TUC Education

Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Awareness Raising
Acknowledgements

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  - Colin Arthur
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Activity 1 – Course Introductions

Aims

This activity will help you:

• get to know who else is on the course
• set priorities for the course

Task

In pairs, conduct an interview and find out your partners:

• Name
• Workplace
• Union
• Position (union representative/safety rep)
• Previous TUC Courses
• Previous Environmental Courses
• Reasons for coming on this briefing
• Aims/Objectives and priorities for this course
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Activity 2 – Key Environment Definitions

Aims
This activity will help you:

- determine an environmental definition
- determine a sustainable development definition

Task
In your groups, and using the resources provided, discuss:

- What does the environment mean to you, both at home and in the workplace
- Agree your own definition of the environment

- What does sustainable development mean to you, both at home and in the workplace
- Agree your own definition of sustainable development

Put your main points on a flipchart and appoint one member of the group to report back to the rest of the course. You should also start to fill in the Environmental Terminology and Jargon Sheet.

Resources
Environment Definitions;
Meyer, Human Impact on the Earth
Bell & McGillivray, Environmental Law.
1990 Environmental Protection Act
Agenda 21 definition sustainable development

Assessment Criteria: 1.1 / 2.2
Environmentalism

“Environmentalism is concerned with the effects of resource use not on the supply of the resource (conservationism), and on the environment or surroundings of the use. The earth has a limited capacity to absorb the wastes of resource as well as its limited capacity to provide the resources being used.”

Meyer, Human Impact on the Earth

The Environment

“the physical surroundings that are common to all of us, including air, space, waters, land, plants and wildlife.”

Bell & McGillivray, Environmental Law.

“The environment consists of all, or any of the following media, namely, the air, water and land; and the medium of air includes the air within buildings and the air within other natural or man-made structures above or below ground.”

1990 Environmental Protection Act

Sustainable Development

“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

World Commission on Environment and Development (The Brundtland Commission)

“development that brings about ecological, social and economic sustainability while contributing to the achievement of society’s other goals.”

Sutton, ISO14001 and Beyond.
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Environmental Terminology/Jargon Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminology/Jargon</th>
<th>Interpretation/Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: You should continue to build this sheet throughout the course. As you come across new environmental terminology and jargon add them to your sheet and give a brief description of their meaning.

Assessment Criteria: 2.2
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Activity 3 – The Development of Environmental Issues

Aims

This activity will help you:

- determine how environmental issues change over time
- consider trade union concerns with regard to environmental issues

Task

In your groups, and using the handouts, discuss the main labour/trade union influence in relation to environmental concerns.

Take into consideration the three phases of environmental development.

- The early industrial revolution
- The development of public health
- The development of trans-national issues

Put your responses onto a flipchart and elect one member of the group to report back to the course.

Resources

Learning Support Materials on Historical development

Assessment Criteria: 1.1 / 2.2
Trade Unions & The Environment

The TUC and the independent trade unions have a long history in the environmental arena, and especially in the working environment. In the nineteenth century the emergence of ‘silicosis’ for ‘miners’ and ‘phossy jaw’ for ‘matchgirls’ were recognised killers along with industrial processes such as arsenic in confectionary and printing, lead in glass making and chlorine gases in bleaching. The stench of these locations was inescapable, not only through the pollution of the industry but also through the open sewers and the accumulated waste of overpopulated urban areas. Various reports through the 1800’s highlighted and recognised these conditions, including the Chadwick Sanitary Report 1842, the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes 1885 and the Mean’s the Bitter Cry of London Report 1885.

Peter Gould, in his book ‘Early Green Politics’, suggests that the most important period for environmental politics before 1980 were the years between 1880 and 1900. He supports this by claiming society during that period received an unprecedented level of critical examination, which questioned the relationship of individual, social, industrial and capitalist philosophy with the physical environment. Trade unions played a central role in the alleviation of these conditions.

The 1977 Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations gave trade union appointed safety representatives statutory rights to deal with environmental issues that impact on human health, safety and welfare in the workplace, and cover a diversity of issues such as COSHH, noise and the general working environment. Wider environmental issues such as sustainable development, environmental management systems and integrated pollution control have been added to the trade union agenda through the passage of time. Although some specific environmental issue may hold a long standing concern for a particular trade union the wider environmental issues started to become a major concern for the TUC and the independent trade unions around the early 1990s.

Some early examples of the growing relationship between the unions and the wider environment can be seen in the publications and the policies adopted in the early 1990s. In 1990 the Transport and General Workers Union changed their policy for safety representatives to include the environment in their remit and take on the role of environmental representatives in the workplace. In 1991 the TUC published its guide to environmental policies and issues at work, entitled ‘Greening the Workplace’. The introduction stated,

“Trade union concern about the environment derives from the wish to improve both the living standards and quality of life of this and future generations. It is not a recent concern. Indeed, the trade union movement has a long and credible record of action to secure a better environment both at work and more widely. However the formidable environmental challenges of today –
from the local to the truly global – mean that a good record is not enough. If we are to reduce pollution and create the conditions for sustainable growth then nothing short of environmental excellence is required.”

Greening the Workplace p2

Other trade unions were adopting specific environmental policies during this same period. For example in 1990 the Fire Brigades Union adopted the policy,

“This conference demands that the union supports all practical measures to protect our environment by urging the cfbac, brigades etc, to take positive steps such as: 1. Converting petrol driven fire service vehicles to unleaded fuel. 2. Phasing out use of cfc's in the fire service as soon as possible, plus any other practical measures necessary to achieve a cleaner and safer environment.”

FBU Policy Archive

Indeed between 1990 and 1991 the FBU generated further policies on recycled paper and proposed a committee be set up to investigate policy on all aspects of environmental issues. Another example during the same period saw the GMB launch its ‘Green Works’ campaign, to engage with employers in the wider environmental issues concerning trade unions, but it ran out of steam largely due to lack of employer interest. As the decade continued the major environmental issues of ozone depletion, climate change, global warming, acid rain, waste creation and disposal and mineral resource extraction, together with International and European pressure, saw the trade union policies and initiatives continue to grow. In particular the principle of sustainable development has risen up the trade union agenda.

In 1998 the Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC) was set up to provide a discussion forum between the government and the trade unions. The membership is made up of the General Secretaries of the major TUC-affiliated unions in the UK. TUSDAC usually meets three times a year and focuses on the input into government policy on sustainable development and developing practical measures that unions can adopt to address the sustainable development issues raised. The TUSDAC terms of reference are:

- To direct trade union input into the policy process to enable constructive dialogue with Government on sustainable development and other related environmental issues.
- To provide a trade union perspective on the employment consequences of climate change, and the response to it.
- To help mobilise the trade union movement to become involved in the move towards better environmental practice in the workplace, building on existing initiatives and activities, disseminating information and experience.

UNISON and the GMB have both set good examples of how far the trade union agenda has risen in relation to sustainable development. UNISON extended their long running interest in environmental issues by adopting the principle of sustainable development as a key campaign objective in 2000, and involves members in sectors such as local government, education, energy, transport, water and the environment.
UNISON has also engaged in the sustainable development agenda through a series of working groups and committees including TUSDAC, the Sustainable Energy Partnership (SEP), Local Works Steering Groups (promoting local sustainability), has a seat on the board of Transport 2000, is a partner in Partners for Water and Sanitation (PAWS) and has a long standing association with Water Aid. They have further supported the Sustainable Energy Bill, the Friends of the Earth sponsored Household Recycling Bill and the Local Communities Sustainability Bill. UNISON have also posted a trade union definition of sustainable development,

“Sustainable development is about meeting present day needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; it requires the integration of economic growth, social development and environmental protection.”

(UNISON Website)

The GMB produced a special report on 'Improving Health, Safety and Environmental Standards' to its Brighton Conference in 2001. The report stated the GMB health, safety and environmental policy as,

“To improve the quality of life of all GMB members and their families both inside the workplace and in the wider community through sustainable development, encompassing environmental, social and economic goals. At a workplace level this can be achieved by encouraging best practice on health, safety and environmental systems and standards at work and working together with employers to reduce risks and continuously raise standards.”

GMB Special Report, Improving Health, Safety & Environmental Standards p2

The GMB report also offers a trade union working definition of sustainable development as,

“Sustainable development can be defined as policies and strategies for continued economic and social development without detriment to the environment, and the natural resources on the quality of which continued human activity and further development depend.” (p5)

Perhaps of most significance the report takes the trade union agenda further into the twenty first century, and ahead of government and regulatory policy, with its references to the precautionary principle,

“The GMB will seek to apply the precautionary principle where a risk assessment demonstrates the possibility of threats of serious or irreversible damage.” (p2)

“Principles and measures to control both health and safety hazards and environmental impacts have much in common e.g. clean production and the precautionary principle.” (p7)

The examples given above are fairly representative on where the trade union and TUC policies are directed with regard to sustainable development. Further to that the trade
unions have a long background in environmental management systems, and with specific environmental policies. For example the T&GWU have provided a range of materials and studies, including the publications, Trade Unionists and Eco Auditing and Workplace Pollution Reduction. Workplace Pollution Reduction is written in two parts, with part one covering why trade unionists should be involved in environmental management systems, and part two covering thirteen case studies on trade union involvement in environmental management systems at the workplace. The case studies involve the following trade unions, T&GWU, AMICUS-AEEU, GMB, AMICUS-MSF, UNISON, RCN, SOR, GPMU and USDAW.

In conclusion it can clearly be stated that the trade unions have had a long history in dealing with environmental issues inside and outside of the workplace. The examples outlined above only offer a flavour of trade union activity in relation to environmental issues, and are representative of trade union activity in general. It will be useful for anyone using these materials to search their own unions records, publications, archives and other sources, to trace the historical development of trade unions in relation to environmental issues and practices.
The Evolution of Environmentalism

Environmental problems in society are not necessarily recent. In 1273 Britain passed what was probably the world’s first piece of environmental legislation, a decree prohibiting the burning of sea coal. However, prior to the industrial revolution environmental law was largely based on the protection of property rights with the pollution of the local atmosphere coming largely from coal used in domestic fires. That created fumes and particles, which caused pulmonary infections and related lung disease.

The industrial revolution increased the use of coal to drive machinery and produced acidic emissions, especially as a result of the alkali works. These works used a Leblanc process to produce soda, but the chemical process released hydrochloric gas which, when mixed with water, created the new phenomenon of acid rain. The term acid rain was first used in the 1850’s by the British chemist R.A. Smith, to describe the effects of the coal burning he found when studying the London fogs.

Between 1840 and 1875 special local boards of commissioners were set up to enforce the minimal standards set for sanitation (the origins of the Local Authorities) and a Royal Commission was set up. The first Alkali Act was passed in 1863, and the Alkali Inspectorate was formed to provide a technical and advisory role, and in general to enforce the Alkali Act. Under the Act there was a requirement to reduce noxious emissions in each plant by 95% to only 5% of previous emitted fumes into the atmosphere. The initial effect of the Act saw a reduction in the production of acidic emissions from 14,000 tonnes to 45 tonnes, but the continued growth of the industry meant that overall emissions into the atmosphere continued to increase. The Alkali Act of 1874 was an attempt to deal with the rising problem by introducing the concept of best practicable means (BPM), which is still a current theme of environmental control.

Similar to health and safety regulation early environmental law was built on an ad-hoc basis, and was targeted at specific problems. The Alkali Acts above and the 1906 Consolidating Act controlled noxious fumes but offered very little control to prohibit smoke into the atmosphere, and resulted in low-level pollution such as smog. Attempts to control the emission of smoke were made under the Public Health (Smoke Abatement) Act 1926 and the Public Health Act 1936, but they dealt in the main with smoke nuisance. The problem of smoke became so bad that in December 1952 thick smog descended in and around London and stayed for five days. It was estimated that 4,000 people died as a result, and was said to have been the cause of the cattle at the Smithfield Show suffering from respiratory problems. The result was the setting up of the Beaver Committee and the following Clean Air Act 1956. For the first time controls were set up to deal with smoke, grit and dust from industries and commercial activities other than the alkali works, and from domestic fires as well.

The same ad-hoc issue based approach to environmental regulation can be viewed in the approach taken to control water pollution and poisonous waste. Water pollution was controlled by the Rivers Pollution Prevention Act 1876, and in many ways was a
reaction to the Alkali Act. Most industries addressed the issue of alkali emissions by choosing liquid discharge as an alternative, and simply made the issue of water quality worse. The Deposit of Poisonous Wastes Act 1972 resulted from the public reaction to fly tipping of toxic wastes on a school playground in the West Midlands, and was one of the first controls over the deposit of hazardous wastes in the world. It was not until the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 that any attempt was made to unify a number of inspectorates under the one umbrella.

Modern Environmental Law From The 1970s:

The start of modern, and current, environmental legislation and policy dates back to the early 1970’s. During the 1970’s the problems with the emissions of smoke, dirt and grit lessened, and the new industrial processes saw a gradual improvement in the quality of the atmosphere. There was a movement away from coal to smokeless substances such as coke and gas, and there was an increase in the use of electricity for power and heating. The Central Electricity Generating Board started to use larger and taller stacks for chimneys to disperse pollution at a higher level, and in the hope that substances would be diluted over a wider distance.

The change of policy to larger chimney stacks saw the creation of the first environmental problem that could be properly identified as crossing national boundaries. The combination of sulphur dioxide and other acids from power stations, and from increased transport (car traffic), combined with the atmosphere to produce acid rain and acid deposits in the atmosphere made of ammonium sulphate particles. The effects of the production of these substances into the atmosphere saw an increase on the acidity of rainfall in some areas to over forty times the natural level. In effect since the early 1970’s national legislation, policy and standards have become intertwined with International and European environmental issues and concerns.

The first attempt to set up a formal framework to control air pollution between nations was the Geneva Convention on Long-Range Trans-boundary Air Pollution in 1979. It was set up under the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and provided a general framework within which detailed protocols set down emission limits for specific pollutants. The most important protocols include the 1988 Sofia Protocol on freezing NO, emissions at 1987 levels, the 1991 Geneva Protocol on the reduction of volatile organic compounds and the 1994 Oslo Protocol on the reduction of sulphur dioxide.

International law to date has continued to develop on the wider environmental impact issues of the ozone layer and climate change. The 1985 Vienna Convention on the protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal Protocol set up controls to reduce and ultimately phase out the use of the main ozone depleting substances, whilst the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 has been viewed as the watershed in the fight against climate change. The UN Framework Convention on Change Convention set down the framework for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and came into force in 1994. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol put more detail on legally binding reduction
targets for the six gases, carbon dioxide, NOx, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), methane and sulphur hexafluoride (SF6).

The European Community was set up to establish a common economic market, but it has responded to the International treaties, conventions and protocols on environmental impacts. Since the early 1970’s Europe has passed over 400 environmental legislative instruments, and has issued a series of Action Programmes for the Environment. The fifth action programme covered the period from 1993 to 2000, and adopted the Rio Earth Summit objectives on climate change. Since 1973 much of the UK’s own policy has been developed as a direct result of European legislation and/or policy.

In the UK the Control of Pollution Act 1974 was the first of the modern large statutory acts. It replaced the Deposit of Poisonous Wastes Act 1972, and included controls over non-hazardous waste through the introduction of the license system for disposal of controlled waste by either landfill or incinerator. It continued the tradition of building ad-hoc targeted legislation, and did not cover areas such as air pollution. That was recognised by the 1976 Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP), who recommended a unified body for environmental emissions and pollution process control. It also recommended that there should be a move away from the emissions based concept of Best Practicable Means to the wider concept of Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO).

By the end of the nineteen eighties environmental law in the UK was administered by a large number of administrative bodies, who had a variety of powers and procedures available to each individual enforcement agency. The traditional and historic ad-hoc approach to the environment meant controls for emissions and pollution were very often over-lapping, and there was a lack of co-ordination between agencies. That led to legislation becoming more concentrated in a smaller number of acts, and the unification of controlling bodies. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Pollution was established in 1987 to control the most hazardous industrial processes under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The National Rivers Authority was established in 1989 to regulate water pollution, and in 1996, under the 1995 Environment Act, the Environment Agency (SEPA in Scotland) was set up to administer integrated pollution control, waste management and water pollution. The current situation is still far from perfect but is a large improvement in co-ordinated control from that which existed as late as a decade ago.
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Workplace Activity – Environmental Information Gathering

Task
In the following week you should gather and return to the course next week with the following information.

Trade Union

- Any policies your union has regarding environmental issues e.g. waste, recycling, representation (who’s role), sustainable development etc.
- Any agreements your union may have with your employer regarding environmental issues.
- Any recent conference decisions agreed by your union regarding environmental issues.

You may want to talk to other workplace representatives, full time officials or/and anyone with specific environmental responsibilities within your union. You may also want to visit your unions’ web-site for information regarding environmental issues.

Employer

- Information on Environmental Management System (ISO 14001 or EMAS).
- Any techniques/practices used in the workplace e.g. environmental impact assessments or lifecycle assessments.
- Any key performance indicators for environmental issues e.g. waste disposal, energy efficiency.
- Any policies your employer has regarding environmental issues.
- Any workplace agreements between your employer and your union.

You may want to talk to other workplace representatives, managers or/and anyone with specific environmental responsibilities within your workplace. You may also want to visit your SHE Department (Safety, Health & Environment) if applicable.

Assessment Criteria: This activity will help with 2.1 / 2.2 / 2.3
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Activity 4 – Environmental Statements, The Trade Union Approach

Aims

This activity will help you:

- review attitudes to the environment

Task

In your groups, review and discuss the following statements allocated to you. Report back to the course and give reasons for your answers.

1. Trade union representatives have enough to do without getting involved in environmental issues.

2. Environmental issues do not really involve trade unions.

3. Members environmental concerns are their own individual issues.

4. There is not a lot I can do about the environment.

5. Workplace representatives cannot have an impact on large global issues.

6. Environmental issues are for middle class people with time on their hands.

7. To be effective trade unions need to be involved globally.

8. We are recycling paper that is enough.

9. Taking care of the environment is an employers’ duty.

10. The UK is becoming an environmental dumping ground.

11. The environment and health and safety go hand in hand.

12. Environmental laws are too stringent and will lead to job losses for our members.

Assessment Criteria: 2.3
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Activity 5 – Trade Union Environmental Policies

Aims

This activity will help you:

- identify key trade union environmental policies
- understand the role of trade unions at local, national and international level

Task

In your groups, and using the course handout and information gathered in the workplace activity, discuss the role of the trade unions at local, national and international level in relation to the environment. You should consider any policies in relation to,

- Workplace, branch and community level
- National and government level
- International links/affiliations
- Non-Governmental Organisations (e.g. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth)
- Sustainable development
- Agenda 21

Resources

Trade union policies/materials
Trade union web-sites
Course handout

Assessment Criteria: 1.1 / 1.2 / 2.1 / 2.2 / 2.3
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Activity 6 – Employers Environmental Policies and Practices

Aims
This activity will help you:

- identify key workplace environmental policies & practices
- consider potential problems and opportunities for trade unions

Task 1
In your groups, and using the course handout and information gathered in the workplace activity, discuss the main environmental policies and practices used in your workplace. You should note any similarities and differences, and take into consideration,

- Environmental Management Systems
- Targeted environmental issues e.g. waste disposal, energy efficiency, packaging etc.
- Environmental impact assessment or Lifecycle assessment
- How trade unions are involved

Task 2
From the above findings you should list and discuss potential problems and opportunities for trade unions.

Resources
Workplace policies/materials
Course handout

Assessment Criteria: 1.1 / 1.2 / 2.1 / 2.2 / 2.3 / 3.1
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Workplace Activity – Members Survey

Task
In the following week survey your members to find out their views and opinions on environmental issues. You should talk to a cross-section of your members and include members that you may not see very often e.g. part-time, community or shift workers. Bring your completed survey reports back to the course for discussion. (This will help with assessment criteria 1.2/2.1/2.3/3.1)

Name:

Place/Area of work:

List the main environmental issues that concern you at work: (e.g. waste disposal, recycling, energy efficiency)

List the main environmental issues that concern you outside of work: (e.g. landfill, emissions to air or water, global warming, conservation)

Should the trade union representatives deal with, (Please Circle)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace issues raised above</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Workplace issues raised above</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If No to any of the above who should deal with them?

_____________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________

Have you received any training with regard to environmental issues in the workplace? (Please Circle)

Yes  No
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Activity 7 – Workplace Environmental Issues

Aims
This activity will help you:

• identify how the workplace interacts with the environment
• break down differences between inputs, processes and outputs

Task 1
In your groups, and using the Worksheet provided, fill in the environmental issues and concerns for your workplace, showing what goes in (inputs), what happens in the workplace (processes) and what comes out (outputs). You should consider environmental issues relating to air, water and land.

Task 2
In your groups and using the completed worksheets discuss any similarities and differences, and possible environmental impacts. Elect one member of the group to report back to the rest of the course.

Assessment Criteria: 2.3 / 3.1
## Inputs, Processes & Outputs Worksheet

**Inputs:** (transport/goods deliveries/packaging)

**Processes:** (recycling/energy efficiency/waste/chemical/noise)

**Outputs:** (waste/emissions/products)
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Activity 8 – Members Environmental Concerns

Aims

This activity will help you:

- understand members concerns regarding workplace environmental issues
- understand members concerns regarding wider environmental issues
- start prioritising environmental issues for trade union action

Task 1

In your groups, and using the survey returns, list the main environmental issues that concern members both inside and outside of the workplace. Discuss any similarities and differences that you find.

Task 2

List and discuss any trade union issues that arise from the rest of the survey e.g. representation and training issues.

Put your main findings onto a flipchart and elect one member of the group to report back to the rest of the course.

Assessment Criteria: 1.2 / 2.3 / 3.1
TUC ENVIRONMENT SURVEY: SUMMARY

The TUC has recently conducted a survey (summer 2002) to gauge the interest and involvement of trade union members and representatives in environmental issues at work. The survey, which was supported by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), also explores if, and how, the trade union environmental role might be more effectively pursued. It was sent to a representative sample of around 1,500 members whose unions are active participants on the Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC). It was also distributed to representatives attending a range of courses at the TUC National Education Centre over the survey period.

Overall 595 responses were received from 12 TUC affiliated unions covering at least 191 employing organisations. This represents a response rate of around 30%. Just over half of respondents were from the public sector, almost 40% were from the private sector and the remainder from the voluntary sector.

Attitudes
There is a very high level of support for stronger Government action to combat global warming and for tackling road congestion. There is also overwhelming support for environmental measures in the workplace and for unions to do more in this regard. However, as previously highlighted by TUSDAC, there are concerns that environmental policies could lead to job losses.

The environment at work
Almost half of respondents considered that their union Branch does support good environmental practice, but a slightly higher proportion did not know whether this was the case and 6% said that it was not. Employers rate slightly better than union Branches, with just over half of respondents agreeing that their employer does support good environmental practice. However, there is also a much higher level of disagreement (30%) in applying this statement to employers than to union Branches.

33% of respondents have an environmental committee at their workplace. However, almost half do not and almost one in five did not know whether there was one. In workplaces where such committees exist, almost one quarter have trade union representation, but over half of respondents said either that unions were not represented or that they did not know. There is therefore significant scope both to raise the level of union involvement and to raise awareness of the role that unions are already taking.

Branch responsibilities
Although health and safety reps take on environmental responsibilities much more frequently than other established reps (26%), an even higher proportion of respondents reported that there was nobody in their Branch with specific environmental responsibilities (28%). There is clearly considerable scope to further develop the role of workplace environmental reps.
This is further emphasised by the fact that almost three-quarters of respondents considered either that their existing arrangements did not work effectively or did not know.

What would help?
Respondents were asked to rank by order of priority possible measures that would assist the effective consideration of environmental issues at their workplace. The top priorities were environmental training courses, establishment of a local committee with union involvement, and legal rights for environmental representatives. The fact that almost half of respondents have indicated their personal interest to participate in an environmental training course shows that there is a genuine motivation to meet this need.

Establishing local committees and establishing legal rights to undertake this role will, in turn, be key to enabling trained reps to operate effectively. Legal rights will need to allow for unions either to extend the role of health and safety reps or to create new environment reps.

10% of respondents reported that they had been refused time off for environmental training, however almost half have never asked their employer. The rate of refusal is slightly higher in the private sector compared with the public sector, though a lower percentage of public sector than private sector respondents have tested their employer’s attitude. The rate of refusal is much higher in the voluntary sector, with 40% having been refused time off. This may be related to size of workplace.
TUC Environment Survey

1. The TUC’s environment survey was conducted in late June / early July. The purpose of the survey was to gauge the interest and involvement of trade union members and representatives in environmental issues at work and to explore if, and how, the trade union environmental role might be more effectively pursued. The survey was sent to a representative sample of around 1,500 members whose unions are active participants on the Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC). It was also distributed to representatives attending a range of courses at the TUC National Education Centre over the survey period.

2. Overall 595 responses were received from 12 TUC affiliated unions and it was possible to identify 191 employing organisations, as detailed in Annexes 1 and 2. This represents a response rate of around 30%. Just over half of respondents identified themselves as being from the public sector (54.6%), 37.9% were from the private sector and 1.9% from the voluntary sector. Just over two thirds of respondents were male and, as shown in Table 1, there was a wide age distribution.

Table 1 - Age of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or over</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentage do not sum to 100 due to missing responses
ATTITUDES
Respondents were asked for their views on a range of environmental issues. The survey set out 10 statements on environmental issues, as shown in Table 2, on which respondents were asked to give their views. This indicates a very strong level of support for stronger Government action to combat global warming and for tackling road congestion. It also shows overwhelming support for environmental measures in the workplace and for unions to do more in this regard. Although a majority of respondents considered that green pressure groups are doing a good job in raising environmental awareness, four out of ten either disagreed or held no firm view. Eight out of ten respondents disagreed with the statement that they personally could do nothing to improve the environment and over three-quarters disagreed that environmental issues are mainly of concern to young people. Overall therefore, there is a sense of a need for stronger action by all stakeholders and at all levels. However, as previously highlighted by TUSDAC, there are concerns that environmental policies could lead to job losses.

Table 2- Environmental views

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree / strongly agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree / strongly disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Government should be doing more to combat global warming</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congestion on the roads needs to be tackled</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is nothing much that I can do to improve the environment</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>79.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green pressures groups are doing a good job in raising environmental awareness</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am mainly concerned about the quality of my local environment</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade unions should be doing more to protect the environment</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental issues are mainly of concern to young people</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>76.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would support environmental measures at work e.g. recycling, cutting waste, water conservation</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I am concerned that environmental policies could lead to job losses

Climate change is an international issue, not a local one

Note: Percentages do not round to 100 due to missing responses.
THE ENVIRONMENT AT WORK

Question: My union Branch supports good environmental practice

4. As shown in Chart 1 almost half of respondents (45.3%) considered that their union Branch does support good environmental practice, but a slightly higher proportion (47.5%) did not know whether this was the case and 6.1% did not agree that their union Branch supports good environmental practice.

Chart 1

Question: My employer supports good environmental practice

5. Employers rate slightly better than union Branches, with just over half (50.8%) of respondents agreeing that their employer does support good environmental practice. However, there is also a much higher level of disagreement (29.8%) in applying this statement to employers than to union Branches - see Chart 2. 18.7% of respondents did not know whether their employer supported good environmental practice.
Question: Do you have a committee that discusses environmental issues at your workplace?

6. 33.2% of respondents indicated that there is an environmental committee at their workplace. However, almost half (48.2%) said that there was no such committee and 17.9% did not know whether there was one.

Question: Are trade unions represented on the environment committee?

7. Of those respondents who were able to answer this question, almost one quarter indicated that unions are represented on the environment committee, but over half said either that unions were not represented or that they did not know see Chart 3. There is therefore significant scope both to raise the level of union involvement and to raise awareness of the role that unions are already taking.
Question: What environmental issues are discussed by the committee?
8. The issues most frequently discussed by workplace environment committees were energy and waste minimisation, as shown in Table 3. Other issues mentioned by respondents included planning, recycling, saving paper, and purchasing / investment decisions.

Table 3 - Issues discussed by workplace environment committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saving energy</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green housekeeping</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste minimisation</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental impact</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water conservation</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Management Systems</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question: Who is responsible for environmental issues within your Branch?
9. As shown in Chart 4, there is a range of approaches in assigning Branch responsibility for environmental issues. Although health and safety reps take on environmental responsibilities much more frequently than other established reps, an even higher proportion of respondents reported that there was nobody in their Branch with specific environmental responsibilities. Other approaches identified included
collective Branch responsibility and giving responsibility to departmental reps. There is clearly considerable scope to further develop the role of workplace environmental reps.

Chart 4

Question: Do your existing arrangements for considering environmental issues work effectively?

10. This is further emphasised by the fact that almost three-quarters of respondents considered either that their existing arrangements did not work effectively (32.4%) or did not know (39.9%).
Question: What would help?

11. Respondents were asked to rank by order of priority possible measures that would assist the effective consideration of environmental issues at their workplace. As shown in Table 4, the top priorities were environmental training courses, establishment of a local committee with union involvement, and legal rights for environmental representatives. The fact that 43% of respondents have indicated their personal interest to participate in an environmental training course shows that there is a genuine motivation to meet this need. Establishing local committees and establishing legal rights to undertake this role will, in turn, be key to enabling trained reps to operate effectively.

Table 4 - Measures to assist effective trade union consideration of environmental issues at work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Top priority (% of respondents)</th>
<th>Top 3 priorities (% of respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of a local committee with union involvement</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication of company environmental accounts</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal rights for environmental reps</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental training courses</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and support from national union</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National accreditation scheme of good environmental practice</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of an environment forum at national level</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Other priorities identified by respondents include:
National law committing employers to good environmental practice.
National environmental awareness day.
Government cash incentives.
Company management leadership and involvement.
Compulsory induction training.

Question: If new statutory environmental rights were provided, what form should they take?

13. A range of views was expressed, as shown in Chart 5. This reflects, at least in part, existing variation in the handling of environmental responsibilities by union branches.

Note: Percentages do not round to 100 due to missing responses
TRAINING

Question: Does your employer currently provide time off for training?

14. 83.3% of respondents said that their employer provided time off for training. 5.2% said that this was not the case and 4.5% did not know.

Question: What kind of courses does this apply to?

15. As shown in Table 5, time off is most frequently provided for training specifically relating to respondents’ existing job and for health and safety training and least frequently for wider work related training and personal development.

Table 5 - Time off for training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of course</th>
<th>Access to training (% of respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job-related training</td>
<td>73.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related training not directly related to current job</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing professional development</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade union courses</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety training</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question: Have you ever been refused time off for environmental duties or training?

16. 10% of respondents reported that they had been refused time off for environmental training compared with 39.6% who had not. However, almost half (45.2%) have never asked their employer. The rate of refusal is slightly higher in the private sector (at 10.8%) compared with the public sector (8.8%), though a lower percentage of public sector than private sector respondents have tested their employer’s attitude: 52.4% of those in the public sector said that they had never asked compared with 40.2% in the private sector. The rate of refusal was much higher in the voluntary sector, with 40% having been refused time off. This may be related to size of workplace.

Question: Would you be interested in attending a trade union training course on environmental issues?

17. Just under half of respondents (49.3%) said that they would be interested in attending a trade union course on environmental issues and a further 23.3% expressed possible interest in doing so.
FURTHER COMMENTS

18. Respondents were invited to add further comments. A selection is given below:
A better public transport system is needed before introducing congestion charges.
Prisoners should be made aware of environmental issues.
Waste management must be effective at all levels and benefits made clear.
A wider knowledge of nuclear power would be beneficial rather than relying on emotions.
Trade unions should not get involved in political issues when there are jobs at stake.
Government should provide better support for Combined Heat and Power projects.
Commitment to the environment needs to be wider than recycling paper.
More companies should be made to accept environmental issues.
My company identifies environmental issues but does not encourage union involvement.
A combination of international, national and local strategies is needed to combat climate change.
The environmental concerns affecting my company could be better managed.
Environmental issues are inextricably a part of health and safety.
I doubt my company would pay more in the interests of the environment as it is only interested in profitability. Trade unions have a role to play but the emphasis should be on the polluters.
More courses and information would be useful as would rights similar to health and safety reps.
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Activity 9 – Environmental Priority Issue

Aims
This activity will help you:

- select environmental priority issues
- use a problem solving approach

Task 1
Using the information gathered on the course to date you should select an environmental priority problem for research. In selecting a priority you should take into account

- Your unions’ policies
- Your employers’ policies & practices
- Your workplace environmental issues
- Your members concerns

Task 2
After selecting a priority issue you should use the PIP approach to deal with any potential or actual problems and prepare a plan that allows you to take up any opportunities that may arise.

Resources
Information gathered for the course to date.
Various web-sites.
The course tutor may have access to more detailed environmental information e.g. environmental legislation.

Assessment Criteria: 3.2 (plus various others)
Understanding Environmental Issues in the Workplace

Activity 10 – Future Action Plans

Aims
This activity will help you:

- review the TUC environment course
- plan for the near future
- plan for the longer term

Task
In your groups, and using the Worksheet, review the information that you have gathered on the course to date and provide an action plan for the short-term and the long-term.

Assessment Criteria: 3.2
Short & Long Term Planning Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-term Action Plan e.g. implement union policies/raise training issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term Action Plan e.g. get involved in an environmental campaign/complete stage 2 environmental course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Name ____________________________________

Unit Title: Understanding Environmental Issues In The Workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Identify environmental changes affecting the workplace.                       | 1.1 Identify specific environmental changes that have affected or will affect the workplace e.g. management systems, working practices, legislation.  
|                                                                                  | 1.2 List the effects or potential effects on members.                                              |          |          |
| 2. Research and identify appropriate environmental legislation, policies and information. | 2.1 Identify key information appropriate to environmental changes at work.                         |          |          |
|                                                                                  | 2.2 List environmental terminology.                                                                |          |          |
| 3. Identify environmental problems and opportunities for trade union action.      | 3.1. Draw up a list of problems or potential problems and opportunities for trade unions.          |          |          |

Key:  SS = Summary Sheet  TO/PO = Tutor/Peer Observation  M = Minutes  FC = Flipchart  P = Plan  O = Other

NB You do not need to write in more than two occasions in the evidence column e.g. first piece of evidence & best piece of evidence

Level Achieved _______________ Date _______________

Signed Tutor ___________________________ Student ___________________________
Name ____________________________________

Unit Title: Understanding Environmental Issues In The Workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Identify environmental changes affecting the workplace.                       | 1.1 Explain specific environmental changes that have affected or will affect the workplace e.g. management systems, working practices, legislation.  
1.2 Describe the effects or potential effects on members.                         |                       |          |
| 2. Research and identify appropriate environmental legislation, policies and information. | 2.1 Locate key information appropriate to environmental changes at work.  
2.2 Explain environmental terminology.                                              |                       |          |
| 3. Identify environmental problems and opportunities for trade union action.       | 3.1 Draw up and explain a list of problems or potential problems and opportunities for trade unions.  
3.2 Produce a plan to deal with problems and take up opportunities.                |                       |          |

Key:  SS = Summary Sheet      TO/PO = Tutor/Peer Observation      M = Minutes      FC = Flipchart      P = Plan      O = Other

NB You do not need to write in more than two occasions in the evidence column e.g. first piece of evidence & best piece of evidence

Level Achieved _______________  Date _______________

Signed Tutor _____________________________  Student _____________________________