

Just Transition

Briefing for MSPs from the Just Transition Partnership ahead of Scottish Government debate on ‘Securing a just transition to a carbon-neutral economy’

14 January 2019

The Just Transition Partnership welcomes the opportunity to brief MSP’s ahead of the Scottish Government’s debate on ‘Securing a just transition to a carbon-neutral economy’. The Partnership was formed by Friends of the Earth Scotland and the Scottish Trade Union Congress in 2016. Membership includes Unite Scotland, UNISON Scotland, UCU Scotland, CWU Scotland, PCS Scotland, and WWF Scotland.

Summary

The concept of a just transition is central to a successful response to climate change, and to build popular support for action on to cut emissions. A just transition must:

- Put protecting workers’ livelihoods, creating new jobs, and delivering a fairer Scotland at the centre of the move to a low-carbon economy
- Be embedded across and supported by Government priorities and infrastructure projects including the Climate Change Plan, the Publicly Owned Energy Company, the Scottish National Investment Bank, future economic strategies and the work of the enterprise agencies
- Involve trade unions, communities and environmentalists at the heart of the process
- Be put into statute under the Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Bill

The need for a just transition

Ambitious targets for moving to a low carbon economy are essential in the context of climate change and our commitments under national legislation and the Paris Agreement. Taking responsibility for our fair share of global efforts to limit temperature increases to 1.5°C to avoid the catastrophic warming highlighted in the recent IPCC Special Report, will require significant, far-reaching transformations across our economy and industry.

Just transition requires that action to reduce emissions must not be at the expense of the workforce and communities which currently extract or depend on the use of fossil fuels. A just transition means moving to a modern low-carbon economy in a way which protects workers’ livelihoods, creates a new industrial base, and delivers a fairer Scotland. The need for action is urgent in order to avert the environmental and economic costs of climate change, to protect jobs, and to rebalance the economy to one which provides enough decent jobs making and doing things in non-polluting ways.

Considering the impacts of the transition to a low-carbon economy on jobs and communities can ensure protection for workers, create employment opportunities, build greater inclusion, and protect the people and places affected. This in turn builds popular support for action on climate change.¹

A just transition embedded across portfolios

In order to achieve a just transition, and ensure that climate targets are met, the principles of a just transition must be embedded across government portfolios. This means using emissions reduction

¹ See our evidence to the Environment Climate Change and Land Reform Committee on the Climate Change Bill [https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Climate%20Change%20\(Emissions%20Reduction%20Targets\)%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/075_Just_Transition_Partnership_Call_for_Views.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Climate%20Change%20(Emissions%20Reduction%20Targets)%20(Scotland)%20Bill/075_Just_Transition_Partnership_Call_for_Views.pdf)

targets as the foundation of an industrial plan which embeds climate change and just transition objectives in economic strategy.

In particular, the Scottish Government's headline infrastructure projects, and the emerging Publicly Owned Energy Company and National Investment Bank, must play a key role in delivering a just transition in collaboration with the Just Transition Commission.

Publicly Owned Energy Company

The current marketised, privately-owned energy system isn't delivering change at the pace needed for a Just Transition to a low-carbon economy. The proposal for a government-owned energy company has the potential to play a central part in a just transition, if its remit is ambitious enough. If allowed to generate its own energy, the company has huge potential to create jobs in low-carbon energy generation and transmission, while tackling the high levels of fuel poverty, high energy prices, and the dissatisfaction with the big energy suppliers.²

The Scottish National Investment Bank

The announcement of a National Investment Bank is a welcome step in tackling inadequate levels of investment and misalignment with crucial public policy objectives like reducing emissions and tackling poverty. To deliver on these objectives, the Bank's remit should be to provide mission-led finance and in particular to support the just transition to a low-carbon and more equal economy which provides fair work for all. This means providing long-term, large scale finance to unlock opportunities in areas such as a domestic renewables manufacturing industry, finance for a national programme of district heating, and investment in public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure. The Bank's policies should ensure that all of its investments take into account the need for energy transition.

The Just Transition Commission & the Climate Change Bill

The Just Transition Partnership called for a Commission to advise the Scottish Government on the transition to a low carbon economy in early 2017. The announcement of a Just Transition Commission with a remit to provide recommendations on maximising the opportunities and mitigating the risks presented by the transition is welcome.

However, the Just Transition Partnership is calling for the Commission to be put on a statutory basis and given a long term remit by way of the Climate Change Bill. This would give it the status and longevity required to effectively carry out an oversight and advice function for the duration of the climate change targets laid out in the Bill.

The Bill should also include a commitment that a just transition approach will be central to the delivery of targets, and include reporting on a just transition in the Climate Change Plan, i.e. on how proposals and policies will affect employment in different sectors, what measures will be put in place to support the transition of the workforce and related communities, and the scale and source of investment to achieve plans.

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² For more information see our submission to the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee Inquiry into the Publicly Owned Energy Company https://www.parliament.scot/S5_EconomyJobsFairWork/Inquiries/EEFW-S5-18-POEC-35-JustTransitionPartnership.pdf