

CHESTER WORLD DEVELOPMENT FORUM REPORT ON ACTIVITIES MAY 2019 TO APRIL 2020



CWDF continues to be very committed to the worldwide ending of poverty and hunger, within the context of respect for the earth and sustainable development, and we do our best to encourage and take part in local action to help achieve these goals. It seems to get more challenging with such a range of activities to be covered. **Climate Change** is paramount but other aspects such as poverty, education, health, refugees and all other areas of the **Sustainable Development Goals** are so important. Sadly Sustainable Goals hardly seem get a mention these days.

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 focussed on climate change and allied issues such as fracking and sustainability. The big challenge now is how we can ensure a sustainable future in a quite different world, but which still has the key issues which we were founded to confront. We have been concerned that our membership was not increasing but in the last few months we have had a few new members



Climate Demo, Town Hall Sq 20-9-19

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. This year, Brexit remained a key issue but at the end of January, following the General Election, the UK left the European Union and future trade arrangements must be settled by the end of 2020. From January, however, the world has been hit with the **Covid19 pandemic** which has led to the indeterminate lockdown of 'normal' life in most parts of the world.

Here in Chester the lockdown has led to the cancellation or postponement of a whole raft of events and the shutting down of important venues such as the University, The Unity Centre, Storyhouse, and the Cathedral. Events listed in the CWDF Diary which had to be cancelled include Friends of the Earth's Sustainable Chester Fair, CWDF's Q&A session with Chris Matheson MP (both in March), the talk "Is Africa Developing" at the University (April), and "Our Journey to Sustainability", the week-long event in Chester Cathedral organised by Chester Sustainability Forum. It may also prove necessary to postpone CWDF's AGM, currently scheduled for 12th May.

REGULAR MEETINGS THROUGH THE YEAR

In **May 2019** we held our Annual Meeting when Committee and officers were elected. This was preceded by a very comprehensive talk by **Shantelle Janes**, Director of CHAWREC about their work, with particular focus on Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

In **July** we developed our thinking about Climate Crisis with a most informative talk by **Linda and Stewart Shuttleworth**, both clinical psychologists, on 'The Psychology of Apathy about Climate Change'.

In **September** **Andy Scargill** and **Christian Dunn** told us about the Countess of Chester Country Park and the plan for a significant area of wetlands aligned with the Country Park which would have a local positive impact on the storage of carbon. Christian put this in the global context of wetlands as carbon stores.

Then in **November** we had a talk by **Natalia Jancewicz** on the theme "Degrowth": the reduction in consumption for social and ecological sustainability. This is vital because economic growth as presently understood, cannot continue indefinitely because resources are finite and injustice and inequality are consequences. We need to change our values and to develop community projects and work much more together between people and countries.

In **January 2020** Colin Watson gave us an outline of climate change issues: how we should be tackling them and an outline of Cheshire West and Chester's plan of action to deal with climate emergency locally. This was a very significant meeting for us as Climate Change has been a key issue for CWDF this year.

In **March 2020** Linda and Stewart Shuttleworth gave us a most informative talk on their personal involvement with the Charity "Jamie's Fund" which supports the development of mental health care in Uganda. The Forum gave a donation to the Fund - as did a number of individual members present at the meeting.

As mentioned above, we had to cancel the Q & A evening with our local MP Chris Matheson in March - itself planned as a replacement for a session in early January which came too soon after December's General Election and the Christmas holiday period. The desire for a Q&A session remains!

OTHER ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES



Our links with **International Development Studies, Chester University** are still most important to us, facilitated by Gill Miller. A joint evening was held in November when Jane Fisher, Centre for Alternative Technology in Machynlleth gave us a comprehensive talk on the history of the Centre and the results of research on how the Britain should be moving towards "Zero Carbon".

Other University lectures on "Introducing the Chester Wetland Centre" by Dr Christian Dunn and on "Towards a Geography of Industrial Carbonisation" by Prof Joseph Howe were publicised by CWDF and a number of members attended the lectures.

Communications are very important, and our website is a most important communications outlet, with full details of our own events and events arranged by other organisations. We regularly communicate with members by email giving them updated information of our events and events of partner organisations through the Diary. Minutes of meetings and details of

talks at meetings are also circulated, the great majority by electronic mail. The Diary is highly regarded by members and member organisations.

The Committee has produced a new CWDF A5 size Leaflet particularly aimed at people we meet at outside events and often have no knowledge at all about CWDF. This will be ready soon - and certainly in time for any lifting of the current lockdown.

Members have attended events on refugees, meetings at Quaker Meeting House, and we are members of the Chester Sustainability Forum. We support City of Sanctuary who are now members of CWDF. We maintain close contact with Chester & District Friends of the Earth and took part in the Eco Communities Sustainable Chester Winter Fair held in November.

Our **finances** are mainly needed to pay for room hire for our regular meetings at the Unity Centre plus fairly low administrative costs. This has meant that we have been able to give a number of donations: £50 to Global Justice Now, £25 to Campaign Against Arms Trade, and £25 to "Jamie's Fund". Again we did not increase subscriptions, remaining at £15 group and £8 individual memberships.

CONCLUSION

We now move into another year for CWDF, and as soon as lockdown arrangements allow we aim to maintain our important focus on Climate Emergency by hosting key events and supporting events hosted by member organisations. Through our representation at the Chester Sustainability Forum we are also involved in key developments in Chester. We also try to keep up with progress for achieving sustainable development goals, maintaining the overseas aid commitment, and a compassionate approach to refugees. At times our resources are stretched and we cannot always make the impact we should like; but, thankfully, what we are able to do does make impact, particularly in keeping us focussed. Climate Emergency is most important to CWDF because we are so concerned that Climate Change will hit poorer countries and poorer people first.

*Terry Green
CWDF Chair
April 2020*

CWDF Participating Groups:

Amnesty International Chester & Wrexham Group, Cheshire Asian & Minority Communities Council, Chester Bahai's, Chester CAFOD Support Group, Chester Christian Aid Committee, Chester CND, Chester City of Sanctuary, Chester Fair Trading, Chester Friends of Palestine, Chester Quaker Meeting, Holy Trinity Church Blacon One World Group, Our Lady's Justice & Peace Group, St Columba's Third World Group, University of Chester Dept of Geography & International Development, Wesley Church Centre, Wirral Trade Justice Group

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