



# RED BIRD

## FOR ECOSOCIALISM

### **A Summary of the Worker-Climate Project**

Early in 2019, a few comrades and I founded Labour for a Green New Deal (LGND) as a response to both the climate movement's relative lack of engagement with Corbyn's Labour Party, and the lack of a serious socialist thinking about how to enable a transition. Our overwhelming success at the September 2019 party conference demonstrated that a massive interest in a socialist climate politics existed within the British left. Our (retrospectively possibly poorly judged) intention for our organisation's name was always that 'labour' referred both to the party and the workers' movement. Following the loss of 2019 and the onset of the pandemic, we began substantially exploring the tactics and forms of worker organising around transition.

This steady exploration led us to setting up the Worker-Climate Project (WCP) around the beginning of 2022. The activity of this project was based on the necessity of workers using industrial organising and action to force transition changes across production and distribution. This has never meant abandoning a realistic estimation of how far we are from that point, but instead finding what we can do to facilitate progress towards this ecological imperative. So, when we found a range of relatively experimental and sometimes disconnected efforts, we saw a role for the WCP in facilitating stronger mutual understanding and connection between those trade unionists taking up this task.

To start with, this meant organising a conference in October 2022. This was aimed at bringing committed organisers together directly with facilitated discussion, rather than more broadly accessible panels. We built up toward this conference with wide outreach and (around 20) long-form interviews across the movement. These interviews allowed us to come into the

conference with comparative resources explaining which tactics and union structures were being used already, allowing us to host some fairly productive strategic debates. While the conference was a limited success, participants felt that more could be gained through longer-term, distributed network-building, leading us to spend 2023–24 focused on building a pipeline of outreach and interviews, heavily inquiring into this movement to allow us to connect participants with each other.

During this prolonged period of inquiry, we gained a good sense of the range of approaches being taken around worker-climate organising. Attempts at propositional worker planning around transition demands often run counter to the trade union movement's predominantly defensive stances since the 1980s. When efforts do take on elements of worker planning, such as the worker-led workshops at Rolls Royce and Grangemouth, these tend to be reactive to existential threats like mass job cuts and plant closures. The historic legacy of defeat is also demonstrated in the attempts to work around trade union legislation which means it's only legal to strike over 'pay and conditions'. This has led to various attempts to define transition demands within a broad concept of 'conditions', with health and safety being the primary angle, sometimes including climate within the H&S rep role or designing specific campaigns around an unsafe condition such as in the Trade Union Clean Air Network or Heat Strike.

While WCP began with a depth of inquiry into the movement, our intention was always for growing understanding to be used in the service of building connections between organisers and facilitating strategic reflection. Our most substantial intervention in this direction so far has been our trades council roundtables. In our interviews, we noticed that trades councils were repeatedly coming up as structures facilitating worker-climate actions at a local level, and so we decided there was scope for a series of roundtables between the

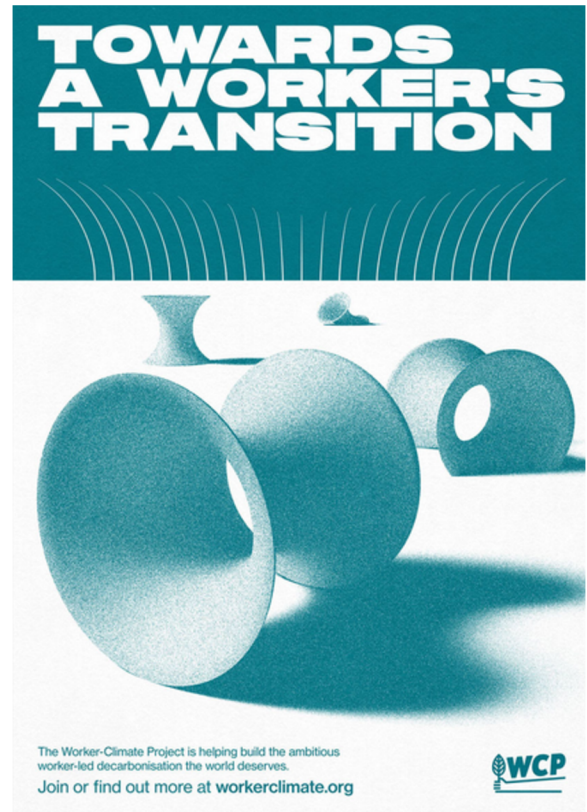
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trades councils most active in this context. After contacting every trades council in Britain, we narrowed those responding down to eight (Aberdeen; Blackburn; Blackpool; Coventry; Dundee; Moray; Sheffield; Wakefield), who shared their efforts across four sessions, ending with deeper reflection on the strategic uses of trades councils for transition struggles. This success is being followed-up by our 'Sheffield Transition Project' where we're currently exploring working closely with Sheffield trades council to develop a worker-led transition plan for the local area.

Since beginning in 2022, WCP's focus has been on connecting up those already taking on worker-climate organising, seeing low-hanging fruit in understanding and connecting these efforts. Coming into 2026, we are strategically reflecting on how to move from 'investigation' to 'instigation'—enabling those across the workers' movement to understand how they could begin taking worker-climate action, and supporting them directly if they do want to rise to this challenge. Partly, this has involved starting work on a 'Movement Assessment' to pull together as many examples of workers' transition organising as possible, allowing strong signposting and a political analysis of the movement so far. This will allow us to facilitate 'instigation' workshops for union branches wanting to start experimenting with new forms of worker-climate organising in their workplace. As with any aspect of the left's battles, there is no single clearly marked path to success, only critical lessons to take from those who've tried before. So we're committed to the spirit of tactical and strategic experimentation, critical reflection and comradely support which will be needed to forge our path forward and allow our movement to take on the historical role which is demanded of it.

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To live up to these ambitions, we need to grow our team of committed comrades. Get in touch at [tradeunions@workerclimate.org](mailto:tradeunions@workerclimate.org) to get involved or if you want WCP to speak/come to an event.



### What is Red Bird?

Red Bird is a bulletin for the British radical environmental movement. We want to encourage discussion about movement strategies and tactics. Print your own copies, discuss, and share with your fellow troublemakers.

### Write to us

Contact us on [redbirdbulletin@proton.me](mailto:redbirdbulletin@proton.me)  
We welcome letters of 100-150 words. Bulletin pieces are usually 500-700 words. Feel free to contact the editorial team for a longer discussion.



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