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January 2010

Conference call - Going Green at Work

On 15 March 2010, the TUC is organising a national conference in Congress House, London, to showcase the work of the TUC's growing army of green reps. Our keynote speakers include TUC Deputy General Secretary, Frances O' Grady and hopefully at least one Government minister from DECC and BIS. Sarah Pearce, TUC Greenworkplaces Project Leader will present the results of her two years' work in developing projects in organisations such as GOSH, BT, Leicester City Council, United Utilities, National Museum Liverpool, the NUT and the National Library of Scotland.

Chaired by Paul Noon, General Secretary, Prospect, the conference includes expert-led workshops:

- *Greening your workplace*: sharing best practice - with Sarah Pearce, TUC, Frances Robertson, SWTUC, and green reps from GOSH, Bristol Council, BT, SWTUC and other greenworkplaces.
- *Adapting workplaces to climate change*: from emergency services and public sector responses to tackling higher workplace temperatures - with Alice Hood, TUC, and Paul Hampton, FBU (tbc).
- *Get CRC Ready* - for service sector organisations, the Carbon Reduction Commitment kicks in from 1 April 2010. Find out how you can play a part - with David Arnold, Unison, and DECC speaker.
- *Targeting Climate Change* - environmental

training with the TUC's new environmental workbook - with Andy Moss, SWTUC and Graham Peterson, UCU.

- *Climate Solidarity*: mobilising union members at work, at home and in their local communities - with Nick Perks, Climate Solidarity, and Sian Jones, CWU.

Last year's LRD survey drew over 1,300 responses from union-led greenworkplace projects, compared with a handful four years ago. Workplaces are responsible for 20% of UK emissions. DECC, the lead Government department, said in its July 2009 White Paper that, "The changes we need to make to 2020 and beyond will transform our workplaces and our whole economy....The plan to 2020 will cut emissions from our workplaces by 13% on 2008 levels." (The *UK Low Carbon Transition Plan*, 2009: www.decc.gov.uk).

Note that date! **15 March 2010, 10.00 to 16.00. Please register at** www.tuc.org.uk/goinggreenatwork

Brilliant Bristol Breakthrough!

Unions at Bristol City Council negotiated a joint environmental agreement with their employer - thought to be the first full formal green reps agreement with any local authority in the UK. [But if you know different do let us know!]

Backed by the South West TUC's (SWTUC) Green Workplaces Project, unions from Unison,

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Unite and GMB have gained green rep recognition including facility time for 12 reps across the Council's core services.

The agreement says: "The city council agrees the appointment by the Trades Unions of 12 green reps, 2 per department each spending up to 2 days per month on environmental issues. This may include attending meetings with management and unions on green issues, consulting with colleagues, attending training and preparing paperwork and materials. There may be variation of this facility time from month to month so accounting for facility time should be done annually. "

Frances Robertson, SWTUC coordinator, describes how this victory was won. "As soon as the SWTUC project kicked off in June 2008, unions invited us to help get the environmental agreement ball rolling. Reps were unanimous in their support for the introduction of green reps at the Council and I spoke at their Joint H&S Committee and their Joint Exec Committee comprised of union reps, management staff and city councillors."

"Once the principle was agreed in Autumn 2008, the TU side recruited green reps from every department and an interim agreement enabled green reps to attend the *Trade Unions and the Environment* three-day accredited TU Education course. They set up a green reps committee, elected a chair (Steve Crawshaw, Unison) and have identified some key environmental issues that they want to see tackled in their workplace."

Bristol City Council being a large organisation (18,000 staff), there was a ponderous process which involved going through a number of committees - so the actual agreement was only finalised recently. The employer has also

responded by getting each Department to select an Environment Champion from management side.

Frances says: "The Bristol City Council Joint Environment Agreement will be available soon on our South West TUC Green workplaces website where you can also find out more information about our project."

www.greenworkplacessouthwest.org.uk

Copenhagen - unions came close!

Sure, the Copenhagen climate change conference failed to deliver a new global deal. The so-called *Copenhagen Accord* left the unions and the rest of civil society out in the cold - literally. It lacked the essential ingredient of legally-binding commitments from governments to cut their CO2 emissions. And the Copenhagen Accord makes no mention of the hoped-for principles of a just transition that the labour movement has been pressing for.

But, the UN has resolved to push on with intergovernmental negotiations in 2010. The aim is a fully-fledged treaty in Mexico in November 2010 that really does meet the challenge of climate change.

And crucially for trade unions, the ITUC came close to securing its key strategic objective, to persuade governments to include the notion of a "just transition framework" in the UN's shared vision. Just Transition will enable trade unions to play an active part at national level in the shift to a low carbon economy.

The UN's Shared Vision for Long term Cooperative action says:

Realizing that addressing climate change requires a paradigm shift towards building a low emission society that offers substantial opportunities and ensures continued high

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growth and sustainable development, based on innovative technologies and more sustainable production and consumption, while ensuring a just transition of the workforce that creates decent work and quality jobs...

Copenhagen was also an organisational success for the ITUC itself. Its 320 delegates represented countries from all ITUC regions, across the full spectrum of economic development, except the ACFTU, China. The TUC contingent included senior representatives from Prospect, Unison and Community, and the TUC itself. There is, therefore, everything for unions to play for in the coming year. And we held a successful briefing with DECC Minister Joan Ruddock MP on trade union priorities for the new agreement.

Copenhagen is seen as an opportunity for the climate change denier brigades. Its political failings may confirm a wider sense of disbelief in the political process. But climate change and its impacts, in developed and developing countries, present profound challenges for politics and the labour movement at all levels. The TUC will therefore continue to press for a fair, effective and binding agreement in Mexico in 2010.

The *Copenhagen Accord*, UN decisions and the UN's *Shared Vision* text are available at: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

Green group unites National Library of Scotland

Tom Proudfoot, Prospect green rep, writes:

Late last year the position of Prospect's green rep at the NLS fell vacant and I volunteered to continue the pioneering work of the previous rep, Eoin Shalloo, who set up the N& Green

group and successfully applied to be part of the TUC's current round of Greenworkplace projects funded through the Union Modernisation Fund.

The group's initial successes included:

- *introducing recycling bins throughout the library's offices, canteens and public spaces*
- *promoting Fairtrade products*
- *starting the long, slow process of getting green issues into policy documents via the NLS sustainability steering group.*

The group has been encouraging NLS to join the Carbon Trust's Carbon Lite programme and set a target for carbon reduction. This should happen soon with the Library signing up for an ambitious 30 per cent reduction in carbon over five years.

The NLS will also be part of The Guardian's 10:10 campaign. Other good news is that the NLS now recycles 60 per cent of its waste and has 'closed the loop' on recycling items such as Perspex and specialist acid-free cardboard.

The group has had marked support from both management and the TUC GreenWorkplaces project. Management support has been positive and helpful, with key personnel pushing through important changes to NLS plant, policy and properties.

The GreenWorkplaces project has helped us tremendously by providing training to carry out workplace assessments, supplying information and examples of good practice along with constant encouragement and advice.

For me personally, it's important to address issues which impact on the everyday lives of union members in the workplace: their working environment, waste at work and wider issues such as Fairtrade and carbon reduction. People need to feel empowered to

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improve these situations, not only for themselves and colleagues, but for the wider community and our shared future.

Article taken from "Report, Prospect's magazine for reps"

Leicester's pilot launched

Leicester City Council's *Green Workplace Pilot* was launched at a union-hosted event before Christmas. UNISON, Unite and GMB signed up for a training course that will provide them with tools they need to negotiate with their employer on green issues.

Speakers at the event included Sarah Pearce, TUC, who outlined the importance of trade unions in the fight against climate change. She said that other TUC pilots demonstrated quantifiable improvements in energy efficiency and reduced emissions when trade unions were directly involved. She also unveiled the preliminary findings of a union survey of council employees showing how staff were keen to be more involved in the green agenda. Representatives from the City Council, including senior councillors, also addressed the launch and spoke on the importance of a shared approach to improving environmental performance, stating their commitment to the pilot.

Climate Solidarity sets sizzling pace

Climate Solidarity, a new union-led campaign aims to mobilise union members to take action on climate change both in the community and at work. It complements our Greening the Workplace projects, by building local *grassroots movement* of members working together to cut their own carbon emissions, and using this as a springboard to support workplace, community or political action.

Climate Solidarity is a partnership of four unions - CWU, PCS, NUT and UCU - along with climate change charity COIN. The project has received a two-year grant from Defra's *Greener Living Fund*.

One option, if you would like to do something about climate change but don't know where to start, is to set up a Climate Solidarity Action Group with some of your friends or work mates. Information and materials are available on the project website. Free half-day trainings are provided for union members wishing to start a group. These Action Groups can choose from a menu of seven themes for cutting carbon - such as reducing food waste or lower electricity bills - and then work on the theme over a period of six months. For more information, including latest training dates, please visit

www.climatesolidarity.org.uk

There's power in a union rep!

Wayne Walters, PCS Green rep in the prison service, explains how a groundbreaking project to recycle prisoners' food waste into energy could help pave the way for a greener civil service.

Not so long ago when meal times at the prison where I work had finished, we would throw all the scraps that the prisoners and staff left behind, and all the metal food tins, into a big skip ready to take to landfill. The cost of hiring this skip was about £1,500 a month, or £18,000 a year just to clear our plates. That is before you even think about the cost to the environment of skiploads of waste.

And if that was happening at Guys Marsh prison, it must also be happening in prisons across the UK, and at other big workplaces. It all adds up.

Well, no longer, because the prison has installed an anaerobic digestion plant,

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recycling food waste into electricity. It works by turning the food waste into methane gas which is then used to run a generator. Solid waste from the process is also used around the prison as a fertiliser. We collect food and garden waste, anything that will biodegrade, from around the prison and put into a tank and heat it for between three and 21 days. This energy powers plant that turns more waste into electricity, which powers the plant...and so it goes on. Very soon, the system will be 100% self-sufficient. As far as I am aware this is the only such system in the Prison Service and possibly even the civil service.

When you consider that the prison's 570 prisoners get through a total of 1,700 meals a day, you can imagine that there's a lot that we used to throw away. This has been a major boost for the prison, but also a great opportunity for me and the prisoners. I have worked at Guys Marsh as an instructional officer since 2004.

I employ eight prisoners at the moment, who help me to collect waste and run the plant, and this will be increasing to 12 in the near future. It's a great thing for the prisoners to be involved with, and we are leading the way in showing prisoners what we can do with waste material and how we can use this as energy.

It was a huge task to set up the system and I have been working closely with the prison management. I'm currently attending a course about the environment through PCS and I am looking to expand on this at a later date. I've also become the PCS green rep at Guys Marsh - this is something I'm enjoying and finding a challenge at the same time.

As well as recycling waste into energy, we also recycle the metal cans the food comes in and collect rainwater from the roof. We have also started to recycle all the furniture from

around the prison and a lot of the prisoner clothes are being recycled.

I would really like to see other prisons start to recycle a lot more of their waste. This is something that most could do that would not only save running costs but would also go a long way to saving our planet for the future.

As our prison governor Julia Killick said: "Prisons are usually thought of as bad places to be, but there is a lot that is positive going on at Guys Marsh."

Recycle and reuse

Turning our food waste into electricity is not the only way we are trying to make a difference to the environment:

Tins that come of the food comes in are broken down and sent to a local recycling company.

Waste by-product left from the digestion process is used as compost on the prison gardens.

We grow our own vegetables in greenhouses and have a wildlife conservation area on the site.

We are installing a new boiler to burn wood chips instead of diesel.

We want to offer qualifications in recycling for prisoners.

Our site manager has plans for a disused house on the grounds to be turned into an eco-centre open to the public as well as an education facility for prisoners.

We are recycling furniture from the prison where previously we would have thrown it away.

We hold wing-based competitions around energy and water use with prizes for those who reuse and recycle.

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Waste into power: how it works - go to:
Bioplex Technologies and Organic Power

GET GREEN TRAINING!

Free Green Events with South West TUC

All SWTUC's events will look at the role of the workforce in workplace resource saving and ways of involving everyone in action. Visit <http://www.greenworkplacessouthwest.org.uk/> for more details.

Turning the spotlight on venue energy saving!

Thursday 11th February, 10.00 - 13.00,
Exeter Northcott Exeter

Wednesday 17th February, 10.00 - 13.00,
The Bristol Old Vic Bristol

Two free half-day events aimed at theatre and performance venue staff, casual, part-time or freelance technicians in the entertainment industry and managers & directors of small venues and arts centres. Arranged by BECTU and the South West TUC's Green Workplaces Project these sessions will look at ways of saving money and reducing carbon emissions.

Energy saving at work

Tuesday 23rd February, 9.45 - 13.45,
Holiday Inn Express, Cheltenham.

Wednesday 10th March, 9.45 - 13.45,
Innovation Centre, University of Exeter,
Exeter

Two free partnership events from the South West TUC Green Workplaces Project and Severn Wye Energy Agency (SWEA) for anyone interested in saving energy in their workplace. Drawing on case studies and the lessons learned from SWEA's involvement in the

ENGINE project the event programme will include:

- Understanding energy use at work
- Measuring and calculating energy use
- Looking at energy use we can influence in the workplace
- Carrying out simple energy audits
- Examining case studies

Green Capital Event

Wednesday 17th March, 9.30-13.00,
Watershed, Bristol.

A partnership event with Bristol City Council and Green Capital -details to be confirmed soon. Contact AMoss@tuc.org.uk for details.

Trade Unions and the Environment Courses

Three day accredited courses for union members available at the following locations:

February 9 - Essex ; February 16 - Exeter;
March 10 - London ; March 25 - London ;
April 6 - London; April 14 - Poole ; April 21 -
Bristol and Newhaven ; May 26 -
Southampton.

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

<http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/courses/index.cfm/sb/14/>

We have included you in this email as we have your details on our Green Workplaces circulation email group, please let us know if you would prefer not to receive future emails and I'll update.

Please feel free to forward also to any interested colleagues.

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