

FARINGDON PEACE GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 1st October 2025

PRESENT

Karen and Sjoerd Vogt (chair), Helen Holly, Jane Youngs, Jill Headey, Ian Wright

1) AGENDA - Adopted

2) APOLOGIES

Dave Headey, Jenny and Steve Braithwaite, Jennie and Phil Chesterton, Josephine Wright, Marge and Neil Crosby

3) 2024 AGM MINUTES - Read and approved.

4) MATTERS ARISING

None that are not covered elsewhere on the agenda

5) CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence

DATES FOR DIARY

All Dates for Diary are on the FPG website <http://www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk/>

Diary dates were distributed to those present.

Attention was drawn to the annual demo at USAF Croughton on 5th October, an open online discussion on Rethinking Security organised by FPG supporter David Couzens on 8th October and the now monthly demos for peace in Faringdon Market Place, 10.00am every last Saturday with FPG and Quakers

FPG Meetings – All 7.30 at Friends Meeting House, Lechlade Road unless otherwise stated

- **Weds 5th November** – FPG monthly meeting. Speaker: Harry Weaver, head of youth CND, talking about young people's involved in the peace movement
- **Weds 4th December** - TBC
- **Weds Jan 7th 2026, 7.00pm** - New Year's Social at Karen and Sjoerd's. Bring and share food and drink.

6) REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

a) FPG Meetings – Helen in place of Jennie

We have had 10 monthly speaker meetings - 2 zoomed and 8 in person - and our usual break in August and New Years social at Karen and Sjoerd's

Issues covered were:

- **Palestine** – Various issues relating to Palestine/Israel were discussed.
Professor Nick Maynard, Oxford surgeon, spoke in person and in a webinar entitled 'British surgeon exposes Israel's use of starvation and healthcare destruction as tools of genocide in Gaza' about the catastrophic situation in Gaza's hospitals where he volunteered with Medical Aid for Palestinians.
Rizwan Sarwar from Oxford PSC spoke about Oxford divesting for Palestine.
A film 'Where Olive Trees Weep' was shown, movingly depicting the struggles and resilience of Palestinian people under occupation.
- **Climate Action** – Tim Hewes, local vicar spoke about his time in prison following non-violent direct action with Christian Climate Action and his book 'Finding Beauty Behind Bars'.
- **Drones** – Chris Cole talked about the latest spy drones based in Fairford.
- **Modern Day Slavery** – Our own Steve Braithwaite gave a very informative and alarming talk about modern slavery hidden in plain sight.
- **Peace Building** – Local supporter David Couzens spoke about his work with Tear Fund around the world 'Saving Succeeding Generations from the Scourge of War'

- **US/UK special relationship** - Sophie Bolt, Gen Sec of CND, spoke about building opposition to this 'special' relationship.

Thanks to Jennie and team for finding excellent speakers on such a wide range of peace-related topics. It was agreed that we would continue to have a mixture of zoomed and in-person meetings for the foreseeable future.

Other Activities and Events – Helen for Jennie

Peace Group Events:

- In October we held our AGM
- In November we laid a wreath with white poppies at the annual town Remembrance Service and held a Women in Black vigil for Palestine in the Market Place with good support from members and the public.
- In January we enjoyed our New Year's social at Karen and Sjoerd's.
- In June the first joint Quakers and FPG 'Prayers for Peace' was held and has now become a fixture on the last Saturday of every month: Demo for 'Peace' in the market Place at 10 followed by optional prayers and coffee in FMH.
- The 'Party in the Garden' took place in the Braithwaites garden in July.

Events organised by other groups and attended by FPG members:

- In October there was the annual 'Keep Space for Peace' rally and demo at RAF Croughton,
- In January there was a demo at the gates of USAF Fairford at which Chris Cole, Sophie Bolt and Peter Burt spoke and FPG members attended
- In May there was a Conscientious Objectors day in Oxford with speakers and Leveller's Day in Burford.
- In June there was a well-attended demo at Fairford
- Hiroshima Day, 6th August was marked by an act of remembrance and lantern floating in Abingdon
- Some attended the Quakers' alternative Remembrance event in FMH in November
- Karen attended many of the National Marches for Palestine in London organised by Stop the War, CND, PSC amongst others. Often met people from Oxford and also Tony Hinkes on one occasion
- Jennie, Phil and Helen attended regular Oxfordshire Peace Campaign (OPC) meetings throughout the year.

b) Faringdon Advertiser and posters round town - Karen

Posters put up round town for in-person meetings.

Meeting reports submitted to the Advertiser – not always accepted.

c) Treasurer – Steve

Steve had sent the Income and Expenditure account for the year ending 31st August 2025, which showed a balance of £1686.75, nearly £400 down on last year.

The Peace Picnic in July did not raise any money this year

The film 'Where Olive Trees Weep' raised £50

Speakers from Medical Aid for Palestinians, Oxford PSC and Drome Wars UK were all given £50 for their organisations and an extra £100 was given to MAP for the desperate situation in Gaza.

Many thanks to Steve for doing the finances and to John Cecil for auditing the accounts.

d) Peace Picnic

Many thanks again to Braithwaites for offering their garden for a bring and share lunch. Much enjoyed by all who attended. Very little planning, but it all worked.

Entertainment, music and speeches were missed by some. Jane has card for a puppeteer.

No money was made – missed opportunity or nice just to enjoy it?

e) Resources – Ian, Karen

FPG gazebos and other equipment are now stored mostly at the Braithwaites and Steve's storage in Highworth. Lent out to other individuals and organisations for a fee. Ian and Karen are no longer involved.

f) Artistic Projects – Karen

Planning was refused for a plaque on Corn Exchange and the only site offered by the Council is unsuitable. The husband of Sue Drew the artist is unwell. It was generally agreed that FPG no longer had the funds to support the Peace Plaque while continuing to pay speakers and subscriptions.

g) Monthly Meetings – Helen in place of Jennie

Help – Jennie has had help from Helen and Karen in organising meetings.

We also used our own resources in the persons of Steve Braithwaite and David Couzens, who both gave very interesting talks.

Possible alternative to speakers – Film with refreshments worked well and brought in different people AND made some money! Karen to see what other films are offered by Kinema.

Is Simon Bell still available to talk about young people in Gaza coming of age, doing parcours etc?

Charlie Maynard MP will be invited, preferably in person but zoom if only option.

We know 2 people who were part of the Gaza flotilla who will be invited to speak about their experiences.

Other suggestions: Symon Hill, Swindon Racial Equalities Council, Gabriella Rifkind from Oxford Process Group, formerly Oxford Research Group.

Transport/hospitality – Very rarely needed now that zoom is an option for speakers who live further away.

h) Press Reports

The only press reports have been meeting reports sent to the Advertiser by Karen

i) Refugee Link - Sjoerd

‘Sanctuary Faringdon’ is the local refugee and asylum seeker support group. Started with Syrians, then Ukrainians, now many different nationalities at Brackendale and other places in Faringdon. It offers language classes and supported the 2nd Ukrainian cultural ‘Mavka Fest’ in May alongside other practical help and companionship.

7) ELECTION OF OFFICERS

No new candidates, so serving officers agreed to carry on for 2025/26. All were nominated and seconded.

Chairs: Sjoerd, Dave H.

Secretary for meetings and activities – Jennie, with help from Helen, Karen, Jill, David C.

Secretary for minutes, reports and posters – Karen

Treasurer – Steve

Artistic Co-ordinator – Karen with help from Marge

Picnic Organiser – Jenny/Sjoerd

Website/computer lists – Sjoerd (active list) and Dave/Jennie (very active list)

Resources – Steve

Publicity and press releases – Karen

Sanctuary Faringdon link – Sjoerd

8) FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Remembrance Sunday, 9th November

Procession and wreath laying at the War Memorial in Faringdon Market Place. Karen has wreath, will attach white poppies and lay it as part of the official ceremony.

Women in Black Vigil for Palestine

Traditionally on a Tuesday in December – 2nd, 9th or 16th? 9th preferred. TBC. Suggested not silent.

Fund raising

Try another film showing with food

9) DONATIONS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions were agreed to Network for Peace, Stop the War Coalition and CND, through which we get our insurance. Throughout the year donations of £50 each will be offered to speakers or the group they represent.

10) NEWS OF PEACE GROUP FRIENDS

Ian told us the sad news that Josephine is in Abingdon Hospital recovering from a stroke in the summer. There has been some progress, but things are still very difficult for her and for Ian. We all wished her well.

Jill had heard that Chris and Di and family were all well.

Karen bumped into Francesca Ainslie, a young woman formerly from Faringdon, now studying in London, on one of the London marches. She and family all well.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business.

The meeting ended at 20.30, with drinks and 45th birthday cake.

Thanks to all who attended and to Sjoerd for facilitating.

