

Northern Friends Peace Board – report to ECAM January 2026

Northern Friends Peace Board is comprised of representatives from area meetings in the north of Britain. It meets four times a year in meeting houses across the area we cover and online. The Board is supported by contributions from Area Meetings, local meetings plus individual donations and grants for particular work. The latest being the Peace Testimony event in York on 13th June – all welcome.

We are always most grateful for the support received, and trust you all feel connected to the work – the Peace Bulletin is sent to all Local meetings, and to individuals on request - . a trusted source for news on international developments and peace opportunities/ issues, plus the NFPB web site <https://nfpb.org.uk/>. The Board also offers workshops for local and area meetings and is a point of contact for Friends wanting information and support on peace concerns. NFPB continues to work in partnership with other peace networks, contributing Quaker perspectives and drawing on wider knowledge and perspectives - eg. Rethinking Security and GCOMS.

At our most recent meeting in Liverpool our speaker Diana Jeater told us about her work in conflict resolution in Southern Africa. She underlined the importance of listening to the communities involved and hearing the voices of ancestors and wisdom. In some cases, we might have to enlist the local spirits to draw communities into the process. We should learn from her experience in Zimbabwe and make space for the spiritual in peacebuilding. We should be open to this and bring our spiritual aspects to the process. Peace cannot be imposed by force, especially from outside – a decolonised approach is needed. Slides from her talk are available, also a video of her Salter lecture in 2018. (Diane currently serves as one of the clerks of QPSW Central Committee.)

We heard Rachel Julian Professor of Peace Studies at Leeds Beckett University at our previous meeting in York. She spoke about unarmed civilian protection and the important role that mainly women play in peacebuilding in communities across the world. The need for dialogue, collaboration and relationships has never been greater to overcome militarism and fear. Rachel highlighted the importance of sharing stories, to change the current narrative. Rachel talk is available online as a podcast (<https://nfpb.org.uk/rj-talk-to-nfpb-sept-2025/>) and well worth a listen.

Of course we also hear about Friends' Peace Witness across the north in our members' forum. There are exciting initiatives such as handing out white roses for peace by the interfaith group in Huddersfield and witness in support of asylum seekers. I always report on the work of Peace Pathways and the regular vigil for peace in Buxton.

I'd also like to mention the Responses to War publication – some contemporary Quaker reflections (includes several from East Cheshire). I hope that Friends are aware of this. I will write a review for the newsletter. The volume includes moving poems and the articles will help when you get asked "What would Quakers do about the war". We need support as well as courage to explain and live out our beliefs.

NFPB is going through considerable changes as Philip Austin, the co-ordinator for many years, will be retiring after 35 years at the end of 2026. Hence members of the Board have been considering its future work and organisation. Please let me or Till (who is one of the trustees) have any ideas how NFPB can in future "advise and encourage Friends ...in the active promotion of peace in all its height and breadth". This is our work for peace, in our area.

Please raise any queries and suggestions with me, it's good to connect with Friends across the Area Meeting.

Phoebe Spence
ECAM representative on NFPB