

Five things trade unionists need to know about the climate crisis

1

Climate breakdown is affecting us already

UK temperatures reached a 40C record in 2022, and our homes and workplaces are badly equipped to deal with heatwaves, contributing to excess deaths.

In the UK, and around the world, farmers' crop yields have been hit by drought and floods, driving up food prices. Firefighters are having to battle both wildfires and floods. If we don't take action on climate change we will see climate disasters getting more frequent and more severe.

2

Drilling for fossil fuels won't give us cheap energy

Gas prices are set by the global market so oil companies (who own the oil and gas extracted) will sell it on internationally for the highest price they can get. And North Sea oil fields are running out. Whatever decisions are made about new oil fields, in just 15 years' time they will be able to supply at most around a sixth of the gas we currently burn.

Meanwhile, the cost of renewable energy has fallen dramatically - sun and wind are now the cheapest forms of power generation. We need to invest in energy for our future and a transition that secures decent and sustainable jobs for North Sea workers - not false promises.

3

The climate crisis is a social justice issue

The climate impact of the richest 1%, globally, is the same as that of the poorest two-thirds of humanity combined - and the hurricanes, floods, droughts and heatwaves that climate breakdown bring are hitting those who have done least to cause the crisis. In the UK, as elsewhere, the worst impacts will fall on the disabled, elderly and young, and those on the lowest incomes. We need to stand together in global solidarity with workers and communities around the world, while rejecting racism and division here in the UK.

4

The market can't solve the climate crisis

Privatisation and market-dependence can't deliver effectively on the scale needed, doesn't centre people's needs, and leaves the door open to fossil fuel greenwash. We need climate jobs. We need investment in renewable energy and home insulation as the only way to get energy bills down and keep them down. We need to move towards public ownership and democratic control of energy and other crucial services.

5

Climate action can help our workplaces and communities

Taking action on the climate crisis and building a fairer society go together. We can plan our towns and cities so they are more resilient to heatwaves and floods, with good affordable public transport and clean air. We must build and adapt homes so they are cheaper to heat and easier to cool down, and build more wind and solar energy – now much cheaper than fossil fuels. We need to prioritise the needs of communities, including ensuring workers have decent, well-paid and unionised jobs building a sustainable future.

IT'S TIME TO ACT

Find out more about the trade union year of climate action:

cacctu.org.uk/yoa

