



REPORT

Green European Foundation, with the support of Green Foundation Ireland and in partnership with SIPTU and the Dublin Council of Trade Unions, present a Seminar:

Jobs in a Changing Climate

Climate Change and how will it affect the livelihoods of thousands of workers



**Venue: Larkin Hall, Liberty Hall, Eden Quay, Dublin 1
*Saturday 23 June 2018 – 10:00 to 16:00***

This Seminar was presented by Green European Foundation with the support of Green Foundation Ireland and in partnership with SIPTU and the Dublin Council of Trade Unions. It was part of a transnational project of Green European Foundation with Green House Think Tank of the UK as the leading partner and included Green Foundation Ireland, Ecopolis (Hungary) and Strefa Zieleni (Poland) as the other partners.

The overall aim of the project was to address the problem of how to create more sustainable employment for workers who will eventually be displaced from fossil fuel based industries as climate change targets are applied throughout the EU.

It also proposed creative solutions that complement the International Labour Organization's framework on a Just Transition and the UK's One Million Climate Jobs initiative. The Dublin Seminar chose the proposed closure of the peat burning power stations in the Irish Midlands, with the displacement of thousands of jobs, as a practical example of where viable alternative livelihoods could be created. The unique metrics devised to forecast the numbers of jobs in different sectors of the local economy are transferable to other economies in Europe and elsewhere.

The Seminar was chaired by **Esther Twomey**, who is a former chair of PEDNEL in the UK. Esther described her early involvement in the trade union movement and Lucas Aerospace. As a teacher, she set up workshops within the polytechnics in Islington, London, facilitating ideas to offer people free help to establish themselves in the market.

Duncan Stewart, Chair of Green Foundation Ireland, spoke about the job opportunities in building energy retrofits to most of our buildings that can reduce energy demand by 80%, and switching from fossil fuel to renewable sources for heating in dwellings, commercial (retail stores, shops, offices) and public buildings (including schools, hospitals, state and local authority offices).

Adrian Kane, Public Administration and Community Division Organiser with SIPTU, was born a few miles from the Bog of Allen and became secretary of the Bord na Móna Group of Unions.

Where Now For the Bogmen?

Ensuring a 'Just Transition' for Midland Communities Reliant on Peat Excavation.

Communities in the Midlands who have been reliant for decades on Bord na Móna and the ESB for employment will suffer if a transition to a low carbon economy is not properly planned.

The trade union movement is attempting to affect a 'Just Transition' to a low-carbon economy; the need to de-carbonise our economy with workers' right to a livelihood. Rural electrification transformed provincial Ireland. Bord na Móna is now in decline in its core business as the bogs are being mined-out and no new ones are being harvested. What comes post industrialisation is typically poorly paid, precarious service industry jobs, such as cleaning, child-minding and elderly care, which have essentially been compartmentalised and outsourced. He stated that, just as the semi-state sector was key to the initial industrialisation of Ireland, its role in bringing about a Just Transition to a low-carbon economy can be equally as dynamic. Unless we plan our way to a low-carbon future it will not happen. The recent announcement by both Bord na Móna and the ESB in respect of the large-scale solar parks is a good example of this type of planning. The announcement to close-down Littleton briquette factory in Tipperary allowed insufficient time to plan for alternative jobs, with no time to allow for re-training, re-education and re-skilling.

The European Trade Union Congress (ETUC) has been working on the establishment of a 'Just Transition Fund' to give financial support to those workers who will be negatively impacted. The fund could be used for business creation and to help re-generation in parts of the Midlands which were heavily dependent on peat excavation. The type of jobs that have been created to date in the Irish economy in renewable energies have tended to be contract, non-unionised jobs, and not of a similar calibre to the jobs they are notionally replacing. We could see the end of decent well paid jobs in the energy sector. *"Now of course there are many new jobs that can be created in the green economy but the people we in SIPTU represent will be left behind in similar ways to which working-class people were left behind in the rust-belt communities of Britain and America,"* Adrian concluded.

Jonathan Essex from the UK Green House Think Tank discussed the projects he and Peter Sims carried out in both Sheffield and the Isle of Wight and the methods they used to propose green job creation opportunities.

Jonathan also discussed how important local economies are in the move towards a low-carbon transition. He identified the areas for job creation and green enterprise within farming and forestry, renewables, transport and construction. He pointed out the problems with centralisation of contracts and a lack of spending reaching rural areas. He highlighted the need for linking climate change with planning, by retrofitting rather than creating waste from new build, to move towards a circular economy. Local enterprise funding must shift away from roads building to more sustainable development.

Peter Sims explained the research modelling used by him and Jonathan Essex based on Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) areas which distinguishes one area from another for finding out green job potential metrics on energy sector, wind potential offshore, for example, retrofitting housing, transport, reuse and recycling, land use and the transition estimated at 7,000 new jobs.

Peter pointed out how complex this system is at calculating where future job creation opportunities may exist. He detailed how his estimate was measured, but some information is not available or simply does not exist. In these cases he has methods for making assumptions using land-use maps and house retrofitting by age of buildings. Transitions in shared transport, car shares, more public transport, reuse and recycling, assuming these areas will advance, multipliers are put in to predict the new jobs which will be created if we move towards a transition.

Sinéad Mercier has been an advisor on FÓRSA's and SIPTU's Just Transition research projects. She gave an overview of climate change agreements, our obligation to these agreements and the principles of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). She outlined the Just Transition principle and the 'No Jobs in a Dead Planet' campaign as a common ground between environmentalists and the trade union movement.

Sinéad also explained the origins of Just Transition as told through various activists who sought the protection of both the environment and workers. This was followed by a fascinating documentary of human history before the industrial era and local knowledge attached to the land such as the skill of using natural medicine associated with 'witches' led to diminished power of women as well as our relationship with the landscape.

Now governments are privatising climate action by using public funds for private investment. Sinéad offered solutions for the Irish Government to aid a fair and Just Transition, which also opens access for Trade Unions to new industries. The cost of subsidising peat-powered stations is €120 million per annum.

Joseph Curtin, of the Institute of International and European Affairs, talked about a 'Just Transition' to a low-carbon economy in Ireland and a re-evaluation of our relationship with our natural environment. Ireland's climate policy performance for buildings, transport and agriculture emissions is lagging far below legally binding EU targets. Joseph presented a proposal for jobs growth if we are to stay on track for EU targets and showed the jobs that are in decline, such as peat harvesting and generation, coal importing and distribution, with gas and oil to follow, marginal beef farming and processing, oil and gas exploration. The parallel growth in jobs will be in building retrofitting, renewables industries, climate-smart agriculture and smart grids.

Tommy Simpson, Projects Co-Ordinator with Green Foundation Ireland and a former President of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions, recalled the experience of the workers of Lucas Aerospace, who proposed an innovative approach to large-scale redundancies in the aerospace sector in the late 1970s. Known as the Lucas Plan (<http://lucasplan.org.uk>), where workers facing job losses developed their own plan, utilising their skills and abilities to manufacture socially useful products. The New Lucas Plan now also encompasses the problems thrown up by climate change and the ensuing job losses in fossil fuel based industries and power generation.

Impacts

Since our Seminar, the Irish government has announced grants for regeneration of towns and villages in rural Ireland. This will facilitate our research further.

Green Foundation Ireland is currently in discussions with Dublin City University and SIPTU to advance further research and studies to create enterprise and regeneration of towns and villages.