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**Welcome to the first newsletter of 2016. Last year ended with a new climate deal in Paris. We assess the prospects for what this will mean for the education sector and the UK economy.**

### 1. Paris Agreement

Good COP or Bad COP? Opinion is divided on whether to celebrate the agreement that was struck in Paris in December or condemn it. UCU attended the talks as part of the International Trade Union Confederation delegation. The time was spent lobbying and attending events in the official conference space and organising activities in the public space alongside.

The final outcome is not what we wanted. To call it a 'sound global agreement' as some have done is to give it a level of credibility that it does not deserve. Many articles have been written in the last month and people will have different views about how good or bad it was. We have reproduced some below:

<http://theleap.thischangepseverything.org/why-most-of-what-you-think-you-know-about-the-paris-climate-deal-is-wrong-an-annotated-news-story-2/>

<http://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-response-to-paris-climate>

For unions, a major weakness was the failure to put a 'just transition and decent jobs' clause in the operational text. Instead it has been consigned to a preamble. This gives it less authority and undermines the principles of climate justice in the transition to a low carbon economy.

Details of the agreement can be found at:

<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09.pdf>

We now have to work with what we've got and use the impetus that has been created to push governments and employers hard to deliver on the hyperbole.

### 2. What about education?

The agreement does have some content which can be used to push forward sustainable development in the education sector. UCU comment and the relevant extracts can be found in the blog we prepared after Paris:

<http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/2015/12/cop21-how-does-education-and-research-figure/>

We will be working with sector organisations in 2016 to put some substance into the commitments made by college and university employers who signed the open letter to the Paris summit:

[http://www.eauc.org.uk/cop21\\_ministers\\_called\\_to\\_strengthen\\_university](http://www.eauc.org.uk/cop21_ministers_called_to_strengthen_university)

It needs to be reflected at institution level and we welcome the call to action made by the Vice Chancellor of Winchester University:

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/its-time-wake-and-smell-greenhouse-gases>

This work should also be linked with the UN **Sustainable Development Goals** to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years and the one's related to education are:

**Goal 4: Education Target 7** - *By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development*

**Goal 13: Climate Action Target 3** - *Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.* <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

### 3. Climate campaigns

UCU is a member of Trade Unions for Energy Democracy which organised a successful meeting in Paris with Naomi Klein and Jeremy Corbyn. UCU has been invited to contribute to the energy workshop at the **Climate Rising** event being held at Friends Meeting House on Saturday, January 30. Details and bookings at:

<http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/climate-rising-tickets-19947897699>

### 4. Flooding and Air Quality

The science tells us that climate change contributes to the increase in extreme weather events. Thousands of people have experienced the misery of flooding in recent weeks. This has also affected many workplaces. The TUC has produced guidance on an issue which highlights the overlap between health and safety and environment issues:

<http://strongerunions.org/2016/01/04/flooding-dealing-with-the-aftermath/>

UCU has been campaigning on air quality over a number of years. The latest figures highlight yet again what a serious public health issue this is. Some parts of the country had already exceeded their legal limits for the whole of 2016 with the first two weeks of January. This is a national disgrace and impacts on the health of staff and students many of whom live and work in some of the most polluted parts of inner cities.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jan/08/london-takes-just-one-week-to-breach-annual-air-pollution-limits>

### 5. Resources for academic staff

At UCU we realise that academic staff need resources to implement education for sustainability effectively. The websites below contain ideas on creative ways to do this. **The National Education Association** is the largest union in the USA with 2.9 million members. It has produced a Student's Guide to Climate Change. It contains lesson plans and a wide range of resources:

<http://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/53825.htm>

**UNESCO** - The GAP ESD Clearinghouse is a repository for **Education for Sustainable Development** (ESD) resources and news events from all UNESCO regions (Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe/North America, Latin America and the Caribbean). Its main objective is to serve as an online platform to share knowledge, experiences and competences of the ESD global community of practice.

<http://en.unesco.org/gap-esd-clearinghouse>

## **6. P&P GO Green Week**

February 8 -13 has been designated as a week of action on divestment from fossil fuels. UCU branches are urged to liaise with student groups on site to discuss local actions.

<https://peopleandplanet.org/gogreenweek>

A guide has been produced with advice for each day of the week. Monday, Feb. 8 is about building support and students have been given the following advice *'Student activists and staff are invited to contact their local UCU branch to discuss the campaign. In 2013 the union passed national policy supporting divestment campaigns, and UCU reps have been very active in building some of the campaigns in places like LSE and Birkbeck. Arrange a meeting with the UCU branch rep in your college or university in the lead up to Green Week to discuss potential joint activities'*.

<http://peopleandplanet.org/fdl/gogreen2016actionguide.pdf>

## **7. NUS Responsible Investment / Divestment**

The National Union of Students (NUS) is calling for universities and colleges to pull £100 million out of fossil fuels and put it into renewables, as new research reveals the extent of institutions' investment in fossil fuel companies.

NUS launched the Divest-Invest campaign on Monday 18 January at SOAS, the first institution in London to divest. The membership organisation planted 100 paper wind turbines to represent the £100 million they plan to shift out of fossil fuels and into renewables.

NUS issued freedom of information requests to all higher and further education institutions in the UK to find out how their money is invested. The results showed £180 million is invested in fossil fuels, but they believe this is the tip of the iceberg and the actual figure is closer to £600 million. NUS also conducted a survey which revealed both students and staff strongly support divestment. The research found 85 per cent of staff, students and students' union officers think their university should invest in renewables and 75 per cent want the opportunity to invest locally.

Graham Petersen, University and College Union environment co-ordinator, said:  
*"The United Nations has declared 2016 to be the year of Green Finance. It's therefore very timely that NUS has produced this excellent piece of research."*

*The report and the survey highlight both the opportunities and the need to address investment strategy in colleges and universities. UCU looks forward to working with the NUS on ethical investment and divestment campaigns at both institutional and national level."*

There are 2 reports - one on the state of investments across our education system, and another on staff and student attitudes towards fossil fuels and renewables. You can read them here:

<http://sustainability.nus.org.uk/divest-invest/our-reports>

## **8. Greener Jobs Alliance**

The GJA AGM was held at UCU Head Office this month. The organisations represented supported a range of actions linked to the promotion of sustainability skills and jobs. It was agreed to create on line resources for union members and climate change. The lack

of coherent policy in UK industrial strategy was highlighted. The failure to mention climate change, transition to a low carbon economy, sustainability skills in the new 'English Apprenticeships: our 2020 vision' policy document in fact shows a complete lack of vision for the range of skills needed within modern apprenticeships:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/482754/BIS-15-604-english-apprenticeships-our-2020-vision.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482754/BIS-15-604-english-apprenticeships-our-2020-vision.pdf)

Campaigns on this will need to address the funding crisis in the education sector. An analysis of adult education budgets published by the House of Commons library suggests up to four in 10 further education and sixth-form colleges are at threat of closure in England. UCU believes the cuts to adult education budgets are a devastating blow to colleges and will change the face of further education in many parts of the country. LRD article Funding cuts and adult skills:

<http://www.lrdpublications.org.uk/publications.php?pub=WR&iss=1798&id=idm16016304>

## **9. New location for UCU Environment Resources**

UCU has launched a new website this month. From the home page of the new site click on Campaigns and Policy. You will then see a link for 'Environment' which will then take you to this page:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/environment#ucu>

## **10. New training date**

We encourage new reps and interested members to sign up for our new 1 day course on trade unions and the environment. In order to make it easier for activists to obtain release from work we have modified it from a 3 day course. It will take place on Wednesday, May 4, 2016 from 10:00am – 4:30pm at UCU Head Office. Travel expenses and overnight accommodation will be provided for those that require it. Please contact Karen Brooks, UCU Education Officer to register here: [kbrooks@ucu.org.uk](mailto:kbrooks@ucu.org.uk)

## **Get in touch**

**If you are a UCU member looking for advice on sustainable development or have ideas for greening the FHE sector please let us know. Contact: Graham Petersen, UCU Environment Co-ordinator:**

**[gpetersen@ucu.org.uk](mailto:gpetersen@ucu.org.uk)**