

LONDON ASSEMBLY

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Leonie Cooper AM
Chair of the Environment Committee

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
(Sent by email)

29 February 2024

Dear Sadiq,

I am writing to share the findings of the Environment Committee's investigation into Low-Carbon Skills in London, focusing on whether the capital is training enough skilled workers to support the transition to net zero. The Committee held one meeting on this topic on 18 October 2023, where we heard from the following guests:

- Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills, Greater London Authority (GLA)
- Ann-Marie Soyinka, Assistant Director for Skills and Employment Unit, GLA
- Dr Austin Entonu, Head of Energy, GLA
- Nancy Jonsson, Technical Consultant, Heat Pumps Association (HPA)
- Andrew Eldred, Director of Workforce and Public Affairs, Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA)
- Polly Persechino, Head of Economy, Skills and Employment, South London Partnership (SLP)
- Ed Richardson, Programme Director, People and Skills, BusinessLDN
- Cara Jenkinson, Interim Head of Cities, Ashden

The Committee also undertook a Call for Evidence, which was open from Monday 4 September to Friday 29 September 2023, which received five responses from: Ashden, BusinessLDN, Central London Forward, the Electrical Contractors' Association, and HIES. The Committee also received an additional response from London Councils in January 2024. I am attaching these for your information.

Low-carbon skills is an area that the Committee have looked into previously, including its report on *Powering up London's Renewable Energy Future* in May 2023,¹ and the Committee's recent report on Community Energy.²

As part of our investigation into low-carbon skills, the Committee heard that there are still many challenges to be addressed in this area, and that greater co-ordination and partnership working between different stakeholders is needed. As Mayor, you have an important role to play, both in convening industry, employers and further education providers, as well as setting policy and supporting training, including through the Adult Education Budget. The Committee recognises that there is work underway, such as the establishment of the Green Skills Hubs as part of the Mayor's Academies Programme – currently five of the 22 skills hubs are dedicated to green skills and a sixth has a green and digital focus.³ While it is still early to fully assess their impact, there are indications that some aspects are working well, but that others could be made more effective. The Committee's conclusions and recommendations cover the following areas:

- 1) The need for greater awareness and information about career options and on the processes and opportunities for installing low-carbon technologies;
- 2) The vital importance of ensuring appropriate apprenticeships and training pathways are available and that they provide the skills required for access into low-carbon professions;
- 3) The continued need to promote diversity across all professions associated with the transition to net zero; and
- 4) The need for policy consistency and long-term funding for both skills training and also to support ongoing demand for low-carbon installation services.

1. Awareness and information

a. Career pathways.

Information about low-carbon career pathways is often hard to understand and uses overly complex language. In our investigation, the Committee heard that inaccessible language is a barrier to attracting people to work in jobs that support the transition to net zero, such as retrofitting or installing heat pumps. Ed Richardson, Programme Director for People and Skills from BusinessLDN, which co-ordinated the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) in London,⁴ said that they had found:

“There are issues around what we termed in the LSIP ‘green jargon’, both for employers and for potential employees or workers more broadly as well. That can definitely be a barrier to understanding the core competencies required for a role

¹ London Assembly Environment Committee, [Powering up London's Renewable Energy Future](#), 5 May 2023

² London Assembly Environment Committee, [Community Energy Report](#), 23 January 2024

³ Mayor of London, [MQ2022/0588](#), 25 February 2022

⁴ Business LDN, [The London Local Skills Improvement Plan](#)

and other potential pathways into a sector, career progression and that sort of thing. That is definitely a challenge.”⁵

Similarly, Polly Persechino, Head of Economy, Skills and Employment at the South London Partnership, the sub-regional collaboration covering Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Richmond upon Thames and Sutton,⁶ told the Committee that “there is a massive knowledge-building mission that has to go on. We have done a lot of work, for example, with our practitioners, training our practitioners so that they understand green jobs and net zero.”⁷

Polly Persechino also told the Committee about a piece of work led by the South London Partnership to develop a “Green Careers Tree” which aims to support people to find jobs in the green economy, and has identified 18 careers across nine subsectors, including areas such as power, buildings, and low carbon transport.⁸

The Committee considers that there could and should be a role for the Mayor in consolidating and co-ordinating tools, such as the ‘Green Careers Tree’,⁹ to ensure that clear and consistent messaging about opportunities is available to people considering potential career paths. The Committee also considers that even language around the Mayor’s Academies Programme and ‘green skills hubs’ is too conceptual and potentially confusing, and more could be done to communicate in simple terms the location of courses and training.

Recommendation 1: The Mayor should work with industry organisations and education providers to help simplify ‘jargon’ and inaccessible language to help people understand what skills are needed to access jobs in low-carbon professions, and how to develop these. He should promote and consolidate resources to raise awareness of green career pathways, such as South London Partnership’s Green Careers Tree, and provide or signpost a central directory of courses across London.

Recommendation 2: The Mayor needs to urgently invest via his Adult Education Budget to expand retrofit courses. He should also ensure that every construction course that receives funding through the AEB includes a retrofit module, or has retrofit incorporated into it as a matter of urgency.

b. Installing low-carbon technologies.

The Committee heard that there is a lack of awareness concerning the processes and opportunities for installing low-carbon technologies, which is vital for ensuring continued

⁵ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 1](#), 18 October 2023, p.14

⁶ [Home - South London Partnership](#)

⁷ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 1](#), 18 October 2023, p.14

⁸ Ibid, p.14

⁹ South London Partnership, [Green Careers Tree](#)

demand for low-carbon services and jobs for workers. Guests also told the Committee there is a lack of information, both for households and wider industry, which could be made much clearer through a centralised resource.

Ed Richardson from BusinessLDN told the Committee there is scope for the GLA to create a one-stop-shop model supporting jobseekers “that brings together the co-location of employment support, careers advice, skill support as well, and getting the private sector involved and supporting some of those initiatives too.”¹⁰

Cara Jenkinson, Interim Head of Cities from Ashden, described how a ‘one-stop shop’ for retrofit could work for householders:

“They want to improve their home; how do they go about it? They get advice from the ‘one-stop shop’. They might find installers through the ‘one-stop shop’ and they will be helped through the customer journey of getting the work done. As part of that there will be skills training being delivered so that that installer network exists. There has been a lot of investment in Ireland in that model.”¹¹

Recommendation 3: The Mayor should create a centralised source of information for households, providing information on retrofit and other low-carbon installations to encourage homeowners to instigate their own home improvement projects and how to make energy efficiency improvements to where they live.

Recommendation 4: The centralised source of household information should not just be for householders but should also provide information to help employers, education providers and local authorities to collaborate more effectively on low-carbon skills development.

2. Apprenticeships and training

The Committee heard that there are currently not enough opportunities to learn ‘on-the-job’ and get long-term training to develop skills to support the low-carbon transition.¹² More co-ordination between different stakeholders is needed to ensure consistent training opportunities, which will help to create clearer pathways for gaining the skills required for low-carbon professions.

a. Resolving issues with Section 106 agreements

The Committee heard that Section 106 agreements (also known as ‘s106’ agreements), which require developers working on construction or retrofit projects to train local people in low-carbon skills through apprenticeships are currently not working as envisaged. There are many people struggling to complete their training, as it is difficult to find enough projects in the same area to work on in order to gain the necessary experience. The City of London Corporation Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce – a three-year

¹⁰ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 2](#), 18 October 2023, p.12

¹¹ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 1](#), 18 October 2023, p.28

¹² London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 1](#) and [Panel 2](#), 18 October 2023

project to increase the supply of skilled workers for sustainable buildings¹³ – has recommended that the GLA lead a London-wide approach to reforming s106 agreements so that apprentices have the freedom to complete their apprenticeships across multiple boroughs and developments.¹⁴

In their written submission to the Committee, BusinessLDN said that the Mayor should be “driving better borough collaboration on vacancies, recruitment and apprenticeships. This is to include joint promotional campaigns and support programmes, working together on Local Labour Agreements through the Section 106 process, and sharing resources to expand reach.”¹⁵

Recommendation 5: The Mayor should convene local authorities to drive better collaboration on vacancies and recruitment in professions and trades associated with the low-carbon transition. This should include addressing issues such as apprenticeship dropouts arising from disparate approaches to Section 106 agreements.

b. Engaging small companies to take on apprenticeships

Research published by GLA Economics in July 2023 found there had been “a sharp drop [in the total number of apprenticeships started by learners living in London] following the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, with starts in 2017/18 around 7,500 below their pre-levy average.”¹⁶ In addition, “the number of apprenticeship starts at Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) has decreased significantly since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, despite an increase in 2020/21.”¹⁷

Andrew Eldred, Director of Workforce and Public Affairs at the Electrical Contractors’ Association (ECA), told the Committee that there are particular challenges in providing opportunities for on-the-job training because of the size of companies. He stated: “more than 99 per cent of the businesses in this market, electrical and plumbing, are small and micro. They are not even SME [Small and medium sized enterprises], they are small and micro.”¹⁸ He suggested that additional support for very small companies would enable more to consider taking on apprenticeships:

“I absolutely buy into the idea of extra support for smaller employers. For the electrical apprenticeship, 80 per cent of all electrical apprentices are already employed by non-levy companies, the smaller companies. However, the people who we miss out on are probably those a little bit smaller than that, the small and micro. They do not have the infrastructure of supervision or mentoring. They are

¹³ City of London, [Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce](#)

¹⁴ City of London Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce, [Skyline Skills Report](#), 18 August 2023, p.10

¹⁵ BusinessLDN, Call for Evidence Submission, September 2023

¹⁶ London Datastore, [Recent apprenticeships trends in London](#), 8 February 2023

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 2](#), 18 October 2023, p.9

scared at some of the bureaucracy, so additional incentives and support, including potentially wage support, could be targeted at those companies. Dropout rates are a concern and if it goes wrong they will not do it again. Therefore, if you provide that support upfront, particularly for a small outfit that is taking on its first apprentice, you start to get over the issue there.”¹⁹

One issue identified by Polly Persechino is that the short duration of contracts and small margins makes it difficult for companies to take on apprenticeships. She highlighted how “the Federation of Master Builders is saying that the margins in the construction industry are so small that whereas historically they may have taken a hit around apprenticeships and being able to build that, because profit margins within construction are so tiny, the small contractors are just not able to facilitate apprenticeships. It is a real challenge, particularly in London.”²⁰

Ed Richardson from BusinessLDN highlighted that one of the “core asks with the LSIP work is for the creation of an SME support hub with a skills support function as well.”²¹ The Committee supports this idea.

Recommendation 6: The Mayor should increase support to smaller companies and SMEs for apprenticeships to support the transition to net zero, which could include mentoring, supervision and possibly financial assistance, and consider working with other partners to create an ‘SME support hub.’

c. Shortages of experienced college teachers

The Committee were told that the limited availability of experienced trainers with practical experience is hindering the expansion of courses and training opportunities, as wages are often lower than for installation. Ashden, a climate change charity, told the Committee that employers, particularly organisations that work on larger projects and subcontract to others (known as ‘Tier 1’ contractors) could be encouraged to help to plug this gap, through procurement levers: ²²

“With significant government-funded programmes looking to deliver in London over the next 3 years there is a good opportunity to use procurement to deliver training objectives – for example by insisting that Tier 1 contractors support local colleges by training lecturers and also offer work experience and opportunities for newly trained people.”²³

Ed Richardson from BusinessLDN stated during the October meeting that there are opportunities to scale up training in London. He said “through the LSIP process there was

¹⁹ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 1](#), 18 October 2023, p.25

²⁰ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 2](#), 18 October 2023, p.6

²¹ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 2](#), 18 October 2023, p.24

²² Ashden, Call for Evidence submission, September 2023

²³ Ashden, Call for Evidence submission, September 2023

a lot of support for the ‘train-the-trainer’ model ...we are keen to drive through that process in other things as well such as more workforce exchange programmes as well.”²⁴

Recommendation 7: The Mayor should use procurement policies to ensure contractors support skills training in the low carbon skills sector, and use his influence with other companies to ensure they do the same.

Recommendation 8: The Mayor should work with BusinessLDN, which coordinates London’s LSIP, to ensure colleges coordinate with employers so that training and work experience can be jointly offered.

d. Supporting experienced workers to get formal qualifications

The Electrical Contractors’ Association (ECA) told the Committee that the Mayor should “boost support for the EWA [Experienced Worker Assessment] route, including the provider infrastructure to support completion of the EWA.”²⁵ This allows people who have already worked in the electrical industry, or a closely related field to gain a qualification, provided that they can demonstrate adequate existing knowledge and fill gaps through training and experience before taking an assessment of competence.²⁶ This would both help skilled staff transition and address known skills shortages.

Recommendation 9: The Mayor should support opportunities for existing professionals to upskill who may not meet qualifications for industry standards in low-carbon sectors. This should be prioritised through the Experienced Worker Assessment (EWA) and be properly resourced through the Adult Education Budget or other funding mechanisms.

3. Diversity

A 2022 study conducted by the GLA found that jobs in green occupations are more likely to be held by men than women (73 per cent were held by men in 2017-19) and a relatively high proportion of job holders are from a White ethnic background (74 per cent compared to 67 per cent for non-green occupations) with fewer from ethnic minorities.²⁷ Some of these people will experience multiple overlapping disadvantages, including often low-incomes.²⁸

BusinessLDN told the Committee that there are several barriers to work faced by Londoners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The cost of travel acts as a major barrier to

²⁴ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 1](#), 18 October 2023, p.20

²⁵ London Assembly Environment Committee, [Call for evidence - Green Skills](#), September 2023

²⁶ ECA, Call for Evidence submission, September 2023

²⁷ London Datastore, [Green Skills Adult Education Provision in London](#), 17 January 2022 c.f. BusinessLDN, Call for Evidence submission, September 2023

²⁸ London Higher, [Intersectionality is the key to unlocking inclusion in London’s higher education community](#), 11 September 2023

increasing participation in training from under-represented groups, as does the confidence to travel across London and sometimes within boroughs to training and employment.²⁹

Ed Richardson, Programme Director for People and Skills, BusinessLDN told the Committee that one way to change this is to ensure that it is a constant focus of all programmes, including:

“ensuring and just checking and double-checking and constantly monitoring to ensure that the GLA’s programmes and funding, whether that is encompassing the Adult Education Budget, Jobs and Skills for Londoners Fund, No Wrong Door, United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund funding, Skills Academies, bootcamps, and so on. All are working together and are aligned in the most effective way possible to support the delivery and support employment outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged people.”³⁰

The Committee recognises the efforts made within the Green Skills Academy Hubs to increase diversity in the sector, with “around 75 per cent of learners moving from hub training into employment, apprenticeships or paid work placement...from under-represented groups.”³¹

Recommendation 10: The Mayor should continue to focus on diversity in the approach to the Adult Education Budget and training. The Mayor should explore what additional support, such as mentoring, can be provided to people who want to gain the skills to work in the sector and how to lower the barriers to access training and job opportunities, such as subsidised travel.

4. Policy consistency and long-term funding

a. Policy consistency

The Committee heard repeatedly that policy consistency is vital for ensuring the supply chain has predictable demand and can plan into the future effectively. Dr Austin Entonu, Head of Energy at the GLA told the Committee that efforts to enhance demand and supply require “consistent messaging from central government”.³²

Cara Jenkinson, Interim Head of Cities at Ashden, highlighted the importance of “long-term commitment” to programmes and gave the example of how in Scotland the “procurement of Warm Works, that does its fuel poverty work, that was done on a five year contract and they had specific skills targets to train their small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) [...] They cannot just roll on from year to year.”³³

²⁹ BusinessLDN, Call for Evidence submission, September 2023

³⁰ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 2](#), 18 October 2023, p.12

³¹ Mayor of London, [MQ 2023/4280](#), 21 November 2023

³² London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 2](#), 18 October 2023, p.1

³³ Ibid, p.2

Nancy Jonsson, Technical Consultant from the Heat Pumps Association, highlighted how “the recent change in the phase-out date for fossil fuel boilers, extending that for replacement systems by another 12 years, does not create the environment for investment, or help those in the supply chain, the contractors in the supply chain, to see the views and to see the opportunity.”³⁴

While much of the criticism that the Committee heard was aimed at the Government, there is also a role for the Mayor here to ensure a consistent and long-term approach going forward wherever possible.

b. Funding

The Mayor’s Skills Academies have delivered 1,600 jobs, including 340 apprenticeships, in green skills.³⁵ Currently funding for skills hubs has been extended for a single year to 2025 “for the most successful hubs.”³⁶

The Mayor’s Green Skills Hubs have generally been welcomed. Central London Forward, a “strategic sub-regional partnership for Central London” covering twelve London boroughs,³⁷ described to the Committee how they “have played an important role in coordinating skills providers, employers and residents” and recommended that “The Mayor of London should ensure ongoing funding for Hubs focused on green skills, including for curriculum development.”³⁸

BusinessLDN highlighted the importance of moving skills funding “towards more sustainable multi-year funding settlements as opposed to short-term piecemeal funding pots. This should include committing to long-term funding for the Mayor’s Skills Academies Hubs, including giving them a clearer operating model.”³⁹

The Committee recognises that there are challenges around this. Ann-Marie Soyinka told the Committee that “current funding is definitely not sufficient” due to rising demand,⁴⁰ and highlighted how skills funding is currently very fragmented:

“There are loads of different pots that we have been trying to work to simplify as much as we can. Obviously, that is not very much within our gift. The ask of Government is to simplify that landscape and to provide a single funding pot that the Mayor can then use to align with his priorities much more easily.”⁴¹

Recommendation 11: The Mayor should continue funding for all Green Skills Hubs meeting minimum performance levels beyond 2025, and ensure lessons about

³⁴ Ibid, p.2

³⁵ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 1](#), 18 October 2023, p.15

³⁶ Ibid, p.10

³⁷ [Home - Central London Forward : Central London Forward](#)

³⁸ Central London Forward, Call for Evidence submission, September 2023

³⁹ BusinessLDN, Call for Evidence submission, September 2023

⁴⁰ London Assembly Environment Committee meeting, [Panel 1](#), 18 October 2023, p.18

⁴¹ Ibid, p.18

factors that contributed to success are recorded in a public report and shared widely to improve outcomes.

The Committee also recognises that the GLA has to work within the wider policy and funding parameters set by central government. Deputy Mayor, Jules Pipe, told the Committee that “we do not have control over policy or implementation of apprenticeships or standards for apprenticeships. One of the key things that the Mayor has always asked for is the flexibility to be able to use some of the Apprenticeship pot to allow it to be used to top up salaries.” He suggested:

“If we could use a small amount of the money, the Apprenticeship Levy, which otherwise goes unspent in London and gets returned to the [HM] Treasury and gets spent elsewhere. It is a common problem. The enthusiasm for Apprenticeships is very suppressed in London because of the nonpotential earning from it for young people. We need that flexibility.”⁴²

The Committee agrees that additional flexibility for Apprenticeship funding would help support more young people to consider Apprenticeships in the low-carbon sector.

Recommendation 12: The Mayor should continue to engage with the Government about options for longer-term funding and greater flexibility for how it is used, to promote training in low-carbon skills.

I look forward to hearing from you, with your response to our recommendations. The Committee would welcome a response by 24 May 2024. Please address your response to Richard Clarke, Senior Policy Adviser, at Richard.Clarke@london.gov.uk.

Yours,



Leonie Cooper AM
Chair of the Environment Committee

⁴² Ibid, p.12