



Park Dale is the largest zero-carbon housing development in the UK

With the help of construction union UCATT the social housing provider is encouraging other organisations to do the same.

WDH has a 1,400 strong workforce and is responsible for 31,000 homes for around 60,000 residents, including the 91-home, zero-carbon Park Dale housing development at Airedale in Castleford.

Park Dale is the UK's largest zero carbon housing development, providing homes for a range of ages

UCATT and Wakefield and District Housing – Leading the way on going green

Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) is going green, with a vision of becoming carbon neutral by 2016.

and family sizes. It was built for WDH by developers Bramall to the highest (Code 6) sustainable housing standard using traditional construction methods.

Each home is connected to a central biomass boiler that uses locally-produced wood pellets to provide heating and hot water; every house has a south facing roof fitted with 35m² of photovoltaic (PV) panels to turn energy from the sun into electricity; and the air temperature in each property is regulated by a mechanical ventilation heat recovery

(MVHR) system.

In addition, every wall has 150mm cavity wall insulation and insulated plasterboard; windows are all triple-glazed; a “grey water” system allows used water from baths and showers to be recycled to flush toilets; the materials used to build the homes were purchased from sustainable sources, with 80% of timber from recycled material; and the homes are designed to be easily adapted throughout the tenants’ lifetimes.

UCATT ULR at WDH wins Apprentice of the Year award

After four years training to be a plumber, UCATT member Luke Dickenson secured a permanent job with WDH after successfully completing his apprenticeship.



Luke Dickenson with his unionlearn award and UCATT convenor, safety rep and ULR Ian Weglarski

He had the opportunity to work on the Park Dale site (see above) and gained access to unique hands-on practical training in cutting-edge green technologies.

“It was a fantastic experience to work on a zero carbon housing site

because it taught me skills and techniques that are going to be vital to the future of the construction industry – and my future,” he said. *“I worked on grey water recycling, which is where homes use bathwater to flush toilets. A third of a household’s water consumption is lost when flushing the toilet, so these systems will save water and money.”*

His achievements have been recognised with two awards. After winning a WDH ‘Rising Star’ award he was also named 2012 Apprentice of the Year at the TUC education and skills arm unionlearn’s Yorkshire and the Humber regional annual conference.

He now uses his experiences from Park Dale to train other young apprentices, as well as older members of the workforce, on environmentally-friendly plumbing and

heating systems. And he recently signed up to be a UCATT ULR at a union Yorkshire Region weekend school.

“The youngest people in the organisation are the knowledge holders around green training and skills, and the green apprentices play a key role at WDH,” says UCATT National Project Worker Steve Craig. *“They show that you are never too young to teach and never too old to learn.”*

Workers carrying out traditional repairs and maintenance at WDH also have the opportunity to gain a sustainable housing NVQ, increasing their employability while improving the performance of the company. And the union is working with Bury College to give 26 WDH workers the opportunity to gain an NVQ Level 3 health and safety qualification.

Showcasing UCATT and WDH at home and abroad...

in Europe...

UCATT is actively showcasing its work with WDH as part of the TUC and European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) GreenWorkplaces project.

It is an example of how linking the learning and skills agenda with greening the workplace can benefit employers, unions, the workforce and the local community. This can:

- provide opportunities to skill, re-skill and up-skill;
- address social deprivation by reducing fuel poverty;
- reduce the environmental impact of housing; and
- benefit the business bottom line and create sustainable and good quality jobs.

In October 2012 Steve Craig, Denis Doody and Luke Dickenson attended the ETUC Green Workplaces Conference in Brussels. The conference launched a new European network of GreenWorkplace projects and a new European guide for environmental reps. It also provided an opportunity for trade unionists active in 'greening' their workplaces, including Dennis and Luke, to demonstrate their achievements to European Commissioners and business



representatives gathered at the event.

They explained how supporting environmentally-friendly housing development not only helps to tackle climate change and fuel poverty; but also gives the workforce at WDH the opportunity to develop their green skills.

ETUC Confederal Secretary Judith Kirton-Darling said, *"Twice as much is spent on resources and energy than labour costs in average European workplaces and yet all our governments' attention is on labour market flexibility and reducing labour costs. We are facing mass youth unemployment in Europe – a social catastrophe! At the ETUC we are keen to showcase practical examples – like UCATT's work with Wakefield and District Housing – that show how to achieve a triple win in an alternative to austerity: for the economy, for the environment and most importantly for me, in maintaining and promoting good jobs, quality training and education, and worker participation. The construction sector and its supply chain have a key role to play and we congratulate UCATT for what has been achieved. We are keen to share these experiences and support you in taking the project a step forward"*.



in London...

In November 2012, Steve Craig described how WDH and UCATT are working together at the unionlearn Skills for a Green Economy seminar in London.

He explained how the project shows what unions can offer in terms of learning, training, skills and community engagement.

"There is a need to redefine the union narrative – engaging with people in the wider workplace and community to change what they think about trade unions. For example, efficiency is what business buys into. Unions add value in terms of performance, up-skilling and training," he said. *"And it's not just about giving new skills to young workers. We have to unlearn, relearn and learn again in a completely different industrial sector."*

He also explained how the project has had an impact beyond the workplace by influencing the supply chain. WDH has agreed revised arrangements with building materials suppliers in connection with weights, 'standard length' cuts for wood, packaging of concrete and other construction resources to prevent waste.

"If they wanted to work with WDH and deliver materials, they had to do it in a way that fitted in with our green agenda programme," said Steve.

Luke, Denis and Steve outside the ETUC headquarters (left) and with TUC Senior Policy Officer Philip Pearson and ETUC Confederal Secretary Judith Kirton-Darling (right) in Brussels

“The work being done by Wakefield and District Housing should be the template for other housing associations and councils to follow.”

UCATT Midlands Executive Council member Neil Vernon

in Wakefield

In February 2013, UCATT Midlands Regional Secretary Cheryl Pidgeon, UCATT Midlands Executive Committee member Neil Vernon and UCATT research officer Kate Purcell joined a delegation of UCATT representatives and officers from Cannock Chase District Council to look at how WDH can provide a template for local authorities to build sustainable social housing in-house.

In addition to the Park Dale development (see page 1), the group visited other new developments including Westfield Mews, where five new Code 4 sustainable houses will provide three-bedroom, five-person family accommodation. They will achieve 44% lower CO2 emissions and incorporate PV solar roof panels, double-glazed windows and 150mm thick cavity wall insulation. They are ‘lifetime homes’, incorporating a downstairs toilet that can be converted to a wet room if necessary, and are provided with secure sheds to encourage cycling. And they were built in-house by WDH’s construction workforce.

“Our philosophy is if it can be done in-house, it should be done in-house,” said UCATT Executive Council member and WDH Environmental

Manager Denis Doody. “We started with a craft workforce of around 300. We now have a 600-strong direct labour organisation (DLO) that can do almost anything. We have created a comprehensive construction unit – the only thing we can’t do is civil engineering and specialist areas like piling and groundwork. Everything else is done in-house. We factor our workforce into everything we do and that gives our apprentices exposure to the highest level of construction skills they could have.

“Every apprentice should have the opportunity to be involved in new build and sustainable homes,” he added.

The UCATT Midlands delegation was extremely impressed by what they saw and plans to promote the ‘WDH template’ more widely.

“It’s inspirational,” said Cheryl. “Built by an in-house team of home-grown craftspeople to outstanding quality, these homes are as far away from any ‘stigma’ associated with social housing as you can imagine.

“It’s about building a better future and is a fantastic example of how, with vision, sustainable construction can provide skills and employment, meet environmental targets and leave the kind of legacy that we want for the next generation” she added.

Cannock Chase District Council plans to build 85 new homes over the next five years and UCATT reps at the local authority want these to be sustainable homes, built by an in-house team of craftspeople. UCATT shop steward at the local authority, Andy Thurstance, said: “The planet cannot sustain



current construction practice and it has got to change. Environmental issues have not always been at the forefront of the agenda at Cannock Chase but today’s visit is part of our strategy to change that. I’d read about the WDH project, but actually seeing it has really opened my eyes.”

Denis shows the group a solar PV retrofit project carried out by the in-house team at WDH

- The WDH/UCATT project features in the ETUC’s new *Green Workplaces Guide for Union Reps* and will feature in a video to be launched shortly. The handbook provides guidance on how to start, plan and campaign and can be downloaded at:

www.etuc.org/a/10376

- It is also highlighted in the unionlearn publication *Stewarding the Green Skills Agenda* which can be downloaded from its website at:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/stewarding-green-skills-agenda

- And it appears in the TUC Green Workplaces/Labour Research Department (LRD) publication *Green Unions at Work 2012* which is available from LRD price £9 for a single copy.

www.lrdpublications.org.uk/all_issues.php?pub=OT



Wakefield and District Housing’s Paul Lisle (left) and Denis Doody (third from left) with Cannock Chase District Council UCATT reps and officers, and reps and officers from UCATT Head Office and Midlands Region.

Learning to Go Green@Work at WDH

Being part of the TUC and ETUC GreenWorkplaces projects has provided UCATT with the opportunity to further develop learning and skills and link them with the green agenda.

WDH and UCATT have been successfully working in partnership on learning and skills since 2004. There is a learning agreement in place and eleven UCATT union learning representatives (ULRs) encourage workers to take up the learning and training opportunities on offer.



UCATT reps and managers at the Learning to Go Green@Work briefing at WDH

Having secured agreement with WDH's HR, training and environmental departments for paid time off for union reps to attend an on-site GoingGreen@Work course, the union ran a one-day briefing session. The course used 'blended learning' techniques in the classroom and included additional off-course activities on workforce development, bargaining around the green agenda, vocational-related training and community engagement.

UCATT National Project Worker Steve Craig and WDH Environmental Manager and UCATT Executive Council member Denis Doody led the session, with input from UCATT ULR and recently qualified apprentice Luke Dickenson and WDH Sustainability Manager Ben Stone.

The briefing set out why climate change is a trade union issue and the benefits of trade union and worker

participation in greening the workplace. It covered environmental impact assessments and mapping workplace environmental concerns.

And it looked at developing and sustaining management, union, community and apprentice involvement in tackling climate change and securing environmental improvements.

Those taking part in the course came from across the joint-union lay representative structure and involved company representatives with responsibilities for delivering WDH's environment and sustainability agenda, both within the company and beyond through community engagement.

The briefing contributes to on-going environmental activities that include:

- A travel to work survey;
- Energy monitoring at every WDH office, contact point and depot; and

Shadow Housing Minister visits Wakefield and District Homes

Shadow Housing Minister Jack Dromey MP joined UCATT General Secretary Steve Murphy at Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) in March 2013.



UCATT General Secretary Steve Murphy and WDH Environmental Manager and UCATT Executive Member Denis Doody with Shadow Housing Minister Jack Dromey at Park Dale.

Following a tour of WDH new build and retrofit projects during which he spoke to apprentices about their training and experiences, Mr Dromey said: *"WDH builds homes and strong communities and rebuilds lives. With an impressive leadership and workforce represented by UCATT, it is nothing short of remarkable what WDH has achieved in a district that was hard hit by pit closures."*

He added: *"I will never forget the proud family of four telling me how their new home built by WDH had transformed their lives. And I will never forget the bounce in the step of the WDH apprentices waxing lyrical about their pride in their jobs. WDH and UCATT can be proud of what they have achieved, a remarkable success story in tough times."*

- A 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' waste campaign that has already doubled collections for paper and cardboard recycling. Energy-saving practices in WDH offices include:

- recycling paper, cardboard, plastic and cans;
- using energy efficient lighting;
- asking employees to use glasses instead of plastic cups; and
- turning waste paper into notebooks.

"We are already working well in partnership on both the learning and the green agendas at Wakefield and District Housing," said Denis. *"The Going Green@Work briefing session helped us to further develop the skills, confidence and ability of our reps to help them make sure that the whole workforce is onboard in delivering sustainability both within the company, and externally by engaging with the local community."*

"The developing green economy provides a number of opportunities for UCATT to recruit and organise workers and engage in this rapidly growing industrial sector,"

said UCATT General Secretary Steve Murphy.

"UCATT wants to be ahead of the curve in progressing initiatives around the green agenda and our UCATT reps and activists have a key role to play in influencing developments in this important area."



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