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Welcome to our last newsletter of 2013. It's been a busy year for UCU and you can read about some of the highlights in our annual report below. Once again here's our top ten news items of the last couple of months. Have a good break and see you next year.

1. UCU Annual Environment Report

Our annual report for the period Sept. 2012 – August, 2013 has been published and is available on the website. <http://www.ucu.org.uk/environment>

The report highlights the union's work in the last academic year and points to the fact that we have more workplace environment reps than any other trade union in the UK. As a union we have a responsibility to ensure that the education sector delivers on training a workforce fit for a low carbon future. This will only come about if there is effective engagement with staff and their unions.

<http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/2013/10/education-key-to-stem-runaway-climate-change>

Keep us posted on your progress this academic year so we can feature you in the 2013-14 report.

2. The Education sector and the fossil fuel industry

Last month even Prince Charles spoke out about the dangerous link between pension funds and unburnable fossil fuels. The 'carbon bubble' is one of the major threats facing us and UCU has added its voice to the calls for action.

<http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/2013/10/fossil-fuels-and-pension-funds-investing-for-a-sustainable-future>

We are working with a couple of campaign groups to change the investment strategy of institutions:

ShareAction promotes Responsible Investment by pension funds and fund managers. It brings together leading charities, trade unions, faith groups and individual investors, and aims to catalyse a shift at each level of the investment chain, so that responsible investment becomes the norm. The Green Light Report: resilient portfolios in an uncertain world examines the major issues and trends at the intersection of pensions and climate change. Underpinned by robust research, the report recommends a series of actions to be taken by pension providers. To read more about the report follow this link:

<http://www.shareaction.org/greenlightreport>

The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is one of the largest pension funds in the UK. The fund has considerable investments in fossil fuels. A dialogue between UCU's representatives involved in the scheme's governance and Share Action has been arranged for early in the New Year.

People & Planet – The fossil free campaign was launched this autumn. UCU held a meeting with Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, before the London launch on Nov. 1st. We discussed ways in which unions can link up with students and community organisations to influence investment and climate strategy.

<http://peopleandplanet.org/fossil-free>

The 2014 Green Week from Feb. 10th-16th will be an opportunity to develop joint initiatives. Start planning now – for resources go to <http://peopleandplanet.org/gogreenweek>

3. Naomi Klein's message to unions

In a speech to the newly formed US trade union UNIFOR Naomi Klein calls for workers to make sustainable jobs and social justice the cornerstone of union activity. Watch the edited video here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIJCXC_730w&feature=youtu.be

In 2014 Naomi will be publishing a book on climate change that will be accompanied by a film. We'll be sending out further details as soon as we receive them.

4. UCU and the climate talks

The union was represented on the trade union delegation that attended the UN Climate talks in Warsaw last month. Anyone who caught the limited coverage in the media will know that the conference failed to put in place the global strategy needed. The predicted outcomes were so poor that for the first time the unions and many of the NGOs like Greenpeace walked out. For a more detailed report go to:

<http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/2013/11/warsaw-climate-talks-no-more-cop-outs>

5. NUS projects and resources

The National Union of Students Green Fund is now up and running. Details of the projects can be found at:

<http://www.studentsgreenfund.org.uk/>

These projects are a great opportunity to strengthen staff/student links and we hope to be working closely with NUS next year to encourage a closer partnership. UCU reps are urged to have a look at the wide range of environment management resources that NUS has put on its green impact site:

<http://www.green-impact.org.uk/2012/07/19/students-unions-resources-2/>

6. Climate Outreach Information Network

COIN has produced its latest report Climate Silence (and how to break it), It describes the blanket of silence that has descended on the issue of climate change in the UK in the past five years. The report argues the debate urgently needs new narratives that make the link between the climate challenge and ordinary people's lives.

<http://www.climateoutreach.org.uk/coin/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Climate-silence-and-how-to-break-it-COIN.pdf>

7. Skills Manifestos

Next year will see the end of the UN decade for education for sustainable development. A number of organisations have been critical of the lack of progress in the UK.

Green Skills Manifesto - UCU helped to establish the Greener Jobs Alliance to address the 'skills gap' that prevents a proper transition to a low carbon economy. The Green Skills Manifesto was launched in 2012 to identify the policy changes needed. The manifesto is updated each year and next month will see the start of a consultation for the 2014 version. The manifesto can be accessed at:

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/p/i/Green_skills_manifesto.pdf

EAUC ESD Manifesto - We contributed to the consultation for the manifesto being launched this month at the House of Commons.

<http://www.eauc.org.uk/search?q=Rio+%2B20+manifesto>

UCU is keen to work with all organisations in the sector to get the government and the sector to take the action needed.

8. HE Consultations

There are 2 consultation documents out that could have an important impact on the future for sustainability in higher education.

- The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has produced Education for sustainable development: Draft guidance for HE providers.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/ESD-guidance-consultation.pdf>

The deadline for responses is January 3rd, 2014.

- The Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce) has issued a consultation document Sustainable development in higher education. This proposes an overall framework to support sustainable development in the higher education sector.

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2013/201331/name,83723,en.html>

The deadline for responses is February 7th, 2014.

UCU will be submitting a response to both documents and we will keep you posted on the outcomes.

9. UCU Environment Reps

In 2014 UCU will be launching a Handbook for Environment Reps. To promote this we will be running a number of regional events during the spring term. These events will also be focusing on the development of regional and country networks to support our campaigns and links with students and community organisations. Branches are urged to identify members interested in taking on the role.

10. Thanks to James

We would like to thank James Rose who has helped to produce UCU Environmental News and dealt with member's enquiries. He has also co-ordinated our Greener Jobs Alliance server teams at festivals this year that raised over £2,000 to support our work. James is leaving head office and transferring to the UCU Scotland office.

Get in touch

**If you are a UCU member looking for advice on sustainable development or have ideas for greening the FHE sector please let us know. Contact: Graham Petersen, UCU Environment Co-ordinator:
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