



BUILT ENVIRONMENT JUST TRANSITIONS ACCELERATOR

T A K E A W A Y S

ROUNDTABLE

22 SEPTEMBER 2025

TAKEAWAYS

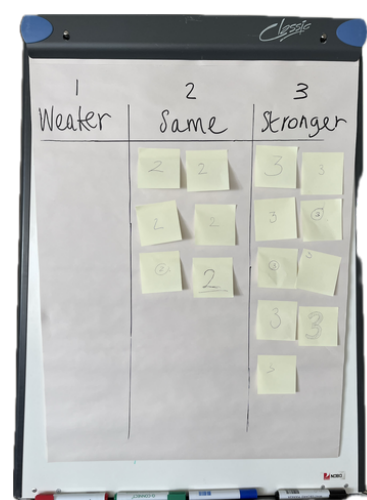
Advancing, Shaping, and Strengthening the Just Transition Together

INTRODUCTION

Human Rights Temperature Check

- 60% of the stakeholders reported strengthening their human rights commitments year on year
- 40% reported staying the same
- 0% reported weaker commitments

This provides a clear state of play: organisations engaged with BEJTA UK are actively working to embed human rights, but the scale and urgency of the challenges in housing, workforce, and climate goals remain significant.



OVERVIEW

Giulio Ferrini, IHRB Head of Built Environment, opened the session noting how real estate and construction are somewhat sheltered from the backlash seen against decarbonisation in many other sectors, as the economic benefits of climate action - particularly retrofit - are well understood. These sectors are therefore uniquely placed to align climate and social objectives, particularly in housing.

"Labour rights challenges remain vast, but it was great to see civil society organisations, businesses and policymakers recognise the need to work more closely with labour agencies to protect workers, increase the appeal of the sector, and unlock the built environment's decarbonisation. The Labour Agency Vendor Accord (LAVA) has already delivered positive impacts when it's been used, and we look forward to working with our partners to strengthen it, and broaden its adoption."

– Giulio Ferrini,
Head of the Built Environment Programme, IHRB.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Human rights commitments are improving, but risks remain – workforce shortages, visa restrictions, and enforcement gaps could undermine progress.
- Collaboration is essential – civil society, business, unions, and government must work together to align climate and social objectives.
- Practical action is possible – through the Labour Agency Vendor Accord (LAVA), targeted visa reform, ethical recruitment, and robust enforcement mechanisms, the sector can achieve a Just Transition.

BEJTA UK is committed – advancing practice and shaping policy to deliver meaningful impact on the right to adequate housing, workers' rights, and net zero climate goals.

The Roundtable included insights from key speakers and facilitated dialogues:

REFLECTIONS

- Giulio Ferrini, IHRB: Housing is the nexus of climate and social policy; translating policy into action is critical.
- Margaret Beels OBE, DLME: New enforcement structures (Fair Work Agency, Employment Rights Bill) will impact housing and retrofit workforce protections.
- Gordon Miller, IHRB: Workforce shortages and Skilled Worker visa restrictions create informal labour pathways, increasing exploitation risks.
- Kirsty Girvan, UKGBC: The emerging housing and worker policy landscape is detailed and complex, but the progression provides hope for positive change.

"The UK's current Immigration Rules simply aren't fit for the construction sector. A restrictive Skilled Worker visa pathway excludes many of the trades we urgently need. The result is more informal labour, bogus self-employment, and higher risks of exploitation. This has a knock-on effect on achieving critical decarbonisation targets, retrofit and new build goals alongside the right to adequate housing and workers' rights."

– Gordon Miller,
Programme Manager, Built Environment, IHRB

KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED:

- Workforce shortages in construction threaten labour rights, net zero, and housing delivery.
- Skilled Worker visa restrictions exclude key trades, creating informal labour pathways and rights risks.
- Enforcement is under-resourced; exploitation in trades like roofing, insulation, and joinery is rising.
- Supply chain accountability is insufficient to ensure public investment meets ethical standards.

EMERGING SOLUTIONS DISCUSSED:

- LAVA to set enforceable ethical recruitment and worker protection standards to mitigate labour exploitation.
- Sector-specific Skilled Worker visa reforms informed by international examples (Canada, New Zealand, Germany) and UK approaches in other sectors (horticulture and social care).
- Upskilling, personal development pathways, and worker voice mechanisms are essential to operationalise Just Transition principles.

MEDIA ASSETS



Slide Decks



Photos & recordings

1).



2).



Breakout Workshop: Labour Agency Vendor Accord (LAVA)

The breakout session focused on strengthening the voluntary LAVA to protect construction workers' rights and embed a Just Transition approach.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Mandatory Standards: 90% of the current LAVA content is feasible; some areas need strengthening, particularly enforcement and monitoring.
- Establishing LAVA levels – Bronze (non-negotiables) / Silver (adopted barriers) / Gold (added desirables) – could incentivise progressive adoption.
- Local Recruitment Challenges: Restrictions in borough/region recruitment need careful design; shared apprenticeship schemes could help but are costly.
- Upskilling & Career Development: Embed CPD budgets, tailored development plans - particularly for green skills - and career adviser support.
- Workers' Voice: Encourage union membership, secure reporting channels beyond whistleblowing, and ensure worker feedback informs compliance.
- Fair Work Standards: Clarify baseline – Real Living Wage, London Living Wage / Good Work Standard – and ensure alignment with legal requirements.
- Employee Wellbeing: Track and report wellbeing outcomes over time; positive impact could unlock public health funding.
- Celebrating Success: Highlight good practice to incentivise compliance and broader adoption.

REFLECTIONS

- Larger companies find current LAVA feasible; smaller companies face cost and reporting barriers – but the human rights bar has to be at a high level.
- LAVA should benefit existing workers as well as new employees/sub-contractors.
- Importance of client relationships and enforcement mechanisms for real-world impact.
- Detailed, specialist monitoring is essential, but costly and time-intensive – clarity is needed on who bears the cost.

Next Phase: Establishing Working Groups

The Roundtable concluded with the agreement to establish two working groups:

THE LAVA WORKING GROUP

- Objective: Develop the LAVA standard – establish levels, encourage adoption – pilot, ensure application across existing and new workers' roles, upskilling, and workers' voice mechanisms.

THE POLICY WORKING GROUP

- Objective: Advocate for reforms to advance retrofit, housing, and decarbonisation goals while ensuring adequate housing rights, construction workers' rights and mitigating exploitation.

These working groups will advance practice by piloting solutions and shaping policy through evidence-based advocacy, ensuring workers' rights, housing delivery, and decarbonisation targets progress together.

Please find a [link](#) to the Combined Working Groups Stakeholder Pack.

WORKING GROUPS – COMMITTED STAKEHOLDERS

Businesses

- Balfour Beatty
- GPE
- Lendlease
- Lloyds Banking Group/Lloyds Living
- Mace
- Morgan Sindall
- Multiplex
- Oak Park Development Corporation
- Rathbones
- VGC Group

Civil Society Organisations

- Association of Labour Providers
- ReGenerate
- Stronger Together
- UKGBC

Unions

- Trades Union Congress (TUC)

Policymakers

- GLA

Call to Action

The BEJTA UK is building a coalition of those willing to deliver tangible impact. By engaging joining, stakeholders can help ensure that the UK meets its housing decarbonisation and climate goals while upholding workers' rights and the right to adequate housing.

Interested in joining the LAVA or Policy Working Group – or both – as a Core Member or Advisory Circle?

Email Gordon.Miller@IHRB.org to:

- Confirm participation in one or both Working Groups.
- Select role: Core Group or Advisory Circle.
- Commit to the shared objectives of BEJTA UK.
- Be listed as a stakeholder supporter on the BEJTA UK website and communications.

FURTHER READINGS

- [Roundtable Attendee Pack – Agenda, Attendees and Logistics](#)
- [Built Environment Just Transitions Accelerator \(BEJTA\) UK](#)
- [Advancing Just Transitions in the Built Environment](#)
- [Making the case for green and affordable housing](#)
- [Investment must change to meet the world's housing needs](#)
- [Future green construction jobs](#)

CONTACT

Gordon Miller, Programme
Manager UK, Built Environment
Programme, IHRB
E: gordon.miller@ihrb.org

Giulio Ferrini, Head of Built
Environment, IHRB
E: Giulio.Ferrini@ihrb.org