



CHANGING THE CLIMATE IN UNISON

UNISON Environmental
Strategy and Action Plan
2008-2010

Contents

Foreword	3
Environmental strategy	4
Environmental policy	4
Environmental objectives	4
- Property	4
- Energy usage and procurement	5
- Water usage and procurement	6
- Procurement, equipment and facilities	6
- Waste recycling	7
- Transport	7
- Conference management	8
- Environmental training and communication	8
- Management and reporting	8
Appendix 1: Successful internal green initiatives to date	9

Foreword

The scale of the challenge facing our planet is well documented. Scarcely a week goes by without further stark evidence that unless we take urgent action on the environment and climate change we risk catastrophic consequences.



So how should UNISON respond?

As UNISON employees we can all play a part by thinking about the way in which we use resources at work. Can we, for example, reduce waste and energy use? Can we increase the amount of recycling that we undertake? Here we will be building on firm foundations. We are not recent converts to this cause. There is a tradition of environmentalism in UNISON that speaks volumes about who we are as individuals and as an organisation. We have had an environmental policy since our foundation, and have always sought to take measures to reduce our carbon footprint.

But we do recognise that we have to raise our game. That is why we have established a green taskforce to look afresh at ways in which our own organisation can make further progress on sustainable transport, energy and waste management practices.

As this document shows, we are making progress. UNISON does have a strategy, an action plan and a commitment to working with all staff to deliver more sustainable working throughout the union.

Of course, improving the environment and tackling change will require major policy changes at a national and an international level that will impact on the world of work and our public services. It will demand the concentrated efforts of world leaders, revolutionary changes in energy and transport use, and far reaching changes in patterns of consumption. And while we will continue to engage and campaign around these issues in the months and years ahead, we should aim to do so on the basis that we are prepared to both think global and act local.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Prentis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dave Prentis
General secretary

Environmental strategy

UNISON is committed to proactively managing and minimising its environmental impacts through the implementation of an effective environmental management programme. This programme will be developed to include targets in line with current best practice. In order to support the programme, we will work towards establishing an environmental management system that would allow us to gain future accreditation under the recognised International Standard ISO 14001.

Environmental policy

UNISON believes that urgent action is required to address the challenge of climate change and to secure a sustainable future for our planet. We note the evidence that the cost of facing up to these challenges now will be far outweighed by the costs in future of failing to act and believe that far-reaching measures are required at international, national, local and individual levels. As a large and influential organisation UNISON is committed to ensuring that its day-to-day operations are consistent with the need to reduce carbon emissions, minimise its impact on the wider environment and build the principle of sustainability into all that it does.

At a practical level UNISON will:

- actively comply with the requirements of all environmental legislation and approved codes of practice
- assess and address the environmental impact of all current and future operations
- continuously seek to improve environmental performance
- reduce pollution, emissions and waste
- reduce its use of all raw materials, energy, water and supplies
- introduce a comprehensive awareness-raising programme to encourage participation and train employees in environmental matters
- introduce a best practice standard in relation to the environmental standards we expect from all suppliers and contractors.

Environmental objectives

Property

UNISON's property strategy will ensure that the consumption of raw materials, chemicals, energy and water, emissions and generation of waste are controlled, minimised and prevented wherever possible.

On all new freehold schemes we will continue to adopt BREEAM (the Building Research Environmental Assessment Method) as a tool to identify and specify the environmental and sustainability performance requirements of our buildings at the briefing stage. We will always attempt to achieve a "very good" standard and strive to achieve an "excellent" standard wherever possible.

Action plan for 2008-2010

We will:

- Continue to implement open-plan working to improve efficiency of use of space, increase natural light and improve ventilation flows.
- Following culture change work relating to the new head office, consider policy of reduced office space (reflecting remote working practices, increased work-life balance opportunities) and agree space standards.
- Actively comply with the new regulations relating to the European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, which will require energy performance certificates on all new buildings, starting with initial inspection and certification of all existing buildings by January 2009.
- Complete the building of the new head office to achieve an “excellent” BREEAM rating, and CO₂ reduction of nearly 20%, to make it one of the most efficient buildings in London.

Energy usage and procurement

UNISON will use renewable energy sources wherever possible and promote energy conservation. Technology and management systems will be used to reduce consumption.

Action plan for 2008-2010

We will:

- Implement a national agreement for energy procurement based on 100% recycled energy where possible.
- Implement Carbon Trust recommendations received to:
 - develop and adopt an office-wide building energy policy and appoint an energy champion at senior level
 - establish a local and central consumption monitoring and reporting system and improve sub-metering at site level
 - implement a range of specific energy-saving improvements suggested for Mabledon Place, Reading and Birmingham offices at a cost of £42,000, based on one-year pay back from savings generated.
- Review heating and ventilation provision in freehold properties to reduce air conditioning where possible, make systems more efficient and reduce levels of consumption.
- Review insulation levels to conserve energy.
- Review provision of low-energy lighting. Review opportunities for sector-controlled lighting and occupancy sensors.

Water usage and procurement

UNISON will use technology and management systems to reduce consumption. Mains-fed drinking water should be the standard for all establishments and replace all environmentally unsound refillable bottled water systems.

Action plan for 2008-2010

We will:

- Complete the introduction of mains-fed water wherever possible to replace bottled water.
- Review water usage and implement further reductions, for example using water cistern usage reducers and water-free urinals.
- Introduce leak detectors wherever feasible.

Procurement, equipment and facilities

UNISON will take a whole life cost approach to procurement including the final disposal options. We will continue to improve the social, ethical and environmental performance of our supply chain within the boundaries of a sustainable procurement policy. We will only procure the equipment and materials we need and continue to identify ongoing use for the waste we produce.

Action plan for 2008-2010

We will:

- Complete video-conferencing installation, training and BT support services to reduce travelling time, costs, fuel, and staff downtime. This in turn will reduce our carbon emissions.
- Review opportunities for low-energy IT servers requiring reduced cooling.
- Actively seek to secure affordable sustainable paper supplies. General paper supply is currently from sustainable wood forests, but recycled paper could be introduced at an additional cost of 15%.
- Review the potential for increasing the volume of recycled envelopes.
- Agree a policy and champion acceptance of “multi-functional devices”, which provide copy/print/fax/scanning facilities, to continue to reduce the number of printers we deploy in offices and consider a “no printing of emails” policy.
- Following work to allocate NEC members with IT equipment, continue work on reducing paper output for committees and meetings.
- Avoid use of couriers and special deliveries to save money and fuel. (Second-class post is reported to be more fuel efficient as first-class post is often sent in vans carrying less than optimum loads.)

- Work with London Remade through the Mayor of London's Green Procurement Code to increase the procurement of recycled and more sustainable products.
- Undertake a review of suppliers to ensure the required environmental standards are met.

Waste recycling

UNISON will reduce waste, and increase re-usage and recycling.

Action plan for 2008-2010

We will:

- Introduce a UK-wide audit of recycling practices to ensure consistency of service and compliance with conference resolutions.

Transport

UNISON will seek to use more sustainable travel alternatives for our operations and our employees' journeys to work. We will promote and use public transport systems wherever possible. We will continue to reduce car fleet mileage.

Action plan for 2008-2010

Car fleet

We will:

Review the recommendations of the Energy Saving Trust green fleet review carried out in 2007 and agree a more sustainable car fleet policy

Introduce a Toyota Prius pilot, with a view to extending Toyota petrol/electric hybrid options to the fleet and evaluate the potential for a mileage rate decrease.

Encourage reduction in car mileage and maximise the use of video conferencing and public transport alternatives wherever possible.

Air travel

We will:

- Review and consider a policy on internal flights (mileage/time-based) within the UK looking at time and cost versus carbon emissions.

Alternative transport

We will:

- Consider a bicycle procurement incentive scheme.
- Develop and implement the transport plan drawn up for the new head office planning application and develop regional transport plans.

Conference management

UNISON conferences are to be made as environmentally sustainable as possible.

Action plan for 2008-2010

- The conference team will review methods of improving sustainability of UNISON conferences.
- An external specialist organisation will be appointed to review and advise on improvements, including ways of ensuring delegate bags and other promotional materials are made from recyclable materials.

Environmental training and communication

UNISON will increase staff awareness of energy issues.

Action plan for 2008-2010

- Following Carbon Trust recommendations, UNISON will evaluate methods of increasing staff engagement, including the inclusion of environmental issues into induction processes, personal objectives within development reviews and training and awareness sessions. UNISON will also engage fully with staff union environmental representatives in line with UNISON branch and TUC best practice.

Management and reporting

UNISON will develop an environmental management system, which will establish clear governance and responsibilities; enable regular reporting; and allow measurement of continued improvement and the use of targets where necessary.

Action plan for 2008-2010

We will:

- Evaluate the requirements and resources needed to achieve ISO 14001 accreditation and develop systems accordingly.

Appendix 1: Successful internal green initiatives to date

Property initiatives

On all new-build schemes UNISON adopts BREEAM (the Building Research Environmental Assessment Method) as a tool to identify and specify the environmental and sustainability performance requirements of our buildings at the briefing stage.

We aim for at least a “very good” rating wherever possible, including in the new Cardiff and Exeter offices, which were recently completed and an award achieved.

Grey water recycling has also been included in our most recent projects and water-free urinals have been introduced at Mabledon Place, saving water. Regions have also deployed water-saving devices in cisterns to reduce water usage.

Mains-fed water has been introduced across many of our offices and we are reducing provision of bottled water wherever possible.

New head office

It has been decided to install biomass boilers, which will burn recycled wood chips, and will heat the office and residential tower. This will achieve a 20% carbon reduction for the building in accordance with current targets. Photovoltaics (solar powered cells) are being considered for the south- and west-facing elevations of the new building, with a view to providing all the power necessary to supply the large showcase NEC conference room at the top of the building.

Other design features include the optimum design to maximise natural light; sector-controlled light switching and a range of the design requirements required by BREEAM and Camden planning department, for example recycled cladding materials, 90 cycle racks, limited car-parking space.

Rainwater recycling is also included in the brief.

Equipment, facilities and procurement

Flat computer screens were introduced in 2007, which deliver better energy efficiency. Automatic “power-off” software is also deployed on our IT equipment so that PCs and laptops automatically switch off if left on, to save energy.

Portable laptops and blackberries have been issued to regional organisers to facilitate better working from remote locations and in order to reduce the number of regular journeys required to the regional offices.

IT equipment is reused, rather than recycled, by the developing world through Computer Aid International and we receive the necessary environmental certificates relating to disposal. No waste generated by Computer Aid ends up in landfill and

any waste they do generate is sent to state-of-the-art licensed waste management companies in Belgium and Holland. Each PC subsequently set up in a school will last an average of three years and will be used for 250 teaching days a year for eight hours a day. UNISON is totally WEEE compliant in terms of its disposal and recycling processes.

Ink cartridges are recycled.

Desk-side printers are being replaced by a smaller number of “multi-functional devices”, which provide copy/print/fax/scanning facilities. These will save energy and reduce the heat output, as well as prompting us to think before generating the volumes of paper output associated with desk-side printers.

Furniture is sourced from fully sustainable resources, procured from local suppliers where possible to avoid wasteful transportation, and manufactured as locally as possible to avoid importing.

Carpets supplied to offices are made from recycled materials.

The majority of the stationery we procure through Office Depot is recycled. Office Depot has strong environmental standards and policies.

Print work is carried out using recycled paper wherever possible.

Cleaning materials provided across UNISON are made from recycled materials. Products that are biodegradable are also procured where possible.

Chemical use is minimised and chlorofluorocarbons and other ozone-depleting substances are avoided.

Fair trade products are used in Mabledon Place deli bar and in the regions.

Video-conferencing facilities have been provided in each UNISON office, and should result in reduced travelling time, costs, fuel, and staff downtime. This in turn will reduce our carbon emissions.

General paper supply is from sustainable wood forests and we are considering moving to recycled paper across the organisation.

Following the issue of IT equipment and Blackberries to NEC members, work on reducing paper output for committees and meetings will continue.

Environmental workshops have been held in some regions to raise staff personal awareness of how they can contribute to green improvements.

Energy procurement

We have started the process of collecting information on energy agreements within each region with a view to establishing a national agreement for energy from the most eco-friendly supplier. Some regions have action plans for monitoring the use of gas and electricity including setting targets for usage.

Waste recycling

Full recycling facilities are available in Mabledon Place and in many regions.

Transport

Mabledon Place has recently had bicycle awareness days to encourage more people to take up cycling as an alternative to polluting methods of transport.

We have conducted a survey of staff in Mabledon Place to fulfil the requirement to produce a transport plan for planning application for the new head office. With little parking space in the new head office we will need to encourage alternatives, including cycling and more use of public transport.

The introduction of video conferencing by the end of 2008 will help to reduce travel for meetings.

The average car fleet mileage has reduced by more than 30% over the last 10 years, down to around 8,000 miles a year per person, and 75% of the fleet vehicles are now diesel. Regional managers review annual mileage within their regions and attempt to re-allocate workload and areas covered wherever possible to reduce total and individual mileage.



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