



# Annual Environment Report

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**2012/2013**

# Contents

- Foreword and introduction 3
- 1 UCU Environment reps 4
- 2 Education for sustainable development 5
- 3 UCU international work 6
- 4 Alliances and campaigns 7
- 5 Training and resources 8
- Appendix 1:**
- UCU Congress motion 2013 9
- Appendix 2:**
- Education International World Congress Motion 10



STEFAN BOBEREK

UCU members at the Global Labour Institute Summer School in July, 2013. See page 6.

## Foreword

**W**elcome to the UCU Annual Environment Report for 2012-13. The report contains information on the main developments during the last academic year. We continue our efforts to put this into the mainstream of what we are doing as a union.

At a time of major challenges to the conditions of employment of staff it is not easy to prioritise activity around sustainable development. Our view is that we can't afford not to. This report highlights ways in which we can link what we do on sustainability to recruitment, campaigns and jobs. We urge all our branches and associations to make this an organising issue.

The transition to a low carbon economy is crucial if we are to avoid runaway climate change. It is our members who must provide the research and training to deliver this transition. The education sector has a key role and the UCU will play its part.

**Barry Lovejoy**  
National Head of Further Education

## Introduction



It's been another busy year of activity on environmental issues for the UCU. Not only are we trying to influence the policy framework in which academic staff operate but also to promote positive examples in the tertiary sector.

In 2009 we launched the '3 C' strategy of campus, curriculum and community. Since then it has been put into practice by UCU members across the UK. This work has achieved national and international recognition.

UCU would like to acknowledge the work of other organisations inside and outside the sector who are striving to protect the planet and create a more sustainable future. We look forward to strengthening our alliances and ensuring that the trade union voice is heard.

**Graham Petersen**  
UCU Environment Co-ordinator

# 1 UCU environment reps

UCU now has over 150 environment reps – more than any other trade union in the UK. There has been a large increase in members willing to take on the role – approx. 50% in the last 18 months. This illustrates that despite the difficulties in filling some branch posts this is a growth area for union organisation. Many of these new reps have not held a union position before and are attracted by the opportunity to be pro-active on a wide range of issues.

Two thirds are employed in the higher education sector and one third in the further education and adult learning sector.

## Policy

UCU passed a resolution at annual congress in 2013 making sustainable development ‘a core organising principle’ (Ref Appendix 1). A fringe meeting was held with the NUS and People & Planet which highlighted the importance of staff and student alliances. This is an exciting agenda but one where we will need an environment rep in every branch.

## Campus

Reps provide a staff voice on a wide range of environmental management concerns. In 2012 we were able to get a ‘staff and trade union engagement’ standard included in the Green League Table. This has helped, in the absence of legal recognition, to give staff a voice. We need to continue to press for sector recognition to ensure consultation on environmental measures, particularly those that impact on conditions of employment.

### **Case Study: Food growing**

The UCU environment rep at Sheffield College approached students at Sheffield and Hallam Universities to run a food growing project on the

three campuses. The proposal ‘Sheffield on a plate’ won funding from the NUS Green Fund and is a great example of integrating a campus issue with a curriculum and community dimension.

## Curriculum

Reps have worked with other academics to drive education for sustainable development into the curriculum. Recent NUS/HEA research has shown that students want this and yet progress is still painfully slow. UCU organised and participated in a number of conferences designed to address this weakness.

### **Case Study: Environmental awareness**

UCU members at Lewisham College applied for LSIS funding to develop course materials for discussion leaders from local housing estates. It helped empower local community groups to set up further sustainability projects. The project won the Green Gown Award for ‘Learning and Skills’ in 2012.

## Community

UCU has championed the importance of the education sector working together with local communities. There is huge potential in drawing up assignments and course work that have a sustainability focus and create employability opportunities

### **Case Study: Low carbon communities**

The UCU rep at South Thames College obtained LSIS funding to develop a community engagement strategy. In conjunction with community activists a low carbon zone was established in Tooting and college students linked into work experience activities with local schools and employers. The project won the Green Gown Award for ‘Best Newcomer’ in 2012.

## 2 Education for sustainable development

Education for sustainable development (ESD) has been a priority issue for UCU. It is widely recognised that there is a significant sustainability skills gap in the UK.

### Greener Jobs Alliance (GJA)

At national level we have co-ordinated this work through the GJA. It is an alliance of unions, students and environmental groups. In 2012 and 2013 it published a Green Skills Manifesto which highlighted the measures needed to address skills shortages.



In 2012 UCU represented the Trades Union Congress at the first meeting of the Skills Task Group for a Green Economy. This was set up by the Green Economy Council to advise on measures to ensure an ESD framework was put in place. In 2013 progress has faltered and UCU will continue to press for a model that offers an alternative to the current market/employer-led approaches that are not working.

### Further education and skills sector

In FE we have worked closely with the Learning Skills and Improvement Service. Unfortunately during 2013 LSIS lost its funding and we are pressing for its replacement – the Education and Training Foundation – to adopt a strong sustainability focus.

We are members of the Sustainable Development Alliance for Learning and Skills (SDALS) which brings together the main sector organisations. SDALS faces a major challenge

to promote ESD at a time when changes in the Ofsted framework and cutbacks in funding run the risk of undermining progress.

### Higher education sector

UCU is a member of the Higher Education Academy ESD Advisory Group. Some HE institutions have made good ESD progress but the Green League table of 2013 shows that many are still lagging behind.

The UN Decade on ESD ends in 2014. The UK will fall short of meeting these ambitions unless there is a rapid commitment to fast track this into the core business of each institution.

### Devolved administrations

UCU has been pressing for stronger ESD policy frameworks in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

### Scotland and Wales

Both countries have passed legislation making sustainability a core organising principle of public bodies. UCU has joined the English Learning Skills Alliance to press for similar legislation in England.

### Case Study: Green Rep of the Year

John James, the UCU Wales Environment Officer, participated in the Welsh Assembly consultation process on sustainable development. He was awarded the Welsh TUC 'Green Rep of the Year' in 2012-13.

## 3 UCU international work

The union recognises that global action is needed to confront climate change. We have been trying to influence policy development in a number of ways:

### Rio+20 Summit

We have been working with the Environment Association of Universities and Colleges to take forward the outcomes of the 2012 Rio+20 report The 'Future we want'. It contains sections on:

- Promoting full and productive employment, decent work for all and social protection (Paras 147-152). This highlights the role of trades unions and the need for a Just Transition to a more sustainable economy.
- Education (paras 229-235). This calls on nations to integrate education for sustainable development into the curriculum.

### International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The ILO is the employment arm of the United Nations. The annual conference in Geneva took place in June, 2013. UCU represented the TUC as the UK workers delegate to the discussion on 'Sustainable Development, Decent Work and Green Jobs'. This was the first time that the issue had been discussed at the ILO. The final report fails to call for a UN Standard but does highlight the importance of the education sector and skills development. UCU's report of the conference can be found at:

[www.ucu.org.uk/environment](http://www.ucu.org.uk/environment)

### Education International (EI)

EI is the global federation of education unions representing 30 million educators in 170 countries. We acted as the EI spokesperson

in the debate at the ILO. The EI has passed a resolution on climate change at the last World Congress following a UCU motion ( Ref Appendix 2). [www.ei-ie.org](http://www.ei-ie.org)

### Global Labour Institute (GLI)

Members of UCU attended the annual summer school of the GLI at Northern College, Barnsley in July (see photo, inside front cover). This brought together union activists from around the world and included workshops on social justice, energy and the environment. Details of the event can be found at:

[global-labour.net/wp-content/uploads-2013/08/2012-13-Report-of-Activities.pdf](http://global-labour.net/wp-content/uploads-2013/08/2012-13-Report-of-Activities.pdf)

### Trade Unions for Energy Democracy

UCU affiliated to the new international campaign to promote public, democratic direction and control of energy in a way that addresses the needs of workers, communities and the environment.

[energydemocracyinitiative.org](http://energydemocracyinitiative.org)

### Trades Union Congress (TUC)

We are members of the Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee which brings together a number of affiliated unions. We ran workshops at a number of TUC conferences. Our case studies have featured in the Green Workplaces project, including presentations at the European TUC.

[www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/index.cfm?mins=87&minors=4&majorsubjectID=2](http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/index.cfm?mins=87&minors=4&majorsubjectID=2)

## 4 Alliances and campaigns

UCU has campaigned with a wide range of organisations in the last 12 months. These include:

### National Union of Students (NUS)

Our 2013 congress motion called for ‘a coalition of unions and students’, and as part of this we have developed very good links with the NUS. United campaigns by staff and students deliver a strong message to institutions that they must not drag their feet. We are pleased that in August, 2013 the TUC and NUS signed a joint protocol that said ‘Our vision is underpinned by the principles of social justice and environmental sustainability.’ Details of the 10 point agreement can be found at:

[www.nus.org.uk/en/news/news/nus-and-tuc-agreement](http://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/news/nus-and-tuc-agreement)

### Campaign against Climate Change (CACC)

UCU contributed to the ‘1 million climate jobs’ pamphlet {insert front cover of the pamphlet} and sponsored the Climate Jobs Caravan. The trade union section brings together some of the most active unions and UCU members played an active role. The UCU Rep at London Met University convened the CACC TU annual conference in June, 2013. UCU members have also been active in the anti-fracking movement and moved the Trades Council motion adopted by the TUC in 2012. [www.campaigncc.org](http://www.campaigncc.org)

### Green Skills Partnership

UCU is a member of the GSP. This has been set up by Unionlearn and has put together a coalition of sector skills councils, employers and community groups.

[www.unionlearn.org.uk/our-work-and-projects/skills-investment/skills-green-economy](http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/our-work-and-projects/skills-investment/skills-green-economy)

### Sustainability and Environmental Education (SEEd)

SEEd works with the school sector and we were involved in the successful campaign this year to keep climate change in the geography curriculum. UCU is a member of the advisory panel and advocates alliances between the school and tertiary sector. [se-ed.co.uk/edu](http://se-ed.co.uk/edu)

### People & Planet

UCU has supported this student campaign body on a range of issues. We support the ‘Fossil Free’ campaign launched in 2013 which challenges university investment, research, endowment and partnership practices with fossil fuel companies. [peopleandplanet.org](http://peopleandplanet.org)

### ShareAction

Closely linked to the above is the ‘Green Light’ campaign aimed at the ‘carbon bubble’. Pension funds are putting our savings and the planet at risk by funding fossil fuels. In 2013 we attended meetings to promote the campaign to make pension funds more climate-conscious. [www.fairpensions.org.uk](http://www.fairpensions.org.uk)

### Energy Bill Revolution (EBR)

The EBR campaigns on fuel poverty and to pressure the government to use carbon taxes to make homes energy efficient. UCU is a member of the alliance. [www.energybillrevolution.org](http://www.energybillrevolution.org)

## 5 Training and resources

We offer our reps support to carry out this demanding role. Individual requests for information and guidance is provided. We encourage reps to join regional networks that provide help and ideas. We can also help with bids to fund projects. All reps have access to:

### Environment reps training

UCU is one of the few unions that offers customised environment training. Two- and three-day courses are run in the regions and head office.

### Bi-monthly newsletter

We publish a newsletter six times a year which is sent to approx 600 people on our contact list. It also goes out in UCU circulars to all our branches.

### Website

The environment page on the UCU site contains a range of videos and other resources that reps can use in their workplace and communities.

[www.ucu.org.uk/environment](http://www.ucu.org.uk/environment)

### Environment Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC)

EAUC has a membership of over 300 colleges and universities and is an important advocate for the sector. [www.eauc.org.uk/home](http://www.eauc.org.uk/home)

One of its services is the Sustainability Exchange. UCU is a founding partner of the Exchange and we recommend that reps access the wide range of resources to be found on the site. [www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk](http://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk)

### Fundraising

UCU raises money for its campaign work by sending teams of members to UK music festivals. The UCU Greener Jobs Alliance server team worked the bars at Glastonbury and Latitude in 2013 and raised over £1,500. This work was organised through the Workers Beer Company owned by Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council. The BWTUC also provide funding for the Greener Jobs Alliance and this grassroots support has been vital to support the work referenced in this annual report.

### Contact us

UCU is the largest trade union and professional association for lecturers, learning support staff, academic related staff, trainers, researchers and managers working in further and higher education in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our 120,000 members are employed mainly in universities, colleges of further education, colleges of higher education, and in adult, prison and land-based education. We also have members in the private sector, for example in private training agencies and language schools, as well as members working on a freelance basis. Students training to teach in post-school education also belong to UCU.

For further information related to this annual report please contact:

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## Appendix 1 UCU Congress Motion 2013

UCU believes that sustainable development should be a core organising principle for the FHE and skills sector. This means moving away from treating environmentalism as a token issue or as a bolt-on to other activities. It means moving towards choices that integrate sustainability into business practice. In particular:

1. using the focus on employability to embed education for sustainable development across the curriculum
2. building divestment campaigns from high carbon portfolios. The average pension fund has 55% of its assets invested in high-carbon sectors
3. promoting international, national and community based campaigns that address fuel poverty and the de-carbonisation of energy supply.

Congress calls upon the NEC to develop a coalition of unions and students that will contribute to delivering these objectives. Congress calls upon sector employers to recognise the trade union role and establish procedures that promote embedding sustainable development.

## Appendix 2 Education International World Congress Resolution

### Composite Resolution: Education Unions Mobilising on Climate Change

Proposed by: Executive Board and UCU/  
United Kingdom

The 6th Education International (EI) World  
Congress meeting in Cape Town, South Africa,  
from 22nd to 26th July 2011:

1. Recognises that human-induced climate change has serious environmental, economic and social consequences for all countries and all peoples and represents one of the most serious global challenge facing governments and civil society in the 21st century;
2. Rejects all attempts to promote atomic power as a clean alternative to carbon emitting electricity production. Chernobyl and Fukushima have made it clear: nuclear energy is neither safe nor sustainable and should be substituted by renewable energy;
3. Believes that the global union federations have an important role in the shaping of opinion and policy on climate change and that action to mitigate the effects of climate change is critical for all trade unions because:-
  - (i) The transition to a low carbon economy requires new patterns of production, consumption and employment; workers must be centrally involved in this transition:
  - (ii) Mitigation requires collective action by governments and all sectors of the economy, nationally and globally; unions are well placed to use their organizational and collective strength to bring about the structural changes needed to create new low carbon production and distribution systems.
4. Asserts the particularly important role of education and research in leading the debate on climate change, particularly in ensuring that the debate takes place on the basis of sound, scientifically based information.
5. Declares that education institutions, have a responsibility to reduce emissions as part of national and global collective action by all economic sectors:
6. Recognises the need for a binding international agreement to supersede the Kyoto Protocol and the inadequacy of the framework for, and levels of, emission reductions pledged at the 2010 UN climate change conference in Cancun, Mexico: this agreement must include an international public research plan based on national, regional and international cooperation on the least polluting forms of energy, energy efficiency, energy sobriety and the necessary structural changes for the transition to a low greenhouse-gas emissions economy;
7. Notes that members of national education unions have an important role to play in educating students about the causes and the effects of climate change, and the necessary structural changes for the transition to a low greenhouse-gas production and distribution systems and in implementing carbon emission reduction measures in education institutions, particularly in the more energy-use intensive higher education and research sector:
8. Encourages all member organisations to raise awareness of environmental issues by taking the following steps:

- a. Organise climate change awareness projects among their membership to help them explore ways to reduce pollution and save financial, environmental and material resources;
  - b. Promote environmentally-friendly workplace policies and practices;
  - c. Seek the extension of the role of union representatives in each workplace to ensure the development of climate change and sustainable development clauses to be included in negotiations with employers and in workplace agreements;
  - d. Demand that the curricula of all courses in educational institutions include specific sessions on climate change;
  - e. Draw on new work practices and collective bargaining measures to reduce the carbon footprint of education institutions;
  - f. Encourage all educators to teach future generations about the importance of sustainable development, bio-diversity and climate change through awareness-raising on indigenous ecosystems;
  - g. Ensure, in so far as possible, that members in the higher education and research sector lobby for their higher education institutions to sign up to the 1990 Talloires Declaration on University Presidents for a Sustainable Future and to endorse the 1994 Copernicus University Charter for Sustainable Development.
  - h. Promote climate change as an area of study in its own right and as a cross-curricular issue at all levels of education including teacher education;
  - i. Lobby for the protection of research programmes and increased investment in research into climate change and sustainable development;
9. Mandates the Executive Board to:
- (i) Include the issue of climate change on the agendas of its own meetings, conferences and seminars and in discussions with international bodies
  - (ii) Support global campaigns and initiatives by international trade union bodies and intergovernmental organisations to promote a transition to industries based on renewable energy produced at local level and which create environmentally and socially sustainable jobs with fair, equitable and just working conditions;
  - (iii) Ensure raising the awareness of members and of society through websites, article, training etc;
  - (iv) Ensure action-oriented information sharing between affiliates and EI, and between EI and other Global Union Federations (e.g. ITF);
  - (v) Ensure EI participation in the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) led by UNESCO.
  - (vi) Develop the setting up of an electronic network of interested affiliates to carry this programme of work forward.

