

Groundwork UK written evidence

About Groundwork

Groundwork is a federation of charities working locally and nationally to promote practical action on poverty and climate change. Groundwork was established in 1981 as a radical experiment to bring together communities, business and government in a joint effort to improve the quality of life and promote sustainable development in places that had become run-down and neglected. Over the past forty years, helping young people and those furthest from the labour market to access green jobs has been a core part of our work.

Based on our experience of providing employability support and delivering green jobs initiatives, Groundwork has three main recommendations for government to promote green jobs:

- Recognise the potential of job creation in the nature sector.
- Provide pathways into green jobs for people furthest from the labour market.
- Mainstream carbon literacy and pro-environmental decision-making as core employability skills.

Further details are given in response to the inquiry's terms of reference below.

1. What estimates are there for the jobs required to meet the pathway to net zero emissions, by sector, and other environmental and biodiversity commitments?

- 1.1. The transition to net zero carbon emissions has the potential to create hundreds of thousands of jobs. By 2030, reliable estimates suggest there could be as many as 694,000 direct jobs in the low-carbon and renewable energy economy, rising to over 1.18 million by 2050.¹ The National Grid has estimated that 400,000 jobs could be created in the energy sector over the next 30 years.²
- 1.2. There is no shortage of work to do in improving and protecting the natural environment. Based on the Government's current commitments, there is potential for an estimated 70,000 additional jobs to be created in nature over the coming years, including:³
 - 46,000 forestry jobs created to deliver the government's Tree Strategy;
 - up to 3,000 jobs through developers and the biodiversity net gain requirements; and
 - up to 14,000 jobs as a result of environmental land management, depending on its final shape.
- 1.3. In addition to this, there is a further need for jobs focused on connecting people with nature. The mental and physical health benefits of spending time in nature are well documented and current inequality in access to green space reinforces health inequalities.⁴ Investment in roles that facilitate the use of the natural environment to improve communities' health, including through social prescribing, should form part of plans for a green recovery.

¹ Local Government Association (2020), *Local green jobs – accelerating a sustainable economic recovery* <https://www.local.gov.uk/local-green-jobs-accelerating-sustainable-economic-recovery>

² National Grid (2020), *Building the net zero energy workforce* <https://www.nationalgrid.com/stories/journey-to-net-zero/net-zero-energy-workforce>

³ National Nature Service Briefing October 2020 <https://www.nationalnatureservice.org/content/uploads/2020/10/National-Nature-Service-briefing-October-2020.pdf>

⁴ Public Health England (2020), *Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904439/improving_access_to_greenspace_2020_review.pdf

2. Does the UK workforce have the skills and capacity needed to deliver the green jobs required to meet our net zero target and other environmental ambitions (including in the 25-year environment plan)?

- 2.1. The age profile of people in several sectors which are important to our climate and environmental ambitions is a challenge. Construction, waste, utilities, agriculture and parks management all have an ageing workforce and struggle to recruit younger people. The focus on green jobs is an opportunity to reverse long-term trends in these sectors. If we get the entry points and the training offer right, it can be a catalyst for building a younger and more diverse workforce.
- 2.2. The UK has a significant nature sector, largely charitable, which has the skills and expertise to deliver nature restoration and meet the ambitions of our climate targets and the 25-year environment plan. However, capacity is a major issue for the sector which is largely reliant on charitable sources of income to deliver environmental improvements. The Covid-19 has made it more difficult for many organisations to raise funds and further exacerbated capacity challenges.
- 2.3. One of the advantages of creating green jobs in nature is that the roles can be accessible to new entrants to the labour market with few skills or experience. Practical skills can be learned on the job and trainees can gain qualifications and transferable skills that will help them progress in their career. For example, trainees taking part in Groundwork's Green Teams work towards a Level 1 qualification in horticulture or land management while making improvements to the local environment that benefit their community.
- 2.4. In addition to creating new green jobs, the UK needs to make all jobs greener. For the UK to meet its climate targets, deep decarbonisation will be needed across every sector of the economy. This means that every worker must have a good understanding of climate change, the impact of their work on the environment, and how to reduce that impact. Environmental awareness and carbon literacy must be core employability skills for every sector and every role.

3. What needs to be done to ensure that these skills and capacity are developed in time to meet our environmental targets?

- 3.1. Tailored support will be needed to ensure that people who are long-term unemployed and furthest from the labour market are able to access green jobs. Groundwork has examples of models which have been successful in achieving this, for example through our Green Teams young people who are experiencing unemployment are supported to gain skills and qualifications in horticulture and environmental management, while making positive improvements to the area they live in. At The Loops community reuse hubs in London, people are able to gain skills in repairing and upcycling furniture and other household goods. Training, employment and volunteering opportunities are available for local residents. The goods are then sold to local people at affordable prices. Through Groundwork's Green Doctor programmes, people are trained to provide energy efficiency advice to households at risk of fuel poverty.
- 3.2. There is a further need to upskill work coaches and other professionals providing support to job seekers, or careers advice in education settings, to ensure that they understand the opportunities available in the green economy.
- 3.3. Another way that the government can ensure that these skills and capacity are developed in time to meet our environmental targets is to review the list of fundable qualifications supported by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Many environmentally focused qualifications have been removed from the list over the years. Adding qualifications in these

skills to the list of fundable courses would incentivise further education providers to offer these courses and lead to improved skills and capacity in the workforce.

- 3.4. Education on sustainable development should be reintroduced to the national curriculum. As the UK's ambitions are long term goals which we will be working towards for the next three decades, understanding those goals and how they might be achieved will be important competencies for young people as they enter the labour market. Not to educate on these concepts in schools does our young people a disservice.

4. What measures should the Government take to ensure that its proposals to meet environmental targets do not by default lead to jobs in affected industries being exported?

- 4.1. The transition to net zero carbon emissions is expected to lead to job losses in some industries. It is vital that a proactive approach is taken so that workers can access support and training before losing their roles. Through our Sustainable Business Services, Groundwork works closely with a range of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which are often part of the supply chain for bigger businesses. SMEs need support to improve their environmental performance and meet relevant supply chain standards. Providing support for SMEs to review their products and processes to meet the higher standards being adopted by global businesses will help to protect jobs in the UK.
- 4.2. The government should identify where jobs may be lost and work with those businesses and individuals to ensure that they can access the jobs created in low carbon industries such as home energy retrofit, which have significant environmental and social value. Businesses whose current operating models are incompatible with climate targets should be incentivised to transition into low carbon activities and to enable their staff to access relevant training and development.

5. What risks are there to meeting the Government's ambitions for green job creation in both the public and private sectors? What should the Government do to create the conditions to ensure its commitments are met by both sectors?

- 5.1. The government should use all available mechanisms to ensure that organisations across the public and private sectors behave in a way that furthers the UK's climate and environmental ambitions. This includes strengthening social value requirements in public procurement to ensure that services are delivered in the lowest carbon way possible. As discussed in 4.1, support should be offered to SMEs to reduce their impact on climate and the environment, which could be incorporated into Covid-19 recovery support.

6. Are the Government's ambitions for green job creation in the public and private sectors sufficient for the scale of the challenges? What changes should be made?

- 6.1. When it comes to the creation of new jobs in the nature sector, the need and appetite outstrip the funding available. The Green Recovery Challenge Fund, for example, was oversubscribed with applications to create nature-based jobs. These roles are, often literally, 'shovel ready' and even after the available funding was doubled to £80m it was not sufficient to meet the demand for entry level job creation in the sector. A strategic intervention is needed to meet the scale of the challenge.
- 6.2. The nature conservation sector has put forward a proposal for a National Nature Service, which could deliver nearly 10,000 entry-level jobs in 2021, supported by over 5,000 supervisory and expert roles. If the required funding can be found, this would create significant environmental benefits, with 4.5 million trees planted, 100,000 tonnes of carbon captured, 200,000 hectares of priority landscapes created or enhanced, communities protected from flooding and hundreds of

species helped. Under the scheme, jobs would be targeted to places that rank highest on indices of multiple deprivation where people are most likely to be affected by unemployment following the pandemic, including rural and coastal communities.⁵

- 6.3. There is also need for a more strategic intervention in home energy efficiency. Waiting for jobs to be created by market demand based on a voucher scheme will not work fast enough. We need to stimulate this market more significantly while creating the jobs to meet demand. This could be done in a targeted way, focusing initially on households at risk of fuel poverty. Figures show that 2.1 million households were behind on their energy bills in November 2020, 600,000 more than in February 2020, and this number is likely to have risen due to the winter temperatures and further restrictions to control the spread of Covid-19.
- 6.4. These job creation strategies need to be connected to existing labour market interventions such as Kickstart, Restart, the Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund. All these funding streams should be aligned to drive forward green job creation.

7. How can the UK ensure jobs are created in areas most impacted by the transition to a low-carbon economy?

- 7.1. Groundwork was established in 1981 as a radical experiment to bring together communities, businesses and government to improve the quality of life and promote sustainable development in places that had become run-down and neglected as a result of the industrial transition in the 1970s and 1980s. Some of these will be the same areas which will be most impacted by the transition to a low-carbon economy. From working with these communities over four decades, we know that retraining and job creation is not enough to regenerate a community. It needs to be accompanied with action to protect and rebuild the wider social infrastructure – the places, services and associations that tie people to place.
- 7.2. To ensure that green jobs are created in the areas that need them most, the UK should incentivise businesses and third sector organisations to work in areas most impacted by unemployment. However, simply being present in these communities is not enough, and specific interventions will be needed to ensure that local people benefit from the jobs being created. Organisations should work with specialist organisations to provide training and wrap-around support to local job seekers. It may be appropriate for the government to commission sector specific programmes to support people to make the transition from unemployment to working in the green economy.
- 7.3. The transition to a low-carbon economy should include stronger incentives to promote greater economic localisation based on the need to manage environmental goods, services and assets as part of community wealth building approaches.⁶ This will ensure that jobs are created in all areas rather than concentrated in ‘bubbles’ linked to specific industries.
- 7.4. Investment in nature recovery and improving the local environment should not be solely focused on the countryside. Instead, urban green spaces and communities on the urban fringe should be central to nature recovery strategies. This will help to maximise the health value created and ensure that jobs are created where they are most needed.

8. What additional interventions should be undertaken to aid in a ‘just transition’?

- 8.1. To enable people to take up green jobs, there must be accompanying investment in the parts of the economy that facilitate work. For example, to make work possible people must be able to

⁵ For further information see <https://www.nationalnatureservice.org/>

⁶ See Centre for Local Economic Strategies <https://cles.org.uk/the-community-wealth-building-centre-of-excellence/>

access care for children and adult dependents and low carbon transport. Women's employment has been especially badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and, as women are more likely to have caring responsibilities, it is therefore especially important to address this in the current context.⁷

- 8.2. As well as enabling people to take up green jobs, investment in jobs in care and person-centred sectors such as health and teaching would also further the UK's climate and environmental ambitions as these sectors are already relatively low carbon.⁸

9. What impact can green jobs have on the wider UK economy?

- 9.1. The focus should be on greening the 'wider UK economy' rather than solely on a narrow set of 'green jobs'. For the UK to meet its climate targets, deep decarbonisation will be needed across every sector of the economy. This means that every worker must have a good understanding of climate change, the impact of their work on the environment, and how to reduce that impact. Environmental awareness and carbon literacy must be embedded as core employability skills for every role.
- 9.2. Providing a stimulus for sectors which are central to the transition to a low-carbon economy will play a role in shifting the way the whole economy works. This should not be just a sectoral shift but also a shift towards a more localised economic model.
- 9.3. Alongside investing in jobs which are concerned with carbon reduction and environmental improvements, the government should invest in sectors which are already low carbon and for which demand is expected to rise, such as roles in health and social care.

10. What contribution can green jobs make to the UK's economic recovery from Covid-19?

- 10.1. Green jobs will have a crucial part to play in the UK's economic recovery from Covid-19. While many parts of the economy have suffered because of the pandemic, investment in green jobs makes it possible to grow sectors of the economy which are vital to our health and wellbeing, such as nature conservation, home energy retrofit and sustainable travel.
- 10.2. In the short term, investing in the nature sector offers the opportunity to get young people into work without increasing the risk of spreading Covid-19, as most roles can be carried out outside and there is scope to create entry level opportunities which provide transferable experience.
- 10.3. Creating jobs in green space and nature restoration also creates opportunities for communities to take part in healthy outdoor activities and to address the significant mental and physical deconditioning effects of lockdown through green social prescribing.

11. How can the UK ensure high emissions are not locked-in when tackling unemployment?

- 11.1. The government should ensure that any interventions in the labour market are designed to aid the UK's transition to a green economy. For example, there are no conditions in the current Kickstart scheme to ensure that the skills and experience young people develop are compatible with our climate and environment ambitions. There is a risk that high carbon industries use the scheme and young people end up with skills which will be redundant in a few years' time. The same is true of the Restart scheme currently being commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions. Changes to the design of these schemes to focus on roles which create value for

⁷ Alon, T., Dopke, M, Olmstead-Rumsey, J. & Tertilt, M. (22 September 2020), 'The shecession (she-recession) of 2020: Causes and consequences' <https://voxeu.org/article/shecession-she-recession-2020-causes-and-consequences>

⁸ Women's Budget Group (2020), *A Care-Led Recovery from Coronavirus: the case for investment in care as a better post-pandemic economic stimulus than investment in construction* <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Care-led-recovery-final.pdf>

communities and the environment would help drive forwards our environmental ambitions. Prime contractors should be encouraged and incentivised to focus on employer engagement, skills development and enterprise development in relevant sectors. Employment support providers have worked hard to embed better health expertise in their teams and solutions – they now need to do the same in terms of environmental expertise to ensure they are equipping their customers with the skills, confidence and connections to thrive in a low-carbon job market.

Groundwork would be happy to provide further evidence, either written or verbal.

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