

# Update - December 2020



## Northern Friends Peace Board

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## Spend on war no more

We recently contributed to a Twitterstorm – a series of tweets on the theme of UK military spending, sent out during a narrow time period and using the same hashtag, #UKDefundWar. Coordinated by the UK network of the Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS), it took place after the government announced a planned £24bn increase in military spending as well as a reduction in spending for overseas development. The GCOMS website at <https://demilitarize.org.uk> has links to a range of resources and responses to this.



The Twitterstorm also coincided with the first month of the GCOMS UK network having paid support. Matt Fawcett is now working one day a week for the coming months to help promote and support the promotion of the issues in general, and activities around the April Global Days of Action on Military Spending in particular. NFPB is pleased to be supporting this development.

It is particularly timely that there should be an increased level of engagement around spending priorities, with the pandemic and the urgency of the climate crisis highlighting security needs that simply cannot be met through armaments and militarisation. Similar concerns have led to Hebden Bridge Quakers setting up a group to undertake action under the heading of 'Swords into Ploughshares'. And NFPB is one of a number of peace organisations who are part of network that is planning further collaboration on the issue of arms conversion.

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## Nuclear weapons abolition breakthrough

*Treaty to ban nuclear weapons to come into force on 22 January 2021 following 50th ratification*

Resolution 1 of the United Nations General Assembly in January 1946 called for the setting up of a commission 'to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy', whose terms of reference ask it to establish proposals 'for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other weapons adaptable to

*mass destruction*'. Nearly 75 years on, 'could do better' would be something of an understatement.

However, a decisive step has now been taken, with the 50th state, Honduras, having ratified the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 24 October 2020, following ratifications on 23 October by Jamaica and Nauru.

The Treaty was voted in by 122 states at a conference on 7 July 2017, and opened for signature by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20 September 2017. It will enter into force 90 days after the fiftieth instrument of

ratification, acceptance, approval or accession has been deposited. That date will be 22 January 2021 (in the month that is also the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN General Assembly was convened and passed its historic first resolution.)

The process leading up to the Treaty was noteworthy for the involvement of civil society, particularly under the auspices of ICAN (<https://www.icanw.org>) – the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. Members of the ICAN network in the UK include NFPB and QPSW and there is determination amongst them to promote both knowledge and action in relation to the new Treaty over the coming years.

The Treaty (which you can read at <https://undocs.org/A/CONF.229/2017/8>) includes a



comprehensive set of prohibitions on participating in any nuclear weapon activities. These include undertakings not to develop, test, produce, acquire, possess, stockpile, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons. The Treaty also prohibits the deployment of nuclear weapons on national territory and the provision of assistance to any State in the conduct of prohibited activities.

The UK has not yet signed the Treaty, but there is support from many in wider society and in political parties. The Treaty is for multilateral disarmament. It could provide the UK with an opportunity for global leadership, for creative thinking about approaches to security that would address the real problems of our planet such as inequality, climate change and migration. We will need to maintain pressure on nuclear weapons states to act responsibly and make nuclear disarmament a political reality.

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**For further information about the Treaty - including suggestions for how you might mark the entry into law of the treaty on 22 January - visit our page here**

<https://nfpb.org.uk/tpnw-info>

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## Some news from our members

**At our November meeting, members shared news of recent activities and concerns, including:**

A **Black Lives Matter** banner outside Disley Meeting House was damaged in an arson incident, but a new banner with a message saying that 'We stand against racism' has survived. The Meeting has been shocked and is working through the range of views, showing perhaps that issues around white privilege and complicity might merit further attention. (see [https://www.eastcheshirequakers.org.uk/disley/article/arson\\_attack\\_on\\_blm\\_banner](https://www.eastcheshirequakers.org.uk/disley/article/arson_attack_on_blm_banner)).

Some of our members are active within **Quaker Roots** (formerly Roots of Resistance) which is

preparing for Quaker witness and action at the DSEI arms fair that is scheduled to take place in London at the beginning of September 2021. See <https://www.quaker-roots.org.uk/>

**Manchester and Warrington AM's Peace Promotion** group is going to be sending out mailings to Friends suggesting contacting MPs regarding the ICAN parliamentary pledge (<https://pledge.icanw.org>), and banks regarding disinvesting from nuclear weapons (see <https://moneyoutofnukes.wordpress.com/read-the-report>). Members of the group have written to local councillors with a white poppy and asking them to share views on security, picking up issues raised by Rethinking Security.

We heard of participation with **Church and Peace** in discussions around white privilege (<https://www.church-and-peace.org/en/2020/10/online-conversation-dismantling-white-privilege>), and an event to mark the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights (<https://www.church-and-peace.org/en/2020/11/conversation-human-rights-in-europe>)

Friends have also continued to be active, as best they can in the current context, in giving **support to sanctuary seekers**. This has been in practical ways

such as through provision of clothing, and advocacy and campaigning against hostile policies.

Whilst peace education activities have been limited in recent months, our attention was drawn to the **Restore framework**, which describes itself as “a lens through which staff, children and parents can look at the strategy and plans that are needed for everyone’s well-being in a fast changing environment and for a safe and healthy return to school.” See <https://restoreourschools.wordpress.com>

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## NFPB vision and strategic priorities

*In early November, NFPB members met online for their autumn business meeting, with 26 Friends present and most Area Meetings represented.*

A number of appointments were made, with our Board Clerks and our nuclear weapons working group reappointed, and new trustees appointed. As with all our meetings, we spent time both in worship and sharing news and reflections on peace concerns and activities.

The Board also received and considered a paper setting out a vision and strategy for our work. This document built on discussion at our meetings during 2019 and earlier this year, and takes on board the current and changing context; it is available from our office and to download from our website. <https://nfpb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2020/12/NFPBVisionNov2020.pdf>

**The overarching vision for NFPB, from which goals and objectives for the coming period ahead have been set out, is of an organisation and community that ...**

- looks forward whilst drawing on Quaker heritage, is grounded in Quaker worship, in the community of Quakers in the North of Britain and expresses Quaker values and testimonies.
- is welcoming, inclusive and adaptable.
- is clear and purposeful, whilst committed to hearing and responding to new concerns
- uses resources carefully, effectively and sustainably.
- brings people together to engage, act, listen, learn and empower.



NFPB members discussing priorities at our meeting in late February

In the period ahead, we plan to:

- use the framework of rethinking security to link together work on challenging militarism, peace in society, and sustainability
- develop activities that enable exploration and understanding of new issues and concerns

- pay attention to processes that encourage broad participation, from nominations to outreach events

- build on already good links we have with other Quaker work so that we can most usefully complement and collaborate.

- further strengthen our use of web and social media resources

- support the contribution of representatives from Area Meetings, and ensure that our communications and links with Friends across the north are working well.

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## **Future NFPB meetings and events**

At the time of writing, vaccination is starting in the UK. This should, over time, enable us to begin to meet together in person again but we currently assume that our NFPB meetings in the first half of 2021 will continue to be held online. As with all Quaker and other groups, we will be keeping this under review.

### *Monthly online meetings*

Online meetings have opened up new possibilities of participation. As well as our formal Meetings for Business, we continue to hold less formal online events for our members and other interested Friends from across the North. These are times for reflection, connection, discussion and sharing information. **The next will take place on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December between 10am and 11:30am. Please get in touch if you would like to participate – all are welcome.**

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### **Mailing list**

If you are not already on our mailing list to receive these updates directly, please contact [nfpb@gn.apc.org](mailto:nfpb@gn.apc.org) to be added to our mailing list.