UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace Seminar, Project G progress and Nobel events
- short update (prior to a longer report)

1. UK and Ireland Mayors, Provosts and Leaders for Peace joint seminar, Manchester

1.1 The UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter held a joint seminar with Nuclear Free Local Authorities to consider the implications of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons – ICAN – being awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, and the wider remit of Mayors for Peace following its General Conference. The seminar was held in Manchester and a number of Mayors, senior councillors and NGO representatives were in attendance.

1.2 The seminar was opened by the Lord Mayor of Manchester, Councillor Eddy Newman. The Lord Mayor outlined his involvement in the August Mayors for Peace Executive meeting and General Conference in Nagasaki and his attendance at the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Peace Ceremonies, which had been a moving experience. He warmly welcomed ICAN being awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize as a great boost to the nuclear disarmament movement. He also noted the widening of the remit of Mayors for Peace to promote other peace issues. This was of real importance to cities like Manchester and London, which had been affected by terrorist incidents this year. All of these issues were considered within the seminar.

1.3 Elizabeth Minor of the NGO Article 36 and a member of the ICAN UK Steering Group explained the background for ICAN’S work in encouraging governments to develop and agree upon the International Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons at the United Nations. ICAN were delighted this work has led to the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize. ICAN will use the award to promote the need for full ratification of the Treaty and to lobby NATO members, nuclear ‘umbrella’ states like Japan and Australia and nuclear weapons states, including the UK, to reconsider its position towards the Treaty. The Nobel Peace award gives ICAN a considerable amount of international support and recognition which it aims to use in 2018 and beyond. Within the UK, it was important for the 22 groups that make up ICAN UK to work together to put increased pressure on the UK Government and increase both cross-party support and a wider coalition of interest behind the goals of the Prohibition Treaty. Support with devolved governments would also be progressed. A joint letter to the UK Government and a social media campaign is being developed to celebrate ICAN’s Nobel Peace award. The letter was published in ‘The Guardian’ newspaper the day before the Nobel ceremony.

1.4 Dr Nick Ritchie, Lecturer in International Security at the University of York, talked about the impact of the Nobel Peace award for ICAN in terms of changing the terms of the disarmament debate. From the turgid and ongoing stalemate of the NPT process, largely dictated by the nuclear weapon states, the development of three conferences on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, and the agreement of the Prohibition Treaty, has changed the parameters of the debate. Now, non-nuclear weapon states have been more able to assert their views on nuclear disarmament in a more effective way. This change in the international debate is having an impact in the UK, where the costs and technological difficulties in Trident replacement are now linked to the dynamic of a renewed and reinvigorated nuclear disarmament movement. Whilst the UK Government is implacably against signing up to the Treaty, there are interesting developments within other political parties, such as the Shadow Minister for Peace and International Relations, Fabian Hamilton suggesting a Labour Government would sign the Prohibition Treaty. The Leaders of the SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party have also co-written an opinion piece backing the Prohibition Treaty and calling for a step-change in the disarmament debate. 2018 is likely to see a number of interesting changes to the disarmament discussion at a time when ‘Brexit’ will also see changes to the international position and reputation of the UK.

1.5 Sean Morris,NFLA and Mayors for Peace Chapter Secretary, outlined the recent national and international developments that had taken place to both organisations, which had reinvigorated and encouraged them. In August, the Mayors for Peace had agreed to have nuclear disarmament as the central focus of its global campaign, but also to encourage local Chapters
to pursue issues of real concern, such as combating terrorism, dealing with the refugee crisis across Europe and coming to terms with the issues around climate change. Many UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace members had held events for Hiroshima and Nagasaki Day, as well as for International Peace Day. They were also encouraged to engage their involvement in the likes of community cohesion with support for the Mayors for Peace. Manchester’s work is promoting peace education was noted and it was agreed that 2018 would see a greater consolidation of support for Mayors for Peace and ICAN on the nuclear weapons issue as well as promoting relevant campaigns and projects in other important areas.

1.6 The final seminar speaker brought some of the focus to these peace issues. Nick Taylor, Chief Executive of the Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Peace Foundation, based at the Warrington Peace Centre, outlined its work in promoting community peace initiatives, educational programmes and seeking to support strategies to reduce violent extremism. The Foundation has many strands to its work, but its focus has changed dramatically in 2017 after four terrorist attacks, three in London and one at the Manchester Arena. As a result of these, the Foundation has been working in counselling all those affected in these difficult incidents, promoting strategies to support community engagement and solidarity and looking at ways to encourage communities to challenge the problems around radicalisation. In Manchester, close support with Manchester City Council, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Manchester Evening News has led to a community engagement and solidarity programme called ‘We Stand Together’. This is looking at positive ways to bring diverse communities together and involve new strands of peace education techniques. An innovative education programme is being piloted at a number of schools and the plan is for a comprehensive schools initiative across Greater Manchester to be launched in 2018. Many other positive ways to bring people and institutions together are also taking place. Cooperation with Mayors for Peace was welcomed.

1.7 In the discussion that followed, the Chapter welcomed these positive moves forward, which need to be encouraged within a wider structure. Cooperation with the Peace Foundation was welcomed and ways to promote the dual campaigns of the Mayors for Peace will be encouraged over the coming year. All agreed that there was renewed support for nuclear disarmament, while it was also clear local government should play a major role in promoting community cohesion and solidarity in other areas.
2. Project G trees delivered to schools and Manchester Children’s Hospital

2.1 Since 2015, Manchester City Council has been working on a project bringing gingko tree peace seeds from Hiroshima into a wider story on the damage of nuclear weapons and the promotion of peace and regeneration after disaster. Manchester received 15 gingko tree seeds from Hiroshima, which derive from a tree damaged in the 6th August 1945 atomic weapon attack which managed to grow the following spring. These powerful symbols of peace and renewal after disaster have been harvested by Hiroshima University, in cooperation with Mayors for Peace, and are being sent across the world. In the latest example, seeds were planted in the Botanical Gardens in Oslo by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and a number of ‘hibakusha’, or survivors of the bomb, at a special ceremony the day before the Nobel Peace Ceremony.

2.2 Manchester’s initiative, ‘Project G’, has a number of partners – Manchester Museum (part of Manchester University) has hosted a number of education and peace events, the National Trust site at Dunham Massey has nurtured the seeds into small trees ready for outdoor planting, and a number of Manchester primary schools and Manchester Children’s Hospital has taken part in the project promised to take good care of the trees. A follow up event is being planned in March 2018 in Manchester Museum.

2.3 The gingko trees are now ready to be planted outside and the first trees were delivered to four primary schools in Manchester – St Bernards RC Primary School in the Burnage district, Heald Place Primary School in Rusholme, Websters Primary School in Greenheys and St Margaret Mary’s RC Primary School in New Moston. A tree was also delivered to Manchester Children’s Hospital, where it will be planted in a new sensory garden. The children who have been involved in the project promised to take good care of the trees. A follow up event is being planned in March 2018 in Manchester Museum.

2.4 Other trees are being designated for a site in Manchester University, in a new contemplative garden in Manchester city centre and at a number of parks across Manchester. The project has provided an excellent opportunity to promote the story of Mayors for Peace in Manchester and will form part of other innovative ways to promote peace education.

2.5 Four other Mayors for Peace members have gingko seeds from Hiroshima – Edinburgh, the Shetland Islands, Hull and Oldham - and all are developing plans to promote Mayors for Peace by planting the trees at sites across their district. If other UK and Ireland Chapter members would like to get involved in this project, please contact the Chapter Secretary, Sean Morris – s.morris4@manchester.gov.uk for further details.
3. **ICAN awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize – events held in Oslo and the involvement of Mayors for Peace within them**

3.1 The Chapter Secretary, Sean Morris, was amongst a small Mayors for Peace international delegation that took part in events around ICAN being awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize on December 10th in Oslo, Norway. The delegation was led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and also included the Mayor of Frogn (Norway) and Biograd na Moru (Croatia) as well as officers from Croatia and Manchester.

3.2 The Nobel Peace Ceremony annually takes place in Oslo City Hall, the centre of local government for the capital city of Norway. Around 500 people were in attendance in a ceremony that is televised live in Norway and to over 100 other countries. The ceremony is held in the presence of the King, Queen, Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Norway. The ceremony included speeches from the Chair of the Nobel Peace Ceremony, Berit Reiss-Andersen, the Executive Director of ICAN, Beatrice Fihn and, representing the hibakusha and those affected by nuclear weapon tests, Setsuko Thurlow.

3.3 Berit Reiss-Andersen noted that ICAN had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its positive action and campaigning for the development of the International Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons. She went on to note that 12 peace awards have been given to the nuclear disarmament movement over the past 72 years, and ICAN’s award is richly deserved. Beatrice Fihn outlined how essential it was for ICAN’s campaign to be successful given the real threats that exist around nuclear weapons and the huge destruction even a limited nuclear attack could deliver. Setsuko Thurlow gave a moving testimony of her own experience as a 13 year old girl in Hiroshima of surviving the first atomic weapon attack. She said the award is in honour of all those who have died as a result of the attacks in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and those affected by nuclear weapon testing around the world. She called on all states to sign the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty.

3.4 The three speeches can be found at:


The ceremony can be viewed at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1daV8n6fTY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1daV8n6fTY)

3.5 The Mayors for Peace delegation attended the ceremony and interacted with some of the other invited guests. The Chapter Secretary and other delegates met, for example, the Shadow Minister for Peace, Fabian Hamilton, as well as members of ICAN UK and the Peace Boat.

3.6 The delegation also took part in other events over the 10th – 12th December, including:

- An evening torchlit procession from the Central Station to the Oslo Grand Hotel.
- A reception to discuss Mayors for Peace strategy in Europe.
- Attendance at the Nobel Peace Prize Forum, which considered the rights of indigenous groups, followed by a reception at Oslo University.
- A reception in Oslo City Hall to meet with the Mayor of Oslo and members of ICAN’s national groups. Other Norwegian members of Mayors for Peace also attended this reception.
- The inspiring Nobel Peace Prize Concert, which was watched by a global audience of around 100 million people, and was headlined by the singer John Legend.
- The launch of an ICAN ‘Ban the Bomb’ exhibition at the Nobel Peace Centre.

3.7 The visit was highly productive and a great honour to be at for all Mayors for Peace participants. Mayors for Peace warmly congratulates ICAN on being awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize and welcomes the international recognition this has given to the nuclear disarmament issue. Mayors for Peace will seek to work closely with ICAN in 2018 at the national and international level. Other separate events led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki can be found on the Mayors for Peace website.
Beatrice Fihn gives the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize lecture in front of the Norwegian Royal family and 500 invited guests.

The Mayor of Hiroshima, the UK & Ireland Chapter Secretary, the Mayor of Nagasaki, the Mayor of Frogn and Fabian Hamilton MP prior to the Nobel ceremony in Oslo City Hall.

The Chapter Secretary, the Rector of Oslo University, Biograd na Moru’s Jasminka Bajlo, the Mayors of Hiroshima and Frogn and Hiroshima’s Yasco Suehiro at the Nobel Forum, Oslo University.

Norwegian members of Mayors for Peace with the Mayor of Oslo, the Chapter Secretary and Jasminka Bajlo.

The Nobel Peace Ceremony in the Central Hall, Oslo City Hall, December 10th 2017.