

Why Climate Change matters to trade unions

(31 January 2012) A short and concise contribution of Sarah Pearce of Unison argues that greenwork places are “a fundamental part of an international trade union strategy for a “just transition”, that seeks to ensure a shift towards a low carbon economy

that is fair and equitable for all. Quite apart from issues of solidarity with fellow workers around the globe, climate change will affect us all and changes to working life are inevitable.” Work place representatives have a key role to play.

Why climate change is a trade union issue:

- Union research consistently shows that union members are concerned about climate change and want their union to be active on environmental issues.⁴
- Making workplaces sustainable saves money and jobs.
- Working practices may need to adapt to cope with more frequent experience of higher temperatures. Changes to dress codes, uniforms, equipment, shift patterns and breaks may be necessary and need renegotiating.
- Changes in working procedures need to be assessed for their environmental impact. Union green reps can identify any concerns at odds with other employee interests and ensure change is fairly negotiated.
- Negotiations on environmental and energy issues help unions anticipate organisational change, pressures and priorities, ensuring compliance with regulations and potentially avoiding financial penalties.
- Cost savings can be fed into staff bonus schemes or ring-fenced for investment in environmental improvements.
- Environmental improvements can make workplaces healthier, safer, less stressful and more comfortable places to work by maximising natural daylight, improving heating and ventilation controls and air quality.
- Union involvement in the environmental agenda can bring new members and reps into the union, attracting a more diverse membership.

For the full article:

- [ACAS article - EN](#)

- [ACAS article - CRO](#)

- [For the EPSU study on the Impact of Climate Change on Public Services](#)

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