

Executive summary

GreenWorkplaces projects are workplace-based initiatives that bring together the practical engagement of both 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.

The TUC GreenWorkplaces Union Modernisation Fund (UMF) project supported unions in seven pilot projects in some or all of the following activities:

- staff opinion surveys and quizzes
- union green events, environment days and green fairs, including involvement from outside speakers and 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. Each course was customised for the workplace involved following in-depth discussions with management and unions
- negotiations on environmental consultations with management – either through support and advice at face-to-face meetings, or in writing or via telephone conferences.

Further support was offered through access to best practice case studies, relevant legislation and provision of an environmental reps education workbook.

All projects involved up to two days' training provided by TUC Education based at Stow College, Glasgow, with production of a 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. Each project has been provided with its own case file documenting the outcomes and achievements of the project along with details of key contacts.

Key findings

- **Each pilot project enabled a range of initiatives around resource saving and energy reduction to take place** and was established on a principle of cooperation between management and unions. 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 project trained 97 environmental representatives**, resulting in changes to workplace structures and the formation of environmental committees/forums. This highlighted the importance of improving green skills in the workplace and building the confidence to encourage behavioural change. This was achieved by focusing not only on technical skills but also on the more generic skills of influence and persuasion, and communication skills.
- **All projects were effective in building capacity to extend the trade union consultation agenda** to cover environmental issues and were union-led. Pilot projects demonstrated the key role that trade unions can play in mobilising workplace concern over the challenge of climate change.
- **Improved communication was evident in all projects**, with those quick to set up formal structures being especially successful in linking top-down management approaches to union-led bottom-up approaches.

Lessons learned

- **Employers need to see unions as part of the solution.** Union involvement can lead to business benefits through improved environmental performance.
- **Involving reps and members from a wide range of occupations** expands the wealth of worker expertise.
- **There is no one-size-fits-all approach** for engaging in greening the workplace projects. Different employers will have different environmental strategies in place (if any) and different networks for communications, and varied mechanisms for staff consultation can exist across different sectors and unions. Projects involve a great deal of work, effort and commitment to generate success.



Best practice identified

- **Joint union approach.** By approaching management jointly, unions were able to encourage good industrial relations.
- **Senior management buy-in.** Active engagement from senior management is crucial to project success, in terms of both delivering results and convincing stakeholders that the project can succeed.
- **Union involvement and establishing environmental committees.** Evidence from the UMF project demonstrates that putting in place formal structures and obtaining time off for green reps to carry out environmental duties is essential to achieving quick progress and building effective campaigns.
- **A commitment to make the environment a union priority** is needed to ensure success and changes to environmental working practices.
- **A strong union identity** increases staff involvement in surveys, events and training.

Next steps

TUC GreenWorkplaces pilot projects and affiliate greening the workplace initiatives demonstrate that the TUC's work with affiliated unions has reached a tipping point. The TUC's development model is based on capacity building in demonstration projects, with training courses, training materials, and other support activities. It has helped to set standards and ensure the spontaneous development of many other green workplace projects throughout the UK.

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.