

Bike for Peace tour of Scotland **16th – 19th July 2014**

Introduction

The Norwegian group 'Bike for Peace' joined with the international local government group 'Mayors for Peace' for a tour of Scotland, to promote their common aim for a nuclear weapons free world, with Provosts and Lord Provosts from across the country.

Background to Bike for Peace

'Bike for Peace' was founded in 1978 by Tore Naerland to promote peace by bringing together divided communities in a joint sporting activity. Tore Naerland also visited Hiroshima and met disabled survivors of the atomic bombings who inspired him, as a partially sighted man, of the importance a sport like cycling can do to promote a positive message of peace and tolerance. The need to reduce the effects of climate change, using more environmentally friendly activities like cycling, is also a key message of the group.

'Bike for Peace' has visited over 110 countries since it was founded. Highlights include:

- several tours of Northern Ireland bringing both communities together;
- a trip from Moscow to Oslo and on from New York to Washington, bringing Soviet and American groups together during the height of the Cold War;
- trips to Israel and Palestine, bringing members of both communities together;
- trips to South Africa, bringing both communities together;
- tours to Burma / Myanmar during the pro-democracy campaigns led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

Since his first visit to Hiroshima, Tore Naerland has also wanted 'Bike for Peace' to campaign for a nuclear weapons free world. The group toured from Shanghai to Oslo across the 'Great Spice Road' taking them into the country of Kazakhstan and meeting people badly affected near the nuclear test sites of Semepalatinsk (now Semey). Throughout the tour of Scotland, Tore Naerland raised the example of Kazakhstan, who removed all the 2,000 nuclear weapons they possessed after their independence.

Bike for Peace, Mayors for Peace and the 2014 Global Tour

In August 2013, Tore Naerland met with Manchester City Council's Councillor Mark Hackett and Sean Morris during the Mayors for Peace Conference in Hiroshima. Whilst in Hiroshima, 'Bike for Peace' had pledged to support the Mayors for Peace in 2014 with its campaign to promote a nuclear weapons free world. In the short meeting at Hiroshima Airport it was agreed that the planned 2014 'Bike for Peace Global Tour' would start in Manchester, a Vice President of Mayors for Peace.

The March – May global tour included civic receptions in Manchester and Coventry and a Parliamentary reception in Westminster, where the group were encouraged to consider coming back to Scotland later in the year. The former Prime Minister of Norway, Kjell-Magne Bondevik took part in the English leg of the tour, as well as former Norwegian road racing world champion, Anita Valen, and 7 Norwegian Mayors.

The global tour went on to France and Italy for meetings with French and Italian Mayors and a special reception with Pope Francis. The group travelled on to China and Japan, visiting the Mayors for Peace International Secretariat in Hiroshima. The group crossed the

United States culminating in a meeting with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The tour ended in Oslo and Drobak, Norway with special events at the Norwegian Parliament, and with a large number of international Ambassadors to Norway.

From global tours to national tours

Following the success of the global tour, Bike for Peace has continued to work with Mayors for Peace in tours taking place in Turkey and Vietnam.

In mid July, after warm co-operation between Tore Naerland and Sean Morris, a detailed and varied itinerary to go through Scotland was agreed upon. The tour would take place whilst the Scottish independence referendum debate was at its height and nuclear weapons was a major issue within it, would promote the need for the UK Government to be more pro-active in international nuclear disarmament discussions, and would celebrate the upcoming 20th Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, where cycling is one of the sports. Six Scottish members of Mayors for Peace agreed to host civic delegations welcoming Bike for Peace – Edinburgh, Dundee, Perth & Kinross, Stirling, Renfrewshire and Glasgow between July 16th to 19th 2014.

Day 1: Edinburgh – Falkland Palace – Dundee

The joint Bike for Peace / Mayors for Peace tour started bright and early at Edinburgh City Chambers with a civic reception organised by the Council's Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) representative Councillor Nick Gardner, with the assistance of Councillor Jim Orr, a former lead councillor on cycling issues.

The group met in the Diamond Jubilee Room in the City Chambers, which had been the original Council Chamber. After speeches from Councillor Gardner, Sean Morris and Tore Naerland the group had a short presentation from Angela Wrapson, an international arts consultant who has been involved in a large number of arts and cultural initiatives between Norway and Scotland. Also present was Tor Justad, a member of the group Highland against Nuclear Transport (HANT) and a Norwegian Scot who warmly recounted his own story of co-operation between Norway and Scotland. The group were then given a short tour of the beautiful City Chambers by the former Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Councillor Eric Milligan.

Following the visit, the group were taken on a cycling tour of Edinburgh city centre by local tour guide Kim Harding. The group rejoined the minibus organised by Edinburgh based cycling tour company Cycle Scotland, led by Peter Butterworth, and began the tour of Scotland.

Crossing the Forth Road Bridge, the group travelled by minibus to the lovely surroundings of North East Fife, where a photo opportunity was organised outside Falkland Palace. The photos were to appear in Fife papers and were passed on to the Edinburgh Evening News.

Crossing the Tay Road Bridge, the group then got on their bikes again for a short trip to Dundee City Chambers. A civic reception was held with the Depute Lord Provost of Dundee Christina Roberts, the Council's NFLA representative Councillor John Alexander and other councillors. The group met in Dundee with Mayor Svein Arne Jerstad of the Norwegian Council of Kvinesdal, who led the Bike for Peace tour throughout the rest of Scotland.

In speeches, the Depute Lord Provost noted how supportive Dundee was of Bikes for Peace and of being a member of Mayors for Peace. Mayor Jerstad replied by noting his own pre-Mayor background as a soldier responsible for nuclear decontamination matters, and his belief of the necessity for Councils and Mayors to work together in a loud call for nuclear disarmament.

Day 2: Dundee – Perth – Stirling

Following a restful evening just out of Dundee, the delegation travelling on to the outskirts of Perth, where they rode a rural 10kms run to the beautiful village of Crieff.

Making it just back in time, the delegation had a warm civic reception in Perth City Chambers. Formally welcomed by the Lord Provost of Perth Christine Grant, the delegation heard that Perth and Kinross were dedicated supporters of both Mayors for Peace and the NFLA. Warm responses were given by Tore Naerland, Svein Arne Jerstad and Sean Morris.

Official photographs were taken just outside the City Chambers looking over the River Tay, with photographers from the Perthshire Advertiser and the Dundee Courier. The delegation regrouped in the City Chambers for a welcome buffet lunch and a chance to meet councillors from all the political groups on the Council.

The group joined the minibus for a swift run on to the town of Blackford, where they were met by one of the Baillies of Stirling, Councillor Mark Ruskell and members of Stirling Bike Club. The cyclists then went on a fairly strenuous cycle around the beautiful Perthshire / Stirlingshire countryside, finishing at Stirling Council offices for refreshments.

Following official photographs, a civic reception allowed for the opportunity for Bailie Ruskell to reiterate his own personal support and the Council's support of the Mayors for Peace. Speeches were also given by members of Stirling CND. A short tour, with Councillor Graham Houston and Bailie Ruskell, of the council chamber concluded the official activities, and the delegation drove on for a restful evening at their hotel.

Day 3: Faslane – Paisley – Glasgow

The delegation started the final day of the tour with a long drive to the west coast of Scotland for their first appointment at the Faslane peace camp.

The Peace Camp has been in a site close to the Trident nuclear weapons base for over 3 decades now, and the visit allowed for members of Bike for Peace to talk to activists at the sharp end of the nuclear weapons debate. Over tea and scones a warm chat took place, with the members of the Peace Camp talking about a recent nuclear weapons convoy trip to Faslane, which ended in a peaceful demonstration and arrests. The group felt inspired by the commitment of the Peace Camp and made a presentation of books highlighting the history of the Bike for Peace initiative.

Narrowly avoiding the 'Queen's Baton Relay' taking place in West Dunbartonshire – which precluded the opportunity to visit the Council – the tour moved on to the outskirts of Paisley in Renfrewshire. The delegation was met by representatives of Renfrewshire CND and undertook a short cycling tour of Paisley, one of the largest towns in Scotland. The group stopped in front of Paisley war memorial and placed flowers in remembrance of those who had died in the war, 100 years after it had begun.

Bike for Peace then met with the Provost of Renfrewshire Anne Hall, the Council's NFLA representative Councillor Bill Brown, Councillor Jim Sharkey and other members of Renfrewshire CND in the beautiful surroundings of Paisley Abbey. In the warm speeches that took place, Mayor Jerstad talked of how welcoming all the Scottish Councils had been to the group and recounted the importance of Councils, peace activists and Mayors for Peace in working together for a common cause.

The delegation then rapidly moved on for their final destination of the tour – Glasgow, and got there just in time, despite the difficulties of rush hour traffic and one way streets! The delegation was taken up to the remarkable building that is Glasgow City Chambers, and met with the Depute Lord Provost Bailie Gerald Leonard, who gave a formal civic welcome to the delegation.

A warm glass of whiskey welcomed the delegation and passionate speeches were given by Tore Naerland, Svein Arne Jerstad and Glasgow City Council's NFLA representative, Councillor Bill Butler. The delegation was also introduced to the former Consul-General of Pakistan to the UK, Salahuddin Choudhry, who is an Honorary Ambassador of the Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign. Bike for Peace hope to hold a tour in Pakistan and India later in the year. Following refreshments the group were given a short guided tour of the building by the NFLA Scotland Secretary and Glasgow officer Cathy Birrell.

The final official meeting of the tour involved the delegation with Bill Kidd MSP, Chief Whip in the Scottish Parliament, Chair of the Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Nuclear Weapons and an Executive Member of the international group Parliamentarians for Non-proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament (PNND). The meeting allowed for a greater understanding of PNND and the opportunity to develop greater co-operation with Bikes for Peace, Mayors for Peace and NFLA.

After such a full three days, the delegation returned to their hotel. Over the weekend there was the opportunity for longer cycle rides around Loch Earn, where the group continued to meet many CND activists, this time by chance!

Annex – Speech to the Glasgow civic reception by Mayor Svein Arne Jerstad

Mayors for Peace, Glasgow Civic meeting, 19 July 2014

Depute Lord Provost, Councillors, Ambassador Choudry, peace bikers and peace workers.

It is an honour to be here in Glasgow, and we thank you very much for this brilliant reception and civic meeting.

Since we started the trip around the world in 72 days in Manchester in March, this follow-up tour in Scotland is an important occasion for me and for Bike for Peace.

I am the Mayor of Kvinesdal Municipality, and I am proud and delighted to have been given the opportunity to contribute my energy and enthusiasm to promote our joint call for a nuclear weapons free world.

That call is for zero nuclear weapons on this earth as soon as possible. The Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign 2020 aims to have a process to remove nuclear weapons during this period. It does not come by itself. You and I and every one of us must take hold

and put nuclear disarmament on the agenda of all the governments that have nuclear weapons in their arsenal. And all the other countries of the world, like Norway, must support and put pressure on them to complete this task.

The conventional wisdom that nuclear weapons keep their possessors safe, though it may be a widespread notion, is neither true nor rooted in wisdom. The fact is that nuclear weapons are far too dangerous for **any** country to possess - let alone use - and that the US, UK and the other nuclear weapon countries have been playing nuclear roulette with them for nearly seven decades.

We hope that Britain will take to its senses and lead from the front as a guiding star in the worldwide work to get rid of the nuclear bombs which I call the devil's work.

How do we do it? That is the question that needs the most important answer in this world. The challenge is there every day as submarines, aircraft, trucks and trains carry the nuclear threat around us every day and night.

Nuclear deterrence is only a hypothesis about human behaviour. It is a hypothesis that requires all leaders playing the deadly-serious nuclear game to behave rationally at all times: and we know that all leaders do not act rationally under all circumstances.

We know that Boris Yeltsin went around with the suitcase containing the firing codes for nuclear missiles in one hand and a bag of fine drinks, such as vodka, in the other hand. I get unwell just thinking about the risks that have existed, and continue to exist, from the possession of nuclear weapons.

We as Mayors, work every day to develop good municipal services such as nurseries, schools, social care homes, roads and many other local services. We understand the daily needs of our local community.

As a former decontamination officer in the Norwegian Army, I know very well the behaviour and effects of nuclear radiation, heat and the pressure waves of a detonation. Japan has shown that it is possible to rise after a modest nuclear weapon attack. I call it a modest attack, although it was a disaster for the two target cities, compared to what we should expect of a nuclear war today. And what would that be? Total annihilation, nuclear winter, no new food production, not enough food stock for our people. Total destruction and Armageddon. Maybe hell could be a good option compared to this new hell on earth? What use are nurseries, schools, retirement homes if that happened to us?

I'm just asking. Do you agree? Do you understand and share my concern? It is simply not possible to understand how crazy it would be.

I am proud of the active resistance that peace groups, CND and others, around Faslane has shown in relation to the transport of Trident nuclear warheads throughout Glasgow and surrounding districts in Scotland and England. Earlier today we met some of them who recently got arrested after stopping one of those Convoys last week. I really admire them.

We will also shortly meet Bill Kidd MSP. He has also actively shown his concern over nuclear weapon convoys and actively called to stop the transports. These nuclear weapon transports represent in themselves a major safety challenge in the event of an accident or a malicious attack on them.

The Mayors for Peace and Bike for Peace is a very good match. They both have a single focus - get rid of this evil, and let the world be blessed by peace.

We have learned that with a simple uniform, a yellow bike jersey, and a bike, we can open many doors worldwide. We help to build and support networks and we help to bring people together. We need to get the whole world to take part in this activity.

We can't go on pretending, day by day that someone, somewhere will soon make a change! We are all part of God's great big family. We all have to take part in this big issue.

Now we are here to support you and to open new doors. Together with you we will be even stronger. That's how I envisage the forces in the work we do. Each voice is finally a roar that causes the entire world to wake up and thank God that the cause of a nuclear weapons free world must happen.

We look forward to getting to know you, getting to know this beautiful countryside here in Scotland and to be informed about what it is like to have a large naval nuclear weapons base in your backyard!

Thank you for welcoming us to Glasgow, just as we have been welcomed across Scotland.

Some photos from the Scottish tour:

