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Welcome to the first newsletter of 2015-16. We can expect plenty of activity in the sector in the lead-up to the Paris Climate Talks in December. It will provide an opportunity for UCU members to engage with staff, students, community organisations and their institutions. Environmental News will be commenting on these developments and providing ideas on how we can strengthen the role of the union to meet the challenges ahead.

1. UCU Branch Organisation

We'd like to welcome those members who were appointed as branch environment reps at the annual general meetings held at the end of last term. For those branches that haven't held an AGM yet or have still got an unfilled post we would urge you to check our new guidance on the appointment of environment reps.

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/b/4/ucu_branchenvreguidance_aug15.pdf

As part of building branch organisation we will be continuing our sequence of regional meetings. The next one takes place for our SW network on November 26 in the UCU Office at Bristol University. In England we will continue to campaign for legal recognition of the reps role. In **Scotland (The Climate Change Act 2009)** and **Wales (Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015)** the role of trade unions is acknowledged and consultation on programmes and measures is a requirement.

2. Ethical investment and Divestment

The financing of climate change is increasingly under the spotlight. It is also crucial to how we fund the transition to a low carbon economy. In the education sector UCU is addressing both pensions and the endowments of institutions.

UCU Ethical Investment seminar – UCU members of the Universities of the Superannuation Scheme (USS) have been invited to a workshop at the UCU Head Office on October 7. The event organised in conjunction with ShareAction will examine opportunities to address concerns over the investment policies of the UK's second largest pension fund. Applications to attend can be made at <https://www.ucu.org.uk/uss-ethical-investment>

NUS FOI requests

UCU is working with People & Planet and the NUS to continue the divestment from fossil fuels successes of 2014-15. Seven HE institutions took a decision to change their portfolios following student and staff campaigns. This year's campaign gets underway with freedom of information requests going out to all HEIs last month to find out the extent to which they are investing in fossil fuels.

<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/divestment-and-renewables-our-next-step-in-sustainability>

Branches are urged to contact their student union and P&P group to discuss joint working and develop a campaign plan.

3. Training

The next UCU Environment Rep course starts on 19 January 2016. The course is a must for all new reps and interested members. Day 1 will be held at UCU Head Office. The remaining 2 days will be available online during the spring term. It is hoped that this blended learning option will make it easier to complete given the time-off constraints in workplaces. Applications should be made to Karen Brooks, National Education Officer

kbrooks@ucu.org.uk

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/l/p/Activist_guide_2015-16.pdf

4. Student Attitudes

The fifth NUS / HEA annual survey of student attitudes towards, and skills for, sustainable development has just been published. The main findings are:

- Eight in every ten students consistently believe that SD should be actively incorporated and promoted by universities, and this increases as respondents progress through their studies. International students are significantly more likely to agree that action should be taken by universities in this way.
- Over two thirds of respondents consistently believe that SD should be incorporated into all university courses.
- Over 60% of domestic students and three quarters of international students would like to learn more about sustainable development.

Here is the exec sum for students report:

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/executive-summary-students.pdf>

Here is the exec sum for employers report:

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/executive-summary-employers.pdf>

5. Sheffield Conference

Time to Act! National Conference in Sheffield - Saturday, 19 September 2015, Divest from Fossil Fuels, Invest in Climate Jobs, Build the Climate Movement

11:00 – 16:45, with registration from 10.30. Registration fee £10, Concessions £5
Venue: Sheffield College, Granville Road, Sheffield S2 2RL

In this crucial year for climate campaigning, help build a powerful climate movement. Sign up for this national conference organised by the Trade Union Group of Campaign Against Climate Change and Sheffield Climate Alliance.

- Hear a report back from the major international conference in Paris called by the One Million Climate Jobs campaign and the International TUC.
- Speakers and workshops on the connections between Divestment from Fossil Fuels and Investment in Climate Jobs to create warm, healthy homes, public transport with low fares, and renewable energy infrastructure.
- Build campaigns in the run-up to the United Nations COP21 climate change conference in Paris in December, on Divestment/Reinvestment and against fracking.

Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/time-to-act-sheffield-climate-conference-tickets-17791981295> or go to: <http://www.campaigncc.org/sheffclimatejobs>

6. Fracking Latest

Public opinion polls show that support for fracking for shale gas has reached an all-time low. Despite this the government seems determined to press ahead with new measures to push through applications against the wishes of local people and councils.

<http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/2015/08/governments-own-polls-show-rising-opposition-to-shale-gas-fracking/>

Kevin Anderson at the Tyndall Institute, Manchester University argues that a UK shale gas industry is at odds with commitments to maintain a limit of 2 degrees in global warming.

<http://kevinanderson.info/blog/why-a-uk-shale-gas-industry-is-incompatible-with-the-2c-framing-of-dangerous-climate-change/>

7. Government Policy

Since the election the Government has announced a range of measures that undermine the pre-election pledge to show environmental leadership.

<http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/2015/08/ten-charities-challenge-camerons-pre-election-green-promise/>

This has been compounded by the proposals contained in the Trade Union Bill.

<http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/2015/07/how-trade-union-bill-will-cap-greenworkplace-projects>

There will be an opportunity to mobilise against both sets of policies in the **People's March for Climate, Justice and Jobs** taking place in:

Scotland and Wales – November 28

London – November 29

<https://www.facebook.com/events/516078015212179/>

UCU branches are encouraged to organise local meetings in the run up to these demonstrations to mobilise for a big trade union turnout.

8. International

The international trade union movement is holding a conference on climate jobs in Paris in September. Members of UCU will be attending the ITUC event designed to prepare a labour movement campaign in the lead-up to the UN talks in Paris in December. 'No jobs on a dead planet' is the theme and a full report will appear in the next newsletter.

9. Fundraising

It's been another successful year for the UCU server teams at festivals in 2015. Thanks to those who raised money through the work of the UCU Greener Jobs Alliance teams at Glastonbury and Latitude. In particular, Becca Richards, at the UCU SW Regional Office, who co-ordinated the teams. £1,232 was raised to support our work on education for sustainability. This funding is organised through the Workers Beer Company which is part of Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council. Since it was set up in 1985 over £6.5 million has been generated to support trades unions and campaign groups.

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