



**Earth Strike UK:  
Our Strategy for  
Avoiding Total  
Catastrophe.**

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# **Our mission**

Our mission is to achieve a world in which humanity is not in constant competition with itself or with the environment, to halt the rapid deterioration of our biosphere and to live in a world that is not on the brink of ecological collapse. In order to do that we must end capitalism and all other forms of oppression and exploitation which are the cause of injustice and threaten the stability and viability of our environment.

# **Our goals**

We believe that collectively we have the ability to bring about that better world through the power of organised labour and the application of industrial action. Through strikes, occupations and other forms of industrial action over environmental issues in our own workplaces we can have a direct, tangible impact on the trajectory of our climate. By employing those same tactics on a massive scale, across industries and across countries, we can launch a direct challenge to capitalism and the institutions that are driving the climate and ecological crisis.

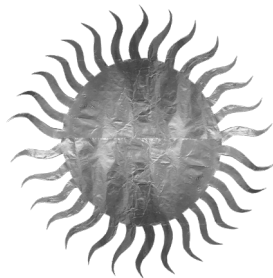
With this in mind, we aim to promote, support or initiate general strikes for the climate nationally and internationally, as well as employ industrial action in defence of the climate more generally, and to create foundations of solidarity and mutual struggle on which we can build a better and more sustainable society.

# Our strategy

However, organising a general strike for the climate is no easy task. We could simply set a date and call a strike but without a broad base of support, a mandate given by all of the people actually striking, it is unlikely that enough people would be willing to take the risk and participate. To be able to build a general strike that is actually effective there are a few things that need to happen first. It is not enough to simply mobilise, first we must organise!

There are several conditions that need to be met for a general strike for the climate to become a viable option in the struggle for climate justice. These conditions do not necessarily need to be fulfilled directly by Earth Strike UK. Our aim is not to be the banner under which all action should be taken, but to facilitate and encourage action that moves us towards a general strike. In fact, it is better if these conditions are fulfilled by a variety of groups, organisations and movements working independently and in parallel with one another, as this will lead to a more broad, dynamic and robust movement.

There are several elements to our strategy. None of them are mutually exclusive and any action that reinforces one is likely to reinforce others. Importantly, each strand of our strategy is also an end in itself; each will individually improve the world in a tangible way, even if they can't all be brought together to materialise a general strike.



# 1. Overcoming the barriers to a successful general strike

There are a variety of obstacles we need to overcome to create the conditions where a general strike in the UK might be initiated, and where, once one has started, it can be won.

**Some of these barriers are systemic** – striking over political issues or in solidarity with other workers is illegal and there are specific legal frameworks in place that make taking action difficult and dangerous. This legal framework is reinforced by a powerful anti-union infrastructure maintained by the corporations themselves: anti-union lawyers, union busting consultancies, groups monitoring union activity. These institutions seek to disincentivize effective industrial action strategies by disrupting organising efforts and by imposing penalties on individuals and organisations that attempt to take action. We must be prepared to resist these systemic barriers and fight to overturn or even break these laws, including by having support in place for those who are targeted by these unjust systems.

**Some of these barriers are strategic** – even if we are successfully able to initiate a strike, it will only be successful if we have the organisation and the resources to maintain it. Strikes are won or lost on whether the workers can outlast the bosses. In past strikes communities have united in solidarity; providing food parcels, running soup kitchens, providing transport, sending messages, holding events to keep spirits high, even establishing their own medical facilities... If we are to successfully utilise strike action in defence of the climate, we will need to do the same again.

**Some of these barriers are cultural** – even if we are able to convince a significant portion of the workforce that the environmental threat is real and that they personally can and should take action, they still might not be able to transform that understanding into strike action due to the loss of a militant organising culture. The workers movement in the UK has been hit hard by the changing nature of industry, a series of crushing defeats in the 1980s-90s, as well as extremely restrictive anti-union laws that make it illegal to strike in solidarity with workers or over “political” issues. The laws also added layers of complex bureaucracy to make the process of calling a strike more difficult. The result is that workplace organising culture has been massively eroded (for example in the case of anti-union laws, unions have a tendency to self-police to avoid the risk of legal repercussions, taking momentum away when it is most needed). We must rebuild a culture of militant organising which recognises the collective strength of the workers and is founded on solidarity.



## **2. Building the mandate for a general strike**

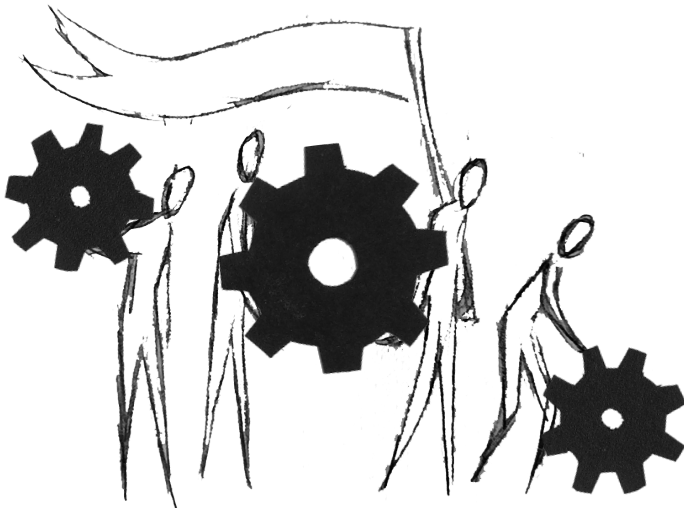
Strike action is by its very nature collective. It requires sufficient numbers of workers, in sufficient density, to take action together. Too few workers spread too far apart and the impact can be easily absorbed by employers and the state, but large numbers of workers concentrated within one industry, locality or employer can completely halt business in that area. Achieving that level of coordinated collective action requires some form of collective agreement to act; a strike mandate. This is a key difference between mobilising and organising. Mobilising either presupposes that the mandate exists or sets about building a mandate after declaring the action, while organising is the process of building a mandate.

Without this mandate any calls for a general strike are unlikely to materialise into actual industrial action as workers can't be sure they won't be acting alone and therefore taking a risk. Strike action carries risks. A worker can lose pay, be victimised by employers, and even lose their job if attempts to take-action are unsuccessful. These risks can be significantly reduced by taking action together. Collective action is more effective, and makes retaliation from bosses more difficult. Workers need to be confident that their fellow workers will stand alongside them when the time comes to strike

At this point, we should distinguish between a formal mandate and a social mandate. A formal mandate is granted to an organisation through its official structure or decision making process (e.g. a union might have a formal mandate to call its members on strike either as a consequence of their membership, or due to the outcome of a strike ballot). A social mandate is the actual level of collective agreement to take action and is absolutely necessary for strike action to occur

and be sustained. If an organisation has a formal mandate but no social mandate either the strike will not materialise, or it will quickly collapse through lack of support and morale. It is possible for a strike to materialise with a social mandate but no formal mandate, e.g. spontaneous wildcat strikes. It should also be noted that having a mandate (social or formal) on its own is not enough to initiate and sustain action, that still requires a collective conscious effort.

There are few mechanisms through which a mandate for a general strike might be built; a coalition or confederation of trade unions might use their existing mandate (or internal decision making processes) to coordinate industrial action; we might attempt to build a mandate independently of existing trade union structures, or independent grassroots action might cascade into more widespread action. There are benefits to all of these mechanisms and it is likely that an actual mandate for a general strike will be built with some combination of all three. The approach we pursue will depend on the political context of the time.





### **3. Developing environmental unionism as a philosophy**

We are not only trying to build a strong workers' movement, but an environmentalist workers' movement. We need to convince our fellow workers of the seriousness of the climate and ecological crisis, and that union organising and workplace action is both viable and necessary to achieving climate justice. We need to develop and distribute environmental-unionist analysis, strategy, and visions for the future. As such, we are working to build environmental consciousness amongst our fellow workers, and to continue to develop class consciousness and anti-capitalist analysis.

We must continue to develop a theory that understands not only how workers' struggle can be used to reactively resist harm, but how it can constructively create alternatives and solutions. We need to change how our society functions and transform the industries that drive it, and who is better placed to make those transformations than the workers themselves? We must encourage our fellow workers to adopt the philosophy of environmental-unionism, to take its principles and apply it to their own circumstances; to develop their own tactics, strategies and solutions, and to share them again. It is only through this process that we will build a diverse and robust movement that is able to challenge capitalism in all its complexities.

And we must learn from those who have gone before us. There are many lessons to learn and inspiration to be found in past struggles, their successes and their failures. We should look at these past struggles and use them to develop our strategy. Learning about the history of our movement also strengthens our sense of solidarity, our confidence, and our resolve. We have a shared past, a shared present and a shared future.

## **4. Using industrial action as a tool to defend the environment now**

Industrial action in defence of the environment works. Workers have successfully used industrial action to achieve environmentalist objectives. For example the Green Bans organised by the Builders Labourers Federation in New South Wales, Australia in the 1970s, when workers refused to work on building projects that threatened the local environment, social housing or historically significant buildings.

The importance of defending against environmental dangers on a local scale can not be overstated. While we believe that a general strike will be the most effective approach for challenging capitalism on the whole and achieving the large-scale changes we need, the same tactic can and should be used on a local level. It can have a direct and tangible effect on the environment; protecting land from an ill-conceived “development”, ending contamination/pollution, and forcing bosses to adopt specific environmental safeguards. The climate and ecological crisis is caused by millions of instances of climate vandalism conducted on the behalf of the capitalist class on a systematic scale, resisting individual attacks on the environment goes a long way to untangling the whole system.

This will inevitably contribute to the previous element of our strategy. As we experience more and more victories, our confidence will grow, our skills as organisers will develop, and we will be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of environmental unionism to environmental activists and our fellow workers alike.

## **5. Building networks of solidarity**

The final key strand of our strategy is building networks of solidarity across the labour and environmental movements. In many ways, this underpins all other elements of our strategy as solidarity is the bedrock of collective action and the foundation of the world we are trying to build. Having networks of solidarity in place will allow us to share experiences and ideas, support one-another in active struggles, and disseminate call-outs for mobilisations. These networks will be foundational to building the general strike, and the society beyond it.

These networks begin on the smallest scale as connections between individual people, and it's here that we must start; forming friendships and networks with our coworkers, workers on the picket line, workers in our area. It is through these conversations and relationships that we can spread our ideas and begin to build a social mandate for action. Relationships of solidarity coalesce into a network of solidarity, and it is this network of solidarity that will be foundational to all future action and to the type of society that we are trying to build.

We must also build larger organisations capable of coordinating strikes and supporting activity both within individual workplaces and across entire regions. We need systems through which we can organise and call action, spread news, distribute resources... through which we can collectively decide when to strike, how to strike, and with what objectives. As such we must unionise our workplaces, connect these unions through trades councils and federations, support these unions with mutual aid networks, and maintain our movement through institutions such as union halls and social clubs.

# Our activity

The actions we must now take in pursuit of this goal can be summarised with the old labour movement slogan: Educate! Agitate! Organise!



## **Educate!**

We must educate ourselves and our fellow workers on the threats posed by capitalism and climate and ecological collapse. We must learn from each other and from the struggles of the past - through meetings, talks, conversations on the picket line, letters and pamphlets, and through a multitude of other means.



## **Agitate!**

We must agitate in our workplaces and in our communities for action to defend the environment and for action to tear down capitalism. We must grow our energy, enthusiasm and confidence and build a mandate for ever greater action.



## **Organise!**

And we must organise! We must organise ourselves in such a way that we can coordinate ever escalating action, that we can feed, shelter and entertain one-another through the struggle, and so that we can live and work together in a world transformed.

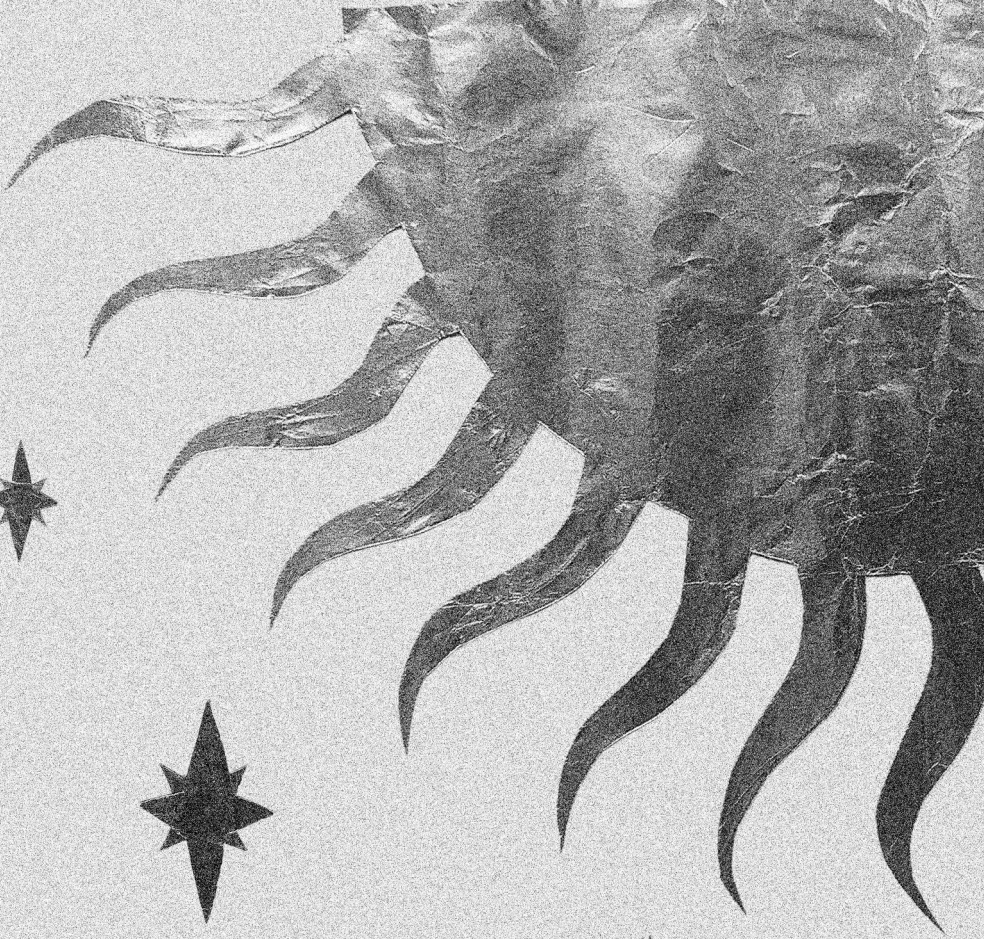
# Conclusion - a call to action

The climate and ecological crisis is dire. The planet is heating up at an alarming rate, weather systems are becoming increasingly erratic and many ecosystems are in a state of collapse. The crisis compounds and is compounded by a multitude of other crises, crises that are all driven by the same systems of exploitation and domination. We must act boldly if we are to survive and create a new world in which we can thrive.

It was the toil and labour of the working class that built the society that we live in, that keeps it running each day. We have built wonderful things, but many of us also work pointless or harmful jobs on threat of poverty. We are being extorted to continue a system that is burning our home and that before too long will leave us starving. But we have the collective might to break the grip that holds us. To end the system that exploits us for the benefit of a few, and to build something wonderful in its place.

The tide is already turning. Workers all over the world are organising and striking. We must keep going, our whole world depends on it!





## Get involved

Organise with Earth Strike, affiliate your union or find out more:

**Web:** [earth-strike.co.uk](http://earth-strike.co.uk)

**Email:** [info@earth-strike.co.uk](mailto:info@earth-strike.co.uk)

**Socials:** @EarthStrikeUK



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