

## UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

**MINUTE OF A MEETING** of the Fair Trade Steering Group held in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House on Monday 20 April 2015.

**Members:** Karen Bowman (in chair), Director of Procurement  
 Kenneth Amaeshi, Lead, Corporate Responsibility & Governance Network  
 Evelyn Bain, Procurement Manager  
 Tasha Boardman, EUSA Vice President Services  
 Conor Bond, Sports Union President  
 Michelle Brown, Head of SRS Programmes  
 Jill Bruce, Development and Alumni  
 Sarah Conway, Careers Service  
 Liz Cooper, SRS Research and Policy Manager  
 Joe Farthing, SRS Communications Manager  
 Hannah Genders Boyd, People and Planet Representative  
 Moira Gibson, External Affairs Manager, Communications and Marketing  
 Dave Gorman, Director of SRS  
 Davy Gray, EUSA Environmental Officer  
 Stephannie Hay, Technology Enhanced Learning Services  
 Tim Hayward, Director of the Just World Institute  
 Matthew Lawson, SRS Programme Manager  
 Ian Macaulay, Asst. Director of Accommodation Services, Catering  
 Lucy Miu, SRS Programme Facilitator  
 Ali Newell, Associate Chaplain  
 Briana Pegado, EUSA President  
 Christina Schmidt, EUSA Global  
 Vikki Stewart, Estates and Buildings Representative

**In attendance:** Jess Acton; Mena Grossman, M.Sc. Environmental Sustainability students

**Apologies:** Kenneth Amaeshi; Tasha Boardman; Conor Bond; Jill Bruce; Sarah Conway; Joe Farthing; Dave Gorman; Stephannie Hay; Tim Hayward; Matthew Lawson; Briana Pegado; Christina Schmidt; Vikki Stewart

## 1 Minute

The minute of the meeting held on 3 February 2015 was approved as a correct record.

## 2 Matters Arising

Covered in post-meeting notes.

## SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

### 3 Review of Fair Trade University

#### Presentation

MSc Environmental Sustainability students Jess Acton and Mena Grossman presented on fair trade at the University, including how fair trade relates to the equity principle of sustainable development:

“Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South” (World Fair Trade Organization).

The presentation (circulated with the minute) covered the context of fair trade at UoE, including the 5 Fairtrade Foundation (FTF) goals and broader awareness-raising activities. The aims of the project, carried out through literature review and informal interviews, had been:

- to research what universities do in terms of fair trade
- to generate recommendations on how UoE could go beyond the FTF goals
- to produce recommendations on how UoE could raise awareness of fair trade.

Legal, institutional, academic and logistical constraints in pushing the fair trade agenda further included: communication problems within the University and between institutions; lack of research on Fairtrade universities and differing understandings of fair trade; and the limited number of fair trade products.

The project group's recommendations included:

- embedding fair trade in the curriculum
- enhancing the profile of fair trade within the Sustainability Awards
- providing topic guidance and incentives to promote research in this area
- engaging with other institutions and with FTF to improve goals ( e.g. golden awards, though limited funding prevented these initiatives in the short-term - FTF's focus was on mainstreaming)
- adopting innovative / best practice examples from other institutions to appeal to a broader audience (e.g. fair trade city map; fair trade fashion show; engagement with schools; unfair football match, 'Hunger Banquet'; building links between producers and consumers).

In terms of fair trade awareness, the project noted reduced engagement over time, as well as a loss of trust in fair trade labelling schemes as not reflective of companies' wider values, and recommended:

- providing accessible, bite-sized information
- consistent, year round and year-to-year engagement and events (Freshers' Week was already overloaded)
- dedicated stands to raise the visibility of fair trade products on campus
- collaboration with societies, especially international societies
- targeted engagement with demographics less likely to be familiar with fair trade, including international students
- fair trade areas in shops
- the internet as a valuable forum for discussing and raising awareness of fair trade
- Events (wine tasting, free food, fashion show, sports matches).

## Q&A

The Convener thanked the presenters, recognising that a significant amount of research and thought had gone into this work.

### A. Q&A Discussion on Student Engagement

The presentation had reinvigorated a key issue for FTSG: the necessity, in order to continue, of engaging students, and that the nature of that engagement would change from one generation to the next.

(a) FTSG noted that the project group felt the best way to get students motivated and engage with the issue was to embed fair trade in the curriculum.

### B. Q&A Discussion on Fair Trade Awareness

Members discussed the narrative for the Google Trends graph (slide 10) showing a net decline in mentions of fair trade in online articles over time, noting that the peaks corresponded with Fairtrade Fortnight. The project group confirmed the impression that

many UoE students were not aware that their institution was a Fairtrade University. The decentralisation of the University had made it difficult to get an overview of what was going on in this area.

(b) FTSG noted the absence of reference to the Fairtrade Café, which was pushing the fair trade agenda every week, and discussed ways of highlighting and promoting this work.

### C. Q&A Discussion on Fair Trade Retailing and Labelling

Members discussed sustainability as part of the world food / street food trend and associated accreditation debates (Soil Association / FTF / Rainforest Alliance). It was possible that, as long as spend continued to rise and the fair trade choice continued to be made, falling awareness levels were not necessarily a problem, and were, to a certain extent, inevitable due to increasing normalisation and a lack of new products.

EUSA as a commercial union also reported that fair trade had become normalised for some consumers and some products, current students having grown up with it as part of their retail landscape. However there was felt to be a growing cynicism, particularly with fair trade labelling if the brand was not associated with ethical trading generally. There had also been expansion in the amount of ethical products competing with the fair trade label in a wider context of ethical consumption. The broader idea of 'fairness in trade' was much harder to deliver.

(c) FTSG noted that within the new procurement law there would be an emphasis on food procurement and labelling schemes, and recognised that UoE had a responsibility not just in terms of what it buys but also in educating its students.

### D. Q&A Discussion on Potential Student Mapping Project

Work on a fair trade map for Edinburgh had been started. Similar work was ongoing within the Student Experience Project, and the Fairtrade City Group had a register of fair trade outlets.

(d) FTSG noted that there was potential for a student project to complete the map for areas near campus and halls of residence.

### E. Q&A Discussion on Terminology

The Group acknowledged the need to look again at the terminology and at 'fair trade' as a label versus alternatives such as 'fairness in trade'. 'Sustainable procurement' was not felt to be as user-friendly as 'ethical buying'. Issues of definition alone could provide the basis for a potential dissertation.

Action – MB to reflect on how project findings and recommendations could link in to review of the Sustainability Awards, follow up with the EUSA VPAA, and decide whether to provide course directors with a list of practical projects.

Noted SRS dissertation prizes would be discussed at SRS Committee in June.

Action – LC to work with the project group to establish how best to publicise their findings (e.g. 500 word summary for SRS blog).

### Fair Trade International Symposium paper

Members noted that the Research and Policy Manager would present a conference paper on linking academics and practitioners within universities on fair trade issues at the Fair Trade International Symposium in Milan at the end of May.

## **4 Procurement Rules Consultation – SRS Policy Implications**

**B**

FTSG noted consultation currently ongoing on the rules which would be coming into mainstream procurement law. The Scottish Fair Trade Forum had written to the Scottish

Government to emphasise the importance of including fair trade. Publicly-funded bodies would have to consider their sustainable procurement duty every time they spent over £50K (the threshold may change). Procurement and the SRS Department were working to unpack the issues for each item. Work was ongoing through APUC on labelling schemes and accreditation along supply chains.

### UoE Suppliers' Tax Practices

Tax avoidance and evasion would be covered in the law and details would be published on the HMRC website. When procuring through the framework agreement, this would be covered at the tender stage.

## **5 Electronics Watch and Procurement**

**C**

FTSG noted positive collaboration between People&Planet, UoE and other buying organisations. UoE Procurement had met with the Scottish Government procurement team to urge them to include consideration of Electronics Watch and fair trade. [Public consultation](#) was open until 30 April and members could respond as individuals.

## **6 Student Placements Update**

Two students would be going to Malawi in May for 4 weeks with JTS to look at the supply chain for pulses (livelihoods, value chain analysis, etc.). The students would have dissertations, photos and other material that the Group and the SRS Department could promote and publicise. The Group discussed how to promote this on the University's main page and proposed organising an event for the students to feed back, hosted at the parliament, and inviting the Cross Party Group. The event would need to be in June, before the students graduated and the parliamentary recess.

Action – LC to follow up with Martin Rhodes on dates.

*Post-meeting note: Moira Gibson has highlighted this to CAM as a good news item and they will be in touch with LC. LC is liaising with the students on their travel dates to see what sort of event will fit around them.*

There would be an additional placement within the SRS Department focusing on the garment industry.

## **7 Conflict Minerals Policy Scoping/Progress**

**D**

The Research and Policy Manager was in the early stages of producing a draft policy. Having assessed the risks and opportunities, consultation with stakeholders was ongoing, including a meeting with the University of St Andrews procurement team and a public event in February. A more detailed paper and policy would be shared with the Group in due course. If UoE adopted a conflict minerals policy then all IT buyers would have to follow it, and the University would need the supply chain to match it.

The Director of Corporate Services would soon sign off on relaunch of the Sustainable ICT Group. If the food dimension had normalised and plateaued, conflict minerals and other social issues in electronics supply chains could provide the next main focus, particularly as the University had significant spend and influence in this market. Focus on electronics supply chains also offered linkages to the circular economy and zero waste agenda.

FTSG noted some expertise / leadership in this area from the US, including the Conflict Free Campus Initiative and the Dodd-Frank Act (2010), reflecting concerns about the exploitation and trade of conflict minerals by armed groups. More so than the garment industry, electronics was an area where the University could have a major impact. It was proposed that this could be the focus for Fairtrade Fortnight 2016. A number of events on the topic had already taken place, during Fairtrade Fortnight and Innovative Learning Week.

## **ROUTINE ITEMS**

### **8 Workers' Rights Consortium**

A meeting between EB, LC and procurement staff from Durham had been positive, but they were broadly in the same position as UoE – struggling to implement the recommendations such as finding out who all suppliers of garments are.

Durham are carrying out their own tender for garments/workwear, whereas Edinburgh are trying to influence national agreements but bound by specific procurement rules. A Skype conversation between UoE and WRC had been enlightening at the time, but not much further had come from it. Although the information on their website was accessible without signing up, both institutions had agreed that it was better to be a member and to work with the WRC to make membership more meaningful for UK institutions. FTSG recognised the success of the consortium as a lobbying group on sweatshops around the world, though their resource to influence suppliers was limited. Edinburgh and Durham discussed the possibility of linking up together and with other UK members of WRC to engage further with WRC on taking the work further within the UK context.

As poor practice was widespread throughout garment trade supply chains, it was important for the Group and the University to support those looking into it, even if UoE spend in this area was minimal. Estates as the largest garment purchaser, while under significant budget constraints, was procuring some fair trade cotton uniform items for its servitorial and cleaning staff. Procurement could encourage departments to buy in accordance with the University's Fair Trade Policy, but the decision ultimately lay with the budget holder. Greater leverage and the ability to draw more information from suppliers may come with the rules changes next year, when tenders would include fair trade caveats.

A Master's student will be carrying out a placement with SRS on university garment/textiles supply chains this summer to look into WRC, Fairtrade cotton and other considerations further.

### **9 EUSA Fair Trade Update**

The EUSA Environmental Officer assured the Group that the incoming VPS would be fully briefed with regard to fair trade. FTSG noted an appetite within EUSA to move on from the coffee and chocolate dimensions to the wider fair trade agenda. Engagement with students would continue through the VPS and the SRS Student Forum.

Members discussed ways to re-establish links with the Fairtrade Café, including asking representatives to join if only for part of a meeting, offering monetary incentives, and moving some meetings to take place in the café.

Action – AN to approach the Fairtrade Café to explore ideas and investigate how they would like FTSG to work with them.

### **10 Fair Trade Communications Update**

Work was ongoing looking at how to take forward the newsletter.

### **11 Any Other Business**

Action – All to feed in to the secretary on the items to cover at May's meeting.

## **ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING**

### **12 APUC Sustain Update**

Carried forward to May's meeting.