

Update

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Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

In New York during March/April and then in June/July discussions took place at the United Nations headquarters in New York. We supported NFPB member Janet Fenton to be part of the international civil society presence on both occasions. Significant progress was made, with the majority of the world's nations playing an active and positive role. The UK government, along with other nuclear powers and their allies, boycotted the talks. Janet wrote, in April of *"the positive hope, despite the accelerated new arms race, in the recognition by the majority of the world's states of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons accident or use for their citizens"*.



Janet also brought a Scottish perspective to the forum, commenting that:

"Many Scottish peace groups have also come to take a position of support for independence for Scotland. Scottish CND has produced compelling evidence that scrapping Trident would, at the very least, make it extremely difficult for any UK Government to continue its nuclear-armed foreign policy posture in the UK if Scotland became independent. Many Scots peace activists would aspire to a Scotland that can speak at the UN and participate at the highest level with the member states and consider that our objectives and interests will be far better served by a democratically elected government than anything that Westminster is offering."

122 nations agreed the treaty (formally known as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons) on 7th July. Quakers were amongst those who signed a multi-faith statement on the occasion of this historic agreement, noting:

"We recognize and applaud the courage shown by the states represented in these conferences, the invaluable efforts by the UN and other international organizations, as well as of civil society, which have resulted in the realization of this Treaty. We offer our particular respect to the hibakusha (a-bomb survivors), victims of nuclear tests and others suffering from the effects of radiation from the manufacture of nuclear weapons and environmental degradation of their homelands, whose experiences and advocacy have demonstrated that the fundamental purpose of this Treaty must be to prevent the unacceptable suffering and harm they have endured from being visited on any other individual, family or society." and concluding ... [see over]

“It is now vital that the principles and norms of this Treaty be widely disseminated among the world’s peoples in order to achieve its universal adoption and implementation. As people of faith we accept as our special responsibility the work of raising awareness of the risks and consequences of nuclear weapons for current and future generations, awakening public conscience to build a global popular constituency in support of the Treaty in order to achieve and sustain a world free from nuclear weapons.”

For information about the treaty - www.icanw.org/the-treaty
and for comment and related news - www.nuclearban.scot/

Meanwhile, NFPB members have joined with Friends and others for Meetings for Worship outside the gates of Faslane, and participated in the Trident Ploughshares camp at Coulport in July.

Workshops

We have been designing workshops on the theme of **Building Peace Together**.

The workshops will be...

- for reflection and support
- for looking at how we work together and engage with the wider community in our concern to take positive action for peace.

We are also offering workshops on:

- **'Rethinking security: ideas to action'**,
- **'Productive Conversations on difficult issues'**, and on
- **'Engaging with the media – changing the narrative for peace'**.



If your Meeting or Quaker event would like support from us in planning or facilitating a workshop on a peace-related theme, we would be very pleased to hear from you and to discuss this further.

At the end of April, for example we facilitated a short workshop adapted to focus on populism. This was for Westmorland Regional Meeting, gathering in Kendal. Friends looked at what is being seen or labelled as 'populism', as well as looking at root causes of some of the tensions in society and aggressive media and political discourse. They also identified the positive opportunities and skills that Friends have and how these can be used for contributing to peace. And in June, we worked with the Merseyside Peace Network in preparation for their peace witness at the Armed Forces Day event in Liverpool later that month.

Election peace concerns

Ahead of the General Election, NFPB produced a short document commenting on some of our key peace concerns at the moment, for consideration by people before voting and discussion with candidates. In the preamble we wrote: “Our society and our planet need politics that will enable people to live sustainably, with respect for differences and diversity, promoting human rights for all. These are some of the foundations for peace.” Themes covered were: Building bridges, Shared Security, Peace in Schools, Disarmament priorities, and Sanctuary.

This is available from our website at nfpb.org.uk/GE2017



On the agenda

NFPB members' meetings are the cornerstones of our life and activities. Representatives from Northern Area Meetings have met three times since November, in York, Bolton and Dumfries. At each meeting we heard from a range of visiting speakers, reflected in worship and in discussion on particular peace challenges, and shared information and news of (mostly Quaker) peace activities around the North.

Michael Elstub of Settle Meeting was one of our speakers in York, on the subject of **Veterans for Peace**. Michael's account of his time in the army and concern for peace was very moving. VfP continue to grow in the UK and their members are keen to speak to groups to help give a fuller picture of life in the armed forces.



NFPB member and Edinburgh Friend Janet Fenton spoke at two of our meetings and described the process that had led to the UN committing itself to working towards a **global nuclear weapons ban treaty** and encouraged us to take action in urging the UK government to take a positive and active role in the forthcoming negotiations. (see front page).

Tim Gee led a session at our Bolton meeting in which he shared some of the questions and initial thinking for centrally managed Quaker work on **forced migration**. Responding to his introduction, Friends talked about the range of ways in which they are involved in providing support. They also spoke with passion about the ways in which those seeking sanctuary in this country encounter systemic hostility.

At the same meeting we were inspired to hear from Hannah Larn, a QPSW peacemaker currently based at the **Foundation for Peace** in Warrington and doing innovative work with young people.

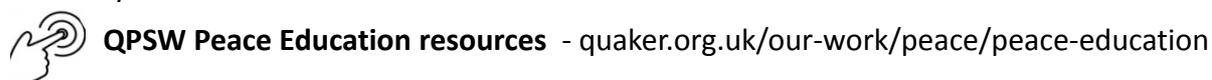


Friends in South West Scotland had been active in following up the concern of **military involvement in schools**, we heard, when we met in Dumfries. They described to NFPB members the steps they had taken to become better aware of what was happening and to raise awareness of what they had found out.

We were given an update from Martin Mansell on the work of the Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer on the same concern, working with Forces Watch through the use of a petition to the Parliament in getting and making visible information about military visits to schools.



And we heard from Ellis Brooks about the work of Quaker Peace and Social Witness in both challenging the role of military in schools and in promoting peace education alternatives. Friends were keen to share information and experiences of taking action on these issues in different parts of the country.



At our meetings, NFPB members have given time to reviewing our approaches to **communication** and building links with Local and Area Quaker Meetings. Our workshops will be seeking to provide support to Friends, but we also depend significantly on written communications, and on one-to-one contacts through our membership, to make these links work most effectively. Issues arising from our discussion in Dumfries will be taken on board to help Trustees in their wider review of

communications. Friends' wider input is welcome on what is and is not working well in this regard; please contact the NFPB office.

Other peace concerns and activities that we have heard about through our members have included.

- Quaker involvement in **Cities of Sanctuary** - cityofsanctuary.org/
- **The Peace Tax bill** that was presented to parliament - conscienceonline.org.uk/
- The work of the **Richardson Institute** in Lancaster - lancaster.ac.uk/fass/centres/richinst/
- Action relating to **remembrance and white poppies** - ppu.org.uk/whitepoppy/
- Links with the **EAPPI** programme and concerns for peace in Israel and Palestine - www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/international-work/eappi
- Action against **arms sales to Saudi Arabia** - caat.org.uk/campaigns/stop-arming-saudi
- Siting of **Peace Poles** in public places - worldpeace-uk.org/peace-poles/
- Remembrance and witness on **Conscientious Objectors' Day** - www.wri-irg.org/en/taxonomy/term/6

As well as many community activities to promote peaceful relations, to address issues of social justice, human rights and sustainability and peace.

Support and materials for Quaker activities

We are always pleased to attend, either just as participants, or as speakers or facilitators, other Quaker and non-Quaker events. Please get in touch if you would like a contribution from NFPB at your event.

We have a range of printed materials for sale and free, suitable for publicising Quaker peace concerns in your building or at a particular event. Please get in touch if you would find this helpful and to discuss what resources you might use.

NFPB Trustees – departures and arrivals

We appoint a small group of Friends to serve as Trustees, mostly from amongst the Friends who are representatives from their Area Meetings. At the end of 2016 we said goodbye to Jette Howard (Craven & Keighley AM), Chris Butler (Brighouse West Yorkshire AM) and to Philip Latham (Northumbria AM). Jette and Philip had made particular contributions as Clerk and Assistant Treasurer respectively. In January we welcomed Allison Challen (Wirral & Chester AM), Matthew Guest (Northumbria AM) and Lyn Pardo (Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire AM). Other

trustees continuing are: Robert Keeble (Leeds AM), Douglas Shaw (West Scotland AM & Clerk to Trustees), Phoebe Spence (East Cheshire AM & Treasurer) and Jill Tutton (East Scotland AM)

Social media

Our website and social media pages are regularly updated. Do visit them and do let us know if there are peace-related concerns and activities that we might help publicise through these tools.

See: <http://nfpb.org.uk>

<http://www.facebook.com/NFPB1/>

<http://twitter.com/nfpb1>

Thank you

Thank you to Area and Local Meetings in particular for their financial support during the year. We ended the year in a stronger position than we had anticipated. This has also been helped by additional contributions from individuals and grants from charitable trusts. Our Annual Report and our Accounts are available via our office and our website.
