

CHESTER WORLD DEVELOPMENT FORUM REPORT ON ACTIVITIES MAY 2015 TO APRIL 2016



CWDF is committed to the worldwide ending of poverty and hunger within the context of respect for the earth and sustainable development. We encourage local action to help achieve this goal through a number of key objectives.

Another year has passed, and we have sought to keep our key objectives in mind in our programme. Once again, we have focused on climate change, food security and tax avoidance. We have aimed to keep our members up to date on these issues before our members, raising awareness and taking what actions we can. For example, in June 2015 a number of Forum members went to London to join in the demonstration on Climate Change and to lobby our new MP, Christian Matheson.

Before the UK General Election in May 2015, we organised a hustings meeting with the International Development Studies of Chester University at the University. All four prospective Parliamentary Candidates for Chester attended, along with a very good number of members of the public. Since he was elected, we have had a number of contacts with Chris Matheson. On Monday 21 December 2015 we held a special session of the Forum so that he could share some aspects of life at Westminster for a new MP, and some of his experiences in Parliamentary committees and debates.



Gill Miller with the line-up of candidates at our pre-election meeting, April 2015

This year has been most important on the world stage, with the replacement of the UN's existing Millennium Development Goals with the new, broader Sustainable Development Goals which run to 2030, and the agreement of Climate Change objectives by world leaders in Paris in December. These are immensely significant agreements, but our great concern is about their implementation and how we can keep abreast of what real progress is being made.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



So, in September 2015, Gill Miller gave us a talk about the Sustainable Development Goals, and Forum members asked questions. Gill's talk and the subsequent discussion were very helpful, revealing the vast range of issues which make it so difficult to keep the details in mind. This February, we joined with the International Studies Department of Chester University to host a talk on

Climate change. Rob Elsworth, who had been at the Paris meetings as part of the CAFOD team, outlined what had happened and what had been agreed. This event was very well attended.

Another joint meeting with the University was held in October 2015, when Paul Tacon (UN Economic and Social Commission, based in Bangkok) gave his personal insights on "Global Migration: who's in charge?" Again, this was a very helpful, well attended, event.

Our re-designed web site continues to be a very important communication tool, but we have recently had a major issue due to the site being 'hacked'. It is now back up and running but needs more work to restore full operation and ensure it is safe for the future.

BRIEF REPORTS ON REGULAR FORUM MEETINGS

May 2015 CWDF AGM: Officers and Committee members were elected and a financial report was given and accepted. Subscription levels were not changed. Before the business meeting we heard from two VSO Volunteers who had worked on education projects in Rwanda.

July 2015: We had a very informative talk about the charity *Ripple Africa*, and their work in Malawi. We were very impressed by the difference they were making for local people near Lake Malawi. Stephen Maund, who gave the talk, also met the Committee in March 2016 to explain about a new micro-finance project he is hoping to establish in Malawi.

September 2015: This was the meeting in which Gill Miller explained about the UN's new Sustainable Development Goals as noted above.

November 2015: Brian & Katy Rowe give us their "*Reflections on Palestine*" based on their recent visit to Israel and the West Bank. This illustrated the great difficulties faced by the Palestinian people in everyday life.

January 2016: Becky Reeve, a young student living in Chester, told us about her 3-month trip to Togo working with the International YMCA as part of the DfID International Citizen Service programme. Living with a local family, she helped with children in an orphanage, helped in a hospital and a school, and carried out educational work in a prison.

March 2016: CWDF member Heather Swainston, Director of CDEC Developing Global Learning, told us about her work promoting Fairtrade in Cheshire schools. Heather showed slides about visits she had hosted by Fairtrade partners from various countries, and showed a short film about the impact and benefits of Fairtrade in a community growing tea in Malawi.



Becky Reeve volunteering in Togo

OTHER ISSUES

During the past year, we have written to both Stephen Mosley and Chris Matheson about important issues to us, including Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). This is of great concern to our members, many of whom have campaigned on TTIP through Global Justice Now and 38 Degrees. We keep in close touch with many development charities: CAFOD, Christian Aid, Action Aid, Tear Fund, War on Want, and Oxfam. Our regular Diary keeps members informed of events in the area.

During Fairtrade Fortnight, we organised a Fairtrade Breakfast at the Quaker Meeting House and some of our members went to meet an olive farmer from Palestine, hearing about his work and the benefits to him trading with Fairtrade partnership Zaytoun.



Finance

We seek to keep our subscriptions low, essentially to do little more than to cover our costs. Our largest single expenditure is to the Unity Centre where we hold regular Forum meetings. It is in a convenient central location. For our joint meetings with the University, we are very fortunate in having access to the facilities at the Best Building. We are very grateful indeed to Gill Miller and the Department of Geography and International Development for these arrangements. We hope their students benefit from the events and speakers we bring to them.

As in previous years, within our limited budget we were still able to respond to appeals: we donated £100 to Nepal Earthquake relief work through DEC; £50 to Ripple Africa; and £25 to support student Becky Reeve.

Membership

Membership for 2015 stood at 23 individual members and 21 organisations. In addition, our Diary updates are emailed to a wider circle of interested people and groups.

And Finally...

There has been considerable progress in decreasing poverty and hunger, but major challenges remain which are being exacerbated by Climate Change. There is still a huge amount for us to learn about, and to take what action we can towards achieving our objectives in a new CWDF year. It would also be good to recruit new members, especially if they reduce our average age!

Terry Green
CWDF Chair, May 2016

CWDF Participating Groups: Amnesty International Chester & Wrexham Group, CDEC – Developing Global Learning, Cheshire Asian & Minority Communities Council, Chester Bahai's, Chester CAFOD Support Group, Chester Christian Aid Committee, Chester CND, Chester Fair Trading, Chester Friends of Palestine, Chester Humanists, Chester Quaker Meeting, Friends of the Earth Chester & District, Holy Trinity Church Blacon One World Group, Hoole URC, Hooton & Ellesmere Port Catholic Church Justice & Peace Group, St Columba's Third World Group, United Nations Association, University of Chester Dept of Geography & International Development, VSO Cheshire Supporter Group, Wesley Church Centre, Wirral Trade Justice Group.

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