

A Just Transition to a Low Carbon Economy

in Hampshire and the Solent



Executive Summary

This report examines how the concept of a Just Transition to a low-carbon economy has been applied in other regions of the UK and explores how it could be applied in Hampshire and the Solent to maximise benefits from decarbonisation.

A Just Transition acknowledges that a switch to a low carbon economy can have negative impacts on people and communities, often a greater impact on those who are underrepresented and vulnerable, and that policies and initiatives need to recognise these tensions. Policy professionals and researchers carried out a review of academic literature, international policies and case studies as well as engagement with people across Hampshire and the Solent to gather perspectives and platform community voices.

Research with community representatives from Hampshire and the Solent revealed limited awareness and understanding of a Just Transition. However, the concept of a Just Transition is a useful tool to consider who could and should benefit from a transition, and centres public participation in decision-making. Community representatives from Hampshire and the Solent produced a vision for Hampshire and the Solent where communities play a greater role in planning and decision making. They developed a set of recommendations which call for the future Mayor of Hampshire and the Solent to ensure the principles of a Just Transition are embedded in future policy decisions.



Key takeaways and action points

The elected Mayor of Hampshire and the Solent could:



Recognise the need for and plan a Just Transition to a low carbon economy



Engage in meaningful public consultation in co-developing Just Transition and decarbonisation plans using methods such as storytelling and local workshops, and engaging a range of stakeholders so that marginalised voices are heard.



Structure Just Transition implementation plans with clear timelines and measurable outcomes creating greater transparency over plans and impacts for residents.



Consider their international responsibility, avoiding unjust impacts on global communities as a result of changes to supply chains and resource consumption.

PART 1

Views and visions of Hampshire and the Solent Residents

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report provides a summary of the "Just Transition for Hampshire and the Solent" project. Its purpose is to enable policy makers and businesses to better consider the views of residents in their transition planning to a low-carbon future and reflect on the potential for greater public participation in decision making. For definitions of a Just Transition, see Part 2 of this report.

The research team sought to understand what people living in Hampshire and the Solent think a 'fair' outcome of a low-carbon transition is, and how they would like to be involved in the process through engaging with 44 representatives from a range of Hampshire locations and communities. The outputs of the work should be considered by local authorities and local businesses to inform their thinking on how to involve residents in decision making processes in the future, as well as identifying new research questions and impact projects for the University of Southampton.

Background

The UK has committed to delivering Net Zero Greenhouse Gas emissions by 2050 along with interim carbon budgets. However, the process by which this legally binding commitment will be achieved, and the type of societal, economic and technological changes that we will see are not yet determined. Decarbonisation planning is therefore underway across all sectors of the economy. The Sustainability and Resilience Institute has been engaging with citizen voices in decarbonisation planning for the past two years including contributing to the Solent Local Industrial Decarbonisation plan funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero." This work has included hosting a 'What works for community voices in decarbonisation conference for over 50 local stakeholders in 2024'. Analysis of these meetings revealed participants felt there were limited pathways for residents of Hampshire and the Solent to share their perspectives with policy makers and businesses in these strategic planning processes.

The UK Government committed to producing a Public Participation Strategy for Net Zero this year. Simultaneously, cities and towns across the UK have been exploring co-development of Just Transition plans with their residents and businesses, but the concept of a Just Transition is yet to be explored at a regional scale. There is also a wealth of UK level research on peoples' opinions on Net Zero and their perceptions of fairness this research isn't specific to our region. We are looking to fill these two gaps.

1.2 WHAT WE DID WE DO?

We delivered a series of engagement activities to gather perspectives and voices of local people about how they envision a 'Just Transition' for the Hampshire and the Solent. The activities built on work carried out in other locations and sought to develop a more localised perspective. We ran two-focus groups with 11 local residents, alongside a public survey which had 33 responses. Recruitment was carried out by Action Hampshire, an organisation which champions communityled action and seeks to raise the voices of marginalised and seldom heard communities. Both engagement methods explored the concept of a Just Transition, visions for the future and participation in decision making. In addition, the focus groups attendees co-produced a set of recommendations for the incoming elected Mayor of Hampshire and the Solent, highlighting the ways a Just Transition should be achieved in Hampshire and the Solent on a range of themes. This report lays out the perspectives and views of those who engaged with the project, in order to provide an insight into the preferences of communities across the geographic breadth of Hampshire and the Solent. We simultaneously ran an online survey to gather further perspectives on a Just Transition and how people living and working in Hampshire and the Solent might like to be considered in policy and decision-making processes on decarbonisation. The survey questions were based on the public participation survey questions used by Glasgow City Council in their Just Transition Consultation.

1.3 WHAT DID WE FIND OUT?

Findings from engagement with community representatives is laid out in two key themes. What is fairness and justice, and reflections on influence and involvement with decision-making.

Notions of justice and fairness

→ How familiar are people with a "Just Transition"?

The concept of a Just Transition seems to still be situated within academic literature and less so public discourse. It has not yet filtered into common language or everyday discussions about a low-carbon transition. Whilst all respondents to the survey were "Very concerned" or "Somewhat concerned" about climate change, and considered it to be an immediate and serious problem, only half of respondents had heard of a "Just Transition" before. This was similar for the community representatives in the focus group.

→ What do fairness and equality look like in the context of climate policy?

Community representatives shared that in the context of climate change policy, fairness means access to equal opportunities regardless of context or circumstances. They highlighted the importance of minimising financial disparity as an outcome of climate policies, and that small business and the workforce are at risk of being disadvantaged. Decision-making should take care to consider, and where necessary prioritise: vulnerable people, minorities, disabled people, young people inheriting the climate crisis and workers who need reskilling and alternative employment. They also highlighted that fairness and equality requires consideration of future generations, not just those who will be immediately impacted. They felt that policy making should be representative of diverse lived experiences and should involve stakeholders through public participation from the start of the design process.

"Fairness means providing everyone with opportunities to thrive" Community representative

→ What does a "Just Transition" mean to you?

Firstly, discussions with community representatives highlighted that it is important to clearly define what we are transitioning from and to, when using the concept. Defining the goals and outcomes of a transition is a key part of the public participation process. Building a strong sense of community was at the core of the discussion. Priority outcomes for a Just Transition included equity in jobs, homes, transport, and green spaces. Community representatives said a Just Transition should affect the following key aspects of everyday life in the region:

→ WORK & EMPLOYMENT

Fair green jobs and inclusive training opportunities

\rightarrow EDUCATION

Climate literacy and future-oriented skills provision

ightarrow FOOD SYSTEMS

Local, affordable, sustainable options

\rightarrow TRANSPORT

Accessible, low-emission and integrated mobility for all

ightarrow HOUSING & ENERGY

Warm, efficient, affordable homes

ightarrow NATURE & GREEN SPACE

Equitable access and preservation

In addition, the priority policies perceived to have the greatest positive impact on quality of life were improvements to public transport, reducing resource consumption and waste, and generating more renewable energy.

Community representatives highlighted the need for inclusivity, ensuring the voices of marginalised and underrepresented groups are included in planning, decision-making, and sharing of benefits to achieve a Just Transition in Hampshire and the Solent. They also highlighted that a lack of clear responsibility for who is accountable for delivering a low-carbon transition as a key risk to achieving these outcomes, noting the shared expectation on national governments, local governments, business and citizens.

"[A Just Transition means] understanding that social justice and climate justice are connected. Moving to a low carbon future in a way that is fair and that brings everyone along." – Community representative

"[A Just Transition means] moving to an approach which does not exacerbate equalities, so responding to the needs of people already subject to inequalities and socioeconomic disadvantages." – Community representative

""[A Just Transition means] Responding to the needs of people already subject to inequalities and socioeconomic disadvantages." - Community representative

Influence and participation in decision making:

\rightarrow Current influence and participation:

Community representatives expressed varied levels of optimism about the future, from cautious optimism to deep concern. In the first focus group two key questions were posed: How optimistic are you about Hampshire and the Solent's future and how much influence do you believe you have on that future? Participants positioned themselves on a spectrum from pessimistic to optimistic and then along a second axis showing their perceived personal or collective influence. This activity, named the Polak Game, revealed that while some felt hopeful, many felt they had limited influence over what happens at decision-making level —highlighting a need to empower communities through better public engagement. Similarly, only 2 of our survey respondents felt that businesses listen to the concerns and priorities of people living in Hampshire and the Solent when making decisions, and there was a call for greater transparency from council led decisions.

When asked what their local council could do to ensure a fairer and greener county one community representative said: "Increase transparency around

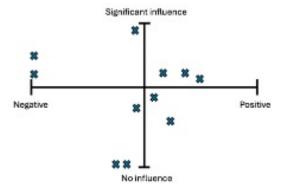


Figure 1. Polak Activity Responses

decisions that local councils are making to develop a greener country...explain why the decisions have been made and the effect that they are expected to have" – Hampshire and the Solent resident

> Preference for future engagement mechanisms

When reviewing Just Transition programmes in other UK regions, Focus Group participants highlighted the following strengths, which should be considered when developing an approach for the region:

- The scope of any plans, visions or recommendations should be clear and recommendations should be detailed and place specific, relevant to the local context.
- When developing visions, they shouldn't be too far into the future, such as 2045 or 2050, as this diminishes accountability of leadership now and may delay action.
- Language used should be accessible to non-expert audiences to allow all people affected by a low-carbon

transition to engage.

 Recommendations should be targeted at specific groups, to enable action and accountability.
 For example, the Glasgow Just Transition
 Recommendations are split into categories such as "Glasgow City Council Actions" and "The role of citizens, trade unions and communities".

When asked how they would like to share their views with councils and businesses, there was a preference for regular consultation on upcoming decisions and the co-creation of principles for policy makers to apply to decisions and an increase in two-way communication.

1.4 CO-DEVELOPED VISION, PRINCIPLES, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HAMPSHIRE AND THE SOLENT

Focus group participants were asked to review the methods used in other places in the UK, to help identify what would work for Hampshire. They agreed to coproduce a Hampshire and the Solent specific output vision and set of recommendations that reflected their values and priorities. The objective is to influence councils and businesses and raise the visibility of community voices. Moving forward, it can be developed as basis for ongoing dialogue and collaboration.

Just Transition Vision for Hampshire and the Solent: "By 2035 Hampshire and the Solent will be a model green region having achieved a low-carbon thriving life for both current and future generations. Communities and industries prosper in harmony together in a circular economic. Local government prioritises climate and nature, and communities have a strong voice in decision-making."

Guiding principles:

- All decisions should be based on an assessment of environmental limits, sustainable development goals and ensuring no one is left behind.
- Nature should be represented and considered in decisions.
- Mechanisms should be made available for citizens to participate in decision making.

Specific local recommendations:

 Transport: Co-ordinate and deliver a low-carbon, reliable and integrated transport system focused on people in underserved areas. Providing active travel and public transport that is connected and joined-up to help reduce car dependency.

- Skills and Employment: Green skills training and education are made widely available to people of all ages and backgrounds, equipping the local workforce for jobs in critical areas for net zero, anticipating the future skills requirements of local industry.

 Build awareness of the importance of individual and collectively action in tackling carbon emissions and biodiversity loss.
- Business and Research: Develop a circular economy where local supply chains are key to Hampshire and the Solent's economic development. Support businesses to adapt to climate change.
- Housing and Planning: Work with developers and the planning system to adopt low carbon building standards, prioritising affordable homes. Ensure residents and business owners in the most climate vulnerable areas are supported to implement adaptation measures to improve climate resilience.
- Public Services: Ensure public services reach those who need them most, operating in a timely, efficient and low-carbon way.

Figure 2 Co-produced Vision and Recommendations

PART 2

What is a Just Transition and how has the concept been used

2.1 WHAT IS A JUST TRANSITION?

The World Future Council defines a 'Just Transition' as a shift away from reliance on fossil fuels toward sustainable value creation to address injustices associated with challenges, such as:

- → Exclusion of affected groups from meaningful social and political participation,
- → Failure to consider the interests and needs of societal groups, particularly workers in unsustainable industries facing job loss due to economic restructuring,
- → Unequal distribution of benefits which disproportionately accumulate with a small subset of stakeholders,
- → Insufficient provision of re-skilling opportunities for workers facing job loss due to transition to renewable energy systems,
- → Inadequate efforts to create new employment opportunities aligned with climate and environmental goals in regions affected by job loss due to restructuring.

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A Just Transition therefore aims to ensure the costs and benefits of a low-carbon economy are distributed equitably. It is a future-orientated concept founded on the principles of sustainability and climate justice, prioritising disadvantaged groups to ensure fair distribution of benefits and burdens in alignment with social equity.

A brief history of the concept

The concept of a 'Just Transition' emerged from U.S. trade unions in the 1980s, initially aimed at protecting workers affected by the shift away from fossil fuels" It has since evolved into a global framework that includes

broader environmental and social concerns.viii While lacking a universal definition, core principles emphasise public participation, equitableix The International Labour Organization (ILO) outlines key guiding principles:

- → inclusive public consultation
- → promotion of workplace rights and gender equality
- → socioeconomic policies supporting all of society
- → sustainable development planning aligned to local contexts.^x

Despite global research on the concept, there is no universal definition of a Just Transition leading to varied interpretations and policy approaches. However, it is widely recognised that disparities in outcomes and observed community vulnerabilities resulting from climate change mitigation policies constitute a significant obstacle to achieving substantial progress in national and international environmental policies. A Just Transition seeks to address these concerns by aligning climate change strategies with social justice and equity principles.

Four Dimensions of Justice in Just Transition

A central component of a Just Transition vision involves transforming industry practices to align with netzero emissions targets, while simultaneously ensuring meaningful public participation in shaping these transformations. Equally important is the need to support communities that are economically reliant on high-carbon industries in transitioning towards employment opportunities within emerging low-carbon sectors. Integral to these multiple definitions of a Just Transition is a comprehensive understanding of justice. Academic literature often breaks it down into four dimensions, **V* each of which must be addressed to ensure that the low-carbon transition is equitable, inclusive, and socially sustainable.

Procedural Justice

Ensures public participation in policymaking, in line with frameworks like the *Aarhus Convention* This includes **consulting marginalized communities and designing participatory mechanisms** such as workshops and storytelling initiatives.

Distributive Justice

Aims for fair sharing of the transition's costs and benefits. Emphasis is placed on vulnerable groups and ensuring those with higher incomes bear more of the burden while those with less receive greater benefits.

Recognition Justice

Environmental harm must be addressed through remediation efforts or the implementation of transition frameworks designed to either compensate for past damage or mitigate the risk of future harm.

Restorative Justice

Requires explicit inclusion and acknowledgement of historically underrepresented communities. Policies must be designed with the specific needs of these groups in



Participatory decision-making for Procedural Justice

While the transition to a low-carbon economy generates benefits locally and globally by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the transition also imposes additional burdens on communities and regions, particularly those with fossil fuel-dependent industries.** It is therefore imperative that policies need to produce a Just Transition with participatory decision-making processes that ensure equitable benefits and costs of the transition.**

The International Association of Public Participation defines participatory engagement as 'any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and that uses public input to make better decisions'. **vii

Procedural justice is a foundation for other forms of justice; without inclusive participatory processes, Just Transition policies cannot ensure fair distribution of the costs and benefits, recognition of past and future harms, and meaningfully acknowledge underrepresented communities. Focusing on procedural justice is therefore central to this research as a key aim is to explore how public participation can help shape a fair and equitable Just Transition in Hampshire and the Solent.

Participatory decision-making methods are being increasingly applied to facilitate Just Transitions in climate change contexts. The European Environment Agency's 2023 report, The Case for Public Participation in Sustainability Transitions' emphasises the critical role of public engagement in achieving sustainability goals. The report highlights that involving citizens in decision-making processes enhances the legitimacy and

effectiveness of environmental policies. It identifies key benefits of public participation, including improved policy outcomes, increased public trust, and the empowerment of communities to drive sustainable change. It also outlines strategies for effective engagement, such as transparent communication, inclusive platforms for dialogue, and the integration of public input into policy development. The EEA advocates for a collaborative approach, where governments, businesses, and citizens work together to facilitate the transition towards a more sustainable future.

However, there is limited empirical research on Just Transitions and the importance of participatory decisionmaking. Intergovernmental bodies, trade unions, and international NGOs have often raised the issue of potential exclusion of marginalised people in Just Transition governance, though these challenges are less considered by academics studying Just Transitions at the national and local level. A study on how the concept of Just Transition is employed in the city-level initiative in Bristol, focusing on procedural justice, highlights challenges in ensuring inclusive decision-making.xix The process was found to be exclusionary, particularly toward women and ethnic minorities. The study argues that as there is no universal definition of Just Transition, the concept must be interpreted based on local context and the perspectives of those involved in the decision-making processes with ongoing inclusive participation necessary throughout Just Transition projects not just as a onetime step.xx

There is increased interest in using participatory democracy methods such as Citizens' Assemblies and Citizen Panels to address climate change challenges. Citizens' assemblies have been used in countries like Ireland and Scotland to ensure public input on climate and transition policies. For example, Scotland's first citizens' assembly on climate change brought together over 100 citizens representative of Scotland to learn and deliberate over the topic of climate change to create and submit recommendations and goals for the government to respond to.xxi Further participatory democracy methods include participatory budgeting as a democratic process which enables citizens to have a say in how funds are spent in certain policy areas (for example, New York City's Participatory Budgeting: The People's Money Initiativexxii), community led planning which prioritises how indigenous and frontline communities participate in community-led planning ensuring their needs shape transition projects, xxiii and digital grassroots participation using online platforms such as Decidim and Loomio to crowdsource ideas and hold virtual consultations on transition policies (for example, Decidim: Participatory Budgeting in Barcelonaxxiv).

2.2 CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Academic literature tends to focus on national government or international environmental regulation and overlooks the role of local or regional governments and private enterprises as environmental policy agents with responsibilities to communities. Regional autonomy regarding Just Transition initiatives can vary depending on distribution of legal responsibilities. A national Just Transition agenda, such as that in Scotland, can shape regional approaches and implementation. However, we can look to a number of cities and towns in the UK which are utilising the concept of a Just Transition in their decarbonisation planning.

Bristolxxvii: Bristol's Just Transition Declaration lays out 10 principles focused on fairness, equity, and public engagement. It promotes distributive justice by requiring higher earners to bear more of the financial load. While feedback from community groups was incorporated, it's unclear whether there was broad public consultation prior to adoption. Nonetheless, the model encourages local business participation and offers a useful example of how to operationalise Just Transition principles at the city level.

Glasgow Coronic Classow's cross-party Just Transition Working Group, formed through its Climate Plan, issued 18 detailed recommendations following wide-ranging stakeholder and public consultations. Key elements include:

- → Engagement with government, business, unions, and communities
- → A structured implementation plan categorized into short-, medium-, and long-term actions
- → Use of participatory storytelling to make the transition relatable to citizens
- → Feminist town planning and mobility justice to improve inclusivity in city design
- → Support for SMEs in reducing emissions and fostering a circular economy
- → Glasgow's approach is a model of procedural and recognition justice in action, combining technical planning with meaningful community empowerment.

GrangemouthTransition Plan outlines Scotland's strategic vision for transforming one of its most carbon-intensive industrial hubs into a centre for sustainable, low-carbon manufacturing. Grangemouth is home to key petrochemical facilities and the country's only oil refinery, facing significant economic and social challenges as it shifts away from fossil fuels. The plan sets out a collaborative, locally tailored framework that aims to retain and create high-quality jobs, attract investment in green technologies, and ensure communities are meaningfully involved in shaping the future of the region. Alongside the co-produced vision, they have agreed a set of Just Transition Outcomes which will be reviewed and monitored.

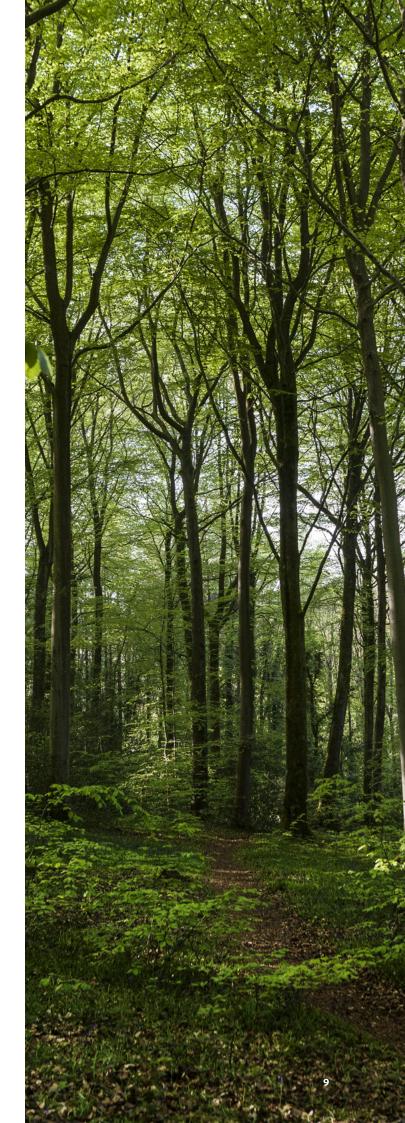
Scotland (National)^{xxx}: Scotland's Just Transition Strategy targets 2045 and emphasises:

- → Transitioning the energy sector to renewables and hydrogen
- → Community-led energy ownership
- → Support for retraining workers in new green industries
- → Broad consultation with academia, civil society, industry, and communities

Scotland's ambitions align with the European Green Deal but take a more localised, participatory approach, reinforcing the value of public trust and tailored regional planning.

European Green Deal – A Comparative Lens: The European Green Deal seeks to make Europe climate neutral by 2050. You'll it includes policies on clean energy, sustainable farming, and a circular economy. However, critics argue that its resource extraction and "green growth" model may offload environmental and social costs onto the Global South, raising questions about its justice claims. You'll Despite this, some components, like the revised Renewable Energy Directive (raising renewable targets from 32% to 40% by 2030) and stricter vehicle emission standards, offer valuable insights for national energy and transport planning. You'll in the support of the service of the support of the sup

Implications for Hampshire and the Solent: By adopting a participatory and justice-centred approach, Hampshire and the Solent can lead the way in modelling a genuinely inclusive and sustainable transition. The region is home to both urban centres and rural areas, with diverse economic dependencies including agriculture, manufacturing, and service industries. To navigate the shift away from fossil fuels in a fair and inclusive way, local authorities need to engage with local residents in shaping climate and energy transition policies. For example, a Hampshire and the Solent-wide Citizens' Assembly could be convened to deliberate on key issues such as public transport decarbonisation, land use for renewable energy, or retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency. Additionally, participatory budgeting initiatives could empower local communities to decide how climate-related funding is allocated, particularly in areas facing higher socio-economic challenges. Community-led planning processes, especially involving coastal and rural communities vulnerable to climate impacts, could ensure that transition strategies are informed by those most affected. Digital platforms like Decidim could support broader participation across the region, including young people and those in remote areas, by enabling accessible and transparent online consultations. By embedding these participatory approaches into climate governance, Hampshire and the Solent can work towards a Just Transition that is democratic, context-specific, and socially equitable.



2.3 FURTHER READING:

To learn more about a Just Transition consider these resources:

- → Hizliok, S. and Scheer, A. (2024). 'What is the just transition and what does it mean for climate action?', available at: https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/what-is-the-just-transition-and-what-does-it-mean-for-climate-action/.
- → Lai, Huei-Ling (2024). 'How to make industrial decarbonisation relevant and fair for local communities?', available at: https://accessnetwork.uk/how-to-make-industrial-decarbonisation-place-sensitive-and-socially-just/
- → Potts, T. & Ford, R. (2022).'Leading from the front? Increasing Community Participation in a Just Transition to Net Zero in the North-East of Scotland', Scottish Universities Insight Institute. DOI: 10.57064/2164/19722.
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- → World Future Council (2021), 'What is a Just Transition?', available at: https://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/what-is-just-transition/.

2.4 FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1. How do levels of understanding of the Just Transition concept vary across different demographic groups in Hampshire and the Solent, and which communication strategies are most effective in enhancing public awareness and engagement?
- 2. How effective are participatory-decision making processes in shaping fair and equitable Just Transition policies at the regional level?
- 3. What are the barriers to meaningful community participation in regional Just Transition (or climate) policymaking, particularly among underrepresented or vulnerable groups?
- 4. How can community-generated visions and recommendations be integrated into institutional governance and monitoring frameworks?



Footnotes

- https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9888/
- https://www.thesolentcluster.com/projects/the-solent-lidp/
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/committee-onclimate-change-2024-progress-report-government-response/ accelerating-to-net-zero-responding-to-the-ccc-progress-reportand-delivering-the-clean-energy-superpower-mission-accessiblewebpage
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- vi World Future Council, 'What is a Just Transition?'.
- United Nations Development Programme, 'Incorporating Just Transition into the design and implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions and Long-Term Strategies', Issue Brief: Just Transition (2022), p.3.
- viii Snell, D. (2018). 'Just transition? Conceptual challenges meet stark reality in a 'transitioning' coal region in Australia', Globalizations, 15:4, 550-564, DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2018.1454679; Rainnie, A., & Snell, D. (2024). 'Just Transition in Australia depoliticisation?' Contemporary Social Science, 19(1–3), 21–40. DOI: 10.1080/21582041.2024.2317393.
- Hana Müllerová et al., 'Building the Concept of a Just Transition in Law: Reflections on its Conceptual Framing, Structure and Content', Environmental Policy and Law 53:4 (2023), p.275.
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