

GreenWorkplaces News

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October 2009

Summer news roundup

Hospital green workplace project launched

Union members have started work on a project at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London that aims to bring about greener ways of working and recruit environmental reps throughout the NHS Trust. Lessons from the pilot project will help to green workplaces across the UK.

The Greening the Workplace project, which kicked off in May is funded via the Union Modernisation Fund and will see union members and managers working together to benefit the environment and the NHS.

David Bones, UNISON's Environmental Officer at GOSH, sent surveys to all staff to find out what environmental issues they thought should be prioritised.

The project was officially launched at a Green Fair on 19 May with opening speeches by Jane Collins, Chief Executive of GOSH NHS Trust, and Dave Prentis, General Secretary of UNISON. Outside speakers from the Energy Saving Trust and Camden Council gave presentations on how to make environmentally friendly choices both at work and at home. Staff who attended also received goody bags and could sign up for training in environmental

issues and to become workplace environmental reps.

Great Ormond Street UNISON branch secretary Sarah Lewis said: "The NHS creates one million tons of carbon emissions every year. If the NHS shaved 15% off its energy consumption, it would save £50 million per year on its energy bills. That's equivalent to 7,000 heart by-pass operations. We need to do our bit at Great Ormond Street, and help share good practice throughout the NHS."

Since its launch in May, two TUC training workshops have been held for staff and a joint environment committee has been set up to take the Greening the Workplace project forward.

Green reps survey and environmental workbook launched

The Labour Research Department's 2009 survey on environmental reps and a new TUC education workbook for union reps were both launched at this year's Greenworkplaces Day.

The LRD's report of its 2009 environmental reps survey revealed great enthusiasm for taking on the challenge of climate change at work despite the downturn. In all, there were more than 1,300 responses from reps.

The report shows that unions are now the real green champions in the workplace, helping to organise union-led activities ranging from

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those to cut energy and resource use to those focused on recycling and green travel.

Hundreds of reps are working with employers through environmental committees at work, the report reveals, yet all this activity is still voluntary.

The Greenworkplaces Day in London on 9 June was held to mark the UN World Environment Day 2009. It was an opportunity for the TUC and affiliates to showcase their green workplace projects, examples of good practice, resources and educational materials.

A green workbook called *Targeting Climate Change* was also unveiled at the event. The workbook is a flexible resource designed for use on TUC education courses; environmental courses; other trade union education courses where the environment is discussed; and other branch and workplace activities.

The workbook is closely linked to its companion, the Go Green at Work Handbook. Targeting Climate Change is available through TUC publications.

South West workshops

Five regional TUC Greening the Workplace workshops were held across the South West in June. Over 50 reps and members from a mix of unions and workplaces came along, discussing issues including travel planning, energy management, educating people about climate change in the workplace, saving resources, planning policy and the recruitment of more green reps. They then returned to their workplace to engage with their branches, other members and managers, take action on energy and resource use and information sharing and link up with support organisations.

The South West TUC project is supporting activists, sharing information, best practice

and case study examples and promoting the green rep role - and there'll be more regional events to come. Contact the project (Tel 0117 947 0521, Andy amos@tuc.org.uk or Frances frobertson@tuc.org.uk) or check out the regional website at www.greenworkplacessouthwest.org.uk

The UK's long-term climate forecast

On 18 June, the government **launched** the **UK Climate Projections**, major new scientific data that sets out how the UK's climate is likely to change as a result of past and present emissions. The projections include detailed maps available down to the local level, showing how the climate is likely to change in your area. They show that even if great progress is made on tackling future emissions, a certain amount of climate change is now unavoidable as a result of past emissions.

The projections make clear the need for urgent action to adapt to climate change. In April, the TUC published *Changing Work in a Changing Climate* which warned that although climate change was beginning to force companies to think about adapting their products and services to a changing climate, few had considered what such a dramatic change in the UK's weather would mean for their staff and the jobs they do <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-16338-f0.cfm>

Green Action at Work camp

Trade unionists from across the UK, representing eight different unions, got together before this year's Tolpuddle Festival on 17-19 July for a Green Action at Work camp.

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The camp involved organisations such as Envirowise and the Energy Saving Trust as well as trade unionists delivering information sessions and practical workshops for unions and reps engaging with the environment agenda and developing ways of taking action in their workplace.

The Tolpuddle location, with its place in union history, lent an extra dimension to the programme - as did an ideas exchange with visiting trade unionists from IG Metall in Germany. The event was well-received (“Informative, inclusive and inspirational - and very entertaining” and “a really good grounding in the green issues and a starting point and springboard for my new role”) and participants gave the Greenworkplaces Project plenty of ideas and feedback on how to build and improve for future events.

For more information on the South West Greenworkplaces project, contact Andy on amos@tuc.org.uk

October news:

Green reps recognised in Government CO2 scheme

The Government has acknowledged that employees have a key role to play in saving energy in their workplace, and that this is integral to achieving emissions reductions in the public and private service sectors.

The Government’s Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) kicks off in April 2010, pricing the CO2 used in 5,000 of our largest service sector employers. The CRC will put a price on every tonne of CO2 consumed in the service industries, with incentives to cut consumption. It aims to save around a million tons of CO2 a year when fully operational.

Green reps working hard to convince management that more needs to be done will

be glad to hear that the CRC will include an energy savings league table, which will require employers to tick an employee engagement box if they meet one of the following three criteria:

- Energy management training is offered to the majority of employees in your organisation
- Your organisation has active employee working groups on energy management, which report to senior management, and take forward initiatives to reduce the organisation’s carbon emissions
- Where an independent trade union is recognised for collective bargaining purposes, energy management issues are considered in these joint discussions and members actively take forward initiatives to reduce the organisation’s carbon emissions

Forum for a Just Transition

The TUC is looking forward to the first meeting of the Government’s new Forum for a Just Transition, a joint Government/unions/industry body that will help see us through a Just Transition to a low carbon economy. The TUC has put a lot of time and effort into building support for the idea of just transition in the shift to a low carbon economy. The Toucshtone pamphlet, **A Green & Fair Future**, argued that the “industrial restructuring of the past 30 years was allowed to occur in a deeply unjust fashion, that saw some lose everything while others heaped huge rewards”.

Many of these ideas now feature in the Government’s **Low Carbon Industrial Strategy**. In a section on Just Transition, the strategy says:

- “As with previous structural changes to the

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economy, the move to a low carbon economy will affect each business, worker and family differently. This will depend on the sector a person works in, the type of job they are doing and where they are geographically located. Previous economic structural shifts have had huge social impacts, with some workers and communities being left behind as industries are restructured by change.”

- “Equipping Britain to take advantage of the move to low carbon is a social obligation as well as an economic imperative. It requires policies that enable people to respond to industrial change positively, through the acquisition of new skills and access to new opportunities and new jobs.”
- “The Government is committed to doing all it can to ensure this just transition. For this reason, the Government will create a forum for considering these issues and advising government. The new Forum for a Just Transition will include representatives from Central Government, national, local and regional bodies, trade unions, business organisations, and third sector bodies.”

Hopefully, the full membership of the forum will soon be agreed, with the first meeting before December.

A Green & Fair Future: www.tuc.org.uk - *TUC Touchstone series.*

Low Carbon Industrial Strategy:
www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/sectors/lowcarbon

Copenhagen December 2009: Union demands for Just Transition

Winning a Just Transition clause in the Copenhagen agreement this December is a major priority for the ITUC. Our “Just

Transition” framework is now paragraph 10 of the UN’s Shared Vision, (text available on the UNFCCC website, google at: FCCC/AWGLCA/2009/INF.2)

“An economic transition is needed that shifts global economic growth patterns towards a low emission economy based on more sustainable production and consumption, promoting sustainable lifestyles and climate-resilient development while ensuring a just transition of the workforce. The active participation of all stakeholders in this transition should be sought, be they governmental, private business or civil society, including the youth and addressing the need for gender equity.”

More references in paragraph 5: “promoting a gradual and just transition in the most affected economic sectors and contributing to building new capacities for both production and service-related jobs”.

The ITUC’s delegation was at the September 2009 UN climate change conference in Bangkok. It reported back that the US Government supported references to workforce training in the new agreement. Argentina was again working for our JT clause, having tabled the original text. But the fragility of union demands lies in challenges from the African group, New Zealand, India and others. We think the EU is on board. We believe we have the assured support of the UK, but we need voices of support at the highest levels. The full text is on the UNFCCC website: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

The ITUC’s leaflet is available at:
<http://climate.ituc-csi.org>

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FairPensions - How your pension could be making a positive difference on climate change. By Catherine Howarth of FairPensions

A greener workplace is a key part of minimising our impact on the environment, but what about the billions of pounds you and your colleagues have invested in pension funds?

Mitigating climate change will be impossible unless the world's major corporations act to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Pension funds are significant shareholders and as so are in a strong position to challenge irresponsible corporate behaviour, not least around greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, pension funds have a clear financial interest in tackling climate change: **your** pension savings need to be properly protected against the risks generated by the physical, financial and regulatory impacts of climate change.

A fifth of the UK stock market is owned by our pension funds. But how many of us really know what our money is funding? Campaigning charity FairPensions gives a voice to pension fund members who want to ensure that their pensions are environmentally, socially and financially responsible.

As the first step in a Climate Change Campaign, FairPensions is researching whether the fund management companies that look after pension savings are genuinely tackling the long-term risks of climate change. If you are a member or trustee of a pension fund and would like more information on this or if you want more information on the campaign and FairPensions' work in general, please email catherine.howarth@fairpensions.org.uk or visit www.fairpensions.org.uk

TUC Trade Unions and the Environment Course

TUC Unionlearn courses on Trade Unions and the Environment are available at the following locations:

November 4, Poole ; November 10, Cheltenham ; November 27, Derby ; December 3, London

January 11, Dover & Southampton ; January 26, Newhaven ; February 9, Essex ; February 16, Exeter

March 10, London ; March 25, London ;

For more information, and further dates and locations available up until December 2010 visit

<http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/courses/index.cfm/sb/14/pg/1/citem/5032>