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West Midlands Pledges Action on Green Skills Shortage

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The mayor of the West Midlands has pledged to address the growing shortage of skilled workers needed to support the region's emerging green industries, outlining plans aimed at strengthening the economy while transitioning toward net-zero targets.

Richard Parker committed to acting on a report by Coventry University that warned of a critical skills gap hampering growth in sectors such as clean energy and electric vehicle production. The study urged the West Midlands Combined Authority, also known as WMCA, to adopt immediate measures to train and upskill local people.

Parker said his strategy would include investment to decarbonise homes and businesses and efforts to draw innovative companies into the region, particularly electric vehicle battery manufacturers. “It will turbocharge the work that’s already begun to build a pipeline of talent to tackle the net-zero skills gap this report rightly highlights,” he said. While the mayor did not detail the full cost of these proposals, he stressed that strengthening the workforce was essential to maintain competitiveness and attract private investment.

Coventry University’s recommendations included setting up a dedicated green skills centre and creating new apprenticeships in clean technologies. The report proposed a phased approach, suggesting short-term training programmes as well as longer-term partnerships between local government and industry to deliver the necessary expertise.

Professor Carl Perrin, director of the Institute for Clean Growth and Future Mobility at Coventry University, underscored the urgency of the challenge. “Green skills are no longer a ‘nice to have’, they are a strategic imperative,” Perrin explained. “Businesses that invest in sustainability and workforce development are not only contributing to environmental goals but also unlocking economic advantages.”

While some critics have argued that policymakers often overpromise and underdeliver on green jobs, there is broad recognition that equipping workers with practical skills will be a decisive factor in determining whether the West Midlands can convert environmental ambitions into lasting economic growth. The success of these plans will ultimately depend on whether the region can avoid the bureaucratic delays and inefficiencies that have dogged similar initiatives elsewhere.

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