

Imperial College Union

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

A note by the President

Background

On 13th March 2007 Union Council passed a comprehensive environmental policy which contained resolutions for the Union to reduce its environmental impact by reducing waste, water use, and by lowering our carbon emissions. Implementation of these resolutions has been at best patchy and recently we have been revisiting this policy in an attempt to carry out the wishes of what was then the sovereign and governing body of Imperial College Union. In this paper I will only cover the resolutions for which we can or have taken identifiable practical steps to achieve the stated goals.

Waste Reduction

What the policy says:-

- 3. *The methods employed by the Union to reduce its waste should include but not be limited to:*
 - a. *Reducing waste by using reusable crockery and cutlery instead of disposable crockery and cutlery in our catering outlets. For the purpose of maintaining the take-away option, biodegradable disposable alternatives may be used.*
 - b. *Reusing waste by using reusable glasses, for example made from hard plastic, instead of using single-use skiffs.*
 - c. *Recycling waste by providing segregated recycling bins wherever there is currently an all-purpose bin in all Union buildings.*
 - d. *Introducing a composting scheme for food waste produced through the The Union's catering services.*
 - e. *Educating and encouraging all students to recycle their waste.*

What the Union has done:-

Reducing Waste In Trading Areas

Catering

This term we have re-introduced re-usable cutlery and crockery for eat-in customers in both dBs and Da Vinci's. We are serving sit-in meals on crockery plates for both large and small portions, which differs from their original introduction last academic year.

This initiative has been relatively successful, however it can only be truly sustainable if we are able to better control the number of thefts of plates, knives and forks we are currently experiencing. Clearly the best way for us to do this is by students and customers showing an element of social responsibility and stop stealing them. This may require a marketing campaign to make customers aware that they are having an impact on the environment as well as committing a crime.

For take-away customers we are still currently using disposable take-away boxes, trays and cutlery. Obviously we are unable to offer a re-usable option for takeaway customers. It is our intention that once the current stock of takeaway boxes used by the Union has been used up, that we switch to a biodegradable alternative. This will also apply to takeaway cutlery and to baguette wrappers. It is expected that we will be able to achieve this for the start of the Spring Term 08.

Bars

In the bars we currently serve drinks in re-usable plastic glasses (busy nights) and in glasses. Following a difficult period where we have had problems sourcing the re-usable plastic glasses we are changing suppliers to ensure that we have sufficient stocks of these to cater for our busy term time events and not have to resort to the use of disposables in 'emergencies'. It is anticipated that our supplier issues will be resolved in order for us to use the re-usable plastic glasses except for major events (Summer Ball, Carnivals etc.) by the beginning of the Spring Term 08.

Given the current setup of the Union bars, we have limited space for glass-washers, as such, for huge events we have to use disposable skiffs. The Union currently has a stock of these, which we expect to be used up at the Christmas Ball. As we cannot operate these large-scale events without using disposable skiffs, all disposables purchased by the union in the New Year will be entirely biodegradable.

Water Use

What the policy says:-

- 1. *The Union will cut consumption through installing simple devices in existing appliances that use water. This should include but not be limited to*
 - a. *Dams in cisterns*
 - b. *Low flow, aerated showerheads*
 - c. *Percussion taps*
 - d. *Tap Inserts*
 - e. *Low flow or waterless urinals*
- 2. *When replacing appliances, The Union will choose water efficient models. The “DEFRA and HM Revenue & Customs Enhances Capital Allowance Scheme for Water Technologies” shall be used to set a minimum benchmark for water efficiency in appliances.*

What the Union has done:-

Water consumption will be cut by specifying in Phase 2 of the building project:

- Low flow tap and shower fittings.
- Reducing lavatory flush volumes by either:
6/4 litre dual flush cisterns, OR:
direct metered mains flushing
- Reduce urinal flushing by low/no flush urinals.

Rainwater harvesting has also been suggested by the HPF study but costs may be prohibitive.

Carbon Emissions, Energy and Transport

What the policy says:-

The Union shall reduce its carbon emissions by 40% by 2009

What the Union has done:-

- Staff are instructed to turn lights out in Commercial areas when activity is over.
- UCH has passive IR detectors to turn lights out when no-one present.
- Phase 1 of building master plan removed several space heating devices from central core and introduced efficient lighting.
- The Building Energy Report commissioned from Hurley Palmer Flatt recommends measures that will be included in Phase 2 (March 08 - Jan 09): inc.

Reduce space heating setpoint to 17 deg C
Upgrade lighting
Introduce improved BMS for heating and lighting control
Improved lighting controls
Timer controls on existing cooling
Ceiling insulation
Internal wall insulation
Supplementary / secondary double glazing

Other bits and pieces

- The policy stipulates that we should avoid the use of patio heaters and we have successfully done so!
- The tour applications spreadsheet has been updated to reflect the variable travel subsidy introduced under this policy.
- Martin Knight has invited me to sit on College's new Environmental Committee and my intention is to bring along a representative from the Environmental Society.