



# United Nations Association Newbury Branch

## Annual Report for 2018-19

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## A summary of events and campaigns held during the year

### Mayor's Coffee Morning May 2018



Mayor of Newbury, Councillor David Fenn with UNA Members and attendees in the Town Hall For the Mayor's coffee morning.

The coffee morning raised £77.00 for international charities.

### U. N. Day - October 24<sup>th</sup>

Three flags were flying at W. B. Council, one in Thatcham and at Newbury Town Hall where a good crowd gathered at the entrance where the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Kulip Singh Kang welcomed Thatcham Deputy Mayor, Councillor Richard Crumly, and Ellen Crumly and all for the ceremony.

Newbury U. N. Association Branch President, Marion Paterson gave the origin of the flag, adopted in 1946.



Readings on the peace theme followed from:

**Paul High** (Quakers) - the ideal of peace, encompassing individuals and collective freedoms.

**Helen Wright** - rethinking our approach to security alliances.

**Jim Penn** - de-escalating the arms race.

**Bernard Eggleton** - put peace building at the heart of common security.

The preamble to the U.N. Charter was read by the President, followed by reports by the three campaigns involved in:

**Palestine by Colin Stone** - remembering the Balfour Declaration which gave the land for equal sharing.

**Myanmar by Anita Whydell** - burning of the Rohingya villages and the refugees fleeing to Bangladesh

**Yemen by Graeme Panting** - the air raids on Yemen and blockade of the harbour. He summarised the common links between them as a lack of adherence to International Law and the inability to allow independent observers into the countries to assess who were the perpetrators of the atrocities.

## Presentation of U.N. Sustainable Development Goals October 26th

The Quaker Meeting House was filled for the visit of New Zealander U.N. Association and U.K. Champion for S. D. G's, Antony Vallyon gave a review on progress in obtaining the targets for the 17 Global Goals to change our World.

In September 2015, countries adopted a set of goals To end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each target has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. For the goals to be reached, everyone needs to do their part: governments, the private sector, civil society and people like you!

Councillor Jeanette Clifford in representing West Berks Council, gave a well researched overview of the relation of the goals and sustainability to the aims of the Council, including the groups represented there, on the importance of Partnership. Greenham Parish Council were represented by Councillor Alana Finn, also members from West Berks Green Exchange, the Green Party, Friends of the Earth and others.



Antony has represented New Zealand in many countries, and when he asked the audience for preferences on the goals, different options were given:

- 1) End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- 4) Ensure Inclusive equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, 6) Sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- 7) Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- 13) Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- 16) Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

He said that whilst all were aimed at securing peace, they were interrelated.

Thanks were extended to all for their support, and it is hoped to arrange a follow up meeting/s to assess the U.K's progress in the next year.

## Letters to the Press

14 November.

Dear Editor,

As stewardship of the natural world becomes ever more critical, experts across the political spectrum agree that some of the most important work must take place at local level. This is why at West Berkshire Council, we want to do everything we can to conserve and pass on to future generations the unique natural inheritance we share in our beautiful District.

We have to do this while meeting our other important responsibilities. As a Council, we help people both young and old in need of support, run good services for all our residents, maintain public assets and the public realm, educate our children, make the very most of our finances and so much more. It's a long list – but our aim must be to embed care for the environment into all these activities, in line with MP Richard Benyon's call to 'to better use what nature has provided'. We think we will be most successful in this if there is dialogue, debate, and partnership with other local organizations – organizations that might use different language, perhaps come from different traditions, but ultimately share the same pressing goal of a sustainable future.

At the end of last month, I was invited to one of those organizations when the Newbury & District United Nations Association Branch, the fantastic apolitical volunteer-led group that works hard to build support for the United Nations in our area, held a meeting devoted to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. These global goals are a universal call to action, concerned with the fundamentals of peace, prosperity, protection of the planet and the end of poverty.

My task at the UNA meeting was to explain how the Council contributes to the achievement of the global goals. I pointed, as examples, to the work we do in urban and rural planning where combatting climate change is the very first of our strategic objectives, inclusive and equitable education, and sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. In my own area of Transport and Countryside, I outlined the impact of our air quality management, investment to encourage electric vehicles, promoting sustainable travel choices, flood alleviation programmes and our partnerships to preserve and enhance our green spaces, reserves and commons, for example with the admirable Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

I would like to say a public thank you to UNA, in particular Graeme Panting, for the invitation and the friendly welcome. Groups like UNA-Newbury inspire by their example, have much to teach, and will, I have no doubt, always hold us at the Council to account. For me, it was helpful to set out our stall to this well-informed and committed audience – an audience that included, I will admit, a few doubters. And that's fine – it's good to be challenged and I understand that some people are frustrated by our focus on what Richard Benyon calls the 'practical things'. But it's the practical things that will see the Global Goals achieved – and West Berkshire an even better place in which to live, work and learn.

Best wishes,

Jeanette

Councillor Jeanette Clifford  
Northcroft Ward, West Berkshire & Newbury Town Councils  
Executive Member, Transport and Countryside, West Berkshire Council.

## Letters to the Press cont'd...

Dear Editor,

Our UNA/UK, October event, was kindly hosted and supported by the Society of Friends, on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. There are 17 goals in total, which are set for economic progress, better standards of living and a healthy planet for all.

I found the speaker Antony Vallyon's presentation on the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals very helpful in setting global targets for a sustainable future and would like to thank him for sharing his New Zealand background and international experience on this important challenge to all countries.

I was particularly interested in goal no 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all girls as it is relevant to my country Estonia. Gender equality is one of the preconditions for sustainable development, and one of the areas that should be worked on continuously in Estonia as well in the UK.

Councillor Jeanette Clifford gave an excellent overview in relating to the work being done in our local Councils. In her presentation she emphasized the importance of supporting families as the base for sustainable development in local communities.

I support holding a meeting with our MP on the worsening situation in Yemen - with more lives being lost.

Maris Knuut.

Newbury U. N. Association Branch.

Dear Graeme,

Coming Events: "PARTNERSHIP is the Key".

I was very glad to be able to come and sorry that I had to leave early - it more than lived up to expectations. My partner came along with me - his name is Stewart, and we're both from Armagh in Northern Ireland which is where the accent is from.

I thought Jeanette, particularly in her Exec role, seemed very willing to work with the group and along the lines of the sustainable development goals. I will have a think on how it can relate to the Parish Council - one thing I have been keen to do for a while is a 'monthly community clean', for the purposes of cleaning up our local surroundings but also encouraging more of a community feel.

I can most certainly draft a letter too - again I'll have a think about what could go in to it. The recent WBC admission in the Vision document that more needs to be done to address the demographic issues and to address housing needs more could be something interesting to look at it.

Best wishes,

Alana Finn.

Greenham Parish Councillor.



### Remembrance Day Parade

Colin Stone presenting the UN flag  
at the Memorial Playing Fields in Thatcham  
in November.



# Thatcham One World Week December

An introduction was given to One World Week, a celebration of different groups and nationalities. We read out the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which served as an introduction to the countries presented by:

## Andres Nemvalts: ESTONIA

A low populated land, tiny but spacious, (70%) forest, swamps and abundant nature. Good preventative health care from Japanese medicine. It has a great variety of languages, being described, as the Finnish and Hungarian as a freak language in Europe and the hardest to learn.

## Ofosua Daaku Ammah: GHANA

Has developed without any civil war unlike most of her neighbours. Has a constant friendly battle with Nigeria over jollof rice though it known the dish may have been invented by the Senegalese. These disagreements are similar to the Devon Cornwall cream tea wars. Tribal affiliations tend to play a significant part in national politics in her democratic republic. The people generally have strong religious beliefs, colourful dress including their expensive Kente cloths, and the country is noted for its fine chocolate because of the unique way they harvest their cocoa and their gold exports.



## Betty Li: HONG KONG

Being only twice the size of London and one of the most densely populated countries it is the 2nd most expensive places to live. It is Canton speaking, (with Macau), as opposed to Chinese main, and the most ideally spoken language of Mandarin,

## Helen Wright:

Visited **UGANDA** with the Welsh Sector 39, a Permaculture Organisation - she was helping on a Design Course. Among the sustainable techniques taught were mixed planting as opposed to monocrops, water-saving - including building swales to stop water running off land, and building clay stoves to reduce wood consumption and smoke. They had a visit from the woman Education Minister. The Uganda has over a million refugees from South Sudan. They are given land, and Sector 39 has been working in refugee settlements in the north of the country - funded by the Norwegian Refugee Council.



The event finished with tea and Betty Li's noodles.

## M.P's Surgery on Yemen January 2019



Marion Paterson, Richard Benyon MP, Colin Stone, Paul Tippell, Graeme Panting.

### **Members raised their alarm on the escalating situation in the country:**

They acknowledged the leadership and diplomatic efforts of the Foreign Secretary on Yemen, including his visits to the Saudis and attendance at the vital talks in Sweden that have helped to secure real progress between the warring factions, lead to a ceasefire in Hudaydah, and helped push the UN Security Council resolution through despite attempts by the US to block it. Monitoring is now taking place on the ground.

### **Representations were made to:**

Put the utmost diplomatic and public pressure on the Saudis and Emiratis to agree to ceasefire talks covering the whole country, and to join peace negotiations leading to a lasting political settlement. To ensure peace talks are inclusive and include Yemen women, youth and civil society.

Mindful of the Senate vote demanding that the US cease military support for Saudi Arabia in its war with Yemen, to suspend UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates whilst there remains a clear risk that these will be used to commit serious violations of humanitarian laws on Yemen.

### **The UK and EU Consolidated Criteria for Arms Exports:**

Criterion 2c states that 'a licence application should be denied if "there is a clear risk that the items might be used in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law."

Whilst, the UN Panel considers that it almost certain that the coalition did not meet international law requirements and evidence clearly demonstrates that the UK is not compliant with its own arms export Criteria when licensing the export of weapons to Saudi Arabia and its partners in the war on Yemen.

Mr Benyon informed members that under the E. U. the Committee on Arms Export Control has the strictest regime of any arms exporter for licence requirements and rules independent of governments.

Mr Benyon serves on the Conservative Middle East Council Group of M.P's, and will take the issues to Alistair Burt, the Minister for the Middle East and also consult with Andrew Mitchell, one of the main campaigners on Yemen, and will report back to the branch in due course.

## Response from Alistair Burt.

He expressed his concerns on the effects of the war on civilians, but welcomed:

- The vital aid through the lifeline of Hudaydah, through which 90% of food and medical supplies pass – blockages of baby milk and cooking oil remain. (No specific commitments were made to the Saudis on demanding they lift their restrictions).
- The adoption of the UK-led U N Security Council Resolutions 2451 & 2452 were welcomed in progressing agreements.
- Our government's provision of £2.5 million to support the UN Peace Support Facility, based on need.
- The £170 million in aid, is a small fraction compared with the £6 million in UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia.
- Supporting the UN: Verification and Inspection Mechanism/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs & the Air Service - on challenges in the rest of the country to feed the 8.4 million who are close to starvation.
- The Government were urged to demand that the Saudi supported Government in the south, facilitate commercial imports of food by ensuring that importers payments were guaranteed and that the UK is working with the Central Bank of Yemen to release \$400 million for this purpose.

On arms sales, he reiterated that the UK is one of the most rigorous arms export licensing regimes in the world.

Under UK and EU law the UK may not supply arms if there is a risk that they may be used to commit violations

of international humanitarian law. The UN has appointed a Panel of Experts to look at war crimes and breaches

of humanitarian law in Yemen. In their latest report they say that all sides have committed grave acts of violations and maintain that over 20,000 Saudi airstrikes have been responsible for most civilian deaths and found that British bombs have been used in some of them.

His footnote says "Do thank your constituents for their work in the UN Association, The UN is even more important than ever".

Full version available. Members can take action by asking their M.P. to sign the cross-party letter to the Foreign Secretary

# Holocaust Memorial Day January

By Dan Cooper, News Editor Newbury Weekly News

NEWBURY fell silent last week to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust under Nazi persecution and in the subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Sudan. A small crowd gathered outside Newbury Town Hall last Thursday to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day and pay respects to those who have been killed as a result of “crimes against humanity”.

Newbury was just one of many towns across the world to take part in the day, which is held to “learn lessons from the past to create a safer, better future”.



Councillors, members and friends in reflection

Holocaust Memorial Day is held each year on January 27 to mark the day of the liberation of Auschwitz, the largest Nazi death camp. Between 1941 and 1945, six million Jewish men, women and children were murdered. The memorial event, on Thursday, started with an introduction by the co-ordinator of Newbury’s UNA-UK branch, Graeme Panting.

The crowd then heard from the general manager of Reading Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality (Acre) Victor Koroma, who said: “Each account and story I read filled me with dread that something like that could happen at all.” He added: “I believe passionately that we should always pay homage so victims of holocausts, genocides and other human rights crimes are remembered.”

Mark Drukker: introduced himself as an Elder and occasional worship leader for the Reading Hebrew congregation. He said the Reading Synagogue was established 130 years ago though still going strong, the numbers of younger members were slowly decreasing as they moved to other areas for employment or professional reasons.

Mark said RHC had been partnering Acre (Alliance for cohesion and racial equality) in hosting Holocaust Memorial Day in Reading since 2005; and in 2019 the Keynote speaker was Dame Stephanie Shirley CH, who talked about her experience of growing up under Nazi control, had come to the UK on the KinderTransport and the challenges she and her families went through. She has since gone on to set up a successful business which has helped many women in the region; and has written books about her experiences.

Continued...



Newbury mayor Margo Payne read out details of the genocide in Bosnia in 1992 – the single largest mass murder in Europe since 1945. In an attempt at political domination, the Bosnian Serb forces conducted a campaign of terror. Muslims and Croats were forced from their homes, raped and detained in concentration camps and many of them murdered.

In July 1995, against the backdrop of the ongoing civil war, Bosnian forces led by Ratko Mladic descended on the town of Srebrenica. There, around 8,000 Muslim men and boys over 13 years old were killed – many of them shot in fields while trying to escape.

Rector of St Nicolas' Church the Rev Will Hunter-Smart then read out details about the fate of Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. It shocked the world when the radical communist Khmer Rouge, under their leader Pol Pot, seized power in 1975. The Khmer Rouge emptied towns and cities, forcing men, women and children into the countryside to work as labourers on collective farms.

The ill, disabled, old and very young were driven out, regardless of their physical condition. The Khmer Rouge also targeted ethnic minority groups, including ethnic Chinese Vietnamese and Thai. Religion was outlawed by the regime – half the Cham Muslim population was murdered, as were 8,000 Christians. Buddhism was also eliminated from the country. It is estimated there were more than two million people killed overall.

West Berkshire Council vice-chairman Peter Argyle then read out a harrowing account of genocide in Rwanda in 1994. He told people how, in 100 days in 1994, approximately one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered following decades of tension.

“On April 6, 1994, the plane carrying Rwanda’s president was shot down. Extremist Hutu leaders accused Tutsis of killing the president and Hutu civilians were told that it was their duty to wipe out the Tutsis.”

Mr Argyle finished by telling those that gathered: “Since the Holocaust and all the atrocities that have followed since, you wonder, will there ever be an end to man’s inhumanity against man?”

Mr Panting agreed, describing the genocides as “crimes against humanity”.

The crowd also heard from UNA committee member Colin Stone, who spoke about the atrocities in Darfur, Sudan, in 1993, which led to the deaths of between 200,000 and 400,000 people. A two-minute silence was observed, before M. P. Richard Benyon in his vote of thanks said that, visiting Aushwitz with local school children had been 'one of the most profound experiences of my life'.

We have endeavoured to engage in some campaigns and invited Antony Vallon, who led our Sustainable Development Goals meeting, we hope to hold a follow-up event at the end of the summer on the UK's response in meeting their targets.

Paul Tipple, our Yemen expert joined us for our M. P's surgery, and the campaign continues and is much in the news, visitors from the Reading Holocaust Day kindly spoke at our Newbury event.

We are planning to invite a speaker from London/SE Region for our Annual Dinner. We hope you will express your interest by contacting us for details and to join in our future programme. For information contact Graeme Panting at: [oxfamexploration@hotmail.com](mailto:oxfamexploration@hotmail.com) or by telephone: 01635 863331.