

CHESTER WORLD DEVELOPMENT FORUM REPORT ON ACTIVITIES MAY 2017 TO APRIL 2018



CWDF continues to be fully committed to the worldwide ending of poverty and hunger, within the context of respect for the earth and sustainable development. We do our best to encourage and take part in local action to help achieve these goals.

Another year has passed and we have sought to keep these goals in mind in our programme and in the key issues we seek to pursue. We have particularly focused on climate change and allied issues such as fracking and the sustainability of natural resources. But 2018 is also the year in which we celebrate 25 years since CWDF began. This has led us to reflect on what we have achieved over the past 25 years, while planning to ensure a sustainable future in a quite different world that still has the key issues we were founded to confront. We recognize need to encourage a wider membership and to see how we might work more effectively with other local groups.

Reflecting on our future, we arranged for a group of Chester University students to carry out a review of our organisation and suggest changes we might make to ensure that we were in a good position to develop in the future. They made recommendations, particularly about how we might use social media and further develop our website. They gave a PowerPoint presentation to our 2017 AGM, backed up by written reports supplied a little while later.

International Development Studies
with
Chester World Development Forum
and
International Development Society

Meet Chris Matheson
MP for Chester

Friday 26 January
7 – 9pm

*An informal Question Time on
international development issues in these
turbulent times*

Best Building CBB013
Everyone welcome

The General Election in June 2017 resulted in our MP, Chris Matheson, increasing his majority significantly. Again we have been glad to keep in contact with him, and he came to a special meeting at the University in January 2018 for a Q&A session about a number of issues affecting world development. The meeting was arranged jointly with the students' International Development Society - but although the overall attendance was good attendance by IDS members was disappointingly low.


The UN's Sustainable Development Goals are still key considerations in world development and a majority of nations are signed up to them, but we still have difficulty in getting information on progress. Refugees moving into Cheshire West

under a Government Scheme has been an important development this past year and a number of members are involved in that area.

Our links with Geography and International Development at the University of Chester are highly important to us, and although Gill Miller is now *Senior Lecturer Emerita* we are delighted that she is still able to facilitate joint meetings. One such event was in October 2017 when William Tacon gave a very informative and interesting talk on his work as a volunteer in Bhutan, helping local entrepreneurs start up and develop their businesses. This gave us very encouraging glimpses of a country most of us knew little about: "The Land of the Thunderdragon".

Geography and International Development
Chester World Development Forum
Encouraging Local Action for a Fairer World

**Developing Entrepreneurship in the
Land of the Thunder Dragon:**
Challenges of doing business in Bhutan



Lecturer:
William Tacon

William Tacon is a consultant for the Lushan Foundation which promotes development through education, learning and entrepreneurship in Bhutan. William is a member and mentor who supports entrepreneurs' experiences through the creation of new social and sustainable businesses.

Tuesday 10 October 7.30pm
Best Building CBB115,
Chester campus
Everyone welcome



Another important link for the Forum was that with the Cheshire Development Education Centre and its founder Heather Swainston. Sadly, CDEC was wound up in September 2017 after 20 years of remarkable work with schools and young people. Fortunately, Heather remains active as a consultant. She was key to the success of "Fairtrade Funday" at the new Storyhouse complex in March 2018, held during Fairtrade Fortnight.

The CWDF website is still an important communications outlet with full details of all our events. We regularly communicate with members giving them updated information of our events and events of partner organisations through our Diary, minutes of meetings, and details of talks at meetings. The Diary is highly regarded by members. By making more use of email, we have been successful in reducing the number of documents we post to members, reducing costs.

FORUM REGULAR MEETINGS

May 2017 CWDF AGM: Officers and Committee members (Terry Green, John Tacon, Bernard Payne, Gerald Grant, Annie McCarthy, Lindsay Cussons and Vicki Jenner) were elected, and a financial report given and accepted. We also had an illuminating talk *Chester Zoo's Conservation Work* by Cat Barton, Field Conservation Manager at Chester Zoo. This looked especially at the Zoo's work in SE Asia to achieve sustainable palm oil plantations. This is coupled with work to prevent the destruction of natural forests which are important habitat for animals, especially orangutans, and in helping reduce the impact of climate change.

July 2017: at this meeting we had a very informative illustrated talk *"Three Jumbos Crash in a Day"* by retired hospital consultant John Williams about numerous visits to Cambodia to help local hospitals improve their medical and maternity services. (The title of the talk referring to the shockingly high numbers of maternity-related deaths in that country.)

September 2017: this was the start of the Forum's 25th year, and we had a very informative illustrated review of our activities since 1992/3 by Bernard Payne: *"An active past, aiming for a sustainable future"*. We also reflected on the recommendations of the review carried out by the university students (see above). This was followed by suggestions and comments from members which were then taken up by the Committee.

November 2017: at this meeting we had an illustrated talk by Colin Watson who spoke expertly about *"Fracking, not welcome here - or anywhere"*. With proposals for fracking nearby, this was very detailed and helpful in providing much information as to why fracking should be resisted.



January 2018: we had a very well attended evening with a very informative presentation by Sarah Rowe, Campaigns Strategy Lead with Christian Aid, telling us about their "Big Shift" campaign, including the themes of *Climate Change and Displacement* - the latter referring to all those millions forced to leave their homes but still within their own country borders - thus not officially "refugees".



January 2018: we had an additional meeting at Chester University chaired by Gill Miller. This was the Q&A session on international development issues, with Chris Matheson MP, referred to above.

March 2018: at this meeting Mike Johnson, Chair of Wrexham and Chester Amnesty Group (one of our member groups), told us about *the work of Amnesty International* - particularly in supporting prisoners of conscience. We then spent time filling out cards to send to some of these prisoners.

Forum finances are mainly needed to pay for room hire for our regular meetings at the Unity Centre plus small administrative costs. This has meant that we were able to give a donation to Christian Aid as a thank you for the talk by Sarah Rowe in January.

We have sought to keep abreast of key issues in world development and members are involved in a variety of groups and activities involved with world development. We see some glimpses of progress, but so much political effort still seems to go on Brexit in the UK and changes of leadership in the USA that world development appears to be very much on the back burner!

Nonetheless, we must continue to have a very positive focus for action, individually, and as a Forum and through campaigning groups on climate change, for achieving sustainable development goals, maintaining the overseas aid commitment, and a compassionate approach to refugees.

Terry Green
CWDF Chair
May 2018

CWDF Participating Groups:

Amnesty International Chester & Wrexham Group, And Albert, 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 Quaker Meeting, Holy Trinity Church Blacon One World Group, Hooton & Ellesmere Port Catholic Church Justice & Peace Group, St Columba's Third World Group, University of Chester Dept of Geography & International Development, Wesley Church Centre.

www.chesterwdf.org.uk