

Update – August 2022



Northern Friends Peace Board

NFPB, Victoria Hall, Knowsley Street, Bolton BL1 2AS

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Charity SC 024632

NFPB meeting in June

NFPB members met online and in-person, in Leeds, on 18 June; thirty-three participated in the meeting during the day.



Ukraine

Regarding the continuing war, NFPB members shared information about Quaker responses, from international to local. This included input about NFPB's own and web resources (https://nfpb.org.uk/ukraine_2022/) and that of Quakers in Britain, from Oliver Robertson. From the practical and human tasks of supporting those who are victims of the war, to engagement with our government and the possibility of an international peace conference, Quakers are being led to take action in different ways.

Alongside hearing of work being undertaken, we heard of concerns regarding the challenges to our peace testimony and of seeking truth and integrity in the context of misinformation – the fog of war. There was a strong sense of solidarity with those most directly affected, including war resisters and sanctuary seekers, and with Quakers and others seeking

constructive ways forward whilst things are moving in the wrong direction in so many ways.

Trustees and staff were asked to look at how a fuller event for NFPB members and other Friends might happen, so that we have more time and space to engage with these issues.

Quaker connections

Further reports we heard included: an update from Tracey Martin, on Woodbrooke's continuing work in providing learning opportunities on peace, and social and climate justice; an outline of a Brighthouse West Yorkshire AM's concern on alternative security scenarios and the need for a radically changed approach away from militarism; and an update about the witness and awareness-raising activities of the Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign. (<https://www.themhac.uk>)

Friends shared other news and concerns from their Area and Local Meetings. We heard of regular acts of peace witness starting, continuing and resuming, with a focus on other international conflicts as well as Ukraine. Covid has negatively affected the dynamics and capacity of groups in taking action together, but new opportunities and ways of working have also emerged, we heard. Friends are also taking time to research new issues, to reflect and to develop approaches of spiritual support and upholding.

Trustees and finance

NFPB's trustees report to the each of our members meetings, and on this occasion gave a short account of a recent 'away day' they had held. They also referred Friends to the recently completed annual accounts and trustees' report*. Funding from Area Meetings has been slower coming in this year, Friends heard;

trustees hope that that source of funding will continue to make up most of our core costs. NFPB will be drawing on reserves to make up deficits during this challenging period, and will consider further use of reserves in taking our work forward.

*(see <https://nfpb.org.uk/resources/updates-and-reports>)

Looking ahead

The meeting concluded with a time of worship-sharing on leadings and openings as we move through this difficult time. We were reminded of the interconnections between our concerns and testimonies, to truth, peace, social justice and planet care, and of the need to look deeply at roots of violent conflict. At a time of collective stress and trauma, we need to support one another, to speak out but also hold space for new ideas and actions that will emerge. Love is at the heart, we heard.

Military spending vs the climate

The issue of military spending has moved up the agenda since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with growing commitment amongst NATO members to increase spending. In this difficult context, different groups continued to take action and speak out during the **Days of Action of Military Spending** during April and May. A summary of the range of activities is given by the UK steering group at: <https://demilitarize.org.uk/uk-report-on-gdams-2022/>.

One of our partners in this work, Scientists for Global Responsibility, have meanwhile published the notes from a presentation on "**The Russia-Ukraine war and the climate crisis**", given by its director, Stuart Parkinson. (see: <http://shorturl.at/BERTY>). Whilst emphasising the difficulty in obtaining specific data, the author notes that war is increasing military carbon emissions through large increases in oil consumption of military vehicles, large increases in production of military equipment and increases in energy consumption on military bases. He also notes the carbon emissions due to destruction/ damage to buildings, land etc. In a blog on the Rethinking Security website, Paul Rogers comments that the military industrial complex will benefit from the war, but at the direct expense of aid programme and moves to prevent climate breakdown (see: <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/2022/05/31/ukraine-and-global-human-security/>)

It is clear from heatwaves around the world that climate breakdown is already making many people's lives insecure. Whilst those seeking political leadership roles are becoming more vociferous in calling for military spending increases, it will be more important than ever to speak out and push for increased and sustained commitment to address climate change. For more background on peace and climate links, see our webpage at: <https://nfpb.org.uk/current-work/sustainable-security/sustainable-security-links/peace-and-climate-change/>

Nuclear weapons prohibition – next steps mapped out

The first meeting of the states parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) took place from 21-23 June in Vienna. The TPNW has not been signed by the UK, claiming that it could harm processes for the 'maintenance of international peace and security'. In spite of its disarmament obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the UK in March 2021 announced that it was going to increase its own nuclear warhead stockpile to 260 warheads (up from 195). The UK government did not attend the Vienna meeting even as observers.

NFPB is one of nearly 150 faith communities and organisations that signed an **interfaith statement**, released as the first Meeting of the States Parties (MSP) got under way in Vienna.

The statement reflects that:

"We gather at a time when the threat of nuclear annihilation feels closer than before. ... The resources currently spent on the development and maintenance of these weapons should be directed towards supporting the most vulnerable people and protecting the planet through

investing in food, education, health care and climate justice.

[And urges] ... all nuclear-weapon states to act in accordance with their commitment to nuclear disarmament and take concrete measures towards reducing nuclear threats. In a world that often seems bleak, we celebrate this first MSP as a glimmer of light and hope. Just as we come together to unite our voices and prayers beyond our own faith traditions, we applaud your commitment to multilateralism and diplomacy in a time of divisiveness and tensions. We stand with you to rid the world of nuclear weapons, and create a world where we can advance together for common security and mutual flourishing."

An overview of the **Declaration and Action Plan agreed at the Vienna meeting** can be found at: https://www.icanw.org/vienna_declaration_action_plan_overview

A **webinar** organised by CND was held in July that focussed on how to encourage UK towns and cities to support the TPNW. This can be viewed via: <https://youtu.be/UZ3QxdZFtms>

Remembering Anni Rainbow

Anni was for many years the joint coordinator for the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases and present at many, many vigils, Quaker Meetings for Worship and more at Menwith. She had also been a trustee of NFPB and Area Meeting representative. She brought passion, love, humour, insight, wisdom, friendship and determination to all she did. Her life wasn't easy, particularly in recent years, but she inspired many of us. She died on 24 June.

Anni wrote, in our publication '*The Peace Papers*' and describing her work and witness with her friend Lindis Percy... "It is hard work, begun by others working for peace down the centuries and, we hope, continued by others when we are gone. It is so good to be working with someone who shares the same values and spiritual home - there is so much to do as together we take our wee small steps for peace!"



NFPB workshops and resources

Would your Meeting or Quaker group find it helpful to have a facilitated workshop, to reflect and work together on peace concerns and action?

We are available to offer workshops with the aim to inform, inspire and support Friends. These could be varied in length to suit different groups and Meetings, from a full-day workshop to a contribution to another event, and be offered as either online or in-person events.

Please contact Philip Austin, NFPB Coordinator via: nfpb@gn.apc.org if you would like to explore options.

During the pandemic we have operated increasingly online but with more opportunities for meeting and events in person again, **printed**

materials can be useful to have available. We are working to update ours over coming months. **Current items for general outreach**, on Quakers and peace can be found on our website here:

<https://nfpb.org.uk/resources/publicity-information-outreach>.

Printed items for **sale** are available via:

<https://nfpb.org.uk/shop/>

NFPB in 2021, (a short account of our work and our finances), and the full Trustees Annual Report and Accounts can be downloaded from our website and printed copies are also available on request :

<https://nfpb.org.uk/resources/updates-and-reports/>

Rethinking Security – it's about all of us

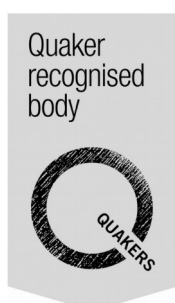
The Alternative Security Review being undertaken by this project, of which NFPB is part, aims to be inclusive and to work at many different levels. They have partnered with Coventry University's Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, from which research Zsófia Hacsek has summarised some of their initial background work. It asks '**Where are you in the story of security?**' - read it here: <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/2022/06/28/where-are-you-in-the-story-of-security>. One of their methods of engaging people is a photo project "**Visualising Security**" – you can register an interest in being involved in that via: <http://shorturl.at/gryz5>

Whilst not a formal part of the Alternative Security Review, **community conversations** about security can be a useful way of building connections, exploring issues and learning together, and identifying possibilities for action to promote positive alternatives. Updated guidance on organising such a conversation can be read and download from <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/supporters/ideas-resources/organise-a-conversation-to-rethink-security/>

Thank you!

Thank you Friends for your continuing financial support during this challenging period.

For different ways to contribute go to: <https://nfpb.org.uk/donate/>



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