



## Local Climate JOBS

### Climate jobs, not 'green jobs'

Climate jobs are jobs that cut down the amount of greenhouse gases we put in the air and thus slow down climate change. 'Green jobs' can mean anything – jobs in the water industry, national parks, landscaping, bird sanctuaries, pollution control and much more. All these jobs are likely to be very necessary, but they do not affect global warming. This briefing sheet homes in how on some ways of raising the argument for climate jobs to be taken up in your area.<sup>1</sup>

These notes draw on the Million Climate Jobs report and the experiences in Sheffield, in particular, and Birmingham and Derby.

There is no one blueprint. It may well be that there has been quite a lot of work done on this in your area, perhaps by done by the council, perhaps by a local environmental group, or perhaps by trade unionists.

### Running a local climate jobs petition

Having been inspired by the Million Climate Jobs campaign and the notion of building a broad based alliance, trade union activists in Sheffield thought running a petition around the issue of local climate jobs was a good way to raise the jobs and climate issue with the general public, focusing in particular upon the council. They decided to call for 10,000 local jobs, based on Sheffield having around 1% of the country's population and comparing this with the national million climate jobs call.

The plan was to present a petition to the City Council at one of their meetings as raising over 5,000 signatures could trigger a 40 minute debate on the issue. (On smaller petitions, there are various, lesser actions taken depending how many people sign the form.)

**Wording and collecting signatures:** A petition is a good way to engage people that may not normally consider the issues concerned. By

signing a petition the public can show a degree of support with little effort. In case this is all they read upon the subject a few prominent words should summarise the case. For example, the Sheffield petition was headed Sheffield Climate Alliance: Petition for 10,000 Climate Jobs in Sheffield. This was followed with a few bullet-points describing how climate change is an economic and social issue, followed by a definition of climate jobs. A separate leaflet with more detailed information was kept on hand for those that wanted to know more. In practice, the petitioners developed a sales patter, often explaining the petition to the public, rather than expecting them to read the information. The activists were often asked how the Council can provide this many jobs and argued that although the Council cannot provide all the jobs directly the Council should still act to move the city towards the target.

**Spreading the word:** Asking people to take copies of the petition is one way of spreading the campaign. Another, is to get letters in the paper. (Tip: sometimes it is easier to get a letter in the paper than a press release). This is an extract in the Sheffield Star announcing a meeting:

*Having bailed out the bankers to the tune of £1.3 trillion, the government tells us we have to make huge cuts in our public services to pay for it. But we need a massive investment in climate jobs and services to avert the threat of catastrophic climate change. In Sheffield, there is a steel industry that could easily produce renewable energy equipment such as wind turbines. We need to radically improve local bus services so more people use them again. Improving the energy efficiency of homes and buildings is labour intensive. All these areas could provide employment for many local people.*

<sup>1</sup> See the Million Climate Jobs pamphlet: <http://www.campaigncc.org/greenjobs#pamphlet>

## Public meetings

That letter was also tied into organising a public meeting, aimed at TU [what does TU stand for?] members. In Sheffield the petitioners contacted the Sheffield Anti-Cuts Alliance, the Right to Work Campaign, and as many UNIONS [does UNIONS have to be in capitals?] as possible, mainly using existing personal contacts. Though the activists felt they had to work hard to get the interest of Union members a total of 23 people attended their Climate Jobs meeting last July 2011 and there has been a number of additional meetings around the theme since.

If you have the time and enthusiasm to organise it, a public meeting is worthwhile. One suggestion is to include a showing of the One Million Climate Jobs Now! DVD (the 10 minute version). Contact the local media in preparation, perhaps with a letter to announce your meeting. Book appointments to see local councillors, and explore what action they can take within the local Council. If you have already had one such meeting you may want to try other angles, for example involving local firms and businesses.

## Having a debate at the Council meeting

In Sheffield, the campaigners were unable to obtain the desired 5,000 signatures, so were thereby unable to force the 40 minute debate in the Council. Nevertheless, they were able to present the 2,587 signature petition to a full meeting of the Sheffield City Council. During this meeting one of the activists gave a three minute introduction, and campaigners asked questions from public gallery.

In Derby, any member of the public who lives within the area can put a question to - and force an answer from - the council, and then the questioner can make a supplementary point. While this can be effective it does not allow other members of the public to engage. However, a question backed by a petition carries a lot more weight, and is more likely to obtain media coverage.

## Moving beyond the usual suspects

The campaigners in Sheffield have since been referred to the SCC Scrutiny Board where they presented evidence that led to a positive debate among the Officers and Councillors. They also attended a meeting designed to lead to an input into the Sheffield Economic Masterplan which is

largely Council led. As discussions continued with the Council, specific areas started to be identified, such as the potential for the Council to generate renewable energy locally. In addition, the campaigners started to make links with some of the local employers who are members of the low carbon subgroup. For example, there are a number of businesses that systematically promote a low-carbon agenda and are trying to educate their workforce and/or members of the public.

In Derby one person responded to the idea of a climate jobs meeting with these words:

*I'm very wary of anything that sounds like a "Give us a job" mentality, because I think it fosters dependency, is outdated and inappropriate in dealing with today's issues, and we don't want to be labelled with the sad but convenient political labels of the past. That said, I'm hugely sympathetic to and supportive of creating new livelihoods and ethical (triple-bottom line) enterprises around the opportunities that the unprecedented confluence of climate change and resource depletion present... The Million Climate Jobs report does indeed have much merit.*

It is fascinating how one camp can perceive another. The Alliance for Jobs and Climate sets out to draw in trade unionists but, perhaps not at the same time, it also tries to draw in local employers and people from the council who are keen to explore the green agenda.

## Birmingham's Energy Savers project

Friends of the Earth in Birmingham had a meeting on the economy and employment – not their usual thing – and more than 100 people turned up (admittedly it was the day before the budget). Their meeting had speakers from the New Economics Foundation exploring the Keynesian alternative to unemployment and called for the control of the banks. Interestingly, there were no trade union speakers on the platform, but there were people who had been involved in the Birmingham Energy Savers project, a five-year project led by Birmingham City Council which aims to improve energy efficiency, provide renewable energy and boost the local economy in the process. Management of the scheme has created five jobs within the Council itself. The scheme works with local companies to create jobs and apprenticeships for the manufacture, installation and maintenance of technology such as solar panels on roofs.