

GMB and Community reveal multi-union plan for Tata Steel



GMB Union and Community revealed today a multi-union plan for steel.

GMB Union and Community **revealed today a multi-union plan** designed to secure a just transition for the workforce at Port Talbot and across Tata Steel UK, to safeguard the future of steelmaking at Port Talbot, and to deliver on our climate responsibilities.

The multi-union plan was endorsed by National Officers and senior lay officials from GMB, Community and Unite on the 8th of November 2023, and it was presented to Tata Steel by all three unions on the 17th of November 2023. Subsequently Unite decided to withdraw their support of the multi-union plan.



The steel unions have condemned the 'bad deal for steel' announced by Tata and the Government on the 15th of September, with the potential loss of 3,000 jobs, and we are seriously concerned about the proposal to build a single 3mt Electric Arc Furnace (EAF). Installing a simple 3mt EAF would lock us into a single technological approach producing a significantly reduced and limited portfolio through recycling scrap steel in an EAF, which would threaten jobs, and which would be substantially less green than the strategies being adopted by our main competitors.

Our two-phase multi-union plan would protect more than 2,300 jobs over a decade and would see no compulsory redundancies at Port Talbot. Under the multi-union plan Blast Furnace Number 4 would continue to run until the end of its life-cycle in 2032, while one small EAF and later a second EAF or Open Slag Bath Furnace (OSBF) are constructed. The plan also recommends the construction of a Direct Iron Reduction (DRI) plant to fully decarbonise steelmaking and to ensure the UK retains its strategically important capability to produce virgin steel.

This ambitious multi-union plan can safeguard steel production at Tata Steel UK for generations of steelworkers to come. The steel unions GMB and Community commend this plan and we urge all stakeholders to get on board and back a credible and deliverable alternative plan for Tata Steel UK.

Gary Smith, GMB General Secretary said:

“Port Talbot workers deserve a decarbonisation plan that protects the future of UK steel while safeguarding jobs.

“The multi-union plan offers a credible path to this future.

“It’s feasible, open to proper scrutiny and crucially avoids any non-compulsory redundancies.

“It’s the plan Port Talbot workers want – now unions, Tata and the Government need to make sure it’s implemented.”

Roy Rickhuss General Secretary of Community Union said:

“The multi-union plan, which had been agreed by all the steel unions, can safeguard the future of Port Talbot steelmaking and protect all the downstream plants, and crucially it can be delivered with no compulsory redundancies.



“It is a serious and credible plan developed with the support of the respected industry experts Syndex, who have had access to the company’s confidential information and who have in-depth knowledge of Tata Steel UK having worked with us since 2014.

“Our alternative is ready-to-go and we call on all stakeholders to get on board and back the plan, back our industry and back our steelworkers.”

Sarah Jones, Labour’s Shadow Minister for Industry and Decarbonisation said:

“It is welcome to see Tata engaging with a multi-union process around an alternative proposal for Tata Steel UK. There can be no route to green steel without proper engagement with the workforce to ensure we do not simply ship our emissions and jobs overseas.

“Labour is hopeful all parties can reach a solution in partnership with workers and industry, investing in a range of technologies to decarbonise steel and build the jobs and opportunities for the future of the UK steel industry.”

Stephen Kinnock MP for Aberavon said:

“This detailed, serious, robust and compelling plan for the future of the Port Talbot steelworks has my full and unequivocal support. It’s the only realistic route to retaining our customer base, and it’s also the only credible pathway to a strong, competitive and profitable future for steel-making in Port Talbot and throughout the downstream plants across Wales and the UK.

“The plan was fully endorsed by the multi-union steel committee prior to its presentation to Tata Steel, and I welcome the fact that the company has engaged so positively and constructively with the workforce on the basis of this plan. It’s vital that steel is at the heart of a forward-looking industrial strategy, which is why Labour has pledged £3billion to support the industry over the next decade.”



“I welcome this proposal from the Unions Steel Committee, which addresses wider concerns in the industry about security of UK primary steel supply.

“More than this, I am concerned about the transitional arrangements, where we risk losing all upstream steel capability in South Wales permanently.

“The proposal offers an alternative that eases the transition, giving a better outcome for workers and the local community, as well as ensuring that vital UK capability is retained.”

Stephane Portet, Head of Syndex UK said:

“Syndex has advised the Trade Union Steel Committee on the business case for the decarbonisation of Port Talbot. Following an in-depth review of the company’s proposal, and all the information shared with us by Tata Steel UK, we have concluded that the proposal to transition to a 3mt electric arc furnace results in high levels of operational, commercial, financial and above all social risks.

“Tata Steel UK is in a very difficult position and the challenge for the unions was immense. The unions have worked on an alternative which is financially viable and affordable, maximises the commercial opportunity and lowers the operational risk linked to a solution with only a single 3mt electric arc furnace.

“Most importantly, the unions’ plan immediately protects most of the jobs impacted by the change in technology, and allows for a decade to deliver a real just transition for the workers and their communities. Steelmaking has a future in the UK and this is what the unions’ alternative can secure.”

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