

Chester World Development Forum Annual Report May 2022 to April 2023

This has been a full year of face to face meetings at The Unity Centre after the Covid Pandemic. But we have continued to provide a Zoom facility for members who are still unsure about being at face to face meetings. Throughout the year we have been very conscious that people in Developing countries with limited vaccination facilities have struggled much more than people in western nations with Covid. We have also continued to be most concerned about Climate Justice and that insufficient action was being taken around the world to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees; the consequences of this are most evident in Developing countries.

Regular Meetings through the Year

On 10 May 2022, we had our AGM when the Annual Report and Financial Report were agreed and officers and Committee agreed. A Government Review of the issue of Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament was also considered. It was agreed that a letter be sent to the Foreign Secretary expressing concern about the proposed increase in nuclear weapons, especially following the decrease in Overseas Aid. Concerns were also expressed that fewer members were attending meetings and that we were not attracting new members. If this didn't change, we might have to consider whether CWDF should continue. A focal point in 2023 would be our 30 years anniversary in June.

In June, we supported the 'Great Big Green Week' event held in the Grosvenor Park, Chester. In July, CWDF members Linda and Stewart Shuttleworth gave us a most interesting presentation on their ongoing work in Uganda to improve mental health services in this large developing country. In September, Dr Mark Bendall, Senior Lecturer in the University of Chester Department of Social and Political Science, led us in a most informative and challenging session entitled "Challenges in global politics: mis-use and mis-governance". This was concerning the unappreciated power of autocratic institutions and global companies to have significant impacts on people using their services. Our final meeting of 2022 was in November when Paul Tacon, ILO Migration Team, Geneva, gave a talk via Zoom at the University of Chester about migration. It was so helpful to have good information and to understand the world situation.

Our first meeting in 2023 was held at The Unity Centre on 10 January. We usually invite our MP to speak to us at the beginning of each year, but with a newly elected MP in Samantha Dixon, this was not possible - but we do hope that she will join us in July. Instead, Gill Miller led us in a most informative evening on "Loss and damage: understanding the dilemmas and decisions from COP27."

On 14 March, we had an enlightening and informative talk by Dr Rebecca Collins, a Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Chester, on "Current Trends and Challenges in the Global Fashion Industry". Particular concerns were soil depletion and labour exploitation in growing cotton, and the amount of water used throughout all the various processes. The bulk of the added value from raw cotton to the finished garment on sale occurs in the final stages - marketing, distribution, and retailing - which happen in the developed world and don't benefit the cotton growers at all.

Other Issues

In addition to our Forum meetings, the Committee has met monthly face to face. We have been frustrated in that during the post-Covid period there have been few opportunities to use our new CWDF leaflet created with the help of a local designer. Another aspect has been keeping our website up to date, which is very important to our communications. Most unfortunately, keeping our Facebook page updated and branching out onto Twitter has been very much more difficult since Georgina Wilson left for a teaching assignment on Ascension Island in April 2022.

We are very supportive of Fairtrade, and were therefore very pleased that there was a 'pop-up' stall in the new Chester Market during Fairtrade Fortnight; some members volunteered to be on the staffing rota and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Another important aspect of our communications is our Diary. It is issued regularly, and includes information about events put on by local groups who are members of CWDF.

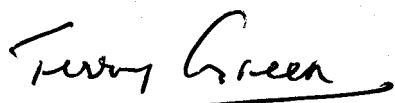
We are members of the Chester Sustainability Forum. This keeps us in touch with local sustainability issues such as the "HyNet" project, which will produce Hydrogen from natural gas as a fuel for the Ellesmere Port industrial complex. However, we have serious concerns about the proposal

for the use of Hydrogen as a replacement gas for domestic consumers in the Whitby area of Ellesmere Port.

Finance: we never have an abundance of money but we do have enough to cover our costs. Our main expenses are paying The Unity Centre for our Forum meetings there, and the hosting fee for our website. We were able to make donations to DEC to support relief of the major flooding crisis in Pakistan, and to Jamie's Fund in thanks for Linda & Stewart's talk on their work in Uganda. At the end of 2022, we had a balance of £139.84 [to be confirmed].

Conclusion

It has been so good to have held regular face to face meetings once again. But we remain most concerned about smaller numbers of members attending meetings, and that our membership is not growing and is ageing! The Committee has reluctantly come to the conclusion that CWDF should end its remarkable journey at the end of this year. We do this with much sadness but with great thankfulness for all those who have been involved and for the significant impact we have made in Chester and on many wider fronts for the Developing nations and their peoples.



Terry Green
Chair CWDF
May 2023

Participating Groups: Amnesty International Chester & Wrexham Group, Chester Baha'i Community, Chester City of Sanctuary, Chester Christian Aid Committee, Chester Fair Trading, Chester Friends of Palestine, Chester Quaker Meeting, Holy Trinity Church Blacon One World Group, Our Lady's Justice & Peace Group Ellesmere Port, St Columba's Third World Group, Transition Chester, Wesley Church Centre.