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UNION MODERNISATION FUND

TUC GreenWorkplaces – greening the work environment

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Introduction

In April 2008, the TUC began a 2 year project funded by the Union Modernisation Fund (UMF) for two years to support union initiatives at a range of pilot workplaces aimed at making these workplaces 'greener'. GreenWorkplaces projects are workplace-based initiatives that bring together the practical engagement both of workers and management to secure energy savings and reduce the environmental impact of the workplace. This can be achieved through awareness-raising events, staff surveys and training workshops. Successful projects often set up joint management and union environmental committees with framework agreements that embed workforce engagement on carbon reduction and environmental sustainability into the way organisations do their work.

Why this project?

The TUC's decision to bid for UMF funding to support a GreenWorkplaces initiative reflects its recognition of the challenge of climate change as a TUC strategic priority. Climate change and the environment was the centrepiece of its 2006 Congress, which included presentations from Al Gore and the then Environment Secretary, David Miliband, with a plenary debate on the workplace context. Sarah Pearce, Project Manager, explains:

'The 2006 Congress called for more environmental action at workplace level to help the transition to a low-carbon economy. This presented a unique challenge and opportunity for unions to contribute meaningfully to an issue that is revolutionising the very meaning of 'operational efficiency' within a modern economy. This UMF-funded round of projects builds on the capacity created and lessons learned from the previous round of TUC GreenWorkplaces demonstration projects, funded by the Carbon Trust. These earlier pilot projects showed how union involvement resulted in actual or potential energy or carbon reduction in the workplace. This new project focused on how environmental action at work could contribute to the potential for a transformational change in the organisational efficiency or effectiveness of unions. In other words, to alter the structure, processes, culture or strategy of the unions involved. In this respect, each workplace project entered new territory.'

Aims and objectives

The aims of the project were to:

- develop good practice in workplace environmental activities
- provide environmental training for workplace 'green reps', supported by training materials, a workbook for reps and other materials (covering best practice and relevant legislation)
- to support and provide advice for union reps and officers that would aid consultations with employers
- raise awareness within the trade union movement, business and the wider population of the union role in environmental issues, including a national TUC conference to showcase the project at Congress House, London, in March 2010.

Methodology and outcomes

The TUC established an internal management team to advise on the implementation of the project. Led by Frances O'Grady, TUC Deputy General Secretary, the team included the Head of the TUC's Economic and Social Affairs
Department as project coordinator, a TUC Senior Policy Officer adviser, the Trade Union Education Manager at unionlearn to provide advice on training, the TUC Finance Manager, the Head of TUC Campaigns and Communications Department to advise on media and conference arrangements, and a representative of the TUC's regional staff to advise on candidate projects. The project was overseen by a UMF advisory group chaired by Paul Noon, General Secretary of Prospect, with membership drawn from members of the Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC).

The project began in April 2008 following the appointment of Sarah Pearce as UMF Project Leader, on a two-year secondment from UNISON. The TUC's environmental education courses and other resources provided by unionlearn and the Trade Union Education Department at Stow College also played a key role in laying solid foundations for the GreenWorkplaces projects.

Identifying projects

The TUC GreenWorkplaces UMF project supported unions in seven pilot projects at British Telecom (BT), Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children (GOSH), Leicester City Council (LCC), the National Library of Scotland (NLS), National Museums Liverpool (NML), the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and United Utilities (UU). Trade unions taking part were BDA, BMA, Connect (now merged with Prospect), CSP, CWU, GMB, NUT, PCS, Prospect, RCN, UNISON and Unite. Sarah Pearce adds

'The UMF project aimed to develop good environmental practice in 10-15 workplace projects. However, some of the successful bids were multi-site initiatives, the largest being UU, which encompassed union reps from several hundred installations across the North West. Union reps from more than 20 sites, many with multi-site responsibilities, attended the launch of the project at UU and reps from nearly 20 sites attended both workshops. The project at Leicester City Council also expanded beyond its original remit of focusing on a handful of city centre administration blocks to canvassing staff from over 100 sites across the city.'

The individual projects involved some or all of the following activities:

- Staff opinion surveys and quizzes
- Union green events, environment days and green fairs, with outside speakers and input from environmental organisations
- Trade union environmental training, including active discussions on the role and function of union green reps, facilities needed to carry out that role and ways to overcome the barriers to employee engagement on environmental issues in the workplace.
- Negotiations on environmental consultations with management – either through support and advice at face-to-face meetings, in writing, or via telephone conferences.

Further support was offered through best practice case studies, relevant legislation and an environmental reps' education workbook. All projects involved up to two days' training provided by TUC Education based at Stow College, Glasgow, with a

subsequent training report summarising feedback from course participants and the discussions and outcomes from workshop activities. These reports offered observations, guidance and further support for the progress of the pilot projects and were distributed to all unions, training participants and management.

Workshop training

TUC Education worked in partnership with unionlearn and TUC GreenWorkplaces, delivering 11 workshops across Britain. Their aims were to build on and support the initial partnership development and to lay the foundations for the wider project aim of 'transformational change in the organisational efficiency or effectiveness of unions'. Although each workshop was customised following in-depth consultation with management and unions, they all:

- were introduced with a discussion on the challenges of climate change
- had a practical and active environmental element (an environmental walk-round/inspection)
- introduced problem-solving techniques related to energy efficiency, waste disposal, recycling and travel to work
- evaluated the measures required to make a lasting change in greening the workplace
- concluded with a set of short- and medium-term actions to make lasting alterations in the workplace.

Workshop materials were based on those previously developed for the Carbon Trust round of GreenWorkplaces projects, supplemented by union and TUC publications and materials. The partnership approach to workshop building saw the introduction into the training materials of the organisations':

- environmental policy documents
- internal environmental structures, such as environmental management systems, green groups, carbon clubs
- internal environmental contact lists
- environmental audit checklists
- logos and branding for workshop materials.

Sarah Pearce continues:

'The consultation and partnership approach also meant that the customisation of workshop materials had a dynamic element, especially for workshops following a two-day model. It led, for example, to the development of customised checklists for NUT, environmental questionnaire design for NLS, and day one workshop reports as discussion papers for day two at the NUT, GOSH, NLS and UU.'

Outcomes

The GreenWorkplaces project produced some very positive outcomes, which will have long-lasting benefits. They include:

Developing good practice in workplace environmental activities

- Detailed scoping exercises were introduced in all projects to assess support and the potential for resource savings at local and national level. Sarah Pearce explains: *'Numerous consultations took place with management and unions at all workplaces. Joint work between unions and environmental, facility, energy or finance teams helped build a strong business case in each project for a union role in the workplace environmental agenda. Case studies from previous TUC GreenWorkplaces projects*

proved invaluable here, for example providing both NLS and NML management with solid examples of previous good practice within the museum and gallery sector.'

- Worker expertise was used to identify potential resource savings via staff surveys (GOSH, LCC, NLS, NUT) or intranet discussion boards (BT).
- Activities took place to raise awareness of union involvement in environmental issues through green fairs or events at all projects, along with quizzes, surveys or environmental seminars.

Support and advice materials for reps and officers to support environmental consultations with employers

- **Environmental workbook for trade unionists**

The production of a new environmental workbook, *Targeting Climate Change*, for use on union environmental training courses 'proved invaluable as a resource and provided activities and supporting materials for workplace-based training sessions'. The book gives an overview of key environmental issues, policy, best practice case studies and relevant legislation. One training participant at GOSH commented that: "Again, the booklet given was easy and useful to read, without having too many facts and figures." More than 6,000 copies have been distributed for use on environmental courses and for branch and workplace activities. The environmental checklists for workplace inspections within the workbook were used in later workshops. *'The checklists were useful for branch and workplace activities, with copies being provided to NLS as a resource ahead of the Carbonlite programme, and used extensively during GOSH joint environmental committee meetings to help design audit checklists.'*

'This project offers an exciting opportunity to see unions, management and staff working together to harness the knowledge and enthusiasm of staff across the organisation in terms of the green agenda.'
Maxine Carden, Director of HR, NML

- **Web-based support**

As part of the project, the 'Greening the workplace' and environmental pages of the TUC website were relaunched, providing reps and officers with up-to-date policy news, online access to TUC resources and a monthly *GreenWorkplaces Newsletter*, featuring articles, news on training events and best practice examples from the pilot projects and other union initiatives. *'Since the start of the UMF project, an astonishing 9,000 copies of the TUC reps' handbook Go Green at Work, also available online, have been requested by TUC affiliates.'*

- **Guides and resources**

The TUC Project Manager ensured that other resources were made available to reps and officers, such as the findings from the 2009 Labour Research Department survey of union reps, *A Guide to Unions and Climate Change*, previous reports from the earlier TUC Carbon Trust-funded round of GreenWorkplaces projects and general evidence to support the case for union involvement. *'The joint CBI, BERR and TUC publication, Reps in Action: How Workplaces Can Gain from Modern Union Representation (May 2009) proved particularly useful in negotiations with management. The report outlines the considerable reduction in energy consumption attributed to an earlier GreenWorkplaces project at the British Museum.'*

- **Networks for reps**

Putting union reps in touch with other reps in similar sectors helped build

networks of support for projects. Union green reps from outside organisations attended the launch event at NML and reps from LCC were put in touch with unions at Bristol City Council, who signed a joint union-management environmental agreement in 2009; and union reps at NLS and NLM were given the contact details of the union lead at the TUC's GreenWorkplaces Carbon Trust project at the British Museum.

'While we can all set our sights on safeguarding the environment, the project encourages employees to work with managers to identify areas where a reduction in CO2 emissions can be achieved without sacrificing employees' jobs, pay and conditions.'
Phil Thompson, UNISON branch convenor and green rep, LCC

- **Additional training**

Reps at BT and NLS also took part in the TUC's online environmental training course and the lead union rep at the NUT successfully completed a three-day TUC 'Unions and the Environment' course in London before their project began.

- **Case files**

Each project has been provided with its own case file documenting the outcomes and achievements of the project, along with details of key contacts.

Benefits

There have been considerable benefits from the GreenWorkspaces project:

Raised awareness among unions
The UMF project has, says Sarah Pearce, *'undoubtedly led to an increased awareness of the role of trade unions in environmental issues. The huge level of response to the LRD survey of union reps on climate change and environmental issues in 2009 reflects the growing momentum in the union movement on these issues.'* More than 1300 union reps responded to the survey, providing details of thousands of examples of reps greening their workplaces.

The successful application by the Climate Outreach Information Network (COIN) to Defra's Greener Living Fund to support union environmental initiatives in the workplace and in communities is 'further evidence of a rapid increase in union activity on climate change'. This Climate Solidarity project, launched in June 2009, is aimed at mobilising thousands of trade union members to cut carbon emissions in the workplace. Unions involved are TUC affiliates CWU, NUT, PCS and UCU.

The TUC has experienced a rapid increase in the level of requests to speak at national and international union and business conferences on greening the workplace issues. These have included officer seminars and union conferences, presentations at regional TUC and national and regional unionlearn conferences, and business events.

There has also been an increase in green motions at union conferences, environmental fringe events and the number of trade union environmental courses on offer through TUC unionlearn. Interest in the Tolpuddle Green Camp received a 'healthy boost' in numbers following a highly successful and well attended TUC GreenWorkplaces day in June 2009. Sarah Pearce adds: *'The resources and support made available by affiliates to union members has increased steadily during the period of the project, with unions such as UCU and UNISON producing their own environmental newsletters, and affiliates such as PCS, Prospect and UNISON providing online resources to aid negotiations on greening the*

workplace. In 2009, UCU held its first environment conference.'

Hard on the heels of Prospect (which opened a new green head office in 2007), other affiliates are also greening their workplaces, with UNISON due to relocate to new eco offices in autumn 2010 and the CWU having redeveloped its Alvescot residential education and training centre near Oxford. The centre features solar heating, ground-source heat pumps and even an on-site allotment. The 1,200 union reps and members who pass through Alvescot every year return to their workplaces with a greater awareness of environmental issues. The union now also holds an annual green camp and ran its first course for environmental reps this year.

Unions are also greening their own operations as employers. UNISON has a green taskforce, with union representation allowing staff to discuss and address environmental issues with the General Secretary. PCS has also set up a joint union–management environment committee (JEC) with GMB reps who represent PCS staff. The JEC will be piloting joint environmental audits and are looking to introduce training on how to carry out audits and on raising wider awareness for a network of green reps across departments and regions.

The TUC now receives regular enquiries from union officials for information on how to obtain funding to set up GreenWorkplaces projects, reflecting an increasing demand for these types of initiatives.

Raised awareness among business and the wider population

The pilot projects have attracted interest from beyond the trade union movement. Good practice at GOSH is being disseminated via the NHS Sustainable Development Unit to the NHS Regional Sustainability Networks. And the project has gained publicity in a wide variety of articles outside the union movement, such as in *Nursing Times*, the *Chartered Institute of Water* and *Environment Magazine, Gov Today* and on the Energy Saving Trust's website and the web pages of Croner HR (a business consultancy dealing with best practice in human resources).

The TUC was invited to address the sixth annual conference of the *Ius Laboris* (Just Law) lawyers' network on the theme of 'A greener workplace', in London in February 2010. Sarah Pearce believes that:

'The invitation reflects a growing awareness of green workplace issues among HR professionals and corporate labour lawyers. The event attracted more than 100 delegates from across the EU and US. The TUC gave a presentation on the main aims of its GreenWorkplaces projects, what it is currently doing to promote them and the wider effects of the projects on improving industrial relations and employer-employee understanding of taking forward energy savings and other joint initiatives. Other speakers from industry and service sectors referred to working with their recognised unions, both to raise awareness and to encourage behavioural change. These initiatives included car pool, energy efficiency and recycling schemes, and volunteer programmes.'

Extending the trade union agenda

All projects were effective in building capacity to extend the trade union consultation agenda to cover environmental issues. The GreenWorkplaces project trained 97 environmental representatives, resulting in changes to workplace structures, with at least three new environmental committees/forums (at BT, GOSH and NLS), and agreement reached to set up a fourth joint environment committee at NML. At GOSH, for example, their joint union/management environment

committee are granted reasonable time off to conduct official committee business. Following on from the workshop at NLS and support given to the Prospect green rep, consultations continue on improving NLS environmental policies and its communication strategy. Sarah Pearce points out:

'Setting up a sustainability steering group with strong links to a green working party signified a significant change in structures from the outset of the project. At the start, the health and safety committee and ad hoc green group acted as the only vehicles for environmental discussions. A now defunct safety and environmental focus team was formed in 2004, but it met only infrequently.'

Cultural change

For unions at branch level, considering the environmental agenda as a core trade union issue was relatively new territory for many union reps and staff attending project events and workshops. Consultations with management through project meetings and at training courses often provided the first opportunity to discuss union involvement on climate change with representatives from management, facility, energy or environment teams. Sarah Pearce comments:

'The fact that unions managed to progress projects in the context of a recession, budget cuts and job losses provides an insight into the potential for these projects to sustain dialogue within the workplace at times when industrial relations are potentially strained. Discussions on largely non-adversarial topics, such as energy efficiency, offer an opportunity to maintain lines of communication on all sides. The business advice and consultancy firm Croner commented in an online article in June 2009 how the project at GOSH "will unite trade unions and hospital management in a bid to make the hospital even more environmentally aware".'

Projects also broke down the cultural barriers that can exist between staff and technical environmental experts:

'Having experts from environmental teams taking part in workshops meant participants came to appreciate technical issues such as the relationship between energy production and CO_2. Participants also learned the value of more generic skills, such as the use of influence and persuasion. The training also helped to get staff and management working together. One participant on the Leicester workshop said in the course evaluation that there had been "good contributions from everybody. [It is] refreshing to hear managers and staff agree."'

The projects were vehicles for union renewal as well, attracting non-active union members on to training courses. The branch membership officer at NLS commented at the project's workshop on how refreshing it was to see new faces getting involved in union activity.

Improved communication

All projects led to an improvement in communication between management, unions and staff, through activities such as setting up newsletters (NLS), designing posters (LCC) and the establishment of intranet pages on the UNISON branch website at UU.

'Those projects that have set up formal structures for union involvement have been able to put in place a process that will enable greater staff consultation in the workplace by linking top-down management approaches to union-led bottom-up approaches.'

A general pattern emerged across the projects. Feedback from staff surveys, project events and training courses showed that frontline staff were often unaware of the scale and detail of current employer work programmes to reduce the environmental impacts of their business. One workshop report

states that the employer had 'in place a very well established top-down side for the management of environmental issues ... course participants did know most of the individuals within the management chain. However, despite the recognition of the individuals, very few course participants were aware of environmental policies, objectives and targets. The main improvement recommendations from the group were the need for effective communication and some development of a bottom-up approach'. Likewise, for employers involved in the project, the involvement of trade unions in energy efficiency and resource saving activity was often seen as a new departure in their workplaces. Sarah Pearce adds:

'In order to attain the highly positive evaluation that the training workshops received, it was necessary to break down any cultural preconceptions or suspicions that course participants, union or management representatives may bring with them into the training room. The safe learning environment created through the participatory approach of trade union educational methods has laid the foundations for meaningful joint working and rapid development of campaign initiatives at pilot projects such as Great Ormond Street Hospital and National Museums Liverpool.'

Lessons learned

Key lessons were learned from the UMF GreenWorkplaces project:

Continue the development of relationships between project partners - The trade union educational methodology used to deliver the workshops, involving participatory and activity-based methods, created a safe, informal learning environment. Says Sarah Pearce: *'This generated genuine and frank evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of current environmental management practices and allowed options for improving environmental performance to be identified. It is essential to set up regular networks to communicate with participants following workshops, meetings and events in order to cultivate positive industrial relations. The delivery of the workshops was only one aspect of the wider project initiatives. The work, effort and commitment required to generate and maintain successful projects is an ongoing task, and weaknesses can be found in any successful initiative. It is the role of everyone involved to evaluate, improve and build on the firm foundations set out in the report above.'*

Employers need to see unions as part of the solution - Union involvement can lead to business benefits through improved environmental performance and GreenWorkplaces projects offer considerable opportunity to deliver cost savings*: 'Employers should not delay involvement in these projects until more favourable economic conditions prevail. Feedback from union reps involved in the projects points to a need to raise awareness of the considerable savings that can be made through GreenWorkplaces projects. One green rep stated during project evaluation that "pushing the financial benefits of green policies helps open many doors at management level". The Carbon Trust has calculated that, for most organisations, a 20% energy efficiency saving would have an equivalent cost benefit to a 5% increase in sales, and that the 20% saving can be delivered through a combination of low-cost and cost-free measures. Critically, the Carbon Trust states that achieving these savings is reliant on employee engagement. Evidence from the pilot projects demonstrates that union involvement increases the level of employee engagement.'*

Bottom-up approaches to staff involvement need expanding -

'Employers involved in the GreenWorkplaces project were quick to recognise the added value that unions offer in encouraging employee participation and giving environmental policy credibility among the frontline workforce. This is evident at NML, for example, where, within two months of the training workshop, management agreed to the setting up of a joint management/union/staff environmental committee.'

Use government legislation to your advantage - During the assessment of the project at NLS, the union green rep commented: 'We have benefited from a two-pronged approach. The targets and policies coming down from the UK and Scottish Governments have meant that we can get these items into policy documents through the sustainability steering group. The second prong is to get people involved through the library's green group and union.'

Recognition of the value unions add to greening initiatives needs to be fed back to staff - The Chief Executive of GOSH has given her personal thanks to members of the new joint environment committee, for example.

Involve reps and members from a wide range of occupations - *'This is essential as it expands the wealth of worker expertise. One rep commented: "Having porters, cleaners and security on your side is very, very beneficial ... they are great eyes and ears as they see every corner of the workplace especially outside of the 9 to 5 day".'*

There is no one-size-fits-all approach - *'Different employers will have different environmental strategies in place (if any) and different networks for communications, and there are varied mechanisms for staff consultation across different sectors and unions. Projects involve a great deal of work, effort and commitment to generate success.'*

Best practice identified

The TUC's GreenWorkplaces model demonstrated its flexibility by adapting to a wide variety of contexts. It showed that it is possible to identify examples of best practice and disseminate them to unions and employers across sectors:

Joint union approach - By approaching management jointly with a clear project brief and action plan, unions overcame any cultural preconceptions by management of union culture and saw the projects as non-adversarial initiatives with the potential to improve industrial relations.

Senior management buy-in - Projects involving senior management in launch events and training workshops, such as attendance by the Director of Adastral Park at the BT training session, and of the General Secretary of the NUT at the project's launch event, sent a clear message to staff that the project was being taken seriously by those with the power to effect change. All training materials for projects incorporated employer policies and information on environmental strategies and most projects had presentations and overviews provided by management at the training sessions.

Union involvement and establishing environmental committees - Evidence from the UMF project demonstrates that putting in place formal structures and obtaining time off to carry out environmental duties is essential to achieving quick progress and building effective campaigns. All the workshop reports cover the importance of setting up formal structures to encourage employee participation and consultation: *'All tutor reports reflect the general consensus*

among training participants that one of the most effective ways to overcome barriers to employee participation in greening the workplace is to raise environmental awareness through a highly visual, highly effective campaign strategy. Running effective campaigns requires union green reps to be granted adequate time off and facilities.'

A realistic evaluation of the work programme and a commitment to making the environment a union priority - Projects involve a great deal of time, effort and commitment to generate success. *'During the evaluation phase of the pilot projects, Sarah Lewis, UNISON branch secretary at GOSH, emphasised the importance of gradually building capacity and not overwhelming new union green reps with too many tasks. Maintaining enthusiasm through regular communication and updates is crucial, as is making campaigns fun. At the Hospital, committee members have been encouraged to take part in an environmental quiz, with answers announced at the following committee meeting to maintain interest and keep meetings lively.'*

A strong union identity - Union-led initiatives such as surveys and events increase staff participation in the project. Staff perceive their union as a 'trusted friend' in the workplace and are more likely to attend events with a union identity. This led to launch events and green fairs being well attended, surveys having high response rates and well-subscribed courses. Many of the projects had a management-led initiative, such as networks of company environmental champions, in place to encourage frontline workforce engagement. However, it was evident from joint discussions with management at many of the projects that workers on the frontline were often unaware of these initiatives. *'Staff are more likely to be aware of union environmental reps who have a formal status and are answerable to the union membership. Furthermore, union communication networks and consultative arrangements can offer ready-made communication links with employees on the ground that employers find hard to reach. Efforts to save energy that are driven by management with no union involvement can be perceived by the workforce as purely cost-saving initiatives. Yet findings from staff opinion surveys undertaken during this project point to tackling climate change as a primary motivation for employee engagement.'*

Conclusions

Sarah Pearce sums up:

'Each pilot project was established upon a principle of cooperation between management and unions, which enabled a range of initiatives around resource saving and energy reduction to take place. Mutual appreciation of the material impact that these projects can have on reducing carbon emissions has fostered improved industrial relations. This has expanded union experience of a key business goal: carbon reduction. The Macleod report Engaging for Success: Enhancing performance through employee engagement (July 2009), endorsed by the CBI and TUC, acknowledged that 'employee voice' is a key enabler in increasing employee engagement and thereby improving business performance. 'Employee voice' is defined in Macleod as: "Employees' views are sought out; they are listened to and [employees can] see that their opinions count and make a difference. They speak out and challenge when appropriate. A strong sense of listening and of responsiveness permeates the organisation, enabled by effective communication." Importantly, the outcomes from this round of pilot projects also demonstrate the added value to business performance when employees are empowered to suggest and lead on new initiatives to

management. Looking ahead, the point has now been reached where there is so much environmental activity out there that coordinating a network of union green reps and developing the resources to support it must form the next stage of the Greening the Workplace programme. This would exploit the true potential of workplace engagement in climate change. The TUC is seeking funding to take this work forward.'

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