

2015 Energy Service Group Conference Final Agenda

Recruitment, Organising and Representation

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Submitted by the Energy Service Group Executive
2. **Raising the profile of LGBT Workplace Equality in Energy**
Submitted by National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee
3. **Increasing the Participation of Black Members in Energy**
Submitted by National Black Members' Committee

Negotiations and Bargaining

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Recruiting, Organising and Representation

1. Energy Efficiency

This conference welcomes the recent focus on domestic energy efficiency and the well documented gains a national programme of energy efficiency measures would achieve.

Conference also welcomes the role that UNISON has played in raising awareness of the gains that could be achieved by producing its report 'warm homes into the future – meeting the UK's energy challenges'

The UNISON report calls for a programme of measures to ensure every UK home is able to meet the Energy Performance Certificate at level C by 2030. This would be carried out by ensuring every UK home has a free full independent assessment and that any remedial works required would be carried out free of charge to low income householders or via interest free loans for those able to pay.

The net result of this programme would be to deliver average savings of around £650 per annum in homes with low levels of energy efficiency.

Conference notes that a comprehensive programme of measures would create in excess of 130,000 sustainable jobs which we could recruit members into, end fuel poverty, reduce reliance on gas imports, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and offset any greenhouse gas emissions to enable us to meet our climate change obligations.

Such a programme although requiring up front funding would however within seven years start to make net returns into the economy and represents the best form of infrastructure investment possible.

Conference therefore calls on the SGE to;

- 1) Continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders to push the issue of domestic energy efficiency as a key policy response to higher prices.
- 2) Recognise that such an approach could present organising opportunities which Energy branches and the SGE could benefit from.
- 3) Produce a simple organising leaflet for energy workplaces highlighting the key messages of the UNISON programme
- 4) Continue to brief Energy branches and members on the benefits of this programme, the fact that UNISON has led on it and to counter more negative reforms which would not achieve the same positive impact.

Energy Service Group Executive

2. Raising the Profile of LGBT Workplace Equality in Energy

Conference welcomes the strong track record of our energy service group on equality issues. Amongst other successes, this has resulted in a diversity of activists on our national energy service group bodies, reflecting UNISON's rules on fair representation and proportionality, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activists. Conference acknowledges the importance of such role models and the contribution their expert knowledge can make.

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Conference notes that LGBT members can be much less visible at branch and workplace level. A significant proportion of LGBT workers are not out at work or in the union about their sexual orientation or gender identity/gender history. This is because of continuing prejudice and discrimination in society and the fear of discrimination. It also depends on people's individual circumstances and one LGBT person being out in a workplace does not necessarily mean others will feel safe to do the same. Some types of energy workplaces, such as some call centres, can have a higher profile for LGBT equality than some of the more traditional energy industry settings.

However, conference notes that there are number of steps energy branches can take to end the invisibility and isolation of LGBT workers across all energy workplaces. These include publicising and promoting our LGBT self-organised group; encouraging buddying and mentoring, and encouraging members to take up the position of branch LGBT officer to take this work forwards. As well as building our activist base and supporting equality bargaining, this can be a great recruitment tool amongst potential members.

Conference also notes that there are non-union LGBT groups who work with employers, providing advice, training and resources on LGBT equality. UNISON has a proud track record of community engagement and partnership working. However, we reassert the principles on which we base such collaboration. These include shared aims and values, mutual respect and public acknowledgment by the partner organisation of the legitimate role of trade unions in negotiating on equality and representing members.

Conference calls on the energy service group executive, working with the business and environment equal opportunities working party, to:

- 1) Urge energy branches to publicise and promote our LGBT self-organised group, its regional groups, national events and resources
- 2) Encourage every energy branch to seek to fill the branch LGBT officer position, noting the national training available and the support available from regional LGBT groups
- 3) Advise energy branches on matters to consider when energy employers seek to hire the services of non-union LGBT organisations.

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee

3. Increasing the Participation of Black Members in Energy

This years' Black members' conference 2015 welcomed record numbers of delegates and visitors. With over 600 people in attendance it was the largest meeting of Black trade unionist in Europe.

Despite seeing increasing numbers of previously underrepresented members including women and young people there were still under 5 delegates who attended Black members' conference from the Energy service group. Further, this has been a pattern that has continued since 2013.

Black members have an important role to play in UNISON in fighting poverty, challenging injustice, eliminating discrimination and building a society that is fair for all. In workplaces Black members have a unique role in challenging racism and discriminatory practices particularly in the energy service group where Black workers numbers are low and they are more likely to have their issues marginalised.

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UNISON's annual Black members conference is central to Black member self organisation. It brings together members and it also helps the union identify and challenge discrimination and build race equality. It is also a great way for members to get involved in the union, develop skills, expertise and confidence.

As well as attendance at Black members' conference, levels of Black member activism at branch and region and representation on service group committees are all indicators to measure the participation and engagement levels in the energy service group.

If Black members from Energy are not at Black members' conference or represented in structures within their own service group then the issues affecting them will not be heard and cannot be addressed.

Conference, notes that further specific work can assist and encourage participation of Black members in Energy and particularly to ensure that in 2016 the pattern of having a very low number of members from energy attend Black members' conference does not continue.

Conference therefore calls upon the Energy Service Group Executive to seek to:

1. Work with the National Black members committee in conducting a survey of Energy branches nationally to establish:
 - a) How many Black members are involved at branch level
 - b) How many branches have Black members' self organised groups
2. Work with regions and branches to actively encourage the inclusion of Black members, to value their involvement and recognise the importance of diversity and to ensure that efforts are made for Black members to be fairly represented in the membership of regional and nation Energy service group committees
3. Promote attendance to Black members conference through service groups circulars and newsletters and improve upon attendance from the service group to the conference
4. Report on progress at Energy conference 2016 with a view to continuing the work and publishing final results in the annual report to the National Energy Service Group conference 2017
5. Hold a fringe meeting at Energy conference 2016 that looks at organising and recruiting around equality in order to increase diversity within the service group membership

National Black Members' Committee

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Negotiating, Bargaining and Equalities

4. Women Apprentices

Conference notes the much lower number of women who become apprentices in areas such as engineering, construction and information technology, and that occupational segregation within the energy sector is widespread.

Whilst there are apprenticeships available for women, female dominated areas tend to offer lower wages and less chance of career progression, therefore women apprentices are more likely to end up in low paid jobs.

According to a recent TUC report the number of women doing low skilled work has tripled over the last 20 years, even though young women have better academic qualifications than young men. Research shows that of all apprentice starts in 2011/12, the uptake by women was 83% in healthcare, 91% in childcare, 93% in hairdressing whilst only 2% in construction, 3% in engineering and 10% in Information Technology. The report also stated unions, employers and government must work together to provide better careers advice in schools for young women.

To actively encourage women to undertake apprenticeships in the energy sector would send a positive message to young women; lead to better access to better paid work and make further progress in closing the gender pay gap.

Conference therefore calls upon the service group executive to work with employers to promote wider access for women to apprenticeships in areas where they are currently underrepresented.

National Women's Committee

5. Competition and Markets Enquiry

This conference notes that last year the energy regulator Ofgem referred the big six energy companies (British Gas, EDF, E.ON, NPower, SP and SSE) to the Competition and Markets Authority. UNISON has many thousands of members working for these employers.

This referral followed an assessment of the sector by Ofgem alongside the Office of Fair Trading and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) which they considered showed increasing distrust of energy suppliers, uncertainty about the relationship between the supply businesses and the generation arms of the six largest suppliers, plus a view that rising profits came with no clear evidence of suppliers reducing their own costs or becoming better at meeting customer expectations.

While UNISON has long raised issues around rising energy prices and increasing fuel poverty we are concerned that the CMA enquiry could have damaging consequences for thousands of our members in the retail side of the business. They have good reason to be concerned because previous attempts to rein in excess profits or poor practices have left members in the retail business penalised and bearing the burden for the mistakes and excessive greed of a few.

This is wrong and takes little account of the hard work our members do dealing with customers day in and day out, at weekends and over holiday periods. Our members have become experts in dealing with vulnerable and distressed customers, in helping them find solutions, and in ensuring good customer service is provided despite at times a lack of

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investment, inadequate IT systems, or excessive call volumes. They are also very much on the front line and often have to face angry and at times abusive customers for failings which are not in their control.

Call to break up the big six energy are misplaced and would represent a race to the bottom as new entrants undercut each other on price in an unsustainable and short termist strategy that would destroy members jobs and leave customers worse off and with little recourse to address problems. It would also lead to more workplaces without a trade union presence, outsourcing and off-shoring overseas of UK jobs.

We therefore call upon the Energy SGE to;

- 1) Respond to these threats by engaging directly with the CMA and ensuring they understand the concerns of our members working in the energy industry
- 2) Continue to push the UNISON led solution to high energy prices, which is to address energy efficiency in UK homes and in doing so end fuel poverty.
- 3) Work with the government and or opposition and or other stakeholders to ensure any legislative or regulatory changes take account of energy members concerns.
- 4) Progress our campaign to ensure that all energy customers receive high levels of customer support from a UK based, highly skilled and professional workforce.
- 5) If full retail separation is proposed as an outcome, a campaign against this outcome be developed to include consideration of alternative options

Energy Service Group Executive

6. European Works Council in Iberdrola

Conference Notes

- 1) The increasing domination of the UK energy market by European based multinational energy companies and the detrimental impact this has on the influence national trade unions can bring to bear in representing their members.
- 2) The legal obligations on European companies to establish European Works Councils (EWC's) to give a voice to employees where they operate in two or more European countries.
- 3) Iberdrola is the only European based energy company yet to establish an EWC.

Conference believes

- 1) The establishment of an EWC in Iberdrola would be an important step forward to defend the terms and conditions of members and ensure company decisions take account of the interests of employees and the millions of customers who rely on essential public energy services.

Conference instructs the Service Group Executive

- 1) To work with EPSU to pursue the aim of establishing an EWC in Iberdrola.

Manweb

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7. Offshoring

This Conference believes the continued use and expansion of off-shoring in the Energy industry is undermining the pay and conditions of unionised labour in Britain by resting on the super-exploitation of labour in developing countries. It has been adopted by privatised utility companies and associated multi-nationals to maximise profits and not as is claimed to help create jobs and bring prosperity to low paid workers in India, Pakistan, Eastern Europe and other areas being targeted.

The appallingly low wages and Dickensian working conditions in many target countries means that companies can make savings in excess of 50-60% of labour costs in this country and still “market” themselves as a “good” employer by local standards. In reality the cynical exploitation of these markets is actually damaging the social fabric and infrastructure of developing countries by attracting graduates from critical jobs in local hospitals and schools where pay and conditions are even worse.

The false claims and arguments of Energy companies should be exposed and pressure brought to bear by the trade union movement to stop any further outsourcing.

Specifically this conference demands that the Energy Service Group Executive:

- 1) Launch a national campaign against the use of off-shoring in the Energy Industry. The campaign should investigate & expose the conditions of off-shore workers, specifically:
 - a) The low wages – often only 10% of equivalent wages in Britain
 - b) Long / unsocial hours
 - c) Poor Health and Safety policies
 - d) Lack of pension provision
 - e) Poor job security
 - f) Lack of trade union rights and recognition
2. Work with other service group executives and the NEC to build links with the independent trade union movements in India and other countries being targeted as off-shore sites. These links should be built to help in the fight to establish trade union rights and recognition at off-shore sites.
3. Campaign for legislation to require companies who use off-shore resources to demonstrate that the off-shore sites comply with UN treaties and ILO rules including Human Rights and the freedom of association and speech.
4. Campaign for the privatised utilities to be brought back into public ownership as the best means of outlawing the use and exploitation of workers in developing countries.

Manweb

Amendment 7.1

1st paragraph line 3 after the word ‘by’ insert “some”;

2nd paragraph first line delete ‘appallingly’; after ‘and’ delete ‘Dickensian’ and insert “difficult”;

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4th paragraph delete 'demands' and insert "calls on the..."

After number '2' insert a new number 3 to read "Engage with employers with operations offshore to become signatories to the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI). The ETI is a leading alliance of companies, trade unions and NGOs that promotes respect for workers' rights around the globe."; re-number.

In '5' delete all and insert: "Campaign for a thorough Government led inquiry, independently chaired, into the state of the energy industry. This inquiry should review all key points of concern and come forward with a range of options to address them. Nothing should be ruled out, including returning parts of or all of the industry back into public ownership."

Submitted by the Energy Service Group Executive

8. Smart Meters

This conference notes that 2015 marks the beginning of the national roll out of smart meters to UK homes and that this roll out should be completed by 2020. Much positive spin has been placed on the net benefits the smart meter programme will deliver, however despite this many concerns have also been raised.

Conference further notes that the total cost for the programme is estimated to be in the region of £11 billion, a cost that will be passed onto all consumers.

Recent analysis by the national audit office has suggested that some of the proposed gains have been overestimated and that consumers will not realise the level of savings originally promised.

Confusion also remains about the suitability of meters in at least 30% of UK properties due to location and building type and whether meters will need to be changed again when the customer changes supplier, as common guidelines and specifications are not yet fully agreed. Security concerns also persist with recent accounts of data being hacked.

Critically conference recognises that we have many members who work in metering and that these members remain concerned for their long term futures as not enough has been done by employers to address these concerns. It also supports the accord reached between the European Public Services Union and Eurelectric (industry body) on smart meters which refers to the European directive on this subject and makes clear that;

- The Directive foresees cost- benefit analysis to determine the added value of the introduction of smart meters. We underline that it is important for Member States to undertake such analysis and include all stakeholders in the preparation for as well as the subsequent evaluation of the results;
- There is concern that the introduction of smart meters will have consequences for employment. These consequences could be negative with certain occupations and jobs disappearing. They could also be positive as the roll-out and new services will create work and require new skills and qualifications. We underline that these consequences should be included when cost-benefit analyses are undertaken. The results should be discussed also with the social partners;

Therefore, conference calls on the Energy SGE to;

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- 1) Request that the Government and the energy regulator update their cost benefit analysis of the meter roll out programme and to publish this in a transparent way. Such an analysis should also include the social costs of possible job losses or employment changes as a result.
- 2) Oppose the roll out programme if the cost benefit analysis does not justify the investment required or the employment disruption caused.
- 3) Develop improved links with members who work in meter reading and look to ensure that we are clear that we have understood their concerns and views on the smart meter roll out programme
- 4) Continue to develop the meter reader's charter which should be used to influence employers to develop best practice in response to the roll-out programme.

Energy Service Group Executive

9. Tackling Biphobia in the Energy Industry

Conference welcomes the progress we have made in putting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality on the bargaining agenda in the energy industry. However, conference notes that LGBT workers are a diverse group, who experience different types of discrimination in different ways. There is increasing understanding that issues facing transgender workers, while having many overlaps with issues facing LGB workers, need particular recognition in workplace policies. There is less understanding of the particular issues for bisexual workers.

Research by The Manchester Business School published in 2014 into the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual workers, showed that of all the larger sexual orientation groups, bisexual workers have the worst mental health, including higher rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide. This is directly linked to the high levels of biphobic prejudice and discrimination they experience at work.

Conference notes with regret that bisexual workers can experience prejudice and discrimination not only from colleagues and managers who are heterosexual but also from those who are lesbian or gay. Biphobia feeds off myths and stereotypes which range from bisexual people being untrustworthy, greedy and promiscuous to bisexuality being 'just a phase' or not really existing at all. Bisexual people have to repeatedly 'come out' to avoid people making wrong assumptions about their sexual orientation. Bisexual role models are few and far between and bisexual workers can feel particularly isolated.

Conference believes that while energy industry equality policies may refer to lesbian, gay and bisexual people, they must do more than pay lip service to the existence and rights of bisexual workers. It is important to separate biphobia from homophobia, recognising that there are specific issues facing bisexual workers in energy.

Conference calls on the energy service group executive, working with the business and environment equal opportunities working party, to:

- a) Maintain a high profile commitment to equality, including bisexual equality, in all negotiating, organising and campaigning;
- b) Promote the use of UNISON's 'Bisexuality; a Trade Union Issue' Factsheet and other LGB bargaining factsheets and materials;

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- c) Encourage branches to equality proof their energy companies' policies to ensure that they specifically challenge biphobia in the workplace.

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee

10. Disabled members and facility time

Conference is concerned to hear that facility time within the Energy Sector is being diminished.

This particularly affects many representatives who are call takers, this is an occupation undertaken by many disabled members, who are already struggling to meet their targets / attendance due to their disability.

Declaring your disability can be a scary thing as a lot of employers are not sympathetic when disabled members apply for disability leave, so asking for facility time is well down their list. Some disabled members feel more comfortable having a disabled representative who has the expertise and knowledge when facing management meetings or sickness reviews.

To keep disabled workers in work in the Energy Sector we must fight to ensure that facility time does not become a thing of the past.

We therefore call upon the Service Group Executive to negotiate with the various energy employers / companies to ensure that facility time is not lost and that disabled members feel confident that when needed they have the appropriate representation.

National Disabled Members' Committee

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Campaigning

11. Public Ownership of Energy Utilities

Conference Notes

- 1) The economic crisis which has forced thousands of businesses into bankruptcy and millions of workers into unemployment and poverty.
- 2) The hundreds of billions of pounds of public money which has been spent by governments across the world trying to prop up the world financial system in order to try and prevent total economic collapse of the major financial institutions.
- 3) The government's claim that the private market is the most appropriate mechanism for managing the vital national infrastructure and resources of the energy sector has been shattered by this economic disaster.

Conference believes

- 1) The energy utilities provide a vital national service and should be publically owned and controlled so they can be run in accordance with the needs of the population rather than subject to the whims and wishes of the market.
- 2) Public ownership will eliminate the drive for profit which leads to excessive bonuses for senior executives, attacks on the employment contracts of ordinary employees and an ever increasing cost to the consumer.
- 3) Public ownership will allow a properly funded national plan to be implemented to invest in the generation of clean energy. Through democratic control this can meet the needs of future generations without repeating the short-sighted, profit-motivated mistakes of the past such as the Dash for Gas and the abandonment of serious investment in new generation capacity which is seen as a commercial risk.
- 4) Public ownership of the energy industry will give the government direct control over the measures necessary to tackle and eliminate the scandal of fuel poverty, without having to try and bribe industry to do so.
- 5) Public ownership would negate the necessity for costly government bodies which have been created to monitor the utility industries and the even costlier need for research, reports and legislation to impose clean energy targets within the utility industry.

Conference instructs the Service Group Executive

- 1) To commission research to determine the most practical and cost effective mechanisms for bring about the transfer of the utilities from the private to public sector.
- 2) To circulate the results of this research to all Energy Branches.
- 3) Based on this research, to draw up and implement a campaign which has as its goal the introduction of legislation to bring the energy companies back into public ownership.
- 4) To bring back a report to the 2016 Conference outlining the progress of the campaign to bring utilities back into public ownership.

Manweb

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Motions not Admitted on to the Agenda

The following motions were ruled out of order and not admitted onto the conference agenda. The reasons for the SOC decisions are indicated.

SOC decision:

The action contained in the motion is beyond the remit of the conference

Motion: Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

Conference notes that the European Union (EU) and the United States have started secret negotiations on a new trade agreement, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which could serve as a model for all future trade agreements.

However, history has shown that its women are unduly penalised when trade agreements aimed at “liberating” inter-country trade are signed. In fact, the North American free trade agreement (NAFTA) model of trade liberalisation has proven harmful to women in all three signatory countries. By not addressing the impact on women’s lives and livelihoods, any new trade agreements could have significant negative consequences for women in both the USA and EU. Under TTIP, women’s access to essential services such as healthcare and education and their access to workplace rights could be severely limited.

TTIP won’t just remove trade tariffs but would also harmonise regulatory standards; open markets in the service sector which could include public services covered by the Energy service group; open up public procurement markets; and introduce the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism allowing multinational investors to challenge state actions which they perceive as threatening their investments and further erode the ability of national governments to act in the public interest.

Conference therefore agrees to campaign for the rejection of the TTIP drawing particular attention to the serious danger it poses to public services and the threat posed by the ISDS mechanism to the public interest.

Conference, therefore, calls on the service group executive to:

- 1) Work with the NEC, STUC and TUC to campaign against TTIP
- 2) Use the campaign against TTIP to strengthen links with sister unions in the united states
- 3) Raise our TTIP concerns with all political parties, in particular working via Labour Link to raise these issues with the Labour Party in the UK and the European parliament.
- 4) Work with the NEC to highlight TTIP’s real threat to women’s rights

National Women's Committee
