

# Chester World Development Forum

## Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 09 May 2023, 7pm at The Unity Centre, Chester



Before the business part of the AGM ...

**Steve Hughes, Chair of the Chester Sustainability Forum gave us an overview of some of the initiatives, campaigns and events currently happening or being developed by members of CSF.**

Steve began by giving the Forum a brief explanation of how the Sustainability Forum came into being. Steve himself had been concerned about sustainability for some time, and this led him to devise his first project as “**Forest City Projects**” – the three “Super Trees” in the sunken garden near the Bus Interchange. He raised some of the money for this project by running marathons.

His second project was the installation of a **giant 5-metre hare sculpture** at the roundabout in Rough Hill near Dogleston. This project was a partnership between Chester-based Meadow Foods, the UK’s largest independently owned dairy group, and Forest City Projects, who now specialise in creating spaces that inspire and educate people about the importance of biodiversity and climate issues.



*Concept designs of the new hare roundabout by Forest City Projects.  
Picture: Russell Kirk.*

The Chester Sustainability Forum came into being as a result of agreements made at the time of the 2019 General Election. The then newly-elected MP Chris Matheson attended most CSF meetings and Colin Watson was its first Chair. Chester’s new MP Samantha Dixon fully supports CSF’s projects and initiatives.

The Forum is made up of individual groups all interested in sustainability. There are 4 main projects at present which the Forum is supporting:

### **Nature Recovery Programme**

Now with new funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Green Recovery Challenge Fund, Chester Zoo is developing an entire 'Nature Recovery Corridor'. The purpose of a wildlife corridor is to connect fragmented patches of habitat in order to form a functioning ecosystem over a large area. Once it is completed, Chester Zoo's Nature Recovery Corridor will extend for 10 miles, connecting habitats reaching south of Chester through to Ellesmere Port in the north, with the aim of turning the area into a thriving example of what British nature can be. More details can be found on the website [chesterzoo.org](http://chesterzoo.org).

### **Green Expo 15 to 17 June on the Riverside and Castle Drive**

The Green Expo includes a student conference on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June co-ordinated and run entirely by young people under the auspices of the Youth Climate Action Network. For more information, visit [greenexpo.uk](http://greenexpo.uk).

It is followed by the Active Travel Festival on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June at Chester Castle lower car park. ATFest's aim is to inspire local residents of all ages and abilities to make cleaner, greener, healthier and sustainable transport choices in their everyday lives. For example, schools and other groups are being encouraged to join in by travelling to Chester City Centre for the event via the four Park and Ride sites.

### **"Slow the Flow"**

Sam Dixon has initiated this project because of widespread concerns over discharges of water contaminated with sewage into the River Dee at The Groves. It is acknowledged that the the best solution would be a complete overhaul of the present infrastructure, but this would be very costly and take too long. However, there are simple things we can do locally to mitigate the impact of heavy rainfall which causes discharges of water mixed with sewage from the combined storm overflows (CSOs). These CSOs act as the "safety valves" of our old combined sewerage and drainage system. They are designed to operate when peak flows are simply too large to contain within the system and the excess water spills into the river. The aim of "Slow the Flow" is to hold back water, reducing peak flows and hopefully cutting the number of CSO discharges into the River Dee. A project by Welsh Water has identified 40 possible sites in and around the centre of Chester for interventions under the banner of "Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems". This proven technology has been implemented in Sheffield. It includes water parks which slow the water flow, with the bonus of increased biodiversity. For more information, see website [slowtheflow.net](http://slowtheflow.net).

### **HyNet**

The HyNet project in Ellesmere Port is one of three "hydrogen hubs" being developed in places identified as the most concentrated industrial areas in the UK. Teesside and Humberston are the others. Each aims to decarbonise the heavy industries in its local cluster. It believes the only way this can be done is through production of hydrogen as a fuel to replace traditional fossil fuels.

HyNet NorthWest is made up of several different elements and together these will provide the infrastructure to produce, transport and store 'low carbon hydrogen' across the North West and North Wales. There will also be infrastructure to capture, transport and lock away carbon dioxide emissions from the cluster. It will upgrade existing infrastructure as well as create new pipelines, hydrogen production plants, and storage facilities. Carbon dioxide will be stored in depleted gas wells in Liverpool Bay. Work is due to start in 2026.

For more information visit the website [hynet.co.uk](http://hynet.co.uk).

Terry Green thanked Steve for his most interesting presentation

## Annual General Meeting

### 1. **Welcome:** Terry Green chaired the meeting

**Present:** Lindsay Lloyd-Cussons (Bahai's), Terry Green, Peter Speirs (Quakers), Terry Walsh, Bernard Payne (St Columba's Third World Group), John Tacon, Gill Miller, Andrew Needham (CPRE), Angela Macquiban (Christian Aid and Wesley Methodist), Tom Ormiston (Our Lady's Justice and Peace Group, Ellesmere Port), Ann McCarthy(Cafod). Arnold Wilks joined remotely via Zoom.

**Apologies:** Heather Swainston (Chester Fairtrading), Linda and Stuart Shuttleworth, and Tony Walsh (Our Lady's Justice and Peace Group).

### 2. **Consideration of Annual Report circulated with this agenda:**

No matters arising.

Tom Ormiston proposed it be accepted and Andrew Needham seconded.

### 3. **Consideration of Annual Financial report:**

JT as Treasurer commented on the report.

Peter Speirs proposed it be accepted and Tom Ormiston seconded.

### 4. **Election of Committee, Chair and Treasurer:**

The present chair, Terry Green, Treasurer John Tacon, and the present committee made up of Lindsay Lloyd-Cussons, Bernard Payne, Gill Miller and Ann McCarthy all agreed to continue until end of year. Members present agreed to this.

### 5. **Future of CWDF - paper attached:**

- Arnold Wilkes suggested that CWDF finish at the end of the year but could perhaps continue as an "information gatherer" via the website.
- JT had received a message from Martin Evans (formerly Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for International Development Studies at University of Chester) that closure of CWDF seems sadly a fact of life - a sign of the times. There doesn't seem to be the same level of interest in development issues, and fewer people generally turn out for meetings since Covid.
- Members expressed the feeling that it would be good to keep a web page going but that it has to be kept up to date. Question is who would do that?
- The CWDF Diary seems to be important. Sometimes the Diary is full, and at other times contains relatively few events. But does the information already go out through other groups or channels? Three main groups send entries for the Diary – church-based, Fairtrade, and Eco-Communities.
- The committee will discuss the options and put forward a plan

### 6. **Website/Social Media:**

No movement at present. It needs to have a message for the future. The key elements of the website appear to be the Diary, archive of minutes of meetings, and events flyers. We are now monitoring the 'traffic' on our website to guide if and how we should maintain it.

### 7. **Future CWDF events:**

**Thursday 13 July** - Sam Dixon, MP for the City of Chester. We have asked her to give us her impressions of Parliament, her role as a PPS, and the goals of Labour policies on development issues.

**Tuesday 19 September** - Gill Miller will give a talk on “Dealing with disease; the role of global institutions and local players”.

**Tuesday 14 November** – a talk by CWDF member Peter Speirs and Philip Austin – co-ordinator of Northern Friends of Peace Board – on initiatives in working for peace, many based in the Quaker movement.

**8. Any reports from members on events in their organizations:**

- Christian Aid ‘Lent Lunches’ in March were very successful. Different venues were used this year. The number of people attending varied but the largest was 66, and total donations were up.
- Andrew Needham commented that he feels that churches are not taking reaching carbon Net Zero by 2030 seriously enough!

**9. AOB:**

Tax Justice Sunday is 11<sup>th</sup> June.

Refugee Week is 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> June.

**10. Date of next meeting: Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> July 7pm at The Unity Centre**