

Jo Grady, address for Climate and Ecological Emergency Annual Meeting (Thursday 7 December 2023)

Welcome everyone.

In what has been an incredibly busy year, it is incredibly nice to get to December, and this annual meeting.

As reps you know that our union has been leading the way on climate change in the trade union movement.

We have a strong pedigree. We regularly face down other unions in the UK trade union movement in our opposition to fracking, airport expansion, and nuclear weapons. Our campaigning means the trade union movement are adopting OUR policies. A shining example of this is back in 2019 when we were successful in getting the entire trade union movement to participate in the school strike for climate. Millions of workers, walking out of their workplaces, to demand change and action.

We have called for a climate justice fund to be established by wealthy polluting nations. Because we know the consequences of climate change are not distributed equally. Climate change, like every other injustice, is an intersectional issue.

Climate change is making immigration regimes in countries like ours even more oppressive.

Climate change is a gender issue, too. The United Nations has calculated that 80% of the people displaced by climate change are women.

Our union has prioritised in our industrial agenda addressing intersectional injustices and giving a platform to marginalised voices and experiences so we can highlight these injustices and campaign for change. And the same is true for our work on climate. Tackling climate change demands migrant and refugee justice

We have been proud and unequivocal supporters of all manner of groups that support migrants and refugees--whether this is the RNLI, a lifeboat charity whom the government attacked because it was fulfilling its humanitarian mission of rescuing asylum seekers in British waters. Or Care for Calais, who help people seek safe and legal route for asylum. Or demanding divestment from fossil fuels in the USS pension scheme (which I know you will be hearing about in a session later).

In further education our recent strike action has not just been about pay, but over a just transition. Ensuring that our industrial demands are aligned with our political demands.

UCU, yet again, leading the way. Demonstrating to all unions that we should use our voices and collective power to demand change.

This is why as general secretary I have committed resources to developing our work on climate change which includes the development of this bargaining guide.

You have also been such a crucial part of this. In fact, you are the beating heart of it. Thank you so much for all you do.

We have a fantastic green reps training programme and CPD courses open to all members. And I am sure you will hear more about these today too.

Of course, we cannot do this on our own. We work closely with SOS-UK and Greener Jobs Alliance to develop the Green New Deal which you will hear about today.

When I stood to be general secretary, I did it with the conviction that members wanted an even more assertive, campaigning union with an expansive bargaining agenda.

Over the last four years, we have expanded our support for branches to bargain and negotiate over climate issues. And the launch of GND bargaining today marks the beginning.

I hope you all thoroughly enjoy today and go back to your workplaces even more committed than before to securing the meaningful change we need to save our planet.

Jo Grady
UCU general secretary