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December 2011

Organising

TUC Green Reps Survey 2012

In January 2012, Labour Research Department will be carrying out the TUC's second national green reps survey. The aim of this questionnaire based study is to find out the scale and range of union-led green workplace activities. We want to identify and share experience and best practice, and learn more about the barriers to further extending these initiatives. We are also keen to compare the findings with the first study in 1999.

LRD will be emailing the Questionnaire in early January - we very much hope you will take part. For more details, please contact Philip Pearson at: ppearson@tuc.org.uk

Green Impact at Universities and Colleges

An NUS led programme, *Green Impact*, originally a national competition between students' unions, now covers 35 Universities and Colleges nationwide, and even extends out into local community initiatives - see www.nus.org.uk/greener. Here, Charlotte Taylor | Green Impact Project Officer at NUS, describes how the project has accelerated from a few pilot projects to a national programme in a few short years.

The first Student Unions involved in Green Impact were given 'workbooks' which provided them with criteria aimed at reducing their carbon footprint and becoming more ethical in the goods they supply students with. After 3 successful years of Green Impact Students' Unions, the same model was piloted at the University of Bristol. Now, Green Impact Universities and Colleges has morphed into an inter-departmental competition that encourages staff and students to 'green' their own workplace.

In 2008-09, and after a successful pilot at the University of Bristol, NUS' Environment and Ethical department used Defra funding to offer the Green Impact programme and two other behaviour change initiatives to 19 other Universities. Green Impact was particularly successful at reducing energy use and increasing recycling. Surveys on green behaviours among staff at the universities saw 15% swings in behaviour change.

Whole green agenda covered

Each university is required to work with the Green Impact team to embed fully their sustainability initiatives and carbon management plan in to the workbook. The idea behind this is that staff and students at the university are able to take ownership for the environmental impact of their own workplace. One success of this is that the workbook now covers the whole sustainability agenda, with categories in waste, energy, communications and sustainable procurement.

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In its second year (2010-11), Green Impact Universities and Colleges had 35 institutions signed up, with 621 staff teams (35,467 staff) taking part. 19,620 'greening actions' were completed as a result of the workbook, and 495 members of staff or students improved their employability by training as auditors to process the results.

NUS' environmental vision is for students to first green themselves, then their institutions, then their communities. The Green Impact programme mirrors this vision, and this year is being piloted in some community workplaces:

- An NHS hospital in Bristol.
- A local authority in Manchester.
- A SME in Cambridge.
- A University in Sweden.

This is led by the Green Impact Development Manager and supported by the Green Impact team. The Green Impact programme focuses on celebrating the environmental successes of staff and students. It also promotes the message that if everybody does a little, the impact will be great. This can be seen in some of the results the programme has had over the last few years. An awards ceremony takes place annually at each university involved, and the Green Impact Students' Unions awards are integrated into the annual NUS awards ceremony.

For more information on Green Impact, or the other work of NUS' Environment and Ethics department, see www.nus.org.uk/greener, or contact Jamie Agombar, Environment and Ethics manager for NUS on JAgombar@nussl.co.uk

Policy

Renewable energy - feed-in tariffs cuts a 'nightmare'

Anne Elliott-Day of PCS writes: On 31 October the Government announced a consultation on proposed cuts to the feed-in tariff (FIT) for solar micro-generation projects. FIT provides a guaranteed payment for those - households, communities, businesses and organisations - that generate electricity through small-scale renewables, such as solar and wind. FITs were included under the Energy Act 2008, following intense lobbying by organisations, including unions, led by Friends of the Earth and the Renewable Energy Association. The tariffs were introduced in April 2010.

22,000 new jobs

Since then 2,500 small businesses have sprung up in the solar industry, 22,000 new jobs have been created and there have been around 100,000 installations.

However, in the Chancellor's comprehensive spending review in Autumn 2010, a fixed budget for FITs was introduced. Then early in 2011, as take-up soared, the government announced a 'fast track review' that cut the FITs for larger solar installations over 50kw, last August, claiming that the FIT had been designed for domestic installations not 'solar farms'.

'Nightmare' cuts

The Solar Trade Association, which described the proposed changes as a 'nightmare', accepts that the tariffs should be cut as costs fall. The problem is the extent and timescale

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of the latest cuts. They cut by more than half the support for electricity generated through solar panels (solar PV) from 12 December - 11 days before the consultation ends - and will have devastating consequences.

Councils and housing associations which have been using the opportunity provided by the FIT to install solar panels on social housing are cancelling projects up and down the country while community energy projects which have been working hard to raise funds to install the panels on schools, hospitals and village halls are folding. Workers are already being laid off and the Renewable Energy Association estimates that 11,000 jobs are threatened.

PCS Assistant General Secretary Chris Baugh says: "The introduction of FITs marked a revolution in the way energy is produced in the UK. They put the capacity to generate energy directly in the hands of people and communities. As the government rows back on FITs scheme, it creates the strong impression that it is pandering to the Big Six energy companies which not only dominate the market in fossil fuels but seem to want to control the market in renewables too."

FoE legal challenge

Friends of the Earth is taking legal action against the government arguing the **proposals are unlawful as the tariff will be cut two weeks before the consultation period ends.**

Meanwhile Green MEP Jean Lambert has called upon the European Commission to investigate whether the UK Government's proposal to drastically cut the solar FIT will weaken the UK's ability to meet the legally binding EU target to source 15 per cent of our energy from renewable sources by 2020.

The FIT consultation is on the Department of Energy and Climate Change website

www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/fits_comp_rev1/fits_comp_rev1.aspx

Support Friends of the Earth's 'Final Demand' campaign for a public inquiry into the Big Six energy companies and for feed-in tariff support for renewables - www.foe.co.uk

Nottingham city council introduces workplace parking levy

Nottingham City Council was the first local authority to introduce a workplace parking levy (WPL) this autumn. *But will the cost be passed on to staff?* This briefing looks at the issues.

- Local authorities have the power to introduce the workplace parking levy (WPL) under the Transport Act 2000 and WPL (England) Regulations 2009.
- The WPL aims to tackle congestion, discourage private car use, improve local public transport, and encourage the development of workplace travel plans and 'more sustainable commuter travel'.

Charges

In Nottingham, employers that provide 11 or more workplace parking places (excluding those for disabled Blue Badge Holders) will pay the charge from 1st April 2012. This includes public sector employers (apart from the emergency services and some NHS premises). Employers that provide workplace parking places need to have licensed these by 1st October 2011.

- The initial charges in April 2012 are £279 per workplace parking space per year.

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- The cost of the levy will increase year-on-year in line with inflation.
- Parking places used by customers/ visitors will not be charged and motorcycles, mopeds and bicycles are exempt.

The employer is responsible for paying the WPL but can pass the cost on to staff who use workplace parking. An employer can opt to introduce a salary sacrifice scheme whereby staff sacrifice part of their salary in return for a benefit. PCS is aware of at least one public sector employer in Nottingham that intends to pass on the charge to staff in full.

Nottingham City Council plans to use the revenue raised to redevelop Nottingham railway station, extend the existing tram system and improve the local bus network. The council argues that without the WPL investment in public transport could not be afforded and some current services would have to be scrapped.

The scheme is supported by the Campaign for Better Transport and the Green Party. But the British Chambers of Commerce calls it a 'stealth tax' and said it means businesses won't invest in towns that implement it and may even relocate. In Nottingham 83 of the 100 businesses that responded to the consultation on the WPL were against its implementation.

There have been reports in the press that other local authorities are considering implementing a WPL and are looking closely at the scheme in Nottingham. These include Liverpool and Bristol city councils and Devon, Hampshire, Leeds and Wiltshire.

- More information about the scheme is on the Nottingham City Council website <http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=905>

- If you work in Nottingham and your employer is planning to pass on the WPL to staff - or if you work in another local authority area which is considering implementing the WPL - please forward any relevant information to Anne Elliott-Day at PCS (annes@pcs.org.uk).

Thanks to Anne-Elliott-Day for this briefing.

Events

The new green team: Local government, sustainable energy, jobs and skills

31st January, 11-2, Congress House, London

Speakers:

- Caroline Lucas MP, Leader of the Green Party
- Frances O'Grady, Deputy General Secretary, TUC
- Cllr Richard Williams, Opposition Leader, Southampton Council
- Solar industry representative
- Mark Bramah, Assistant Chief Executive, APSE
- Union speaker

The New Green Team, a UNISON report supported by the TUC, shows how local government can play a major role in our economic recovery and in efforts to ensure that the UK meets its targets on carbon emissions and renewables. This approach involves bringing together local government's economic and environmental agendas together in a more systematic way, creating green & decent jobs through the installation of community scale renewables and roll out of energy efficiency programmes.

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The New Green Team was written for UNISON by the Association for Public Services Excellence (APSE) and was based on extensive interviews with local authorities. Such an approach requires a supportive framework from government. Recent announcements, especially the decision by the government to reduce the Feed in Tariff, suggest just the opposite.

Come and take part in this important seminar to discuss how politicians, unions and employers could respond at national and local level to ensure that local authorities can create jobs and cut carbon in their communities.

To register please visit
<http://thenewgreenteam.eventbrite.co.uk/>

For full information on green workplaces events visit:
www.tuc.org.uk/green_workplaces_network

Free training - take the Trade Unions and the Environment Course

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

Trade Unions and the Environment

9th to 13th January 2012, Kirkcaldy Adam Smith College, Kirkcaldy (Scotland). This course will help union reps to: - Identify environmental changes affecting the workplace - Research and identify appropriate environmental legislation, policies and information - Identify environmental problems and opportunities for trade union action.

For more information please contact:
sbell@tuc.org.uk

Provider: Adam Smith College: 01592 268591
Email: jimwalker@adamsmith.ac.uk

Trade Unions and the Environment

26 Jan 2012, Bridgend (2 Thursdays from 26 January 2012). This course will help union reps to: - Identify environmental changes affecting the workplace - Research and identify appropriate environmental legislation, policies and information - Identify environmental problems and opportunities for trade union action. Bridgend College, Bridgend (Wales TUC).

For more information please contact:
ryoung@bridgend.ac.uk

Provider: Bridgend College: 01656 302511
Email: ryoung@bridgend.ac.uk

Scottish Green Workplaces

For TUC Environmental courses and information in relation to Green Workplaces in Scotland and any general environmental enquiries please contact George Waldron, Trade Union Education Department, Stow College on 0141 332 1786 ex512 or e-mail gwaldron@stow.ac.uk

For more information on courses visit:
www.unionlearn.org.uk/courses/index.cfm/sb/14/

To find out more about the TUC's GreenWorkplaces Network contact:
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