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**Welcome to the March newsletter. UCU never ceases to be amazed at the inconsistency in government policy. On the one hand endorsement of the Paris climate agreement, while on the other, adopting policies that run counter to this commitment. We address some of these issues below.**

### **1. UCU/NUS Academic Conference**

Make a note in your diary for Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup>. UCU will be holding a conference jointly with the NUS on the '*Role of education institutions in combating climate change*'. It will be held at the University of Manchester and is free of charge. It will explore the cross-cutting themes of skills, research, and finance. Failure to integrate these into national and sector policy will fatally weaken attempts to meet the UK's legally binding targets. A range of speakers have been invited including Lisa Nandy, Shadow Energy Minister. Sign up for the conference on this link <https://www.ucu.org.uk/education-and-climate-change-conference>

### **2. Attack on climate research**

Senior scientists have denounced a potential move to "muzzle" colleagues whose findings are disliked by the government. The proposal – announced by the Cabinet Office earlier this month – would block researchers who receive government grants from using their results to lobby for changes to laws or regulations. For example, climate scientists whose findings undermined government energy policy could have work suppressed.

[https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/feb/20/scientists-attack-muzzling-government-state-funded-cabinet-office?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/feb/20/scientists-attack-muzzling-government-state-funded-cabinet-office?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

Many of these scientists are UCU members and we oppose these attempts to compromise academic freedom. This will be one of the issues discussed at the conference above.

### **3. Pensions and investment**

Another theme featured at the conference in May will be the crucial issue of how you fund a low carbon transition. The simple answer is by not funding fossil fuels. Last month People and Planet's Green Week highlighted the problem.

<https://storify.com/peopleandplanet/fossil-free-friday>

The fossil free campaign continues to grow with 20 universities that have committed to divestment. The campaign has now moved into local authorities where some colleges have financial interests. As with climate research the government are planning to put restrictions on the ethical investment decisions of local authorities. This attack on local democracy must be resisted. [http://www.campaigncc.org/pensions\\_local\\_democracy](http://www.campaigncc.org/pensions_local_democracy)

<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2016/01/local-government-pension-funds-not-ministers-should-decide-where-to-invest-their-members-money-says-unison/>

In the HE sector UCU is continuing to work with ShareAction to get greater commitments from the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) on responsible investment. A joint meeting has been arranged **for Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup>** from 6pm-8pm at University College London (near Euston station). Further details and to register

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/uss-step-forward-on-climate-tickets-22888319580>

#### 4. Education and climate change

The other conference theme is curriculum change. Recent research from the USA has prompted the headline '**Climate confusion among US teachers** -Whereas, most U.S. science teachers include climate science in their courses, their insufficient grasp of the science may hinder effective teaching. Mirroring some actors in the societal debate over climate change, many teachers repeat scientifically unsupported claims in class.' (from Science – US Journal)

<http://portside.org/2016-02-15/climate-confusion-among-us-teachers>

Attempts are being made to address this state of affairs. The **Greener Jobs Alliance**, supported by UCU, is currently preparing training resources for trades unions on climate change and these will be launched at the Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival on July 16<sup>th</sup>

<http://www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/index.php?page=2012-festival-and-rally>

**Education International**, UCU's Global Union Federation, is also producing guidelines for affiliates which will be available on the EI web site shortly. These will make the link between the Paris Agreement and other UN initiatives like the UNESCO Global Action Programme on education for sustainability and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

<http://www.ei-ie.org/>

**The Environment Association of Universities and Colleges** (EAUC) hold their annual conference on May 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> at UWE, Bristol.

<https://www.eventsforce.net/assuredevents/frontend/reg/tOtherPage.csp?pageID=42983&eventID=104&traceRedir=2&eventID=104>

The EAUC Sustainability Exchange continues to provide useful resources for UCU environment reps looking for examples of good practice. <http://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/home>

Other new resources include a WWF-UK short (5 minutes) film with Jeremy Irons and Maxine Peake. It is based on a letter from a grandfather to his granddaughter about the world he cherishes and wishes for her to grow up in- a world threatened by our changing climate. It was written for the campaign, by award-winning author Michael Morpurgo

<https://business.facebook.com/WWFUnitedKingdom/videos/vb.311627208673/10153915321088674/?type=2&theater>

**UCU Environment Reps Course** - 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<sup>th</sup>**, 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 [kbrooks@ucu.org.uk](mailto:kbrooks@ucu.org.uk)

## 5. Funding for Campus energy projects

UCU Environment Reps calling for energy management improvements are often told that budget constraints make improvements difficult. Exploring some of the options to leverage funding could include:

**FE sector** – Interest free loans from SALIX to fund energy savings that pay for themselves within 5 years

[http://www.salixfinance.co.uk/system/public\\_files/college\\_application\\_notes\\_jan\\_2016-\\_formatted.pdf](http://www.salixfinance.co.uk/system/public_files/college_application_notes_jan_2016-_formatted.pdf)

**HE sector** -An energy efficiency scheme run across UK universities is expected to provide savings worth £210 million. The Revolving Green Fund was launched in 2008 and helped implement energy-saving projects in 57 universities across the country.

The government-funded organisation Salix Finance and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) invested £20 million in the programme. Another £5 million of support came from a third investor. Salix claims the 2,600 projects have so far helped the universities save more than £50 million on energy costs. They are also expected to reduce around 82,000 tonnes of carbon emissions every year.

[http://www.eauc.org.uk/salix\\_funding\\_creates\\_50\\_million\\_of\\_investment\\_](http://www.eauc.org.uk/salix_funding_creates_50_million_of_investment_)

## 6. Implementing Paris and the Budget

In the last newsletter we lamented the failure of the Government to reflect the Paris Agreement in UK industrial policy. In particular, the lack of any reference to climate change or the transition to a low carbon economy in the new policy on apprenticeships. It was compounded this month in George Osborne's budget. This was meant to be a "budget for future generations" and yet again failed to address climate change responses.

<http://www.campaigncc.org/backwardsbudget>

<http://www.hackneyenergy.org.uk/2016/03/16/osbornes-fossilised-budget/>

This lack of vision needs to be challenged by trades unions. 2016 is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lucas Joint Shop Stewards Plan. This was an inspirational document that harnessed the skills and experience of industrial workers and academics. It was a response to mass redundancies and unfortunately such an innovative alternative industrial strategy has not been produced since then. The time is right for new alternative sector strategies to be developed between workers, unions and academics to challenge the myopic approach of the current government.

With Paris recorded as the hottest month on record urgent action is needed.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/mar/20/february-was-the-warmest-month-in-recorded-history-climate-experts-say>

Ed Miliband has called for the commitment to zero carbon emissions to be made into law. Andrea Leadsom, the Energy Minister, has indicated that this will be done. We need this long-term target but crucially we need a coherent industrial strategy to get us there.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/mar/14/zero-carbon-emissions-target-enshrined-uk-law>

## 7. Fracking

The decision of the Cuadrilla enquiry on fracking in Lancashire is expected this month. UCU members have attended and Michael McKrell, Branch Officer at UCLAN has spoken at demonstrations outside the hearings. Professor Kevin Anderson, deputy head of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, University of Manchester and UCU member has given evidence. Cuadrilla had said shale gas would get going by 2025. Professor Anderson said: *"You would have five years where shale gas would have a bridging role. Is it appropriate to develop an industry with a five year life-span? Given the bridge finishes at 2030, shale gas would have no role to play after that. There would be a five-year window – it would be foolhardy to develop it for that time frame"*.

<http://drillordrop.com/2016/02/26/live-updates-from-the-cuadrilla-fracking-inquiry-day-12-climate-change/>

## 8. Air Quality

Air pollution raises the risk of death for many decades after exposure, according to the longest-running study to date. The latest evidence highlights this public health crisis. Many UCU members work and live in these pollution danger zones and the information should be used to intensify local and national campaigns on this public health issue.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/feb/09/air-pollution-raises-risk-of-death-for-decades-after-exposure>

## 9. Environmental campaigner assassinated

The ITUC has condemned the brutal murder of environmental and land-rights activist Berta Cáceres in March, and demanded that the authorities allow an international investigation into her death. Cáceres was killed just four days after she denounced the murder of four community leaders. Berta Cáceres was an outstanding and dedicated advocate for justice and rights. Since the 2009 coup in Honduras, at least 111 environment activists and 31 trade unionists have been killed, and journalists, campesinos, people of African descent, and legal professionals have been subjected to innumerable acts of violence. The weak justice system and corruption are contributing to the climate of impunity and the terrorising of innocent people. Berta's contribution, and 8 other female environmental activists, was highlighted by Friends of the Earth as part of International Women's Day. [https://www.foe.co.uk/living/articles/international-womens-day-9-amazing-women-who-defended-environment?ic\\_number=45872127&m\\_sourcecode=LM1603005&product=CAMP&MID=759d17c7f1&utm\\_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=email](https://www.foe.co.uk/living/articles/international-womens-day-9-amazing-women-who-defended-environment?ic_number=45872127&m_sourcecode=LM1603005&product=CAMP&MID=759d17c7f1&utm_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=email)

## 10. Campaign against climate change

Sunday, **May 8<sup>th</sup>** is another date for your diary. CACC have organised a demonstration in London called *'Going backwards on climate change.'* Since May 2015, when the Government were elected, clean energy technology has been sidelined in favour of a dash for gas, subsidies for clean energy have been cut and roads and runways have been pushed through despite strong local opposition. So what better way to mark the government's one year anniversary than to march - backwards - down Whitehall?

<http://www.campaigncc.org/goingbackwards>

## 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)