

City of Bristol Just Transition Declaration – Traditional Version

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Table of Contents

City of Bristol Just Transition Declaration – Traditional Version	1
Executive Summary	2
Purpose	3
Introduction	3
Declaration Authors	4
Declaration	4
Principles	7
Centring the expertise of disadvantaged communities at every step of the journey	7
Good future-proof jobs for everyone	7
Empowering disadvantaged communities to take climate and ecological action	8
Supporting individual change through system change	8
Fair distribution of costs and benefits	9
Prioritising accessible communication	9
Standing in solidarity with those experiencing the worst climate and ecological impacts across the globe	9
Building inclusive resilience	10
Infrastructure for all	10
Embedding the process internally and at the beginning	10
Next Steps	11

Appendix	11
Resources to support implementation	11
General guidance for businesses	14
Other Equalities initiatives in the city	14
Just Transition Work from other places	14

Executive Summary

This Just Transition Declaration has been written to accompany Bristol's Climate and Ecological Emergency Declarations and strategies. It should not be treated as an action plan of itself but is a set of 10 principles that all climate and ecological work in the city can embed into their plans to make them as just as possible.

The 10 principles, not in order of importance, are:

1. Centring the expertise of disadvantaged communities at every step of the journey,
2. Good future-proof jobs for everyone,
3. Empowering disadvantaged communities to take climate and ecological action,
4. Supporting individual change through system change,
5. Fair distribution of costs and benefits,
6. Prioritising accessible communication,
7. Standing in solidarity with those experiencing the worst climate and ecological impacts across the globe,
8. Building inclusive resilience,
9. Infrastructure for all,
10. Embedding the process internally and at the beginning.

Stakeholders large and small across Bristol are invited to sign up to the declaration to support, endorse and action its principles. The declaration is a living document that will be reviewed as the city's understanding of how to transition in a just way grows.

Purpose

Bristol has issued vital climate^[1] and ecological declarations^[2], and accompanying strategies^{[3][4]}, which have pledged the city to reach net zero and reverse its ecological decline by 2030. This declaration is an addition to these documents that commits their work to being just and clarifies what working in this way means.

The declaration is not an action plan of itself but a set of principles that every stakeholder in the city is invited to follow and embed in their work. To state their intention to work in this way, stakeholders are invited to sign up. We acknowledge that not all stakeholders will be carrying out work relevant to every principle, nor will every stakeholder have the power to influence in all areas. Instead, by signing up, stakeholders declare their intention to uphold these principles when they are relevant to the scope of their work. Guidelines on how to sign up can be found in the Next Steps section of the document.

Introduction

Just transition is complex and demanding work that requires engaging in difficult conversations without easy answers. Creating a just society is a goal that we must all reach for while holding onto the knowledge that a 'fully just' society might not be possible in our lifetimes. Indeed, the idea of perfection can lead to new problems because it creates a mindset where criticism is received with fragility. Instead, we must embrace the fact that we are all on a lifelong journey of continual efforts to improve our justice work.

By writing this declaration our hope is to make organisations and people in Bristol aware that they are on this journey and encourage them to commit to it by engaging in a process of constant listening, learning, humility and welcoming critique. Despite the challenges, we face this work with excitement because a just transition isn't about sacrifice and struggle, but co-creating the fair, healthy and sustainable Bristol that we all want to live in.

Declaration Authors

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The authors express their gratitude to all their fellow activists in equalities and community organisations who offered input and ideas for this declaration, including Suzanne Wilson at Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust, Emily Fifield at Easton Community Trust, and Anna Markova from the Trade Unions Congress, as well as others too numerous to list here.

Declaration

We are in a climate and ecological crisis. To address these crises, Bristol has committed to transitioning to a net zero city and reverse ecological decline by 2030. This crisis disproportionately affects those already facing economic and social inequalities, including but not limited to those associated with race and ethnicity, class, impairment and disability, faith, immigration status, gender, gender identity, age, and sexuality. We also recognise that it is possible for the work of transition to create new barriers and difficulties for these communities and for workers if it isn't created fairly. This is often as a result of exclusion from decision-making processes and other conversations around the crises. Bristol's transition must actively work

to prevent this by centring disadvantaged communities and workers through a just transition.

A successful transition cannot happen if it is not just. The climate and ecological crises are social problems that have their roots in a failure to respect all people, knowledge and life, and any attempt to address the crisis without tackling this root cause would be ineffective and short-lived. This is particularly relevant to Bristol given its prominent role in the history in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which built the wealth of the city at incomprehensible cost to the people it enslaved. The inequalities that arose from this egregious injustice are being further entrenched by the climate and ecological crises. This can be seen internationally, in the correlation between the countries that were colonised and the countries that are now experiencing the worst climate impacts^[5]. Yet it is also apparent in modern Bristol's racial inequalities and how Black and ethnic minority communities are among those most disproportionately impacted by the city's environmental problems, such as the higher levels of air pollution in areas of the city where many of these communities live^[6]. As we transition, we must address the harms of our city's past and seize this moment as an unmissable opportunity to positively reimagine its future to create a fairer, healthier, and more sustainable Bristol that values everyone.

With this in mind, we commit to a just transition. The concept of just transition was created by American and Canadian chemical unions in the 1970 to protect the rights of their workers as it became clear that many jobs needed to be phased out for the health of the planet and workers^[7]. The idea had strong roots in the work of working class, Black and ethnic minority communities who lived on the frontline of polluting industries and had been campaigning for a healthier environment since the Civil Rights Era^[8]. As Bristol undergoes a transition that is no less radical, we must ensure that both its

workers and disadvantaged communities are at the heart of these changes. Its locus is not only the economy but society as a whole, and the work must consider its wide-reaching impacts on all those living and working in the transitioning and transitioned city.

This declaration follows vital work carried out on an international and institutional level, including the acknowledgement of the Paris Agreement^[9] on "the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities" and the International Labour Organisation's guidelines^[10] for a just transition. We have also been inspired by the work of the Climate Justice Alliance's Just Transition: A Framework for Change, which uses the historical connections between the union origins of just transition and civil rights movement to "adapt the definition of Just Transition to represent a host of strategies to transition whole communities to build thriving economies that provide dignified, productive and ecologically sustainable livelihoods; democratic governance and ecological resilience."^[11]

This declaration sets out how the concept can be translated to a Bristol level. The definition we are using for this document therefore understands just transition to be mitigation, adaptation, and system change action that is:

1. A redistribution of resources and power that works against systems of oppression based on social and economic divisions with a focus on preventing inequalities being further entrenched for workers and communities and instead actively builds a future that is good for all,
2. Inclusive, and makes a point to continuously work with affected communities and workers,

3. In line with our commitment to reach net zero by 2030 but understands differentiated responsibilities that acknowledge ability, resources, and impact,
4. In solidarity with those suffering the worst climate and ecological impacts in other places.

Principles

Justice is measured in action not words. To work towards a meaningful just transition we commit to embedding the following principles in all our work:

Centring the expertise of disadvantaged communities at every step of the journey:

Communities have the right to participate meaningfully in decisions that directly affect them, so we commit to embedding the input of disadvantaged groups at every stage of our climate and ecological work, from the very beginning phases of planning, through to decision-making, implementation, and further development. We will also create space for feedback and review. We recognise the expertise in these communities and the power that they have to rally the people of Bristol behind the transition, and so will favour meaningful co-creation processes over consultation. The human rights of these communities will be central at all stages.

Good future-proof jobs for everyone: Along with communities, workers must be at the heart of transition. They are experts on what is needed to effectively transition and their own needs. So, where we have power to facilitate the shift in jobs required by transition, we will centre worker's voices and ensure they can take a leading role in redefining their workplaces for a just, zero-carbon future. Particular care will be given to working alongside workers who currently make a living in carbon-intensive activities to ensure that there are clear and accessible pathways for them to thrive in a net zero Bristol. This will include regular dialogue with unions about climate action plans

and their forecasted impact. All new jobs will be good jobs that are well paid, flexible, accessible, safe, meaningful, stable, and have union recognition. Redeployment will include creating programmes to inform, educate and upskill that should be free or affordable and accessible to all. As an employer, we will co-produce a worker-led just transition agreement on how our current and future jobs can align with a just, zero-carbon future^[12]. We will ensure that those who experience social and economic disadvantages benefit from green jobs through tailoring our training, communications, employment process and workplaces to make them accessible to these communities. We will also consider the needs of people who are currently locked out of work because of injustices in our system. We will take active measures to recruit individuals from diverse backgrounds into roles at every level of our organisation.

Empowering disadvantaged communities to take climate and ecological action: We will embed the priorities of the community climate action plans from across the city into our work and offer support to enable communities to bring their climate and ecological projects to fruition. We recognise that transition cannot be achieved without the work of communities and will develop policies and processes that empower and complement this and make an active effort to avoid barriers being placed in their way.

Supporting individual change through system change: We will prioritise changing systems over individual action where people don't have the ability or resources to make the sustainable choice. We are all responsible and need to act, but we aren't equally at fault for causing the crises nor do we have equal power to bring about the solutions. A just transition will happen when everyone is empowered to act in the areas where they do have influence and when changes to the system are made so that sustainable action becomes the sensible, affordable, and desirable choice for all.

Fair distribution of costs and benefits: Climate schemes, such as installing solar panels or buying an electric car, can save people money but often require privilege and money to access. They also often create the largest burdens for those who don't have spare capital to adapt to changes. We will address existing economic and social inequality by equitably distributing the financial burdens and benefits of climate and ecological work. We will ensure that people in our city not only benefit from the outputs of climate work but from the investment towards these schemes staying in our communities. Where opportunities arise, we will work towards a more progressive and circular economy for the city.

Prioritising accessible communication: We recognise that many of the barriers and difficulties related to the crises are the result of information about them being inaccessible. We will produce our key climate and ecological resources in translated formats, including non-English languages, Plain English, audio, BSL and Easy Read. Other formats can be available on request. Staff who engage with communities will be trained on how to do this work in a way that respects them as equals and meets their communication needs.

Standing in solidarity with those experiencing the worst climate and ecological impacts across the globe: The climate and ecological crises forcefully disprove the notion that any city or country stands alone. Bristol is intimately tied to the world beyond its borders through our climate, ecosystems, economy, resources, and culture, and we cannot have a just transition without acknowledging this two-way exchange. We stand in solidarity with all people suffering because of these crises and will work to have a positive impact beyond our borders by examining the direct and indirect impacts of our work, including any products, supply-chains, processes, waste, and any other relevant aspects of our operations. We will ensure Bristol has a

welcoming culture and ethos to those who have been displaced and respects the human rights of all.

Building inclusive resilience: Where applicable to our work, we will take action to ensure disadvantaged communities don't bear the impacts of the environmental extremes arising from the climate and ecological crises, many of whom are already facing higher costs, barriers, and struggles. This disproportionate impact will be a key factor in decision-making around policy, planning and the allocation of resources when building resilience.

Infrastructure for all: The process of transition will radically reshape the built and natural environment of our city and the transport system for moving through it. If we are involved in designing and building these spaces, we will be conscious about the ideologies and priorities implicit within them, moving beyond spaces designed around cars and other fossil fuel infrastructure to those that centre people, communities, and nature. These spaces must be accessible and welcoming to all. Work in this area must be seized on to create the opportunities and skills for good and future-proof jobs.

Embedding the process internally and at the beginning: We live in a national and global society that is often unjust and this leaves its mark on all of us, meaning that, as well as engaging in external action, a just transition calls on everyone to do the internal work of reflecting on and advancing our thinking, attitudes, and behaviours. This includes recognising how our prejudices shape both whose voices we consider to be of value in climate and ecological work and how stereotypes impact on how we interpret and judge people's actions. We will take active steps to challenge these biases in our thinking and embrace the skills and work that everyone in our city can bring. Our equalities work will be of the highest standard, using protected characteristics as a minimum then going further to include social class and considering the intersectionality of these

traits. Mistakes will inevitably happen from time to time but when they do we will review and use the experience to better our practice for the future. We will embed these principles from the start and embrace challenges from communities as an opportunity for growth as part of a process of continual listening, empathy, and humility.

Next Steps

We invite every organisation—political, economic, and social—in the city to follow these ten principles in their plans and actions and evaluate their progress on this at yearly intervals. To sign up to commit to working in this way, please email

BristolJTDeclaration@gmail.com.

The authors of this document recognise that our understanding of what a just transition is will develop over time and through conversations as we continue to engage with communities on this issue. Though we envisage the core principles remaining the same, other than in extraordinary circumstances, this declaration will be treated as a living document that we will continue to review.

Just transition is a complex journey that will call on all of us to challenge ourselves. Yet we welcome this work because the reward is creating the city and future that we all deserve to live in.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." - Martin Luther King: Letter from Birmingham, Alabama jail, April 16, 1963

Appendix

Resources to support implementation

1. **Centring the expertise of disadvantaged communities every step of the journey**

1. [Carnegie UK - A Toolkit for Co-production in Community Planning](#)
2. [Six Modes of Co-production for Sustainability](#)
3. [NIACE - Reaching and Engaging Disadvantaged Groups in and through Community Learning](#)
4. [C40 Cities - Inclusive Community Engagement](#)
2. **Green jobs to protect the rights of workers and disadvantaged communities**
 1. [Campaign Against Climate Change - Climate Jobs: Building a workforce for the climate emergency book](#),
 2. [Groudwork - Green Careers Report](#),
 3. [C40 - Cities Good Green Jobs](#),
 4. [TUC - A just transition to a greener, fairer economy](#),
 5. [Syndicat European Trade Union - Involving Trade Unions in climate action to build a Just Transition](#),
 6. [International Labour Organisation - Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all](#),
3. **Empowering disadvantaged communities to take climate and ecological action**
 1. Bristol Green Capital Partnership's [Community Climate Action project](#),
4. **Supporting individual change through system change**
5. **Fair distribution of costs and benefits**
6. **Prioritizing accessible communication**
 1. [Government guidelines for accessible communication](#),
 2. [Creating accessible PDFs](#),
 3. [North Yorkshire County Council - A Guide to Producing Information in Easy Read](#),
 4. [A2i - document translation services](#),

5. [Bristol City Council Translation Service](#),
7. **Standing in solidarity with those experiencing the worst climate and ecological impacts across the globe**
 1. [B Lab - The Climate Justice Playbook for Business: How to Centre Climate Action in Climate Justice](#)
 2. [Greenhouse Gas Protocol - Corporate Value Chain \(Scope 3\) Standard](#)
 3. [BSR - Supply Chain Sustainability](#)
 4. [SDG Action Manager](#)
8. **Building inclusive resilience**
 1. [Partners for Resilience - Building Inclusive Resilience](#)
 2. [Inclusive Spaces: Disability-Inclusive Design for Climate Resilient Cities](#)
 3. [COP26 - Disability, Resilience and inclusion in our cities](#)
 4. [European Environment Agency - Towards 'just resilience': leaving no one behind when adapting to climate change](#)
9. **Infrastructure for all**
 1. [Making Technology Accessible and Inclusive](#)
 2. [Inclusive Mobility](#)
 3. [C40 Cities - Access and persons with disabilities in urban areas](#)
10. **Embedding the process internally and at the beginning**
 1. [Bristol Disability Equality Forum - Protest for All guide](#)
 2. [A challenging environment: Experiences of ethnic minority environmental professionals](#)
 3. [The definitive guide to disability inclusion in the workplace](#)
 4. [Nus - Race, inclusivity and environmental sustainability](#)
 5. [Politics, Voice, and Just Transition: Who has a Say in Climate Change Decision Making, and Who Does Not](#)

6. [ACAS - Improving equality, diversity and inclusion in your workplace](#)
7. [Bond - Anti-racism and decolonising: A framework for organisations](#)
8. [Stonewall - Best Practice, toolkits and resources](#)

General guidance for businesses

1. BTeam: [Just Transition: A Business Guide](#),
2. BITC: [The Right Climate For Business: leading a just transition](#),
3. UN Global Compact: [Introduction to a Just Transition: A Business Brief](#),
4. UKRI: [Net Zero business models for a Just Transition](#),
5. LSE: [Translating just transition ambitions into investor action](#), includes a framework of expectations of business on the just transition,
6. SSE case study [Just Transition Strategy](#) followed by [Just Transition: From principles to action](#),
7. [Just Transition Centre - Just Transition: A business guide](#)
8. [Better Business Act](#)
9. [B Corp Impact Assessment](#)

Other Equalities initiatives in the city

1. [Bristol's Commission on Race Equality](#),
2. [Bristol Women's Commission](#),
3. [Bristol Disability Equality Commission](#),

Just Transition Work from other places

1. [The People's Transition - Rural Ireland](#),
2. [Just Transition - Climate Justice Alliance](#),
3. [Just Transition Commission - Scottish Government](#),

4. [United Nations - Just transition of the workforce, and the creation of decent work and quality jobs](#),
5. [Decolonising Economics](#)

[1] [Climate Emergency declaration passed at Full council November 2018](#)

[2] [Ecological Emergency declaration issued by the Mayor and One City partners February 2020](#)

[3] [One City Climate Strategy issued February 2020](#)

[4] [One City Ecological Emergency Strategy issued November 2020](#)

[5] Colonialism as a historic and ongoing driver of the climate crisis is recognised by the the [2022 IPCC report](#)

[6] <http://erg.ic.ac.uk/research/home/projects/Bristol.html>

[7] You can read more about the history of the term in the Scottish Just Transition Commission report: [link](#).

[8] You can read more about this history in the Climate Justice Alliance Just Transition report: [link](#).

[9] <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>

[10]

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_432859.pdf

[11] <https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/>

[¹²] Inspiration can be taken from worker's led just transition plans such as that created by workers at Rolls Royce: [Link](#).