

GreenWorkplaces News



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October 2010

Organising

New carbon “tax” is a call to action for environmental reps

Slipping beneath the headlines of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was the announcement that the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Energy Efficiency Scheme is to become a new carbon tax on public sector organisations and larger companies.

The CRC, introduced in April this year, acts as a cap and trade scheme covering about 3000 large public and private sector organisations - a figure set to rise to around 5000 organisations and businesses. The scheme affects organisations using more than 6,000 megawatt hours of electricity a year (roughly speaking, that’s an energy bill of about £500,000 or more)*. Scheme participants include: hospitals and local councils, colleges and universities, government departments and agencies, hotel and restaurant chains, retailers, banks, insurance companies, large warehouses and other major service employers, and many more.

Prior to the CSR, all revenue raised by the annual sale or auction of allowances in the CRC, was set to be “recycled” back to scheme participants. A positive incentive to reduce emissions. The more employers reduce emissions, the bigger the proportion of the overall revenue raised from the scheme gets handed back to them.

But this is all set to change with revenue raised now being handed straight over to the

Treasury and used to shore up the public finances. It’s expected to generate £715 million in 2010/11 rising to around £1billion once allowances are capped in April 2013. How much of this will be set aside for investment in environmental measures (if any) is anyone’s guess. No guarantees have been given.

So how does all this impact upon the role of union environmental reps?

Unions will want to see how the scheme can help to ensure employers take action on reducing energy use and ensure that energy savings ease the pressure on other costs. The emphasis must be on cutting carbon, not jobs.

The key task for union reps will be to ensure that the CRC and energy use is on the joint union-management agenda. Energy costs and initiatives to save energy need to be regularly discussed and monitored. With the proven ability of union environmental reps to play a key role in encouraging huge savings in energy usage, the CRC can act as an important driver for making the business case for union involvement in workplace energy management.

To find out more about the CRC, download the TUC briefing at:

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/crc-ees.pdf>

You can check to see if your employer has registered as a full participant in the scheme or has to make an “information disclosure” to the scheme administrator (the Environment Agency) at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/pollution/117652.aspx. Employers can be subject to financial penalties for failure to register.

**An organisation must register as a Participant in the CRC scheme if it has one or more half-hourly electricity meters settled on the half hourly market; and it used at least 6,000MWh (Mega Watt hours) of half-hourly electricity during the qualification year. The qualification year for the introductory phase of CRC is the 2008 calendar year. If your organisation has a half-hourly electricity meter settled on the half-hourly market, but did not use at least 6,000MWh of half-hourly electricity during 2008, you must make an Information Disclosure via the online CRC registry. Visit: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/pollution/98263.aspx for more information.*

Unions and the CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme

Under the CRCEES, employers are encouraged to consult with recognised trade unions and provide training and advice on energy savings.

Employers are encouraged to consult staff by either:

- providing energy management training to the majority of employees, or
- having active employee working groups on energy management, which report to senior management, and take forward initiatives to reduce the organisation's carbon emissions, or
- where independent trade unions are recognised for collective bargaining purposes, energy management issues are considered in joint discussions and members actively take forward initiatives to reduce the organisation's carbon emissions.

Union action and the CRCEES at the National Library of Scotland.

Prospect member and Estates Architect, Linda MacMillan highlights how important the CRCEES has been as a driver for action at the TUC GreenWorkplaces project at the National Library of Scotland:

“The CRC scheme has been a serious consideration for us. Even though we are not currently required to buy emission allowances, the fact that we must make an Information Disclosure means we are very focussed on the need to stay below the CRC threshold for full participation. We have used this to highlight to managers the need to reduce energy consumption in order to ensure that we continue to remain outside full participation. The bottom line is that the scheme could take money away from spending on NLS services if we don't cut our energy usage now.”

The NLS Carbon Management plan emphasises the role of the trade union in encouraging staff engagement in energy reduction and is endorsed by the TUC GreenWorkplaces project. It states:

“It is in the NLS interest to remain under the CRC threshold for full participation. Failure to do so at current emissions would incur a charge of at least £38k p.a., equivalent to the post of a skilled member of staff. Investing in infrastructure maintenance is preferred to having to buy carbon allowances.”

If you have used the CRC to get your employer active on energy efficiency we'd like to hear

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your story. Contact Sarah Pearce at spearce@tuc.org.uk

South West GreenWorkplaces Project - Champions for Change Awards

Do you know a fellow union member or rep who deserves some recognition for their hard work on greening their workplace? Maybe they've led change in the way people work, cut energy use by convincing others to "switch off", organised successfully around green issues and encouraged others to become union green reps, or perhaps been instrumental in setting up a project that's reduced the environmental impact of their workplace.

The South West GreenWorkplace Project is looking for nominations for their Champions for Change Awards to be held at their upcoming conference on 19 November (see events). We want to celebrate the work of union activists in the region and recognise their contribution to a better environment. Contact Beth Callinan bcallinan@tuc.org.uk for more information or to nominate a colleague.

PCS and the case for Public Transport

An opinion piece from PCS HMRC Branch Environmental Committee

Many of us recognise the need to switch from private to public forms of transport in the battle against climate change. Is this necessarily a trade union issue though?

What follows are some reflections on the work of a PCS branch environmental committee in this area, designed to give us one version of the role that trade unions can play around public transport issues. I'm excluding here the

obvious role that public transport sector unions themselves play.

Transport Issues in the Workplace

Our workplace and branch certainly has some major transport issues - overstretched by a seemingly limitless demand for car parking; taking in more staff from outlying offices that have closed who now have much further to travel on a daily basis; a lack of site facilities for public transport users, despite having a long standing, dedicated fleet of works buses; and now we face the withdrawal of some of these services themselves.

We have made a start on tackling these issues. Within PCS Revenue & Customs Group, we have established an Environmental Advisory Group which is mapping the environmental impact of the HMRC Office Closure programme in terms of extra travelling incurred. For our site, an average extra 75 miles per person per week has been the result. Locally we have asked for the threatened works bus services to be adopted by the regional transport body, Nexus, and retained as 'secured services' on the grounds of social need. We are also discussing expanding our facilities (bus shelters) with the local council highways department.

Community action

Beyond these immediate issues lies another challenge - the recent privatisation of our local light rail system (Tyne and Wear Metro) and the uncertainty of what changes this will bring. Many in the local trade union movement campaigned against such a shift, working along with community activists in a group called 'Keep Metro Public' (KMP). Originally opposed

to privatisation, internal divisions within KMP emerged over the potential for an 'in-house bid' by the current operator. This bid went ahead but failed and Deutsche Bahn won the contract.

Although ultimately unsuccessful, KMP has now shifted focus and agreed to constitute a regional public transport users forum, in conjunction with the new operators of Metro (Deutsche Bahn, who are also the new owners of Arriva buses too) and local regulatory bodies, to put forward the concerns of public transport users. Not surprisingly many of these travelers are trade unionists dependent on this mode of transport for work. Our branch had from the outset, supported the KMP campaign, before our environmental committee took things a step further and joined the group itself.

We have now set up a workplace transport users committee designed to feed into the new larger regional body. At workplace level, the group is centered on our branch environmental committee, plus representatives from the branch women's and equality & diversity committees. The larger regional group is open to all users in Tyne and Wear, whether individuals or delegates from organisations. We secured two seats on this regional body in recent elections.

All of which may, or may not, be of interest to you; but what does it say for trade union involvement in transport issues?

Union involvement in transport issues

Perhaps your workplace or branch has no parking problems; perhaps there are no local groups supporting public transport to liaise with; perhaps you have plenty of other pressing issues.....

All that may be so, but the clouds are gathering on the horizon in the shape of something called the **Workplace Parking Levy (WPL)**

www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=905

This is a central government initiative, due to be piloted in Nottingham, that intends charging employers a fee for each parking space their staff use (over a threshold of 10 spaces). And most importantly, in both private and public sectors, the employers are able to pass this charge on to their staff (including your members), to the tune of 250 pounds per space per annum. Should this be rolled out nationally, a distinct possibility for cash strapped local authorities and cost cutting central government, this transport issue is guaranteed to work its way up your branch agenda, as members complain about charges and the lack of available decent public transport alternatives. Which brings us back to campaigning for public transport facilities.....

Campaign for free public transport

There is a Campaign for Free Public Transport underway which is looking to forge links with trade unions and establish a national presence www.freepublictransport.org.uk.

What are the campaign goals? To massively expand and bring into public ownership a transport system free at the point of use, on the grounds of environmental need and social equity. Environmentally, the option of free public transport could be a key means to get people out of their cars and thereby make a significant impact upon overall transport carbon emissions. Socially, free public transport will dramatically restore the right to travel for groups currently finding it very costly - the poor, the unemployed, single

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parent families - and reduce the stress associated with road congestion for all of us. All causes trade unionists can support. Perhaps it's time to get on board? There is a national conference planned for next year.

Million Climate Jobs

And one final thought. PCS, like many other unions, has been involved in developing the 'Million Climate Jobs' proposals within the Campaign Against Climate Change. Many of the issues involved in improving and expanding public transport - in terms of more services, increased access for certain user groups, more security on vehicles and stations - all point towards increased employment within this sector. Maybe this could be a key theme to campaign on to make the Million Climate Jobs agenda a more concrete reality at local and regional levels? It could also serve as a foundation for local trade union alliances between transport unions like RMT and those whose members rely on public transport daily, to mount campaigns in the defence and future expansion of this public service. With the substantial cuts to transport budgets and hike in rail fares announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review, there are pressing reasons to take up the public transport agenda.

Policy

CSR: Some green goods - but no Green Bank?

by Philip Pearson, Senior Policy Officer, Economics and Social Affairs Department, TUC

With no CO2 impact assessment, and no jobs estimates, how to judge the Spending Review against climate change targets and green growth? We have to wait until next year for the CO2 figures, in a "government-wide carbon plan in 2011" (page 63).

DECC's budget was cut by 30%, with nothing on projects foregone. News on the Renewable Heat Incentive is very positive. The Feed-in tariff looks safe, as is Labour's £60m scheme to promote investment in North Sea port facilities for offshore wind turbines. We can welcome the single carbon capture project for coal, but the Coalition promised 4, and there's still no decision on the CCS levy. Four CCS projects could generate 100,000 jobs. One won't. As for the "Green Investment Bank", it isn't a bank, yet, and it's got no money until 2013.

What's good about the key DECC decisions:

- £860 million funding for the Renewable Heat Incentive from 2011-12. More detail is needed on how the incentive will work for different technologies. But our campaigning with many other organisations has paid off, and Ministers have responded appropriately. Heat sources generate 47% of our CO2 emissions, so "action this day" was needed. DECC says the decision will shift renewable heat from a fringe industry into the mainstream.
- £200 million for low-carbon technologies - with £60m for a competition to support the upgrading of the UK's ports infrastructure. This is critical so that it is not a bottleneck limiting the attractiveness of the UK for offshore wind plant manufacturers. There could be 70,000 jobs in the offshore wind supply chain. A victory for all in the renewables lobby.

Less convincing:

- “Up to £1 billion of investment to create one of the world’s first commercial-scale carbon capture and storage demonstration plants”. Chris Huhne has secured money from Treasury for the first CCS demonstration project. But the Coalition promised 4 UK plants, so one will lack credibility with investors until the Government can confirm that the CCS Levy will be used to underwrite subsequent schemes. We’re promised a consultation on the levy and carbon pricing in November. More delay, and projects 2-4 may not be funded by a levy, either. But we look forward to DECC’s call for proposals for demos 2, 3 and 4 promised before the end of the year (2010) including clarification on whether gas projects will be eligible.
- [Power investors wait](#): “a 900 MW IGCC power station with CCS that could be capturing, transporting and storing carbon dioxide on a commercial scale in 2016 is on hold until the UK’s coalition government clarifies its policy and incentives regime for the technology” - Powerfuel chief executive Richard Budge, 13 October. Not good news

But the Green Bank is a real concern.

- The CSR speaks of “plans for a Green Investment Bank... The Coalition Agreement set out the Government’s commitment to establish a UK-wide Green Investment Bank. The Government will initially capitalise a new institution with £1 billion of funding together with additional significant proceeds from the sale of Government owned assets, subject to a final design which meets the tests of effectiveness, affordability and transparency.”

- Table A3 tells us £1bn is set aside for 2013-14. This is not a Bank, and it is not enough funding. A Bank that issues bonds could leverage 20 times as much private capital, turning, say, a £6 billion government investment into £120 billion green investment bonanza.

Before the CSR, the TUC was concerned that the Government currently lacked a convincing narrative around economic growth. We support a well-capitalised GIB, rather than a green “fund”. A White Paper on growth is due to be published shortly. But since May’s General Election, political discourse has been dominated by the fiscal deficit, leaving many observers (including the TUC) concerned at the risk of very slow growth or even a double-dip recession that this presents. The GIB has a vital role to play in delivering the £450bn investment, from infrastructure to company-level finance, needed to secure low carbon economic growth and cut our CO2 emissions.

The Bank’s capitalisation must reflect the scale of the challenge: the GIB should receive £4bn to £6bn initially, and may need up to £20 billion in capitalisation by 2020 - an average injection of £2 billion pa from 2011.

Alliances for Green Growth 11 October 2010: Conference Report

Last The 200 delegates taking part in the TUC’s annual climate change conference, *Alliances for Green Growth*, heard Secretary of State Chris Huhne outline the coalition’s view on the need to ‘build a new kind of economy’. For the TUC, Frances O’Grady said the TUC would work with ministers, industry and other stakeholders for a greener economy that ‘free markets alone will not deliver’. Green MP Caroline Lucas argued that announcements on

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Treasury cuts in the Comprehensive Spending Review would be 'the first litmus test of how green the government really is'.

To read the conference report in full and for copies of speeches visit:

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/social/index.cfm?mins=80&minors=25&majorsubjectID=13>

The TUC would like to thank delegates for their feedback on the event and will take note of the good and the critical comments in organising future climate change events. Some comment below:

- 'Good, informative day - maybe should follow up with seminars on actions taken'
- Panellist Ruth Davis and Joan Walley 'spectacular'.
- Need for a proper economic analysis of the green economy
- What will happen after the spending review?
- Too many speakers, but good questions.

AND FINALLY ..

- Our sincere thanks to the speakers, workshop chairs, panellists and the chairs of the main sessions for making the day an overall success.
- Most delegates rated the conference 'good' or 'excellent', with the strongest ratings for the keynote speeches.

Events

South West GreenWorkplaces Conference - Champions for Change

The South West GreenWorkplaces conference, Champions for Change in the Workplace, is being held on Friday 19th November in Bristol at the city centre location, At-Bristol,

Time: 10 - 3:30 (Lunch Provided)

Please register by Friday 5th November to secure your place

Register online at:

www.tuc.org.uk/championsforchangeatwork

Key Speakers:

- Jonathon Porritt - One of Britain's Leading and most influential Environmentalists.
- Frances O'Grady - Deputy General Secretary- TUC speaking about the union role and why it is important
- Haydn Young - CEO Gaia Active Limited Talking about behavioural - capitalising on the fact that your people, not equipment, will save you energy.
- Green reps presenting case studies from around the region.

What issues are being looked at?

- How has the Union role worked so far?
- What are the benefits of union involvement
- What else can be done?

The conference will look at these issues and more.

Event Outline

The Southwest TUC's Green Workplaces Project has been working with trade unions members and employers for the last two years to promote employee engagement as a way

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making workplaces more environmentally-friendly.

The event will provide unions and reps with enthusiasm and examples of good practice to take back to their workplace. What work has been done so far with the South West project, what help is needed in the last few months and what reps want left in place when the project finishes.

Workshops and stalls

- Travel planning for an organisation
- How to promote behaviour change in the workplace
- Improving resource efficiency in a business
- Effective communication and negotiation at work

UCU Environment Conference, November 18th, 2010: Sustainable development - Making our voice heard

This event takes place at UCU Head Office, Carlow St, London NW1. For the conference programme and to register online visit:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5026>

Free training - take the Trade Unions and the Environment Course

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

November 3 - Swindon

November 4 - Cardiff

November 10 - Taunton

December 3 - London

And dates into next year:

January 26 - Poole

January 27 - Cheltenham

March 4 - Liverpool

May 10 - Wrexham

May 11 - Bristol

June 13 - Cornwall, Plymouth

For more information visit:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/courses/index.cfm/sb/14/

To find out more about the TUC GreenWorkplaces Project or to join the TUC's Green Reps Network contact the project leader Sarah Pearce at spearce@tuc.org.uk or Tel: 020 7467 1230