

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT GREEN JOBS, WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Perspectives from the Cornwall Green Jobs Summit - 26 November 2021

There is no agreed definition of Green Jobs

The first jobs that come to mind when Green Jobs are mentioned often include renewable technology, or ecological roles. But almost all jobs and industries can be green, and will need to be green if we are to meet our environmental and ecological ambitions.

- What do we mean by Green Jobs? What assumptions and biases affect our view of what they are and could be?
- What will others hear when we talk about Green Jobs? Whose vision of Green Jobs are we contributing to?

Green Jobs must be for One and All

Not everyone can do every job, but we need to use the opportunity that Green Jobs promise to improve Cornwall's employment system. If we only create the jobs, then the existing barriers to work will lead to these jobs being accessible to very few local people. Across Cornwall, one in five children live below the poverty line (1): we do not have equality of opportunity.

- Our transport infrastructure makes it hard for those without access cars to access opportunities more than 5 miles away. While public and active transport options are a priority, what else can be done to provide jobs and training where they are needed?
- What qualifications are we asking for, and why? New jobs bring potential to rethink how we measure the skills and experiences required to meet the opportunities of Green Jobs.
- How will Cornwall's housing crisis affect our ability to bring Green Jobs to our communities? We need more support for young people to live and work in Cornwall.

Not just Green Jobs, we need Green Careers

For a job to be sustainable, it can't just be green, it needs to be well-paid and reliable as well. As new Green Jobs become available, we have to create pathways for people to see how they can work towards them, and where they will lead.

- We need more funding for apprenticeships, with consideration to how people can afford to live near and travel to them.
- Where will these jobs be advertised? Who can see them? Is it clear what skills are needed and where they can be developed?
- Who is currently falling through the gaps in Cornwall? We need more than simply jobs to address inequality, including diversity bursaries to create equity of opportunity.
- 40% of our workers earn less than the Real Living Wage and do not have enough to meet their basic needs (2). Temporary and zero-hours contracts create a culture of insecurity and low resilience to ill-health or other crises.

Jobs are changing as Cornwall changes

Cornwall's climate is changing, and all aspects of our society are changing as we respond to the threats and opportunities that the climate emergency brings. The idea of Green Jobs comes with a need to reframe how we think about work, and to reflect on the dramatic shifts that have already begun since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Our understanding of how we value different jobs is changing. Care work and hospitality are more recognised as both key to Cornwall's economy but also significantly more dangerous roles to work in during a health crisis.
- Change can bring uncertainty and fear, for job-seekers and employers. How clear is our messaging that Green Jobs are a necessity for our future? What more can we do to communicate the benefits and opportunities they will bring?
- It's easier to see the jobs that have disappeared than the jobs that are emerging. How do we communicate how the labour market is changing? How do we reach all ages and areas of our communities, to ensure that people don't feel alienated from new Green Jobs?
- Our workforce is changing. People are retiring later, migrant labour is less accessible. How do we support Cornwall's small, local and family run businesses to respond to these changes, and create new ideas of what work means in Cornwall?

Making existing jobs greener

Not all Green Jobs are new jobs, connected to new technology or social priorities. From plumbers to musicians to politicians, if we are to reach our targets, then all jobs must become green or they face the risk of being replaced.

- We need to embed sustainability across the curriculum at all levels of education. No matter what is studied, there will need to be Green Jobs at the end of it.
- Businesses and other organisations account for around 30% of Cornwall's carbon emissions (3). There will be incentives and requirements for all of Cornwall's businesses to ensure their workforce are skilled and knowledgeable about sustainability.
- Some of Cornwall's existing workforce will need to transition into new careers, or gain new skills and training, as the economy shifts towards net-zero. Green Jobs can provide future-proofed work, and should be our best security as we adapt to the demands of climate change.

We cannot achieve our ambitions without real Green Jobs

Green Jobs are not a nice-to-have, they are essential. We face not only the climate crisis, but also an unemployment crisis, made worse but not caused by the pandemic. The sooner we invest in a Green Jobs revolution for Cornwall, the sooner we will be able to rebuild a society that is safe, fair and thriving for One and All.

- The average economic scarring impact of future wages lost for one year's unemployment for an 18-21 year old over the next 20 years is estimated at £47k to £63k (4).
- For Cornwall, the economic scarring estimate in lost wages over the next 20 years for 16-24 year olds is between £276m and £303m (5).
- Green Jobs will bring many other economic benefits, including savings to the NHS from associated increases in health and wellbeing across Cornwall.