

## Engaging with our employers to tackle the climate emergency

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, we are urging branches to organise a day of action on climate change for our second [Green UNISON Day](#).



As General Secretary Dave Prentis said in June, “the climate crisis is the greatest single threat humanity faces.”

Often challenges of this scale can seem impossibly large for individuals or branches to get involved with, so the Green Network has prepared this pack to help you start a conversation with your employer. The introductory information will give you an idea of what to ask and what to expect back from an employer.

### Why are we engaging with employers on this?

The scale of the threat from climate change cannot be overstated and the impacts of it will be felt far and wide for generations to come. Our strength as a trade union gives us the opportunity to encourage employers to commit to the action needed.

To do this we must first start the conversation, highlighting that UNISON is committed to building a better future for our members and future generations.

Increasing levels of flooding, heat waves, and storms are all likely outcomes of our changing climate, many of which we’ve seen this past year. These extremes of weather have impacts on our members, other workers and our communities; whether that is all those who must continue to provide vital public services under these conditions, or through the impact on services and jobs as the cost of responding to climate extremes spirals.

Adapting to our changing climate now increases resilience and reduces risks rather than dealing with these challenges in the future, showing the need for planned adaptation measures to be part of Green Workplace agreements, and an end to austerity cuts.

In short, this emergency will affect the lives of us, our members, and the communities where we all live.

### Is it really an emergency?

Yes, the 2018 report from the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) stated we had less than 12 years left to make the needed changes to prevent catastrophic changes for our planet.

The panel is a body of the UN for assessing the science related to climate change and this latest special report was compiled by 91 lead authors, 133 contributing authors, from 40 countries with the final publication containing over 6,000 scientific references. Its findings cannot be ignored.

The declaration of a climate emergency by the Scottish and UK governments is an opportunity to press hard for the action that must take place towards net zero carbon - removing as many emissions as we produce. The Scottish Government has committed to reach this point by 2045.

### What can UNISON do?

As the largest union in the UK, we have the power to affect real change. As branch representatives, we can engage with employers and, where needed, challenge them to do more to meet their obligations.

This information pack is designed to help you do this and is split into two parts.

The first is a conversation, either in person, on the phone, or via email. When contacting the employer, you are looking to find out who is responsible for:

- Sustainability,
- energy efficiency,
- or climate change reporting

The second looks to gather information on what policies and strategies are in place to support action on climate change, and what technical projects have yielded the best results. (Some information is reported annually through the public bodies climate change duties reporting <https://sustainablesotlandnetwork.org/reports>, but we are encouraging branches to contact employers and talk.)

The questions asked may require information from more than one department, but a contact within one will be able to pass questions on internally. The aim is to get employers to engage with branches on the issue and develop a working relationship where we can, for the coming months/years. For that reason we are suggesting an approach in person rather than a Freedom of Information request.

The answers will be useful at branch level to build on your engagement with the employer over climate and green workplace action. The Green Network is keen to build a wider picture of what employers are doing, if you are happy to share the information with us. Please copy and paste/upload answers/policies etc., into the online survey, once you have the answers from your employer. You can do this in two stages if preferred. In due course, we will use these to compile a short report to use for further green workplace campaigning work in 2020.

If you have any questions on this survey, climate change, or the Green Network please contact [Fiona Montgomery](#)

## The Conversation

Opening lines of communication with employers is vital, so initially we are looking for branches to pose two questions to employers.

### Has your organisation declared a climate emergency?

- If yes:
  - Please provide wording and dates of relevant motions/statements/decisions
  - What strategies or targets have been implemented to bring you in line with the latest IPCC (international panel on climate change) reporting and Scottish Government targets?
- If no what was the reason:
  - Has not been discussed
  - Has been discussed but proposal was rejected or decision was deferred
  - Declaration is in discussion currently
  - Declaration is in planning currently
  - Please provide supporting dates and minutes for you choice

### Has your organisation declared a stance on school climate strikes?

- Please provide any relevant motions/statements/decisions

## The Questionnaire

- What main strategies and policies do you have in place to drive action on climate change?
- Since their inception, what are the main achievements of these strategies and policies?
- Please provide information on your emissions reduction projects with reference to the projects with:
  - the lowest cost per tonne CO2e saved
  - the highest CO2e saving
  - the highest financial saving
  - the shortest payback period
  - largest renewable installation (including income generation figures)

**[To upload responses digitally, complete the survey here](#)**

Responses should be sent using the above link or by email to [Fiona Montgomery](#) by 12 November 2019.