and delivering policy.**
8. Our natural heritage – from the dramatic peaks of England, Scotland and Wales to the marine environments off our shores – is rightly cherished not only for its great beauty but the benefits it brings to communities across our country. **Labour will protect and restore our existing natural heritage, aiming for the recovery and renewal of nature rather than simply halting decline.**
9. Tackling the climate and nature crisis will require creative new ways to design and deliver public services. We recognise that the free-market experiment in critical infrastructure has failed to deliver on our environmental, social and economic justice goals. **Labour supports alternative models of common ownership as part of a Green New Deal.**
10. We recognise that our climate and nature crisis doesn't end at our nation's borders, and our historic actions and current consumption in the UK drives emission production and resource depletion elsewhere. **Labour in government will be internationalist, with the UK showing genuine international leadership to tackle historic climate injustice and its impacts on the global South.**

Just Transition: making the green transformation work for all of us

Building on the ten principles laid out above, and answers received to this year's consultation questions, the Commission has set out a number of policy positions.

Firstly, just transition packages for sectors where jobs need to be protected ought to receive appropriate government support. Government cannot and should not impose a massive transition on an industry from Whitehall and then wash its hands of the consequences. When a direction of travel is set – such as the 2030 phase-out date for ICE vehicles – this should be accompanied by a clear strategy to protect jobs and prepare us for the future.

Secondly, public investment in sectoral transitions should be accompanied by enhanced accountability to the public, including through public equity stakes and democratic control. If the public is taking on the risk of early investment in vital transition infrastructure such as gigafactories, fabrication yards and low-carbon power, then it should be recognised as just that: an investment, not a subsidy.

Thirdly, the fruits of the transition need to be shared fairly, with an equitable approach to infrastructure up and down the country. This will mean a proper green industrial strategy, facilitated by the government, aimed at tackling the regional disparities this Government is baking in. It will also mean investment in new infrastructures such as EV charging networks, low-carbon heat and smart grid technology, targeting areas such as Yorkshire, the North West and the West Midlands that are being left out at present.

Fourthly and finally, essential new products and services should be made accessible, ensuring that the transition does not maintain or worsen existing inequality. This could be done by providing direct support and incentives for the manufacture, sale and uptake of low carbon products.



Submissions to the consultation

The responses to our consultation questions were wide-ranging, demonstrating the breadth of issues touched by this topic and the importance placed upon it. Nonetheless, responses demonstrated a high degree of consensus on several key issues, which are reflected in the amended principles and broad policy positions laid out above.

There was, in the first place, an overwhelming endorsement of the consultation's premise: that climate and environmental justice should not be seen as a barrier to economic growth but rather a potential source of jobs and prosperity. Many submissions, particularly in response to the question on creating new jobs, highlighted that interventions to reduce our carbon emissions and restore nature – from home insulation to tree-planting – are a source of good jobs and have the potential to form the basis of new, long-term growth sectors in the economy. It was also mentioned in several submissions that there already exist detailed blueprints from sources within the labour movement – including our own affiliated unions and the Trades Union Congress – for how to unlock the potential of these interventions and ensure they deliver on their jobs-rich promise.

"We need to meet the challenges of turning around the historic depression in living standards over the past decade, to finally build an economy that is socially just and wealth and power is more equally distributed and tackle climate breakdown. To do this we must address the insecurity that many face in their jobs and earnings, support and develop the industries and jobs of the future and deliver high quality publicly owned public services."

UNITE THE UNION

"The green industrial revolution brings with it a wealth of opportunities and new industries - for example in renewable energy, tidal lagoons and fuel innovation - but must be managed carefully to ensure that everyone is able to play a role in our cleaner, greener future."

ASLEF

"There needs to be a big initiative to retrain displaced workers as high carbon jobs disappear. There also needs to be large scale government/ state intervention to direct the transformation to a green economy and society. Things can't just be left to the market."

HIGH PEAK CLP

This optimism was however tempered, most notably in responses to the question on protecting existing jobs, by an acceptance of the scale of the challenge ahead. Many cited as a cautionary tale the decline of the mining sector in the 1980s and 90s, which led to widespread and long-lasting hardship in former pit communities. Respondents argued that avoiding such a fate for workers in vital industries such as the aviation and automotive sectors, and the communities that depend on them, would require significant levels of state coordination and investment. Most answers to Question 1 emphasised skills and training – or rather, a lack of opportunities to acquire either – as the primary barrier for workers in existing industries hoping to transition to new roles or sectors.

“Well-resourced training is needed so that workers in industries that need to be rapidly decarbonised or closed down can transition to the new occupations needed for a zero-carbon future, such as the development, installation and maintenance of renewable energy technologies. Workers in the affected industries should be encouraged and resourced to develop alternative plans for the workforces and plant in those industries.”

SHIPLEY CLP

Many respondents stressed in answer to the question on job quality that businesses in sustainable sectors – such as renewable energy – are not any more likely to provide good, stable employment than those in traditional sectors. In particular, the role of trade unions in avoiding these pitfalls was highlighted, with some submissions suggesting an institutional or statutory role for trade unions in determining local policies on transition. An example cited in a number of submissions of where this has not always happened was the offshore wind sector in Scotland. It was noted that in many cases offshore wind is poorly unionised, with worse pay, terms and conditions than conventional industries with similar skill bases such as offshore oil and gas, and that the majority of orders are not placed in the UK.

“De-industrialisation has characterised the modern labour market as precarious, insecure and often low paid. Protecting workers and communities during a process of industrial change will be reliant on engaging with trade unions to ensure working people have a seat at the table when strategizing the move to a green economy.”

USDAW



“We should work in partnership with the workforce and their trade unions in every sector of our economy, so that they lead the transition in their industries, creating new, good-quality jobs and making sure that their extensive skills are passed on to the next generation of workers.”

WOKING CLP

In response to the question on delivery bodies, submissions noted that devolved, regional and local administrations are well placed to mitigate against some of the challenges referenced above and deliver the benefits. Some submissions cited specific existing examples of good practice, where local and devolved administrations – most notably Labour in government in Wales – are already taking bold and innovative action which could be scaled up. There was a strong view that we should recognise the expertise and skills of local and devolved Government, rather than seeking to reinvent the wheel, and that any new powers or responsibilities would need to be properly funded and resourced. The need for localism – and coherence with existing local government structures – was also raised in the context of public ownership. Many respondents highlighted the failed experiment of privatisation in sectors such as energy, water (in England), mail, rail and telecommunications as a cause of the issue. Submissions also noted the appeal of locally and democratically accountable institutions operating in these sectors.

“With the dire state of Local Government finances there is no way councils can deliver on climate emergencies and net zero targets if that funding is not strengthened still further.”

UNISON

“Privatisation of the utilities has generated benefits for the few, directly against the interests of the many.”

VALERIE, LABOUR MEMBER

In answer to the question on democratic oversight, there were a range of different opinions on what aspects of our Green New Deal should be decided and administered on a local level versus a national one. Some necessary changes, such as reforms to workers' rights, or the increased regulation of polluting industries, will necessarily need to be driven at a national level. On more granular issues, such as funding for specific projects, there was a consensus that local decisions could have more legitimacy. Again, submissions emphasised the need to respect existing democratic structures, while also floating a number of

alternatives such as citizens assemblies and regional just transition bodies. An important caveat mentioned by a number of respondents was that any new institutions would need to have proper powers and funding to ensure their effectiveness.

“By building upon the best traditions of our party and our movement, we can ensure that meaningful collaboration between elected representatives, officials and the public will translate into transparent, effective, and accountable policy-making processes which are suited to the task of radically improving the lives of working-class people. “

LABOUR FOR A GREEN NEW DEAL

“Councils should enable the communities they serve to have a genuine say about local priorities, through, for example, citizens assemblies.”

JOHN, LABOUR MEMBER

There were two other major themes which fell outside of the five questions asked at the outset of the consultation, but nonetheless recurred across a significant number of submissions.

The first of these was the need for a just transition for consumers. There was a clear view across a number of submissions that tackling the climate and nature crisis ought not to result in a fall in living standards or a restriction in the range and quality of goods available to British consumers. New, sustainable methods of producing food, energy and other goods were cited in some submissions as ways to maintain the existing standard of living enjoyed by people in the UK while reducing our carbon emissions. Other submissions suggested that a return to traditional and localised methods of production could fulfil a similar purpose.

“Cheap food means our farming system is unviable without subsidy and drives imports from countries like Brazil and Indonesia where the environmental consequences of deforestation are damaging for the world. Our response should be to eat less meat, produce less but higher quality UK meat, address the catastrophic damage that our agricultural practices have had on wildlife in the countryside, become healthier as a result.”

HUGH, LABOUR MEMBER



The second of these was the international dimension of just transition. There was a strong recognition across numerous submissions that our policies need to reflect and respond to the international dimensions of the climate and nature crisis. Several submissions noted that the UK, as one of the first countries to industrialise, has historically been responsible for vastly greater emissions than the majority of countries around the world. Many also recognised that as one of the largest economies on the planet and a major importer of goods and services, the UK “offshores” much of its emissions. Labour’s existing policy of accounting for the carbon we consume, not simply our territorial emissions, was praised in some submissions, while others advocated further steps in the form of climate reparations.

