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**Here we are again with our top ten updates. This will be the last newsletter for 2014-15. Have a great break and we'll be back in September.**

### **1. UCU Congress Report**

Annual congress took place in Manchester on May 29-30, 2014. We launched the new UCU Environment Rep Handbook - '*Staff Organising for Sustainability.*' The guidance has been produced as a resource for existing reps and to help in the recruitment of more. The main message is that there can be no effective staff engagement without representation. A hard copy has been sent to all reps and branches and is available on the website at:

[http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/7/7/UCU\\_Environment\\_Reps\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/7/7/UCU_Environment_Reps_Handbook.pdf)

A well attended fringe meeting was addressed by Charlotte Taylor from the NUS and Suzanne Jeffery from the Campaign Against Climate Change. Every UCU Environment Rep was entered in a draw for 2 free tickets to the Leeds Festival. The draw took place at the fringe meeting and the winners from UCL and Greenwich kindly donated the tickets to the Yorkshire region for fundraising.

The Greenwich Community College Climate change motion was passed unanimously and reinforces our existing policy commitments:

*'Congress notes:*

- *that recent reports suggest that the last winter's devastating floods in the wettest UK winter for 200 years were clear evidence of accelerating climate change due to human activity*
- *that the government have been keen to divert attention away from their responsibility for the severity of flooding in many areas due to cuts in the Environment Agency budget and their failure to address flood prevention measures or sufficient development of alternatives to energy production through oil, gas and nuclear means.*

*Congress resolves:*

- *to encourage branches to elect green reps and bring to members' attention materials on climate change for use in curriculums and as campaigning materials, such as those produced by the Campaign for Climate Change.'*

There were 3 related congress motions which support some of our campaigning priorities:

- USS Pension scheme (Motion HE10)
- Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnerships (Motion 30)
- Improving relations with student unions (Motion 34)

## **2. UCU Regional / Country Networks**

UCU regions and nations have been contacted to supply an up to date list of environment reps to help support the development of networks in 2014-15. Branch AGMs have been targeted to identify the appointment of new reps.

The networks will assist information exchange, development of joint campaigns, training activities, and recruitment of new reps. We plan to hold an event for each one in the next academic year and reps and branches will be consulted on the arrangements.

## **3. UCU Training**

The next Environment Reps 3 day course will take place at UCU Head Office in London. The dates are 15 and 16 October 2014, with the follow-up day on 21 November.

Contact Karen Brooks, UCU Education Officer, to register and for further information:

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

## 4. Greener Jobs Alliance

The June meeting of the GJA agreed:

- Preparation of a new draft of the Green Skills Manifesto for autumn publication.
- A paper for the Green Economy Council Task Group review of the Government's Industrial Strategy in July.
- Education for Sustainable Development auditing pilots in the FHE sector.
- Energy co-operatives and air quality monitoring - both projects are a practical demonstration of the value of linking the curriculum with sustainability issues that have generated considerable community and media interest. There are real opportunities across a range of disciplines to link course work and citizenship activities to community engagement. Funding opportunities will be investigated.

The next meeting will be held at the UCU on 3 September 2014.

## 5. HE Update

### Quality Assurance Agency

In June the QAA published '*Education for sustainable development: Guidance for UK higher education providers*'. This is official guidance and UCU members engaged in curriculum development discussions can access the document here:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=533#.U8PIM7HQNAw>

UCU made a submission during the consultation process. Some improvements were made but our main concern was on the crucial issue of staff support in terms of training, cpd, and time off.

References to staff support seem to have been removed compared to the original document. Until institutions and sector bodies recognise the importance of staff engagement and the measures needed to cultivate it we will see limited progress.

### Green League Table

People & Planet is finalising its arrangements for the 2014 table which ranks HEIs according to environmental performance. It provides an opportunity for branches and reps to engage with the sustainability managers. One of the criteria in the student and staff engagement section includes "*engagement with recognised trade union reps environment reps or engagement with trade unions on sustainability issues.*"

UCU would welcome feedback on whether and/or how this consultation has taken place. The results are anticipated on 11 November and we will cover these in a future edition of the newsletter.

<http://peopleandplanet.org/greenleague>

## **6. FE update**

The Association of Colleges held a conference on 'Sustainability, Employment, Education and the role of Colleges' at Barnsley College in July. From the presentations it is clear that some institutions are taking positive measures. It is equally clear that the sector has some major challenges ahead.

On top of severe funding cuts we have had the abolition of the Sustainable Development Commission, sustainability references taken out of the Ofsted framework, the abolition of the Learning Skills and Improvement Service, and others too numerous to mention. The net result is a sector that is going backwards in key areas of performance.

Joan Walley, MP and Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, highlighted the difficult policy backdrop confronting the sector. Joan called for sustainable development in the curriculum as a legal requirement to be included in party election manifestos. She also highlighted the 'Environmental Scorecard' being published in September and currently taking evidence on performance in the 10 areas referenced in this report:

<http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Environmental-Protection-briefing.pdf>

## **7. Cross sector update**

### **Green Gown Awards 2014**

The EAUC recognition of best practice is in full swing with the winners being announced in November. UCU environment reps have been involved in some of these initiatives and we would like your reports on their progress. Check if your institution has been short-listed by visiting:

[http://www.eauc.org.uk/2014\\_finalists](http://www.eauc.org.uk/2014_finalists)

### **Report on "The FT Transformational Business Conference 2014"**

The Financial Times "Transformational Business" Conference and Awards Ceremony took place on 12th June at the Intercontinental Park Lane Hotel. The focus this year was on sustainable urbanism. As the introduction on the conference website states, "half the

world's population lives in cities. By 2050, that proportion will grow to three-quarters — with most of the growth in developing countries. At a time of unprecedented urbanisation, incremental remedies are no longer sufficient. Urban areas need transformative solutions to provide the essential services and infrastructure for people to move out of poverty and start to prosper."

A "keynote session" of institutional investors followed. The speakers spoke of the importance of encouraging long-term investment in cities, and curbing the worst excesses of speculative development. However it was difficult to know how far these good intentions are representative of the "investment community" or are translated into practice. Overall, it is clear that business has a role to play in the transition to a greener economy. Yet it was equally clear from this conference that big business will not lead the way in the most critical areas - in the fight to secure a *just* transition and in the necessary limitation of greenhouse gases that is required to preserve a liveable climate. Here, "business as usual" will not suffice, and governments (pushed by their citizens if necessary) will need to take the responsibility that they have in recent years been happily delegating to private business interests. **Peter Coville, UCU Environment Rep Reading College.**

## **8. TUC Green Workplaces**

The **June newsletter** is available at:

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/green-workplaces/green-workplaces-news/greenworkplaces-news-june-2014>

The **Green Workplaces annual conference** took place on 11 July. This was a well attended event where the UCU Environment Reps Handbook was introduced to a wider audience. The latest LRD pamphlet the 'The union effect' was also launched. It features 6 case studies, including the UCU / Greener Jobs Alliance community engagement project:

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/social-issues/environment/climate-change/union-effect-greening-workplace>

## **9. International**

### **UN summit and People's Climate March preparations underway**

In the USA and UK mobilising is taking place in the lead up to the summit in September. Trade Unions for Energy Democracy is helping to co-ordinate. The People's Climate

March in New York on 21 Sept is expected to be one the biggest held in the city. More details <http://unionsforenergydemocracy.org/news-updates/>

### **Time to Act Campaign**

The Campaign against Climate Change is mobilising for an event in London Met University on 20 September to coincide with the events in New York. The revised edition of the 'One Million Climate Jobs' pamphlet will be launched. UCU Branches are urged to send delegates to this conference:

<http://www.campaigncc.org/sites/data/files/Time%20to%20Act%21%20leaflet%20by%20CCC%27s%20Trade%20Union%20Group%20for%20Trade%20Unionists.pdf>

### **Global Labour Institute Summer School**

UCU members took part in the annual event in July at Northern College, Barnsley. It brought together trade unionists from all over the world. One of the sessions saw Sean Sweeney and Lara Skinner from TUED lead a climate debate with Gary Smith, National Officer of the GMB. Watch the video here <https://usilive.org/iss14-unions-climate-change-and-the-great-inaction/>

## **10. Resources**

**ESD and ESOL** - Linda Ruas, Environmental Rep at Greenwich Community College, London, has created a new on-line bank of resources for ESOL learners and teachers, all related to global justice issues, including, of course, sustainability. Linda is working with the co-operative New Internationalist to simplify their articles and create "ready lessons" and quizzes for teachers to use in ESOL classes. Learners can also work independently, choosing from many articles to read, first in simplified "Easier English", then the original from: [http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Main_Page). Please use, pass on and promote this resource.

### **Grantham Research Institute**

The new website can now be accessed at: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/grantham>

### **Friends of the Earth**

This link contains some useful resources:



10 key facts <http://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/climate-change-ten-key-findings-climate-scientists->

### **And finally...**

A big thank you to the UCU Greener Jobs Alliance Team that helped run the bars at Glastonbury 2014. Their fundraising will help us resource the work programme for 2014-15.



### **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)**