

Briefing

House of Commons Report stage on the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill

21 February 2022

Overview of the bill

The bill forms the legislative underpinning for further education reforms set out in the Department for Education's [Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth](#) white paper, published in January 2021. It will also address recommendations from the [Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#), published in May 2019.

The bill is currently a missed opportunity for climate and nature

The Skills and Post-16 Education Bill is a clear opportunity to bridge the government's ambitions on environment and levelling up through promoting and encouraging green skills. The bill was [amended](#) in the House of Lords to include environmental considerations in local skills improvement plans (section 1(6)), but there is currently no provision to embed climate and nature within higher and further education nor set out a wider, national strategy for green skills.

This is a missed opportunity for climate and nature. Green Alliance's latest report, [Closing the UK's green skills gap](#), finds that every major sector in the UK economy faces a significant skills gap.

- Eighty per cent of the 2030 workforce are currently already in the workplace, meaning that large numbers must be retrained and upskilled in low carbon jobs to help the UK meet its net zero target.
- Sectors with the most immediate need to cut carbon emissions face the most acute shortages. The transport sector, for example, is set to create 175,000 jobs in the next 13 years, but these jobs will require new skills in battery manufacturing, electrification engineering and developing sustainable aviation fuels.
- Green skills are especially important in the least productive regions, such as the West Midlands, North East and East Midlands which have large proportions of people employed in high carbon industries. In these areas, green skills policy could form part of a specific levelling up transition package.

To close the green skills gap, our report recommends the development of an integrated green skills programme which delivers for individuals, institutions and industry. This includes creating a framework for green jobs to match supply and demand regionally and across sectors, a 130 per cent super-deduction for training, new green courses, and supporting retraining workers.

Priority amendments to support

We would therefore very much welcome your support for the following amendments during the Report stage debate.

NC4 – Green Skills Strategy (Chris Skidmore, Caroline Ansell, Siobhan Baillie, Andrew Bowie)

This new clause would require the secretary of state to publish a national green skills strategy which would set out a plan to support people to attain skills which will directly contribute to or indirectly support climate change and environmental goals.

NC14 – Recognition of skills in the energy sector (Caroline Lucas)

This new clause would facilitate cross-sector recognition of skills and training between the oil and gas sector and the renewable energy sector.

NC15 – Retraining guarantee for oil and gas workers (Caroline Lucas)

This new clause would establish a retraining guarantee for oil and gas workers seeking to leave the sector, supporting them in transitioning to green energy jobs.

Closing the green skills gap can help level up

The transition to net zero offers new economic opportunities that can be harnessed to level up the country. Research shows that with a better green skills provision the government can create high wage, high skilled labour across the UK, especially in regions facing significant employment challenges.

- Onward research shows that wages in net zero jobs are 30 per cent higher than carbon intensive jobs and have an average skill level 26 per cent higher than the current average occupational level in the UK.
- Green Alliance research has found that a transformation shift towards a ‘circular economy’ could create 450,000 gross jobs by 2035. This could mean opportunities for engineers at a new bio-refining plant in the North East and skilled repairers of machinery and electronics in the West Midlands.
- Green Alliance research demonstrates that improving peatland, woodland, and urban parks could create at least 16,000 entry level and skilled jobs across 20 per cent of the constituencies experiencing the most severe employment challenges coming out of the pandemic.

There is broad public support for jobs in the green economy:

- The [Centre for Towns](#) recorded 79 per cent support for green jobs in big cities and 75 per cent in small towns.
- Half of those aged 18-34 who spoke to [Good Energy](#) said that they wanted a job in the green economy.
- Our [focus groups](#) indicate that while public knowledge of the green economy is low there is broad enthusiasm in the prospect of green jobs. However, the public needs evidence that the green economy is not just a short term project by making green jobs and skills the safe option.

To ensure that the UK's environmental targets are as a central consideration in the development of local and national skills strategies, please consider supporting NC4, NC14 and NC15 when the bill is discussed in Report stage in the House of Commons on [21 February](#).

For more information, contact:

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