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Welcome to our first newsletter of 2014. Once again the environment is headline news. Last year it was energy and now it's flooding. You'd think there would be some recognition that we are facing a climate emergency. Instead we get politicians going through a blame game without addressing the root causes. In 2014 UCU looks forward to working with all our activists and contacts to put the message out there.

### **1. UCU Environment Networks**

We plan to support the creation of regional networks in the UK. These will assist UCU environment reps to:

- exchange information and best practice
- identify gaps in union representation in colleges and universities
- promote joint activity with students
- promote joint activity with organisations in each region that focus on skills development, job creation and campaigns.

The networks will help to support the appointment of new environment reps. Our target is at least one rep in every FHE institution. Until we have achieved this target we will have a limited impact on the efforts to mainstream sustainability into the education sector. To help with the appointment of new reps we will be publishing a UCU Environment Rep Handbook. This will be launched at UCU Annual Congress in Manchester in May 2014.

### **2. Greener Jobs Alliance AGM**

The AGM took place on January 15 and endorsed a plan of action for the year ahead for local, regional and national work. Progress so far:

**Local** – Providing start up funding for the Furzedown Low Carbon Zone Energy Co-op. This will link up schools and the tertiary sector in SW London with renewable energy investment opportunities.

**Regional** – Develop a regional strategy to promote education for sustainable development and community engagement. We will use the UCU networks referenced above to link with students and Unionlearn to grow the low carbon job market. Developments so far include meetings and projects in London, SW Region, and Yorks and Humberside Region.

**National** – In Scotland the EAUC conference in Glasgow on February 20 will provide an opportunity to liaise with UCU Environment Reps in attendance and initiate a Scottish network. We will update the Green Skills Manifesto in 2014 as part of the review of progress at the end of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development. We will work with the NUS on developing a toolkit that can help students and staff to review this progress at institutional level.

### **3. Pensions and the 'carbon bubble'**

The financial sector has recently been under the spotlight for its lack of support for a low carbon economy. The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is the largest pension fund in the UK and UCU has been discussing the issue of potential stranded assets in high carbon portfolios. A meeting was held with ShareAction and the Superannuation Working Group in January. A meeting has now been planned with the USS Ethical Investment Manager.

### **4. Quality Assurance Agency Guidance**

The QAA carried out a consultation exercise on education for sustainable development that ended in January. The intention is to support HE institutions who and improve their performance on ESD. UCU has made a submission and we wait to see if any of our comments are reflected in the new guidance that will be coming out shortly.

### **5. HEFCE Sustainable Development Consultation**

The Higher Education Funding Council for England also carried out a consultation that completed this month. This was on the wider issue of a new framework for sustainable development in the HE sector. UCU made a submission that emphasised the need for 'staff support' if the ambition of mainstreaming SD is to be realised.

Both UCU submissions are available for circulation. Please contact Graham Petersen at [gpetersen@ucu.org.uk](mailto:gpetersen@ucu.org.uk)

### **6. NUS Green Fund**

Information on the NUS Green Fund projects can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7oKpYEp237o>

Here's an update from UCU Environment Rep Valerie Petersen on the Sheffield one:

*After our successful bid for Green Fund money, The Sheffield on a Plate project has been engaging a number of staff and students from the universities and the College in sustainability awareness through food-themed activities.*

*To encourage cooking with sustainable, locally sourced, affordable ingredients, chefs and students from the College catering department held a cookery demo for university students, ran a short course and a student masterchef competition. To encourage food growing, students and staff are working together to set up food grow sites at the College and Hallam University. At Christmas, a student food drive collected approx.1400 food items for local people in need, highlighting other strands of the project – food waste and poverty.*

*Food poverty is one of the main topics of a regional conference we are organising in Sheffield on March 27th. Another theme is partnerships and we'll be looking at our experience of working together from different institutions, with students and staff, UCU and the Students Union and with local organisations. We're also hoping to establish a regional support network.*

For more information on the project, please contact Valerie Petersen, UCU

[valerie.petersen@shefcol.ac.uk](mailto:valerie.petersen@shefcol.ac.uk) and visit our website: [www.sheffieldonaplate.com](http://www.sheffieldonaplate.com)

## **7. UK Government Policy + one million climate jobs**

The shambles that is UK policy on mitigating climate change has been compounded by the failures to adapt to extreme weather events.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/exclusive-climate-scepticism-blamed-as-owen-paterson-slashes-spending-on-global-warming-9086397.html>

Last week DECC released figures showing that Greenhouse Gas emissions were up by 3.2% in 2012 compared to 2011. This reverses the downward trend of previous years. Coupled with the impact of recession and our 'export of carbon' from imported manufacturing products it shows we are way off where we need to be.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-uk-emissions-estimates>

In the light of this it's welcome news that a new edition of the influential 'One Million climate jobs' pamphlet is scheduled for publication to set out the alternatives.

## **8. Trade Unions for Energy Democracy**

UCU is a member of the TUED which is an international campaign to advance public and democratic control of energy. The last meeting in January focused on fracking and shale gas. There are some excellent resources available on the site for anyone involved in some of the anti-fracking protests springing up over the UK

<http://energydemocracyinitiative.org/>

## 9. English Learning and Sustainability Alliance

UCU has joined ELSA which has been set up to 'lead, promote and influence crosscutting strategic policy for learning and sustainability in England.' As a 'group of groups' we will be working with other key stakeholders to inform national debates and influence policy and practice.

<http://www.eauc.org.uk/elsa/home>

## 10. Events

Here are some of the other events taking place over the next few months:

- Net positive conference in York on February 27. Further information:

<http://www.netpositivefutures.co.uk/our-projects/netpositive-conference-pathways-to-transformation/>

- Climate Week – The annual climate week will run from March 3 – 7.

<http://www.climateweek.com/run-an-event/register-an-event/>

### 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:**

**[gpetersen@ucu.org.uk](mailto:gpetersen@ucu.org.uk)**