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*The environment and climate change – a guide for union reps.*

Contact **Sharon Russell** to receive a copy

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## 1. Trade Union Climate Change Conference

Saturday 9 February 2008

University of London Union, Malet Street, London

Climate change has become a major, mainstream issue for trade unions. UCU is supporting the national Trade Union Climate Change conference in London and branches and LAs are strongly encouraged to draw members' attention to it and are invited to send delegates to the conference. Individual members can also attend. UCU president Linda Newman will be among speakers. Conference details available at [www.campaigncc.org/](http://www.campaigncc.org/).

## 2. UUK report: *Greening Spires: Universities & the green agenda*

This report contains many impressive examples of the contribution which university research is making to measures to reduce energy and materials use and contribute to sustainability. But the references are overwhelmingly towards the contribution of science, and little is made of the role which economics, transport planning, law, politics, social policy and other subjects will have to play in promoting sustainable options.

There is also little mention of the role which university unions and students can play to create changes in opinion and behaviour from below.

The report highlights many courses with environmental elements, but there is no mention of the need to build sustainability into the whole HE curriculum. The excellent work on this at Gloucester University looks sadly untypical.

UCU welcomed the report but also mentioned the economic and public policy teaching and research done by UK academics and the role university unions and student unions can play. We repeated our call for universities to establish local partnerships to develop plans to green campuses and the curriculum.

Download a copy of the UUK report at:

[www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/mediareleases/show.asp?MR=582](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/mediareleases/show.asp?MR=582).

What do you think of the report?

### 3. Tackling climate change – Sir David King

Sir David King, the former Government Chief Scientific Adviser, drew attention to the some of the issues absent in the UUK report with a plea for an interdisciplinary approach to tackling climate change. In a statement to the new 'Times Higher Education' (the former THES), Sir David challenged academics in the arts, humanities and social sciences for staying in their disciplinary "comfort zones" and failing to engage with scientists on the problem of climate change..

Click here to read the statement in the new Times Higher Education.

[www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=400269&c=1](http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=400269&c=1)

### 4. News of HEFCE's response to climate change

On 31 January, HEFCE publishes its '**Strategic review of sustainable development in Higher Education in England**'. The report exposes the patchy and generally poor progress which HEIs are making to incorporate sustainable development (SD) into their activities. HEFCE consulted on progress being made to promote (SD) via estates and management, research and teaching. An apparently unasked question was 'what are you doing to involve staff, including their unions, and students?' The report's brief as well as its responses show how little attempt has so far been made to develop an inclusive campus culture of sustainability by developing strategies with staff and student representatives. This is where UCU must play a role. Only 22 estates departments of the 132 institutions bothered to even reply.

There is slow progress on SD in teaching and research, and the level of interest shown by HEIs and departments varies enormously, illustrating the challenge ahead. Some fine examples of SD in teaching exist and UCU is keen to encourage the spread of this good practise. There is concern however that progress will be slow because of barriers to adopting SD, e.g. RAE funding obstacles to multidisciplinary work - as well as the attitudes of some academics to involving themselves in SD.

UCU intends to encourage involvement in SD with sensitivity. This is a pressing global priority and further and higher education will have a vital role to play. Please send us your comments on how we can speed up the greening of the curriculum as well as the campus.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in England will benefit from a new fund to provide repayable grants for projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The fund will total £30-40 million to distribute over the three years from 2008. Read more at [www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/2008/green.htm](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/2008/green.htm).

UCU participated in a HEFCE workshop in December, contributing ideas about campus unions can help develop local strategies for sustainable workplaces.

### 5. Go Green Week

16-24 February with '**People and Planet**' and how green is your university?

UCU staff recently met with People and Planet, the student campaign on world poverty, human rights and the environment, to explore possible cooperation in universities and colleges. In June 2007, People & Planet published the first ever league table of universities' environmental performance – **The Green League**. The report shocked many VCs into action. Many are fearful of a poor reputation on an issue of such importance to young people who may be university applicants.

Whatever the merits of league tables, UCU wants the response of HEIs to be more than a public relations campaign. There is a need for discussions with campus unions and student representatives to develop strategies to green universities.

Look out for P&P's '**Go Green Week**' 16-24 February. This will be the UK's first national student week of action and events against climate chaos. Groups will be organising loads of different events across the whole of the country at universities, colleges and schools. If your branch can support the activities and build links with People and Planet, please do.

Links:

<http://peopleandplanet.org/>

<http://peopleandplanet.org/gogreen/greenleague2007>

<http://peopleandplanet.org/gogreen/gogreenweek>

## 6. More green jobs in research

The government has announced plans to spend £1.3bn on four research programmes including climate change and energy. Click here to read the article from Education Guardian <http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/research/story/0,,2226101,00.html>

## 7. University and College transport - More campus car parks or better public transport?

A debate recently took place on the UCU 'activists' network' triggered by references to the old chestnut issue of car parks. Are university and college managers using climate change as an excuse to raise parking fees? What should UCU response be? Here is what UCU NEC member **Malcolm Povey** suggested.

## 8. Sustainable development in FE

CEL launches strategy for leadership of sustainable development in FE (19 November 07). To read more go to:

[www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/default.aspx?Page=nomenuReadNews&id=409](http://www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/default.aspx?Page=nomenuReadNews&id=409).

## 9. Trade Unions sustainability

PCS held a dayschool recently, including sessions on 'Why sustainability is a TU issue, supporting the role of reps and how to develop the green bargaining agenda. UCU is considering something similar. TUC has produced a guide: **How to green your workplace** ([www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-13386-f0.cfm?theme=sustainableworkplace](http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-13386-f0.cfm?theme=sustainableworkplace)) and offered **Ten green resolutions for 2008** - [www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-14152-f0.cfm?theme=sustainableworkplace](http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-14152-f0.cfm?theme=sustainableworkplace).

## 10. UCU Congress 2008

There will be an environment fringe meeting. If you have ideas for this please let us know.

## 11. UCU flies the flag

UCU's banner was present at the Campaign Against Climate Change demo on 8 December, along with representatives of UCU branches from Westminster, City, UEL, London Met, Thames Valley and Leeds universities and a range of FE colleges.

## 12. Greening UCU

Clearly if we are asking colleges and universities to 'green up' we have to put UCU's house in order. UCU Congress will expect a progress report on this this year. One idea would be to bring in the Carbon Trust to do an energy audit of a UCU regional office. This would be valuable in helping UCU to plan its new national HQ. Ideas welcome.

## 13. Future events

**'All our Futures' Conference**

**9-11 September 2008, University of Plymouth**

The aim of the conference will be to explore, in this context, how to shape and deliver an anticipatory education for sustainable futures. All aspects and levels of education will be on the conference agenda; but there will be particular emphasis on the contribution to be made by the universities and other institutions of higher education. Further details available at <http://csf.plymouth.ac.uk/?q=allourfutures> or contact **Jerome Satterthwaite** at CSF, tel 01752 238 890, 01752 823 091, 07708 107 564, email [jsatterthwaite@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:jsatterthwaite@plymouth.ac.uk).

This conference is hosted by Centre for Sustainable Futures, University of Plymouth in association with Kingston University, the Ecoversity, Bradford and the Higher Education Academy ESD Project.

### Join the UCU environment network

**UCU has begun to establish a network of members who share concerns about the environment and want to do something. The network is intended to help us share ideas, news and good practise and to find and train reps to maximise UCU's contribution locally and nationally to promoting sustainability.**

**Let us know of other members who might be interested: lecturers, researchers and academic related staff who we can invite to join the network. Or pass this on.**

**To join, send an email titled 'Join environment network' to [Sharon Russell](#).**

**IMPORTANT:** please send Sharon the following information about yourself:

**Name** .....

**Institution** .....

**About you - role at work, any roles in UCU, any special environmental interest/knowledge**

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**Preferred e-mail address** .....