

CHESTER WORLD DEVELOPMENT FORUM REPORT ON ACTIVITIES MAY 2013-MAY 2014



A change of scene!

Since last year's AGM there has been a significant change in the regular organisation of the Forum: last Autumn we left St. Peter's and now meet for our regular bi-monthly meetings at The Unity Centre. This has meant a change of day from Mondays to Tuesdays. Feedback has been positive about the new venue - for example lighting is better BUT the rental is higher (£30 rather than £15).

FORUM REGULAR MEETINGS:

The year's programme at our regular meetings included ongoing business, along with a wide range of topics led by speakers, some invited guests, some our own members:

May 2013, CWDF AGM

The business meeting was followed by Forum member Terry Green providing an update on development work in Ethiopia.

July 2013, Forum meeting

Here we had talks by two of our members, Peter Hobson on the activities of the Chester and Wrexham Group of Amnesty International, and Andrew Herbert on the Chester and Ellesmere Port Foodbank (subsequently extended and renamed the West Cheshire Foodbank).

September 2013, Forum meeting

Forum member Susan Flynn talked on Merseyside United Reformed Churches' work over the years with the women of Malawi, going on to mention her own involvement in a new project using African fabrics in garment fashion.

November 2013

On this occasion it was decided that our regular Forum meeting should make way for the one-day conference "Food Matters" - see comments below.

January 2014, Forum meeting

Speakers Tony and Anne Ellis on their orphanage work with the charity "China Concern".

February 2014

Showing of the film "The UK Gold" about the financial workings and influence of the City: followed by discussion led by David Hardman

March 2014, Forum meeting

Invited speaker Dominic Cadman on aspects of climate change, power needs in the UK and renewable her and in developing countries.

April 2014, Forum meeting

This was an additional Forum meeting, held during the Parliamentary Easter recess, giving the opportunity for Stephen Mosley MP to address our members and have a wide-ranging discussion on development issues at an important time, just one year from a general election.

OTHER KEY EVENTS:

June 2013, Chester Green Day

This was held in Chester Town Hall, organised by Transition Chester. CWDF presence included a stall in the Town Hall itself, and a table outside for the signing of cards in support of the national campaign "Enough Food for Everyone IF..."



November 2013, "Food Matters"

This was CWDF's major event of the year, a one-day conference arranged in association with the University of Chester's Department of Geography and Development Studies and held in Best Building on the University's Chester campus.



"Food Matters" featured a major keynote lecture by Patrick Mulvany, formerly Senior Policy Adviser for the international development charity Practical Action, and author of works on sustainable agriculture - essential for both food and livelihood security.

The Day also included four workshop sessions led by leading NGOs, each repeated so that all delegates had the opportunity to participate in two of the workshops. These were:

- **Christian Aid** on the topic of Tax Dodging,
- **CAFOD** (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) on Small Farmers,
- **Action Aid** on Food, Not Fuel - exploring the adverse implications of crops as biofuels.
- **Oxfam** on "the Companies Behind the Brands".

This active involvement by the NGOs added a great deal to the Day, and their efforts were very much appreciated.

The audience of around 90 was greeted by the University's Vice Chancellor Prof Tim Wheeler, setting the scene for a very stimulating day - and another very significant development in the links and cooperation between CWDF and the Department of Geography and Development Studies and the active and very welcome support provided by Senior Tutor Gill Miller.

The audience included a good number of students, giving a healthy span of ages for the event!

A full account of the Day's proceedings has been circulated to all participants, and is available on the CWDF website.

Forum Income & Expenditure

We keep our subscription levels low, essentially set to cover our own administration expenses. Given the great increase in postage costs, at subscription renewal time we did give members the opportunity to choose to receive our circulated information by email or by post - and a good number of members have gone for the email option.

The AGM will receive a separate financial report, but we can record here that during the year the Forum has been able to give donations in response to a number of emergency appeals:

- £100 to the DEC's Syrian refugee appeal
- £100 to the DEC's Philippines Typhoon appeal
- £200 to Oxfam's Syrian refugee appeal.

Membership & Communications

Currently, our membership extends to 24 organisations and 26 individual members. In addition, we send our Diary updates and other event notifications via email on to a larger circle of interested people.

Our AGM report last year expressed the hope that an improved website would be developed with technical help available through the "SkillShare" project administered through the Chester CVA. This proved very successful, and the new website www.chesterwdf.org.uk is much more attractive and, crucially, much easier to keep up to date and be used as a reliable source of information for upcoming events.

The CWDF Year:

Overall, an interesting, varied and stimulating year, with good exposure of CWDF and its areas of activity to a wider audience. No let-up seen for the next 12 months!

*Kath Stephenson & Bernard Payne
On behalf of CWDF Committee, May 2014*