

GROWING GREEN CAREERS



To create a better and greener future and meet the government's carbon reduction goal, thousands of new green jobs need to be created across multiple sectors, from energy generation to nature recovery.

Green jobs are considered to be any jobs that have a direct, positive impact on the planet and that will form part of the low carbon economy of the future. Green jobs are available in a wide range of industries, for example renewable energy, manufacturing electric vehicles and other low carbon technology, horticulture, environmental management, and home energy retrofitting. While attention is often focused on highly skilled technical roles in the green sector, there are also a wide range of entry-level roles suitable for on-the-job training.

The green jobs agenda is relevant beyond a narrowly defined 'green sector': to protect our future, every job must be 'green'. This means that all employment sectors will need to adapt to low carbon methods of delivery and production and every worker must have a good understanding of climate change, the impact their work has on the environment, and how to reduce that impact. In this report, we will refer to jobs that have the potential to be 'greened' as mainstream roles.

Green jobs have the potential to provide long-term employment to thousands of people in the UK as well as to create healthier, happier, and greener communities for us all. Over the past 40 years, Groundwork has helped unemployed people of all ages to access green jobs and we're ready to do even more in response to the climate and nature emergency.

This report explores what we have learned from working with individuals, communities, public bodies, and businesses. Based on this learning, we set out four priorities for green jobs policy to address:

- > Making every job green
- > Creating accessible pathways into entry-level green roles
- > Increasing the diversity of people pursuing green careers
- > Helping places to thrive in a green economy



We believe that addressing these priorities must play an essential role in ‘levelling up’ the UK. Places that have missed out on opportunities during the shift from manufacturing towards a service dominated economy could be regenerated through investment in the green economy, leading the way towards Net Zero and nature recovery. Producing local food, generating local energy, and reusing waste are all as relevant in Bolton and the Black Country as they are in Bath and Berkshire. Creating accessible pathways into green careers in these areas has the potential to boost the recovery of ‘left behind’ areas and create a greener, more equal, and more resilient society for us all.

Background

Green jobs have been rising up the agenda of the UK government over recent years. In its 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, the government announced plans to support up to 250,000 green jobs by 2030 (GOV.UK, 2020). The cross-departmental Green Jobs Taskforce, set up to advise on developing plans and support in alignment with this, made a wide range of recommendations on three themes (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2021):

- > Driving investment in net zero to support good quality jobs;
- > Building pathways into good green careers;
- > A just transition for workers in the high carbon economy.

The creation of green jobs is an issue of interest for a number of government departments:

- > Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) leads on the government’s Net Zero strategy, support for businesses and the energy sector;
- > Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is concerned with the development of the green workforce needed to deliver its 25 Year Environment Plan in areas including nature, farming and waste;
- > Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has an interest in the creation of accessible, good quality green jobs that support people into sustainable, well-paid employment;
- > Department for Education leads on skills strategy and included green skills development in its draft strategy on Sustainability & Climate Change; Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities has an interest in the role of the green economy in ‘levelling up’ and local government plays an increasingly prominent role in local skills development.

The recent 'Levelling Up' white paper included ambitions to devolve more responsibility for skills to the local level, meaning that Combined Authorities will play a growing role in green jobs policy. This includes determining how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, designed to replace EU Structural Funds, will be distributed once the investment priority supporting people and skills comes into play from 2024.

Devolved governments and authorities also have an important role to play in driving forward the green skills agenda. The Scottish government made green jobs central to its strategy to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic (Scottish Government, 2020), while Wales' Future Generations Commissioner has called for a focus on green jobs and the Northern Ireland Executive has recently consulted on a Green Growth Strategy with green jobs at its heart (Northern Ireland Executive, 2021).

In England, the devolved mayors are playing an increasingly prominent role in green job creation; for example, green skills and job creation initiatives have been announced in London and the West Midlands (London Assembly, 2020; West Midlands Combined Authority, 2021).

Given the broad interest in the topic from across national and local governments at all levels, there is a significant opportunity to create a joined-up policy response that realises the potential of green jobs to contribute to a greener, more resilient, and more equal society.



Potential for Green Job Creation

The creation of green jobs is essential to tackling climate change, but it also has the potential to create wide reaching benefits for people and communities. If the government plans to 'level up', reducing inequalities between regions and improving quality of life for everyone, green jobs have to be part of the solution.

And the opportunities are there: a report by Green Alliance found that just three types of nature enhancement – improving woodland, peatland, and urban parks – could create 16,050 jobs across the 20% of constituencies experiencing the most severe employment challenges (Green Alliance, 2021). Estimates suggest that, by 2030, there could be as many as 694,000 direct jobs employed in the low carbon and renewable energy economy, rising to 1.18 million by 2050 (Local Government Association, 2021).

The current gas price crisis has underlined the importance of increasing the energy efficiency of our housing stock and making renewable heat sources available to more households. One analysis found that 138,600 jobs could be created in this sector by 2030 if investment in low carbon heating is increased in line with the government's goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 (Cambridge Econometrics, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought significant disruption to the labour market and to people's working lives. The younger generation has been hit particularly hard by this: 82,000 more young people were economically inactive in the last quarter of 2021 compared to the first quarter of 2020 (Powell et al, 2022). Connecting these young people, and economically inactive people of all ages, to the growing need for employees and skills in the green economy has the potential to address multiple problems at once.

Green job creation also includes the development of new green enterprises. As well as growing existing green businesses, reaching our environmental goals will require new businesses and enterprises in many areas of the economy. Groundwork is working with the Enterprise Development Programme, funded by Access – The Foundation for Social Investment, to support charities and social enterprises operating in the environment sector to become more sustainable. Initiatives to support the growth of new businesses and entrepreneurs should form a key part of the green jobs policy.

Case Study: **Working with the John Lewis Partnership to Create Green Jobs**

Groundwork is partnering with The John Lewis Partnership to support unemployed people in Peterborough, Sheffield and York on a route to green employment, through practical real-life experience working on local community projects.

The programme offers a six-week course for groups of up-to 12 participants to support them to carry out practical community focused landscape improvement projects. Those involved will work towards nationally recognised horticulture and employability qualifications, as well as having the opportunity to develop their employability skills through interview skills and CV writing training, including support into how to set up a green enterprise.

The programme is not only helping participants to build a new career, but ensuring much needed investment to support the future of the green jobs workforce.



Case Study: **Enterprise Development Programme**

Groundwork has joined the Enterprise Development Programme (EDP) as an Environmental Partner to support charities and social enterprises operating in the environment sector to become more sustainable.

Groundwork is working closely alongside a cohort of environmental organisations to develop a package of support including:

- > **Access to a bespoke learning package**
- > **Peer-learning and networking opportunities**
- > **Pro bono legal and financial expertise**
- > **Financial support to put learning into action**
- > **Information about the world of social enterprise from leading experts**

Groundwork will support around 60 organisations by 2024. Examples of eligible projects include: selling woodland products or produce from land management projects, selling services such as training or awareness courses, producing and selling a Standard Mark, or setting up an online retail or physical charity shop.

The EDP is developed and funded by Access – The Foundation for Social Investment and managed by Social Investment Business (SIB).



Current Barriers

One of the biggest barriers to realising the potential of green job creation is the gap between existing skills in the workforce and the skills needed to support a net zero economy. A report by Green Alliance found that every major sector in the UK needs to close a significant skills gap to enable them to reach net zero, with the sectors that need to reduce emissions most steeply facing the most immediate shortages (Green Alliance, 2022a). Two thirds of employers have struggled to recruit staff with the necessary green skills (Learning & Work Institute, 2022).

In some sectors, the gap between government ambition and the policy in place to deliver it makes it more difficult to grow the green workforce. For example, the inconsistency in policy and funding to support home retrofit has contributed to a chronic shortage of skills in the sector. The introduction then withdrawal of short-term

funding schemes, such as the Green Homes Grant, makes it difficult for organisations delivering home retrofit to plan and grow their workforce (House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, 2021).

Lack of information about green jobs and future labour needs also presents a barrier for potential employees and inhibits career advisors from directing people towards green careers. Young people have told us that they are interested in building their careers in green sectors, but do not know where to look to find opportunities. When we spoke to young people aged 16 to 25 about their aspirations for the future for Groundwork's Youth in a Changing Climate report (Groundwork UK, 2021a), 32% said they were interested in pursuing an environmental career. Many young people told us that they felt optimistic about the possibility of new green jobs being created in their local areas:

“ I think of new industry, new ways to move like electric cars, wind power, things like that. My grandad was a miner and my grandma worked in a factory, so classic 1950s North East jobs. I feel like the jobs of the future will be very different from what they knew... but I don't feel like they're inaccessible for me.

However, many also said that they never heard about green jobs when they were thinking about next steps after school or university. Lots of young people commented that they weren't sure where to look for green jobs or what options were out there:

“ Online there's not much awareness of green jobs and not much on the internet about where to look for them.

33% said they wanted resources that would increase their awareness of environmental careers and the pathways available to them.

Lack of diversity in the environmental workforce puts some young people off pursuing careers in the sector. A 2017 report found that **97%** of environmental professionals and **94%** of workers involved in horticulture or landscape design identify as White British (Norrie, 2017). By comparison, White British people made up **81%** of the population at the 2011 census (GOV.UK, 2020b). A study undertaken on behalf of the London Green Space Commission found that just one in 10 people employed by the large grounds maintenance providers were female and more than **80%** were White (Parks for London & Groundwork, 2020).

This lack of diversity impacts on the working culture in these sectors and on the likelihood of new entrants from minority backgrounds choosing these careers. Previous studies have found that students from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely than their White peers to say that they are discouraged from pursuing an environmental career and are less likely to have had contact with the environmental sector or nature settings (National Union of Students, 2018).



Making Every Job a Green Job

For the UK to meet its climate targets, deep decarbonisation is needed across every sector of the economy. Therefore, in the future every job must be a 'green job'.

This means that every worker in a mainstream role must have a good understanding of climate change, the impact of their work on the environment, and how to reduce that impact. To achieve this, environmental awareness and carbon literacy must be embedded as core employability skills for every role, a 'fourth functional skill' alongside maths, English and digital literacy.

Employers are increasingly aware of the need for environmental skills and knowledge in their workforces. Just over a quarter of employers currently require green skills and a third expect to require them in the future. Over two in five employers say that their employees will require new or different green skills in the future (Learning and Work Institute, 2022).

Carbon Literacy training is one way of equipping employees with a foundational knowledge of climate change and carbon reduction. Carbon Literacy training is accessible and relevant to people from all walks of life, no matter whether their role is one we would traditionally think of as a green job. Sessions inform and inspire audiences both to act right now to reduce their carbon emissions and to begin to plan longer-term action towards a zero-carbon society.

Groundwork has been piloting this approach, equipping the next generation of employees and entrepreneurs with green skills through mainstream employability programmes, including our Kickstart placements. Young people are offered a Carbon Literacy qualification, in roles spanning everything from administration to practical horticulture. 82% of young people who have completed their placements said that their awareness of environmental impacts, including climate change, had improved as a result.



Case Study: **Carbon Literacy Training**

Groundwork Greater Manchester has played its part in the Carbon Literacy initiative as a certified training partner, delivering Carbon Literacy to those on their employment & skills programmes, to local community groups, and to business partners and their employees.

So far, Groundwork Greater Manchester has delivered and overseen the training and certification of over 500 individuals in the city region.

As well as adding to the growing number of climate pledges, Groundwork aspires for all participants to recognise the value of the Carbon Literacy certificate on their CV and to become climate change champions in their future workplaces.



Rowan's Story

After graduating university with a master's degree in landscape architecture, Rowan wanted to pursue a career in the environmental charity sector. She began volunteering with Groundwork in 2012 before securing a paid position in Groundwork London's events and marketing team. In this role, she gained valuable and varied experience which inspired her to move into a role working on an urban regeneration project. She went on to work on Queen Elizabeth Park in Stratford, managing a post-Olympic games social enterprise focused on socio-economic regeneration, and is now the Countryside Service Manager at Sheffield City Council.

“ Whether you are scientific, creative, strategic or like working with tools – there is something for everyone and it is a career path and sector for the future and it is now more important than ever. All of these different environmental challenges that face us and the urgency with which we will need to address them, requires investment into young people and green jobs. These are our future decision makers and drivers behind the agenda – the ones calling the shots with the ideas, motivation, energy and voting power.



Accessible Routes into Green Careers

Given the current lack of diversity and skills shortages in the environmental sector, creating accessible routes into green careers for people from all backgrounds must be a priority.

Making green jobs more accessible has to start early, with information available to young people while they are still in schools or colleges and thinking about their future careers. This can help make learning about sustainability and climate change more relevant to young people's lives, showing them that engaging with these topics can lead to good jobs and interesting careers.

Fixed-term job placements can allow people to gain skills and experience in green sectors, bridging the gap between education or job seeking and longer-term employment. Groundwork has a long history and track record of delivering local initiatives and national programmes that provide a pathway for those out of work into green careers – from the Community Programme in the 1980s through the Environment Task Force, Future Jobs Fund and, more recently, the government's Kickstart scheme. Often this has been done through an intermediate labour market approach combining waged work placements, job brokerage support, tailored information advice and guidance, and additional support to overcome personal barriers to work.



Groundwork has created around 400 jobs through the government's Kickstart scheme, providing young people on Universal Credit with paid six-month work placement within our federation of 14 charities. The majority of roles created through this scheme were in green jobs, either in practical delivery or 'back office' support. Examples of the wide range of jobs supported include roles in nature recovery, community project assistants, energy advice, education, working on reuse and upcycling projects, and working in Groundwork's communications team.

Placements such as this provide people with the opportunity to learn about a sector, develop their skills and plan next steps. They can act as a stepping stone to longer-term employment opportunities. However, it is vital that short-term placements like these are designed with the right level of support in place to equip people with the skills and confidence they need to progress into long-term employment.

This is especially true when it comes to supporting those furthest from the labour market into green jobs, where support can be needed to tackle barriers to engagement both inside and outside the work environment. Groundwork's Welcome to the Green Economy programme employed a dedicated job coach to support young people in their waged placements, with the capacity to get to know each person individually, including through spending time with them at their place of work. This enabled the job coach to identify and address potential issues early on before they developed into more significant problems or the breakdown of the work placement.

Bringing together expertise from the employment support sector and green sectors is vital to ensuring there are accessible routes into green careers. Many environmental charities and organisations have relatively little experience of interacting with mainstream employment schemes, which can mean it is difficult for them to take advantage of opportunities like Kickstart.

The nature of some green jobs means that they can be more accessible for people experiencing barriers to employment than other types of roles. For example, some trainees on Groundwork's Natural Neighbourhoods programme found working outside in natural settings therapeutic, which is particularly significant given the complex relationship between unemployment and poor mental health (The Health Foundation, 2021). For trainees who had found it difficult to engage with school or other work settings, the practical and outdoor nature of their roles removed a significant barrier to sustaining employment.



Case Study: **Kickstart**

The Kickstart programme is a government funded scheme aimed at getting young people in receipt of Universal Credit back into work. Employers are funded to create new jobs on a 25 hour per week contract for 6 months and to provide additional support and training.

Groundwork has created around 400 roles through the Kickstart scheme, giving each of these young people opportunities to experience a green career. In many cases, Groundwork has been able to offer enhanced pay and hours. Roles cover a wide range of green jobs, including in energy advice, nature and landscaping, working with communities on environmental projects, and re-use and recycling. In addition to role-specific training, every Groundwork trainee has taken part in a development programme including community development training, a Carbon Literacy qualification and peer networking.

While many young people are still completing their placements, initial indications about destinations are positive, with almost half of those completing the scheme moving straight into new roles and three-quarters feeling positive about securing a job. The majority of young people also report that their Kickstart roles have contributed to increased confidence and self-esteem, motivation, and life satisfaction.



Case Study: Low Carbon Careers

This programme is aimed at helping unemployed young people aged 18-25 to start their career in the green economy. Each course is focused on one routeway into a career in the green economy.



The Natural
Environment



Waste and
Recycling



Introduction to
Retrofitting

Participants undertake 3-4 weeks of classroom-based learning followed by a 2-week work placement. The programme gives them the opportunity to gain skills and qualifications which can help them in their future careers, meet employers and find out about jobs and careers in the green economy. Throughout, they are supported to find sustainable employment by a dedicated Employment coach.



India's Story

After finishing sixth form, India found herself unemployed in the middle of a pandemic. Her interest in the outdoors led her to take part in a two-week pre-recruitment course organised by Groundwork Greater Manchester through which she gained qualifications in health and safety and Carbon Literacy. Following this, she successfully applied for a role with Groundwork as a Ranger through the Kickstart scheme.

During her placement, India was involved in the Natural Neighbourhoods programme, funded by the government's Green

Recovery Challenge Fund, helping to create a boardwalk and construct a rolled stone pathway. She also completed an accredited safe use of strimmers course, gained Level One Health and Safety in Construction Environment and passed her Construction Skills Certification Scheme card test.

The role has confirmed her passion for the environment and inspired her to study Ecology and Conservation at university, hoping to move into a career as an Ecologist or Ecological Surveyor.

Scott's Story

Scott had a difficult childhood, he was a young carer and experienced bullying, deprivation and the devastating loss of his two brothers, Owen and Callum, from Muscular Dystrophy. He found that spending time in the outdoors always helped him to feel better. He jumped at the opportunity to get involved with Groundwork in Wigan and they enrolled him on the Future Jobs Fund programme. He continued to work with Groundwork for four years, embracing new challenges and tackling unfamiliar tasks to push himself.

The experience and confidence he gained during his time at Groundwork prepared him to make the next steps in his career and he now works for one of the UK's leading landfill site operators. He is responsible for developing and sharing effective solutions to environmental projects and overseeing maintenance and restoration programmes.



Hamzah's Story

22-year-old Hamzah joined Groundwork as a trainee energy efficiency advisor in the Green Doctor team through the UK Year of Service Scheme and has now been in the role for 6 months. He was drawn to the job because it allowed him to help people whilst not being confined to an office every day. His days are spent providing energy advice to vulnerable people who are living in fuel poverty, helping them to save money whilst simultaneously reducing their carbon footprint.

Hamzah sees his role as important for a greener future, stating:

“ The world is trying to reduce climate change and save the planet. These green roles that are being created will help distribute information and speed up the transition process of going green.

Once he has completed his training, Hamzah hopes to continue to build his career and become “fully-fledged Green Doctor”.



Increasing Diversity in Green Jobs

Diversity within the green workforce is important to ensuring equality of opportunity. It also benefits the sector by bringing in a wider range of perspectives and life experience. If we are to successfully lower our carbon emissions as a society, we need to take everyone with us on that journey. Businesses and organisations that do not reflect or understand the communities they serve will struggle to build trust with those communities, making it more difficult for them to achieve their goals.

To address this, employers in green sectors must take a proactive approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion in their recruitment practice, going beyond legal requirements and learning from best practice in other sectors. Ensuring an inclusive culture may mean challenging accepted practices. External support can help organisations identify their blind spots and areas for improvement. This may include thinking creatively about how green jobs can be delivered, with more opportunities for flexible working and supported roles. Further research on the barriers to entry and retention of underrepresented groups should be undertaken to drive systemic change.

Opening up accessible pathways into entry level green jobs is vital to increasing the diversity in the sector. These can help to counter existing inequalities in experience and qualifications between different demographic groups. 23% of the young people recruited through Groundwork's Kickstart programme have a disability and 16% identified as LGBTQ+, both higher proportions than for Groundwork's workforce as a whole.

Programmes targeting groups that experience barriers to employment are another way of increasing the diversity of the workforce. For example, Groundwork's Green Start programme works with people with criminal convictions, setting them up to enter the green skills job market after their release from custody.

In some roles there are specific barriers that limit diversity and small changes could be made to address these. For example, many nature-based roles require employees to be able to drive because of the area covered and the need to transport equipment. This means that these roles are more likely to attract people from certain social groups: 76% of White people over the age of 17 had a full driving licence between 2015 and 2019 compared to 53% of Black people, which was the lowest rate of any ethnic group (GOV.UK, 2020c). Currently, it is not possible for employers to fund driving lessons from skills budgets, despite this being an essential skill for the job. Increasing the flexibility of skills budgets would allow employers to support people to gain the skills they need to access and progress in green roles.

Increasing exposure to the environment and green industries from an early age will also help to increase diversity in the sector. There are currently stark inequalities in access to nature, meaning that many young people do not experience nature in their day-to-day lives (Groundwork UK, 2021b). Therefore, they are less likely to think about nature-based roles when envisioning their career choices (National Union of Students, 2018).

Case Study: **Green Start**

Green Start is a learning and employability programme, funded by the City and Guilds Foundation, that aims to help people with criminal convictions thrive in the green skills job market after their release from custody. Working in resettlement prisons, including HMP Forest Bank, it delivers a mix of practical, outdoor, group learning and classroom-based activities over a 9-week training period. It focuses on

- > Construction and land management skills
- > Carbon literacy and green skills
- > Work skills

Employment Advisers work with course graduates prior to their release to prepare them to access job opportunities and continue to support them after they gain employment. They also work closely with Probation staff to maximise support and reduce the likelihood of re-offending.



Case Study: **Green Teams**

Green Teams are helping people, predominantly under the age of 25, back into work. They are given on-the-job training doing practical horticulture to make communities greener and better.

Many of the trainees left school with few or no qualifications after spending years struggling in a classroom setting, and find that the hands-on nature of the scheme suits their learning style. As many of the participants also have additional challenges, including physical and mental health struggles, Green Team leaders provide guidance and support, tailoring the programme to the individual.

Being part of a Green Team is the first step towards a career in horticulture for many but can also be a stepping-stone onto other things, providing participants with the qualifications or self-belief they need to move into other work or return to education.



Ali's Story

After becoming qualified in Computer Science in his home country Iran, Ali struggled to find a role in the field after moving to the UK and worked as a security guard for four years. He then joined the Elevate programme, a London-based project assisting refugees to find work and overcome the barriers they often face when seeking employment. He found a supportive environment that offered tailored job-matching and application advice. Through this, he found work in Groundwork's water saving advice team. He helps households across London to save water and reduce their bills. Given that London is an area of 'Severe Water Stress', Ali's work is incredibly important and creates a positive impact for both the environment and the economy.

“ I wish employers would offer more internships and apprenticeships that can support us into careers, even for those older than 25. We just need more opportunities to express our ability. Some people offer work experience that has no benefit – you spend three months cleaning in a grocery store for free as ‘work experience’ and then never hear anything.

Elevate is a Building Better Opportunities project – an initiative that brings together funding from The National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund (ESF) to help tackle poverty and promote social inclusion across England.



Hellen's Story

Hellen mainly grew up in Rochdale in Greater Manchester but her family travelled around quite a bit, which inspired an interest in photojournalism. After her father bought a farm in Zambia, Hellen helped him (from a distance) come up with ideas for its development. Through this she discovered a passion for nature, growing and working outdoors.

Hellen successfully applied for the role of Environmental Projects Assistant at Grow Speke, a community garden in South Liverpool. She gained valuable knowledge and skills, such as how to grow food sustainably and how to make raised beds and storage crates, that she hopes to use to help expand her father's farm in the future.

“ Groundwork has ignited my interest in upcycling. I've started making the things I need rather than buying them. I've even joined Groundwork's environment committee. When my Kickstart placement is over, I'm planning to visit my dad on the farm in Zambia. I'll have the chance to put everything I've learned at Groundwork into practice. But for now I am loving my time at Grow Speke and being part of the local community in Liverpool.



Helping Places to Thrive in a Green Economy

Growing the green economy can form a key part of the government's Levelling Up agenda. Many of the places that feel 'left behind' in the current economy have the potential to lead the way towards Net Zero and nature recovery if the right pathways are put in place.

The expansion of the green economy – bringing with it more energy efficient homes, a circular economy, better food, and less waste – has huge potential to address some of the drivers of the current cost of living crisis (Green Alliance, 2022b). It therefore makes sense to focus its expansion first on the people and places hardest hit by the rising cost of living who stand to benefit most from this effect.

There are clear opportunities to expand the green economy in economically disadvantaged areas across the north of England and North Wales, where hydrogen production and renewable energy generation are likely to be major industries in the future (IPPR North, 2022). Many disadvantaged communities are well positioned to benefit from jobs created through nature recovery initiatives due to their proximity to land that could be used for tree planting or peatland restoration (Green Alliance, 2021).

Addressing the poor access to nature experienced in many disadvantaged urban areas is another way that green job creation can be used to improve quality of life and pride of place in left behind communities (Green Alliance, 2021; Groundwork UK, 2021). Using green job creation to drive local environmental improvements has been at the heart of Groundwork's work over the past four decades. Time and time again we have seen the benefits that physical improvements to local green spaces and greening streets have made to community life, providing space for people to come together, and improving footfall for local businesses. If the government's Levelling Up agenda is to succeed in enhancing 'pride of place', green jobs and local environmental improvements must play a role.



Adopting the principles of community wealth building can help local authorities and anchor institutions in economically disadvantaged areas to ensure that their climate emergency action plans deliver for local people (CLES, 2020). For example, by contracting with local green employers who are committed to working with training providers to create opportunities for local people.

The government is currently directing significant funding for place-based regeneration through the Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Funds. Increasing the focus on green job creation in the way these are allocated could play a key role in stimulating the green economy in the places that need it the most.

Expanding a network of local skills hubs, each focusing on a specific sector within the green economy, could help to stimulate the green economy in the places most in need of job creation. Groundwork London is a partner in the new Green Space Skills Hub in the capital. Similar initiatives could help to bring together skills and expertise, presenting potential employees with an accessible point of entry into the green economy.



Case Study: **The London Green Space Skills Hub**

The London Green Space Skills Hub is part of the Mayor of London's Green Skills Academy. It is delivering the commitments of the London Green Space Commission and aims to bring together all parties involved in London's green space improvements. It focuses on sharing the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the landscape challenges of climate change adaptation and mitigation, and attracting and supporting new entrants into this changing, growing workforce. Its work spans the green space sector, including related areas of water management, housing, highways, construction and design to tackle the following issues:

- > People: recruitment, workforce structure, diversity and inclusion
- > Training gaps and Curriculum Design: defining employer needs, identifying training options, curriculum design, brokerage, legacy
- > Apprenticeships: keeping the levy in the sector, SME collaboration, programme design
- > Careers and continuing professional development: upskilling the workforce, outreach to other sectors (housing, highways, regeneration)
- > Climate and Future Skills – focus on climate-driven landscapes, other future green space uses (health and wellbeing, social assets)

Groundwork London and Parks for London are leading the project, working with a wide range of partners.



Case Study: **Natural Neighbourhoods**

Natural Neighbourhoods helps young people into employment by creating jobs and developing a programme of environmental traineeships. The work is focused on the improvement and protection of local parks and the greenspaces that matter to disadvantaged communities in the East, Midlands, and North who suffered the most severe economic consequences of the pandemic and have since experienced a rise in youth unemployment. Local volunteers are encouraged to get involved with projects, working alongside landowners to enhance the quality of accessible green spaces in towns with high levels of deprivation, country parks in urban fringe areas, and pockets of public space in isolated rural communities.

Natural Neighbourhoods is funded by the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund, which is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.



Case Study: **The Loops**

Groundwork operates The Loop on the Pembury Estate in Hackney and the Grahame Park Estate in Barnet, two award-winning community re-use hubs designed to help communities recycle and re-use more household goods, which reduces fly-tipping and amount of waste sent to landfill sites.

The team at The Loop collect, repair, upcycle and sell unique, reasonably priced furniture and other household goods. Many local people have become part of the re-use movement with the hubs also providing training, employment and volunteering opportunities for residents in a range of specialist skills, including furniture restoration.



Conclusion

It is clear that investing in green job creation is vital for the UK to meet its climate commitments. Interest in the topic from across government is testament to the potential of green jobs policies to contribute to wider goals as part of the government's efforts to 'level up' local communities.

Drawing on our 40 years of experience bringing together local people, public bodies, and businesses to improve the environment in disadvantaged communities across the UK, we know that there is a significant opportunity ahead of us to deliver the workforce needed to achieve our net zero and nature recovery goals while also addressing the social, environmental and economic challenges facing our most disadvantaged communities.

Mainstreaming green skills and knowledge throughout the workforce will help to accelerate decarbonisation and nature recovery across every industry, while simultaneously upskilling people to take the next steps in their careers. Creating accessible pathways into green jobs is essential to addressing the skills gaps across green sectors, while reducing the inequality in the labour market and helping people to build fulfilling green careers. Furthermore, increasing the diversity in the sector is vital to ensuring that the sector draws on the widest range of skills and talents, while helping individuals to flourish.

The recommendations in this report set out ways that employers, education providers, and local and national government can work together to make green careers accessible to all. Taken together, these recommendations set out a framework for growing the green economy in a way that allows people and places to flourish.



Recommendations

For employers in green sectors:

- > Engage with local employment support providers and think creatively about recruitment to ensure vacancies are visible and accessible to people who are under-represented in the current green sector workforce.
- > Play a more active role in helping young people understand the pathways into green careers by sharing resources with job coaches and careers services in education settings and offering 'career inspiration' sessions.
- > Provide clarity on career progression and where investment in skills is needed to upskill the existing workforce in new methods and technologies.

For employers in other sectors:

- > Upskill staff in mainstream roles with environmental skills and knowledge, through carbon literacy or similar courses, so that every worker is equipped to play their part in the green economy.
- > Set environmental standards for your supply chain and commit to sustainable procurement practices to embed understanding of practical environmental management across your workforce and wider value chain.
- > Develop carbon reduction plans for your organisation and identify skills requirements needed to implement them.

Education providers:

- > Integrate green careers into your wider careers offer, sharing practical examples of opportunities available, and upskill advisers to help young people access green jobs.

For central government:

- > Ensure policy for reducing carbon emissions and restoring nature provides sectors with the certainty they need to plan and develop their workforces for the long term.
- > Pilot sector-based work academies, to provide a hub for green skills development in local areas where there is a need for skilled workers in green jobs and for quality employment for local people.
- > Ensure that the skills funding system prioritises the delivery of green skills and provides the flexibility to allow employers to deliver on-the-job training, including investment to add modules relating to sustainability within vocational qualifications.
- > Support the development of a Youth Environmental Service – a programme of funded year-long placements to help young people from more diverse backgrounds develop the skills and experience they need to develop careers in the green sector.

For local government:

- > Use the opportunity of the upcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund to develop the skills needed locally to support net zero plans and grow a more circular, community-centred economy, with targeted support for under-represented groups.
- > Work with local skills providers and employers to prioritise delivery of green skills through devolved Adult Education Budget funding.

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