

Supporting workforce diversity in the zero-emission heavy vehicle transition

National policy priorities for a just transition

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Key Messages

- The switch to zero-emission heavy vehicles (e.g., lorries, buses, coaches) is a people and skills challenge as well as a technology challenge
- Building a more diverse workforce is essential for meeting future skills and labour needs
- Current barriers to training, recruitment and retention risk slowing the transition and excluding some groups from its benefits
- Better coordination across government, industry and training providers is needed to address workforce challenges

About the Research

This brief draws on research with **39** stakeholders across Scotland and a review of **16** policy and industry documents. The study explored workforce challenges and opportunities in the transition to zero-emission heavy vehicles and developed a roadmap for action.

The research included:

- **22** stakeholder interviews
- Co-design workshops (**17** participants)
- Development of a transition roadmap



Key Research Findings

Five workforce challenges

Training can be difficult to access

- The cost, location and availability of training can limit participation – especially for small and medium-sized businesses

Low awareness of career opportunities

- Awareness of roles beyond driving remains low which limits the sector's ability to attract new workers

Working patterns can put people off

- Long hours, irregular shifts and limited flexibility can make jobs harder to fill and keep

Career opportunities are not always clear

- Workers may not know how they can progress within the sector which can reduce motivation to stay

The sector risks losing experienced workers

- If experienced workers leave, valuable skills and knowledge may be lost during the transition

These challenges are closely linked. Together, they can make it harder to attract, train and keep the people needed for the transition to zero-emission heavy vehicles.

Workforce diversity is essential to the transition

Participants highlighted that:

- The transition depends on having enough people with the right skills
- Recruiting from a wider range of people will help meet future workforce needs.
- Some barriers affect women, carers and disabled people more than others

Workforce diversity should be built into transition planning from the start.

Why does this matter?

- Workforce shortages can slow the transition
- Challenges are often greater for smaller businesses, under-represented groups, and areas with limited training opportunities

Without action, workforce challenges could slow progress towards net zero and limit the benefits of the transition.

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Priority solutions identified

- **Clear national leadership** on skills and recruitment
- **Funding** for training and skills development
- **Stronger links** between education and employment
- **Clear routes** into jobs and careers
- **Sharing good practice** across the sector
- **Promoting** career opportunities to a wider range of people

These actions will be most effective when delivered together.

What is needed?

- **Long-term commitment** and **coordination** from government
- **Stable funding** to support the workforce transition.
- **Better links** between education, training and jobs.
- **More action** to improve working conditions and career opportunities
- **Targeted support** for small and medium-sized businesses and parts of the country with fewer training opportunities

What does this mean for policy?

Provide long-term leadership and funding

Develop a clear national strategy backed by stable, long-term funding

Improve job quality and keep experienced workers

Support career development, flexible working and knowledge sharing

Create clear routes into jobs

Make career opportunities easier to understand and access

Build workforce planning into the transition

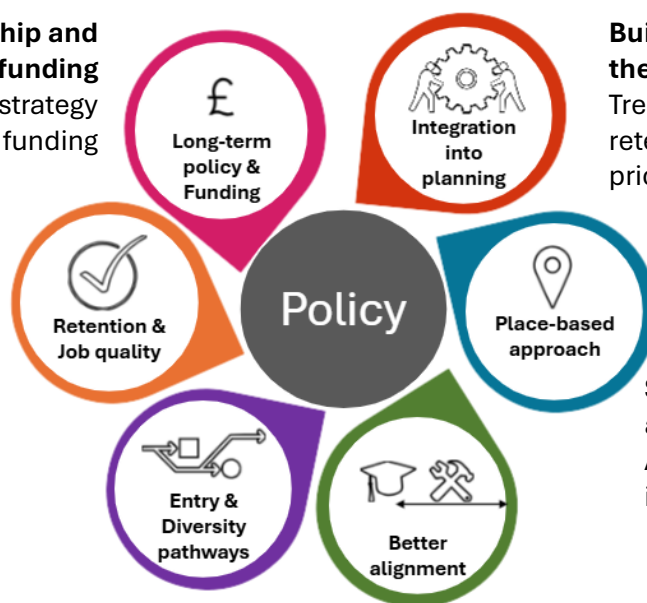
Treat skills, recruitment and retention as core transition priorities

Support smaller businesses and local needs

Address regional differences in access to training and jobs

Improve links between education and employment

Ensure training reflects real workplace needs



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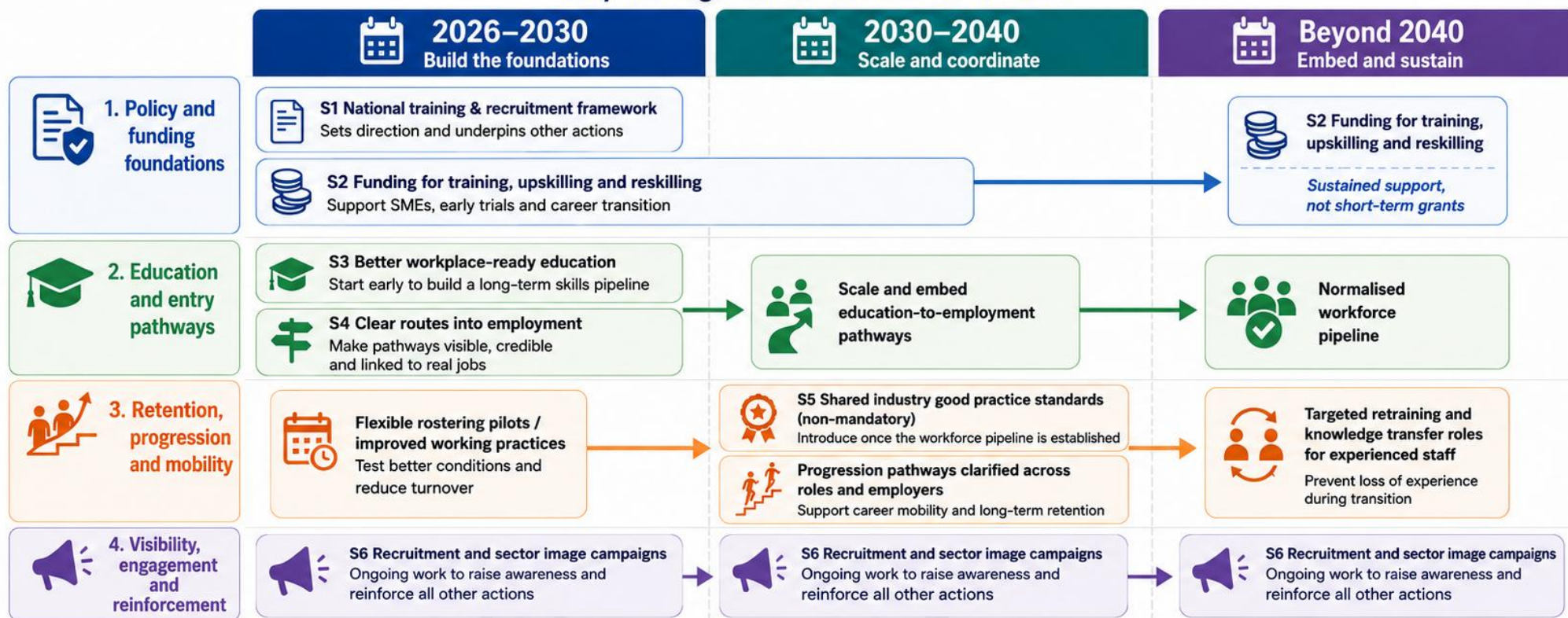
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Workforce Roadmap for a Fair ZE HDV Transition

Sequencing actions from 2026 to 2040



Cross-cutting principle: Fair access to opportunities

Embed across **S1–S6**: targeted routes for under-represented groups, support for career changers, and links from adjacent sectors.



Core message

Participants saw this as a sequencing challenge: policy and funding first, then education and entry routes, followed by retention, progression and longer-term workforce resilience.