

# PPU AGM 2025

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## DATE

14<sup>th</sup> June, PPU office & online via Zoom

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## TIME

AGM: 11am – 1pm

Panel & Discussion Groups: 1.45pm – 5pm

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## IN ATTENDANCE

### *In person:*

Andy Ash, Sarri Bater, Albert Beale, James Bonner, Ceridwen Buckmaster, Bruce Cadbury, Lynne Collins, Elizabeth Cook, Amy Corcoran, Guy Dehn, Peter Glasgow, Matt Harbage, Debbie Herring, Symon Hill, Anton Johnson, Colin Kerr, Rachel Melly, Ruth Moulton, Diana Parker, John Plimsoll, Claire Poyner, Gillian Siddons, Lucy Jane Spare, Elizabeth Szewczyk, Anastasia Taylor-Lind, Geoff Tibbs

### *Online:*

Lois Aitkenhead, Lucy Beck, Elizabeth Beckmann, Jason Blean, Ed Bridges, Lauri Clarke, Davide Dionisi, Edward Evans, Gwyn Gwyntopher, Rob Hadden, Melanie Jameson, Anthony Kestin, Jenny Lindsell, Tracy Locke, Rebecca Marshall, Krystyna McNamara, John Morris, Kay Murphy, Simon Nash, Andrew O'Hare, Helen Owen, Craig Parr, Colin & Sue Pearson, Sidney Plowman, Paula Shaw, Kate Smurthwaite, Melissa Taylor, Linda Ulrich, Marcus Ward, John Woolgrove

## APOLOGIES

Lyn Bliss, Jan Cawley, Ann Feltham, Margaret Forbes, John Hartley, Geoff Hinchliffe, David Hook, Melanie Jameson, Richard Lawson, Rosalyn Mauchline, Katie McLean, Mike Medhurst, Margaret Mountstevens, Jenny Page, Ian Pocock, Viv Rollo, Emily Taylor, Michael Vickery

*N.B. Please accept our apologies if the attendee lists above are not fully accurate. We encountered issues storing these records and will work to improve our processes in 2026. Please contact Amy ([amy@ppu.org.uk](mailto:amy@ppu.org.uk)) with any amendments.*

## WELCOME

Peter welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for taking the time to be part of the AGM. He noted that this marks the second time the AGM has been held in the office. We have opened up the office more and have had members coming into the office for events and social occasions over the past year. We want to continue building on using this space effectively during these difficult times.

Peter noted how important it is to gather together like this in today's increasingly dangerous world. The route to peace, and away from war and conflict, is never found

through increased military spending and 'sabre rattling' but instead through pacifism. This AGM forms part of our overall work to try and ensure this alternative nonviolent view is heard and spread in order to counteract voices of militarist jingoism, violence and other reactionary, regressive notions.

Peter reminded everyone of hybrid meeting etiquette, and the ways in which those online can participate. He also ran through the order of the day, including the ways the afternoon sessions will enable participants to contribute to the PPU's development over the next year.

Peter drew everyone's attention to the fact that the PPU continues to be experiencing difficulties in relation to staffing and finance, though this situation is expected to improve soon. He thanked staff – Amy Corcoran and Geoff Tibbs – for their hard work keeping the organisation running effectively, especially while the PPU remains under-staffed. He also thanked last year's Remembrance Project Intern, Minna Davies, and all the PPU's dedicated volunteers – particularly Colin Kerr and Lyn Bliss – for their contributions to keeping the PPU running smoothly. Lastly, Peter thanked John Morris for all his work as Returning Officer on behalf of the PPU, and Debbie Herring, who has taken up the role now John has stepped down.

## **2024 AGM MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING**

The 2024 AGM Minutes were agreed to be a true record, other than Symon Hill being missed from the list of apologies.

No matters arising requiring immediate discussion were noted at this point.

## **REPORTS**

### **Amy presented the Everyday Militarism report.**

The everyday militarism campaign looks at how the military and military attitudes, language and values seep into everyday life, and how this influences opinions on the military, normalising and legitimising the armed forces, and their power, influence and activities. It was certainly clear in 2024 that there was an escalation of this type of militaristic political rhetoric. A few key elements of the 2024 everyday campaign are listed below:

#### **Resisting Calls for a Citizen Army**

- In February 2024, the head of the British Army called for 'citizen army' to prep ground for war with Russia. This can be understood as an open call for a more militaristic society. Overnight, conscription was talked about again. The Conservatives initially denied plans for this then, in May 2024, they announced plans for national service. This was seemingly an attempt at whipping up support for their increasingly aggressive foreign policy before the General Election. We challenged both occasions, calling on people to resist the idea of conscription and pledging to support COs. It is clear to see how merely discussing national service as a 'reasonable' option can work to shift public opinion. Military service was presented as honourable; a proud way to serve the country and positive way to be a good citizen. A large military was also presented as so important for security that the government could/should enforce it. Here, declining recruitment numbers were

equated with a lack of security, worrying people and inflaming international tensions at the same time.

### Armed Forces Day

- Armed Forces Day has taken place at the end of June since 2009. It was started to improve the military's public image during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The day is a celebration and glorification of the armed forces with events taking place around the country. Many events are billed as 'family fun' with a significant focus on young people, including allowing them to handle weapons. The impact of war is not shown, an unproblematic idea of armed force is presented with the military positioned as heroes, and war is depicted as exciting.
- The PPU has always challenged Armed Forces Day. In 2024, we did this slightly differently - we collaborated with ForcesWatch, as both organisations were struggling with capacity issues and felt they'd be able to achieve more together.
- For the first time since 2009 (other than during Covid-19), there was no national Armed Forces Day event. As such, we focused our efforts instead on helping members and supporters to resist events happening near them.
- We redeveloped our 'war is not family entertainment' postcards to make them more visually appealing and to include five key issues with Armed Forces Day. We also made stickers with the same messaging.
- We sent postcards to people for free for distribution outside events or in the run up in areas where an event was taking place. Both PPU and FW promoted this on their respective networks.
- We received quite a lot of requests, and the feedback afterwards was that the postcards were helpful in starting conversations. It's unlikely to change people's minds if they are about to enter the event, but we may be able to encourage them to think more critically.
- Alongside the postcards, we developed a joint press release with FW. We'd previously submitted a large number of FOIs to local councils putting on AFD, and to the MoD, asking about funding, safeguarding policies etc. We discovered that no one had come forward to host the national event and there were much fewer events in total (almost half their largest number). We focused our press release on this declining interest. It was quoted in The Telegraph (and reproduced almost in full on their website), which was a valuable piece of media coverage, despite them (unsurprisingly) putting their spin on it.

### Farnborough Air Show

- Arms fairs are presented as legitimate trade conferences – respectable, prestigious events to hold in your borough or conference centre.
- Presenting arms fairs in an uncomplicated way, as just another business event, works to position the arms industry as just another industry.
- The fact that most arms fairs give themselves very ambiguous and euphemistic names also reveals the ways they hope to distance themselves from the realities of their trade in the eyes of others – e.g. Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) - often the words used to try and direct people's minds to the image the industry wants to present about itself i.e. that it exists to defend us and keep us secure.
- DSEI didn't take place in 2024, but the PPU instead attended the Farnborough Air Show.
  - This included many extremely loud flyovers and demos every day.
  - Disgustingly, this included the exact jets bombing Gaza - arms dealers admired their technical capabilities at a flashy event, seemingly completely unconcerned about the reality of their usage.

- The air show does have a civilian focus, but is becoming progressively more military heavy, with many arms companies represented (BAE had its own hall in 2024).
- The event has a big impact on residents too – in 2024, it took place during half-term but otherwise they have to close schools because it's too noisy.
- Numerous residents came to talk to us, including one who went home to bring her children back with her. Residents thanked us for being there, particularly as they often feel in the minority living in such a military heavy area.
- These interactions underscored the importance of events like this. Additionally, it felt important for the PPU to be active in the wider peace movement this way – it was positive that other organisations reached out to invite us to join, and very positive that we were able to do so.

#### War Requiem at the BBC Proms

- In August 2024, the BBC Proms included a performance of Benjamin Britten's War Requiem at the Royal Albert Hall.
- Britten was a prominent member of the PPU for decades, and this piece in particular has an explicitly pacifist message. As such, we felt it was a good opportunity to promote the PPU to a new audience, one already potentially open to our views to an extent, given their choice of music.
- We developed and booked an advert in the concert programme. It was constructed to be a very measured statement about Britten's values and how these still inspire people today. The advert was accepted by the company contracted to put the programme together, but was then pulled by the BBC.
- While the BBC repeats militaristic opinions in its news bulletins, and was even willing to host a political piece of music, this advert and a desire for peace over war was deemed too political. The PPU took the opportunity to highlight this and capitalise on it.
- Our press release was published in The Independent, the Private Eye, and a number of specialist music outlets.
- We also printed the advert the same size as programme, and a number of volunteers went down to hand out as people entered the concert. They had good conversations with concert attendees and handed out all their flyers.
- This was a good example of the PPU being able to respond quickly to an evolving situation, and in mobilising our membership to generate some practical action.

#### QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

- A few members responded with positive feedback to the Britten/BBC action, as well as the continued development of the Armed Forces Day campaign. This included the collaboration with ForcesWatch on Armed Forces Day, as it was felt that such collaborations are essential to amplifying and expanding our messages.
- The PPU was encouraged not to place too much focus on countering conscription in the UK, as it was felt that while particular politicians and military personnel may be raising this as an option, it is very unlikely to be pursued.
- Attention was drawn to the fact that a growing number of musicians and industry professionals have publicly criticised King's Place, the arts venue near King's Cross, over its decision to host a defence industry conference sponsored by Lockheed Martin. The event, Defence in Space, is set to return to the venue on 28th-29th October 2025.

## **Geoff presented the Remembrance report.**

The white poppy often gets accused of politicising remembrance, but remembrance is *always* political - the way we remember the past informs how we act in the present.

- In 2024, official events to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day included military flyovers and 1940s-style entertainment. A lot of the language was around 'celebration' and 'heroism', with little reference to the widespread suffering caused by the fighting. These events, and others to commemorate the end of WW2 in 2025, are an important backdrop to the UK government's increasingly militaristic policies.
- The white poppy provides an alternative, reminding us that war should never be celebrated, its victims never forgotten and its mistakes never repeated.

### **Alternative Remembrance Ceremonies**

- Numerous alternative remembrance ceremonies took place around the UK in 2024.
- In London, the National Alternative Remembrance Ceremony featured two Palestinian speakers: Nadine Aranki, who spoke about her family in Gaza, and Marwan Darweish, who shared his parents' experience of the Nakba. Jon Nott from CAAT and Roger McKenzie from CND and the Morning Star spoke powerfully about their campaigning against militarism and causes of war. The event was tied together brilliantly by our host, Kate Smurthwaite.

### **White Poppies in Ceremonies and Educational Settings**

- In 2024, white poppy wreaths were featured in a larger number of official remembrance events, suggesting a growing acceptance of white poppies across the UK.
- PPU members worked with local councils, the Royal British Legion and others to incorporate white poppies into official ceremonies. In some places, white poppies have become a longstanding part of official commemorations, while in others this change has only been seen recently.
- More schools, universities and other educational settings have also been adopting white poppies - record numbers in 2024. Teachers cited the war in Gaza as one reason, as more students recognised the importance of remembering all victims of war, including civilians and those affected by wars happening now.

### **Volunteering at Remembrance**

- In the run up to Remembrance Day, a team of around twenty PPU volunteers attended the demonstrations calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, handing out thousands of white poppies.
- The white poppy's message of remembrance for all victims of war - including civilians, who have been so badly affected by the war in Gaza - resonated widely. By the end of the demos, white poppies were a common sight among the crowds.
- Initiatives such as this are largely down to the dedication of PPU members and supporters advocating for the white poppy around the UK, whether by bringing them into shops, schools and community spaces, distributing them on the street, or packing white poppies to distribute in the PPU office.
- All in all, 77,000 white poppies were distributed in 2024.

### **Decolonising Remembrance**

- On Remembrance Sunday, we launched a new project, Decolonising Remembrance. This work has arisen out of discussions over the last few years, acknowledging that the history of British warfare is deeply intertwined with the history of Empire - a fact routinely ignored in mainstream remembrance occasions.

- The project aims to ensure that the victims of colonial wars are remembered, alongside others, on Remembrance Day. It also challenges the legacies of colonialism, which continue to influence who is publicly remembered and whose histories and experiences are erased.
- The launch of Decolonising Remembrance got a good amount of coverage, notably in The Telegraph and LBC, prompting a sharp backlash on social media. Whilst this points to the difficulty of this work, it also highlights its importance, given that mentioning those affected by the wars of the British Empire clearly touches such a nerve.

#### The PPU's work in Wales

- The PPU continues to work with Cymdeithas y Cymod to distribute Welsh white poppies. In 2024, we introduced bilingual Welsh and English materials, including a new bilingual white poppy display box.

### **QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

- Subsidised ceramic red poppy kits are provided for schools. Could we explore something similar for white poppies?
- A question was raised about the PPU's connection with peace groups in other countries where the red poppy is employed as a symbol of remembrance.
  - The PPU has relationships with groups and individuals abroad, particularly in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Belgium and the USA. It should be possible to develop these relationships, and thus develop greater awareness of the white poppy and increase sales.
  - Some of these countries Remembrance at different times of the year, so this needs to be borne in mind and contact made at the appropriate moment. This will be easier to achieve when the PPU has three members of staff.
- Positive feedback was received about the development of the Remembrance Project, such as the distribution of white poppies at ceasefire demos.
- Likewise, it was felt that the Decolonising Remembrance campaign is a very important area to pursue, and having seen the attacks the PPU received at the WW1 centenary, empathy was expressed with those on the receiving end of the attacks this time.
- Further positive comments about the Decolonising Remembrance campaign were received. It was felt that the PPU could connect with many other organisations in this essential space to engage with their audiences, as well with as the media and artists.
- There are some progressive grant makers, which might be amenable to funding the Decolonising Remembrance work. Geoff will be provided with details of these grant makers at a later date.
- A suggestion was made to approach Mark Rylance – who has been a long-time supporter of the PPU and who was a lead organiser for the recently instituted Brian Haw memorial – to help promote white poppies and the PPU.
  - Mark Rylance did speak at an event for the PPU during the WW1 centenary and we are in occasional touch with him.
- It was felt that the increase of interest in the white poppy in schools was very positive, and the PPU was congratulated for this.
- A PPU member based in Wales referred to the fact that, after WW1, daffodils became a symbol of hope for a peaceful future. It may be that the PPU can use 1<sup>st</sup> March – St. David's Day – as an opportunity to get our messages out further.

## **Peter presented the Peacebuilding and Non-Violence report.**

The PPU's Peacebuilding and Nonviolence work focuses on promoting nonviolent alternatives to war and violence.

- The PPU provides educational resources for primary and secondary levels as well as for higher education. These resources help children and adults to explore approaches to conflict, ethics around war and peace, and the history of conscientious objection and nonviolent resistance.
- The PPU also has one of Britain's most extensive archives on conscientious objection and peace history, for use by students and researchers.
- We maintain a detailed and lively website called The Men Who Said No, telling the stories of conscientious objectors in the First World War.

In the next few months, the PPU is planning to recruit a new member of staff.

- In a change from previous practice, the educational brief will be shared across the staff team, which will allow a greater degree of consistency in our educational work.
- In the meantime, PPU members and staff are ensuring that this work continues.

### **Peace Education Network (PEN)**

- The PPU is an active member of PEN, contributing to discussions with other organisations at its regular meetings.
- We contributed to [Teach Peace Secondary](#), which was launched in February and offers over 50 cross-curricular lessons on topics including challenging racism, conflict transformation and the arms trade.

### **National Education Union (NEU)**

- The PPU attends the NEU conference annually, building significant contacts for our informal network of teachers.
- In April 2024, we ran a stand at the NEU conference in Bournemouth, building our peace education network and raising awareness about the increasing involvement of the military in our schools, the expansion of cadet corps as well as alerting delegates to the next DSEI arms fair scheduled to take place in London in September 2025.
- We backed teachers who were challenging a rise in military spending against the backdrop of a desperately underfunded education system.
- We shared our stand with PEN, enabling the successful distribution of hundreds of copies of Teach Peace Secondary.

### **Institute of Education**

- The PPU values its link with the Institute of Education and continues to attend meetings as part of the UCL Peace Education Special Interest group.

### **Woodcraft Folk**

- We continue to work closely with Woodcraft Folk to support peace education among their groups of young people across the UK.
- The white poppy activity pack, jointly developed by Woodcraft Folk and the PPU, remains freely available to Woodcraft Folk groups.
- In January, a member of PPU Council facilitated a session on pacifism for a Woodcraft Folk group in North London.
- Staff and Council members will be facilitating sessions during the Woodcraft Summer Camp in July/August 2025.

## PPU Wales

- The PPU's work in Wales flourished in 2024, with a focus on engaging with Members of the Senedd ahead of the Welsh elections.
- [We wrote to the incoming First Minister to call for Wales](#) to build a culture of peace, based on its proud traditions, and to take a clear stance on current global conflicts.
- We also worked with the coordinating group Heddwch ar Waith as part of a large peace event involving organisations from across Wales, at the Senedd in March.
  - The PPU worked with Quakers Wales on a session about military visits to Welsh schools, and the role of peace education in countering these.
- Separately, members in Wales continue to communicate and meet informally online to identify new opportunities for PPU action.

## QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

- A question was asked about the focus of the new member of staff.
  - Our aim is to employ someone with a communications focus and from this background. However, the staff team will then work on campaigns in a collaborative and strategic way. As such, we will aim to avoid siloed working while also ensuring each staff member still a lead focus and areas of responsibility. Aspects like 'education' will be more broadly interpreted, in line with the PPU's strategy, with a focus on encouraging a more general educative approach to the promotion of pacifism.
- It was noted that the Men Who Said No website has not been upgraded in recent years. Possibilities previously suggested included a function to search the CO database.
  - Reassurance was given that this is an ongoing discussion and has not been forgotten.

## **Geoff presented the Military Spending and Recruitment report.**

At the start of 2024, the UK joined the US in attacking Houthi targets in Yemen. This reckless move threatened to further escalate the war in the Middle East. The PPU called out the UK government's imperial arrogance and irresponsible approach to international security.

- This militaristic approach to foreign policy was mirrored at home, with the Tory government using increasingly alarmist military rhetoric.
- As such, the PPU's campaign on military spending and recruitment has been especially urgent. We aim to put forward the arguments against the UK's spiralling military budget and damaging military recruitment practices, offering up to date resources on our website on these issues.

## Military Recruitment

- For the first time in several generations, military conscription has been raised in the UK.
- General Sir Patrick Sanders' call for a 'citizen army' reflected the increasingly aggressive militarism of the UK political establishment.
- In our statement in response, we said: "Military conscription is a violation of our basic freedoms and human rights, and must be resisted at every turn... Now that the prospect of military conscription has again been raised in the UK, we urge people to become conscientious objectors to the very idea of conscription."



## International Conscientious Objectors' Day (ICOD/CO Day)

- The PPU is one of the few UK peace organisations with an active memory of conscription, as it grew out of the conscientious objectors' movement during the First World War.
- We supported COs during the Second World War and continue to do so today - as we do annually on International Conscientious Objectors' Day (CO Day), which takes place on 15th May.
- In 2024, we gave a platform to the Israeli conscientious objector, Or, who has served multiple prison sentences for her refusal to join the military. She issued a public call for solidarity with COs facing persecution worldwide, before speaking at the London ceremony for CO Day in Tavistock Square.
- For CO Day, we work closely with War Resisters' International (WRI), of which the PPU is the British section, and with a coalition of thirteen peace organisations.
  - Together, we maintain a wealth of resources on the history, and contemporary struggles, of COs around the world.
- Soon after CO Day 2024, the then government announced plans to reintroduce national service if re-elected. The PPU pledged to resist the scheme and warned that it would be met with waves of resistance from young people.

## Military Spending

- UK military spending continued to skyrocket during 2024 - Rishi Sunak announced a further £75bn over six years, as well as additional military support for Ukraine.
- In response, the PPU accused the government of inflaming global tensions, as the increase sent a clear hostile message to Russia, China and other countries, as well as wasting public funds during a cost-of-living crisis.
- This trend looks set to continue under the Labour government, making it increasingly important we continue to raise awareness of the grave dangers of military spending, as well as alternative approaches to security based on diplomacy and cooperation.

## QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

- Governments can impose conscription indirectly, by increasing military spending, military jobs and salaries whilst bringing down the economy so that non-military jobs become scarce.
- The work being done in Wales was appreciated, and thanks was extended to Ed Bridges for building these links.

## **Amy presented the Operations and Finance report.**

### Memberships

- The PPU membership numbers have risen from 660 at last year's AGM to 755 now. Of these, 520 are paying by direct debit.
- 130 of these direct debits are paid monthly, which has £3pm minimum. As such, these people choose to pay more than the minimum rates. Many other people choosing to overpay too, now we've introduced the option.
- The remainder of the memberships (direct debit and one-off) are 42 joint, 159 low income, 424 standard.
- Work is continuing on trying to ensure everyone paying their membership by standing order is recorded correctly (largely thanks to Lyn Bliss). This situation will never fully resolve but we are working to manage it the best we can.

- We also have just under 14,000 people on our mailing list, up from 12,800 last year's AGM. Over the next year, we will invest more effort into converting more supporters to members.
- While the membership numbers have gone up, the increase isn't that significant. We're attracting many new members but have issues of retention e.g. we sent out just under 300 new member packs in the last 12 months, but our figures are less than 100 higher than the last AGM. 270 memberships also expired in the last year, many of these people were not members for long.
- A survey was recently done asking people who left the PPU in the last 3 years about their reasons for leaving. We received about 40 responses, including some interesting points to consider about local connections, being kept up to date, people joining through the white poppy, and costs.
  - The PPU aims to develop more of a strategy around membership and fundraising.
  - This will be supported by the new staff member, who we are hoping to have communications experience. If they come from a charity/campaigning background, fundraising, awareness raising etc. should be part of their skillset.
  - We will also explore ways to improve retention by better facilitating member connections, and by getting to know our members better and engaging them in our work more.
    - We have started to do work on this, through connecting members with each other in regional areas, including through setting up a mailing list for London members with around 115 people included. And we are looking into developing mailing lists for active volunteers (e.g. call outs for demos or for representing the PPU on a stall).
- As with Remembrance 2023, a larger number of new members joined mid-October to mid-November. Just under 100 in 2024 and just over 100 in 2023.
  - In both 2023 and 2024, we sent out a letter about joining the PPU with white poppy orders, and it's likely that this was helpful in generating more memberships.
  - We also saw a smaller increase in new members when the possibility of national service was raised in 2024.

## Finance

- One of the biggest jobs in 2024 was getting up to date with the PPU's accounts for 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- This proved challenging for a number of reasons e.g. issues gaining access to the Co-op bank account and setting up online banking to access missing statements, and locating proofs of payments from 2022 and 2023, as records were not fully kept.
- The 2022 and 2023 accounts have now been finalised. They will be made publicly available once they have been signed off by the Chair.
- The 2024 accounts are almost finalised, a few last minute queries need to be raised with the accountants before they can be signed off. Some key points can be pulled out from the 2024 figures:
  - The PPU started 2024 with £75k in the bank.
  - In 2023, our deficit was around £31,500, which is significant. However, in 2024 deficit was brought down to £15k. (Shown as -£33k in 2023 and -£13k in 2024 on the accounts, as £2000 from PRET due in 2023 was paid into the bank at the start of 2024).
    - The 2024 deficit is still significant, but it is promising that it's been more than halved from the previous year.

- We have also started making changes in 2025 that should reduce the deficit still further (e.g. no cleaner, no expensive printer contract).
- We did not receive any legacy gifts in either year, and cannot rely on this form of income to negate any deficit.
  - We have, however, started promoting legacies on the website and will redesign our legacy leaflets soon.
- Our biggest cost reduction in 2024 was staff costs, as the PPU operated with just 2 staff. This has helped the PPU financially but is not sustainable. We are hoping to employ a third part-time staff member through funding from PRET for 3 years from the start of 2026.
  - This will support the PPU's capacity levels but will not generate extra funds to cover general running costs. As such, we should look into other funding options to cover our core costs.
  - It is also hoped that the new staff member, who we hope will have a communications background, will be able to support the PPU financially, through mobilising their expertise to draw more attention to the PPU, thereby hopefully expanding our membership and increasing donations.
- Business rates are increasing significantly in 2025; it now costs over £1000 per month to run the PPU from the current office.
  - We are likely not eligible for any reduction, as the PPU isn't a charity. However, we will look into this more when the new staff member is in place, as we will be receiving more charitable funding then (from PRET) and may be eligible for some relief.
  - The issue of increased business rates feeds into options for the office, which is a big strategic decision for the PPU Council.
- While we have attempted to reduce costs, what we really need to focus on is increasing income, as there is a limit to how many costs we can cut.
  - Raising funds through the building is one potential option, and securing grants is another.
  - Developing our memberships through increasing new member subscriptions, then retaining those members, is another method.
  - Increasing donations from members and supporters is another, as is increasing membership subscription rates (something that's been worked on since the last AGM and will be enacted soon).
  - Our winter appeal raised more in 2024 compared with 2023, probably partly as it was done earlier so was more likely to attract festive giving, and secondly as the appeal contained more information about what the funds would be spent on – something to build on for 2025.
  - A lot of the above intersects with communications and increasing the awareness of the PPU itself, and an important element of this is ensuring the PPU's relevance and visibility to wider demographics.

## **QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

- Amy was thanked for progress made on membership – boosting numbers, income, and the numbers of people using direct debits – as well as improving the membership database and system.
- A point about the high postage costs was raised, it was suggested to rely more heavily on emails instead.
  - Most PPU communications (other than the AGM mailing and new member packs) are conducted through email now. The vast majority of our postage costs are for shop items. Some of these costs are recouped, but we should

revisit the postage costs we charge to customers before this year's Remembrance, as postage keeps increasing.

## ELECTIONS

Outgoing Council: Sarri Bater, Albert Beale, Ed Bridges, Peter Glasgow, Matt Harbage, Colin Kerr, Katie McClean, Rachel Melly

Election of a **CHAIR**

	FOR	AGAINST	UNMARKED
Peter GLASGOW	62	0	0

Election of a **TREASURER**

No nominations received.

Election of other **MEMBERS OF COUNCIL**

	FOR	AGAINST	UNMARKED
Albert BEALE	53	3	6
Matthew HARBAGE	59	1	2
Colin KERR	58	0	4

Election of the **RETURNING OFFICER**

Debbie Herring was elected for another year.

Election of the **STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE**

Albert Beale and Rachel Melly were elected for another year.

## MOTIONS

No motions were submitted for debate in advance of the AGM, and no emergency motions were submitted during the AGM.

## CLOSING COMMENTS

Participants had their attention drawn to the recent loss of John Marjoram, a lifelong pacifist, conscientious objector, and Quaker, who was a PPU member. John carried out amazing work on behalf of peace into his 80s, and the AGM was encouraged to remember his work and legacy.

Lucy Beck, Treasurer of PRET, highlighted the fact that PRET is currently looking for new Trustees. She encouraged PPU members to consider applying, and to get in touch with PRET at [info@pret.org.uk](mailto:info@pret.org.uk) if they would like to find out more. Lucy also extended a sincere thanks, on behalf of PRET, to John Morris, who recently announced that he will be stepping down as Chair of PRET.

## FILM SCREENING

Before lunch, participants watched the short film, *5K from the Frontline*, by Anastasia Taylor-Lind.

## PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel consisted of three PPU members whose pacifist principles intersect with their varied careers in different ways:

Ceri Buckmaster - Facilitator in Nonviolent Communication and an Interfaith Minister

Kate Smurthwaite - Political comedian, writer and activist

Anastasia Taylor-Lind - photojournalist and poet reporting on the war in Ukraine

Recordings of the panellists' presentations can be found on the PPU's YouTube page – <https://www.youtube.com/@PPUtoday>

## Q&A SESSION

The presentations were followed with a Q&A session. Questions and comments are recorded below with responses listed afterwards, including the names of the panellist(s) who responded.

- A comment was made in agreement with Ceri's view that no one should be excluded from table. The way forward is to go through conflict with dialogue to reach a place of resolution. This approach has been challenged with groups globally, and sometimes with interpersonal relationships too. How do we avoid platforming? Or do we challenge the use of this term as loaded, and we're not 'platforming' but simply instead giving all views an equal seat at the table? Or does that potentially bring very negative voices into the Overton window (the range of views politically acceptable to the mainstream population at a given time) so we're inadvertently prioritising them?
  - Ceri responded:
    - Dialogue takes significant time. Often, behind the scenes conversations are very important. Discussions are taken out of the public gaze so they can happen.
    - This process takes a long time. We can deal with concerns over platforming, or whatever the concerns are, and say 'this is where we are – we need to deal with these concerns and move through them so we can get on with the next stage'.
    - When met with issues of parties not wanting to talk to the other side – something which happens on every level of conflict – Ceri encourages the person to speak to her instead, to start there instead. She finds that often in interpersonal conflict, this person will then be willing to give the other side space to be heard because they've been given that space with Ceri – it can be transformative.
    - Presence is transformative, being alongside other people. That transforms things but it's a slow process.
    - Not having an intended outcome is also really important – we're not trying to get *there*, we are *here*. No judgement is made on the person's position at each stage; Ceri positions herself alongside them in each moment.

- Kate responded:
  - One of the difficulties we face with the concept of platforming is that power structures continue to exist, and some groups have more power than other.
  - The idea to prevent platforming – to not give attention and airtime to people whose views are dangerous and problematic – is a positive one. However, people from the least empowered groups are often instead told their views are unacceptable, and that they can't be given a platform, while those people who've bombed and maimed, for example, are still given a platform because the power structure that supports this still exists.
  - As such, the positive idea about being more selective over who gets airtime can backfire, in the same way that every effort about redressing power structures tends to be subsumed by those very power structures.
  - There is a place for saying 'let's not engage with this person on this particular discussion', but we have to be wary about these ideas inadvertently further allowing power structures to entrench themselves. It's important to consider what the practical implications will be.
- An attendee raised the importance of all the pre-work that Ceri's just highlighted. All international conflict resolution work will have had included these processes. Additionally, in interpersonal and organisational conflict resolution and mediation, the parties wouldn't have got to the point they've got to without that pre-work e.g. 'talk to me if you won't talk to them'. We might not know about this work, but it'll definitely have happened, and it's important it recognise this.
- When things are reported we can encourage people to really listen, and to start to discern when things are skewed and obfuscated. What's a bigger issue is what we *don't* see. A recent example was when the red line around the houses of parliament didn't make mainstream news, other than fleeting mention on Radio 4. Additionally, reporting of the large PSC demos has disappeared. It's easier to deal with being given skewed stories and platforming etc., but many people don't know certainly things are happening at all. As such, if people aren't activists making a concerted effort to keep up with developments, they're getting a very skewed idea of what's going on.
  - Kate responded:
    - We talk about the Overton window as what's shown as an acceptable range of views – and this often doesn't include positions where we [pacifists] are.
    - When shown this range of acceptable views, it's easy to imagine the neutral position to be in the middle of that range. However, it's often presented as 'should we kill everybody or should we kill most of the people?' and there's another part of that window not being shown.
    - The issue of stories being wholesale overlooked and ignored is much more serious and bigger issue. Kate is not presenting herself as an optimist who feels we can solve this.
    - However, what we can do is support those media who are reporting on it whether by subscribing or sharing/redistributing them e.g. share online, read and leave on the bus.
    - An example is a website called strike map which highlights when organisations have gone on strike and 99% time there are people 5

miles from you striking about fundamental issues and we don't always hear about it, if they are close you can pop down and support and offer solidarity. It's a question of finding these things. There are lots of excellent online media sources who are talking about these issues and you can try to find which are up to date and covering things e.g. morning star, byline times, reel news. Talked briefly about how algorithms can stop messages getting out there and this issue is very serious, one thing that algorithms can never do is stop you sending a direct email or message to someone. If you do see these stories you think are important then you can send that to someone and tell them this is something important that you've not seen anywhere else, and this will bypass the issue of algorithm because it's direct and it's effective. From own personal marketing – if I post on social medias they get low engagement but sending personal emails rate higher change they will read and come is higher. Half emails get read and only 10% social media max, some 1%. We can write to newspapers and media companies and ask why not covering these important issues. Not sure how well it works but doesn't do harm and the more people that do it the more likely it is to work.

- An attendee based in the USA commented on previous discussions about what the media doesn't record. For example, students she'd worked with in the USA hadn't realised that there was any opposition to the Vietnam War, they hadn't seen photos or heard about the movements of resistance to this. She also attended an anti-war demonstration and received negative responses to her encouragement for people to support COs rather than the troops (having seen 'I support the troops' materials at the demo). She asked Noam Chomsky how we can go about speaking to people about peace work when up against the power of the mainstream media. Chomsky repeated what she'd said about supporting COs, and instead of getting criticised he got a standing ovation. This experience taught her something about how people react to those who are considered a voice of authority. We're pushed out of the media; the US mainstream media will not show us in solidarity with other groups or organisations but show us fighting with each other and try to provoke discord. One of my biggest enemies is our own media. The US armed forces are experiencing an all-time low recruitment, and while that's positive, she worries about the risk conscription. As such, she wants to know how to speak to the public if conscription does happen, as currently she feels she'd be presented as the 'bad guy' who doesn't support the troops.
- Someone raised the point, for everyone's information, that email does get governed to a small extent by algorithms.
- A comment was made reflecting on the phrase in Anastasia's film 'there are some things you think will never happen to you, like an aeroplane crash or a war'. Wars affect people even when they're not on their own doorstep. The experience very different, but there still is an effect on people here. As an example, it's absolutely horrifying that 5% GDP will be spent on 'defence' spending when there are people in real need. There are also families affected when family members are caught up in war overseas, there's a huge emotional response to war that we're dealing with, and there's an impact on the ability to speak out for peace when these things are going on. It would be really interesting to see journalistic work going on from that perspective. We are involved in wars, just not on our doorstep.
  - Anastasia responded:

- Alisa, Anastasia's reporting partner, is now doing a PhD about the idea that war isn't a series of events (an idea photography plays into) but that for people who experience it, it's like a scaffolding that builds up around their lives and war and peace can exist simultaneously or are interlaced with each other. Wars don't end for people when ceasefires are called. There are two ways to survive wars – physically and spiritually or psychologically.
- Given a lot of the discussion has focused on the media, and Anastasia is part of that as a freelance media worker, she shared some further context about how news and pictures are made and end up in front of us.
- Television is often made by staff and print media by staff and freelancers, while most photojournalists are freelancers.
- The first six years of the project Anastasia's been working on with Alisa was unfunded. Anastasia is a British citizen, and there are privileges associated with that. Alisa is an IDP in Ukraine. They are two people with limited agency, and without much ability to influence people inside those organisations.
- They have approached news outlets about the war in eastern Ukraine, which is generally reported as a frozen conflict or a forgotten war in Europe. It's displaced 3-4 million people already, 15,000 are dead and Alisa is from the community. Anastasia and Alisa have done the reporting and can present the news outlets with a package of work including photographs, interviews and other text, and request that the publish it.
- Working in a war zone is expensive. You have to be standing metres from something happening to take the photos, and getting there without an organisation backing you is expensive.
- Good reporting is made by people who find a story they care about, go out and make it, then pitch it to people.
- Elements of the ongoing project, 5K from the Frontline, has been run in numerous news outlets over the years. The fee given each time might be £2k but each trip could cost up to £25k. A similar situation is found in independent documentary film.
- There is really good journalism being made. We just can't trust legacy media anymore to tell these stories.
- The people actually there within metres of events are photojournalists. Anastasia learns about what's going on inside Gaza, Russia and Ukraine by following those photojournalists directly on social media. The images may end up in newspapers alongside text which aligns with that newspaper's biases, but the image taken direct from the photojournalist's social media account explained exactly what happened.
- As such, Anastasia is a big advocate for social media, as it gives direct access to people showing us what's happening on the ground. However, social media suffers from lower credibility – images on Instagram might not be believed as much as when they feature in a respected newspaper, though they're the same pictures.
- When we're looking at conflicts, we're looking at pictures, that's the main source of information about what's happening. This is especially the case in Gaza right now, as it's completely closed. The death toll for journalists is over 200, and these will all be freelancers working



independently and putting photos online in the hope people see it – we should be supporting these people.

## **DISCUSSION GROUPS**

### **WHITE POPPIES AND REMEMBRANCE**

*How can we build on some of the positive developments seen in the Remembrance Project in recent years? This includes white poppies being included in greater numbers of official Remembrance ceremonies, more white poppies being distributed in educational settings, and the launch of the Decolonising Remembrance campaign in 2024.*

#### **Office Group**

- Develop a concrete plan for white poppies and remembrance.
- White poppy ceremonies and events.
- Put together paper/video for ceremonies/events.
- Decolonising Remembrance - what groups can we collaborate with?
- How to get media involved?
- Woodcraft Folk groups.
- How to contact more teachers?
- Can we get sponsors for white poppies to be distributed?
- Recruitment of volunteers to put poppies out and to arrange local ceremonies.
- How do we turn this into something that can be carried out in diverse localities?
- How do we fund the wreathes?
- White poppies are already in about 300 outlets – list these.
- Approach Lush again about stocking white poppies.
- Pairing up with other supporters for white poppy sales outside supermarkets etc.
- How to engage young people around white poppies?
- Monthly meetings online or in person.
- Before Remembrance Day, weekly online opportunity re White Poppies.
- Webinars about white poppies – can be collaborative and educative.
- Value and outreach – events as a starting point to reach wider audience.
- White poppy installation in India regarding the Bengal Famine.
- Develop Quaker contacts and improve relationship - research Boot-print Energy and impact. Speaker.

#### **Online Group**

- The experience of trying to arrange white poppy events in Guildford has been frustrating.
  - Many years ago, members of the Peace Party wished to use the white poppies to remember those civilians and members of the military who had died and been killed in all wars in all parts of the world. At that time, this use of white poppies in remembrance services was likely not taking place anywhere in Britain.
  - One year, after a service at the Guildford War Memorial, the Peace Party left a few white poppies near the red poppy wreaths. That produced some angry responses from the local military lovers.
  - In the years that followed, they tried various ways of involving the white poppy at remembrance time without success. They eventually arranged a

separate alternative remembrance event in a small garden which had been the site of an earlier Quaker meeting house. They didn't attempt to talk to either the arrangers of remembrance services or the local council to seek a way of involving the white poppy officially.

- The Peace Party would welcome advice on how best to go about the laying of a white poppy wreath as part of the general remembrance events.
- There are links between the PPU's work and work At Ease is doing on military recruitment – could we support each other's work more?

## **EVERYDAY MILITARISM**

*How can we enhance and expand our everyday militarism campaigning strand, focusing on key focal events, such as Armed Forces Day and DSEI, as well as instances of everyday militarism occurring throughout the year, such as military visits to schools? What new areas related to everyday militarism could the PPU engage with to a greater degree?*

### **Office Group**

- There are some recurring annual events that we can plan for because we know when they will be (e.g. Armed Forces Day, Pride events) while other instances of everyday militarism occur in different ways at different times.
  - As such, we need a continuous campaign against everyday militarism, between annual events.
- There isn't an official national Armed Forces Day event this year, but there are nearly 200 events around the country, listed on the website. There is an event in Wales calling itself the Welsh national event.
  - The PPU has submitted an FOI to the MoD about how much funding is being spent on Armed Forces Day.
  - The link can be shared with members so they can look for events near them.
  - We provide resources of how to take action – we could perhaps expand this to give members/supporters more ideas and guidance.
  - We help people how to find local members to act with – but we could work to expand this as the potentials are rather limited at the moment.
  - We could try to increase publicity locally nearer the event, making local connections and contacting local groups.
  - We could develop template letters for members and supporters to send to local newspapers and radio stations, or to the council.
    - This is work that could be started just after AFD has finished, arguing for the Council not to host it next year, or at least to not allow children to handle weapons.
- We could produce a leaflet or infographic to highlight how much military language is built into our casual language. Such as "bullet point", "put my head above the parapet", "get out of the firing line" – We could produce as a list on its own, or with alternatives.
- The PPU could put more work into supporting members challenge other manifestations of everyday militarism around the country, such as army recruitment stalls on high streets.
  - We could produce template letters (to be sent to local councils and/or media) for this too.
- We could produce leaflets challenging the 'common sense' notion that war is necessary/inevitable and armed forces are positive institutions – these could be

phrased in a witty/sharp/satirical way that grabs people's attention – we could ask someone with that skill to write them.

- We could develop the military visits checklists work that Ed Bridges has done in Wales.
- We could conduct a survey of people to see how many actually say they'd fight in the army (N.B. one was published in May 2025, can we use any of its findings? <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/third-britons-higher-among-men-and-young-people-would-take-arms-country-confidence-armed-forces>).
- We could submit an FOI to the MoD about their policies around red poppies.
  - It's complex when a private company is running public events rather than a local or national authority because you can't do FOIs. But, given the private entity has taken on public responsibility you could take this forward to the Information Commissioner. You'd probably need to have the initial FOI refused before doing so, so it'd take more effort and time to do.

## Online Group

- Students, particularly those who have done sciences at A-Level, are approached by the military to complete a 'sponsored' degree. It's appealing to many students, because they can then complete their degree without incurring huge debts.
  - However, the realities of this arrangement are obscured i.e. that they are effectively enlisting and need to unquestioningly obey commands even if they believe these are wrong. For example, members of the UK Royal Navy were deployed to the Mediterranean Sea to assist the Israel Defence Forces when the war policy of the Government of Israel was to prevent supplies of food, water or fuel reaching Gaza.
  - At Ease is producing leaflets aimed at students, to inform them about the realities of agreeing to these sponsored degrees before they make their decision.
- The PPU doesn't want to duplicate work already being done on this, however, there are other groups who we could target similarly.
  - We could target schools, universities and other recruitment fair providers to argue for them not to include the armed forces in their recruitment events.
    - We could produce flyers for people attending these recruitment events informing them about the realities of service.
    - We could produce template letters for other people to write to the providers arguing against the inclusion of the military in these events.
  - We could target local councils arguing against giving permission for the armed forces to have recruitment stalls in public.
    - When these stalls do take place, we could produce flyers to be handed out to passers-by about the realities of military service.
    - We could produce template letters for local residents to complain about military recruitment stalls and to demand the council doesn't give authorisation in future.
    - We could also flyer outside more permanent recruitment offices.
- We could try to organise people in the community to speak to young people about alternatives to military service, particularly if we know that the school is organising a military visit to the school.
  - This might be particularly useful before young people have joined a cadets' group, because it can be harder to develop a critical counter-narrative once they're already there and it's all being presented as fun, exciting extra-curricular activity.

- Another area of work which we could look into is in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant.
  - No one in the group knew much about how the Armed Forces Covenant works in practice and this might be something to look more into.
- When the UK armed forces need extra soldiers, they recruit heavily in the commonwealth.
  - Recruits are told that if they serve for 4+ years they can apply for British citizenship.
  - Many may feel that citizenship is almost guaranteed if they serve for this period, enticing them to enlist. However, service only offers the opportunity to *apply* for citizenship, there's no guarantee at all of success.
  - Additionally, if they leave before 4 years, they receive a letter from the Home Office informing them that they must leave the UK within 28 days and cannot work or receive benefits in the meantime.
  - At times, these recruits experience significant levels of racism from other military personnel, who aim to make the recruits' experience so awful they will leave before they have completed their 4 years of service, thus ruining any chance they have of applying for British citizenship.
- The Geographical Association – the leading association for geography teachers – produced some new resources about 'geography in action' recently. While it wasn't stated, these were connected to the military.
  - Could we gather support from our Education Network (around 300 people, most of them teachers) to challenge military involvement with school curricula?
- Could we develop workshops about military spending to be delivered in schools, to communicate the realities before young people's views on military spending have become solidified.
- On a more positive note, could we develop a 'peace map' where we focus on positive campaigns and successes?

## **PROMOTING PACIFISM AND NONVIOLENCE**

*The PPU is seeking feedback and ideas on key areas relating to the promotion of pacifism, which we are planning on developing and expanding in the near future. This includes a series of events focused on pacifism and nonviolence, online resources relating to pacifism, and our peace education work with teachers and students.*

### **Office Group**

#### *Events*

How we would like events to be offered in different ways:

- We would like to try to have in-person sessions, as well as online. Could PPU support us to gather in person in our local groups, with the facilitator online? Could PPU help us find local orgs/ groups or individuals who might do in person sessions with us?
- We would like to have sessions
  - run by individuals from within PPU or guests.
  - joined with other organisations who might be running things that would be good for us (it would be good to meet others too).
  - set up as peer sessions, where we can organise or facilitate ourselves (we would definitely need some help from PPU to get this started).

## Topics we would like to have sessions on:

- Linking the current polycrisis and pacifism e.g. pacifism and racism, pacifism and poverty.
- Online access to Matt Harbage's 'How to talk to arms dealers', session.
- Session/s on *What is peace, what is conflict, what is violence, what is nonviolence, what is pacifism?* NB Sarri can easily offer this if needed.
- *How to deal with conflict nonviolently?* NB Sarri and/or Ceri can offer this if needed.
- How to speak about the PPU, its activities and campaign areas - more knowledge/information about what to say when we are at events/campaigning, including how to confront people and challenge them.
- As part of this, could we be supported to create buddying systems, where one experienced person could work with someone who is new to it?
- What different ways can we contribute to PPU actions? - What different roles and skills are needed? i.e. Do we all need to be able to confront people? What other valuable roles can we take and how can we feel more confident that these roles are needed, and that we are needed, when we might not be a good speaker?
- FAQs/advice/coaching clinics: a place to come to ask what to do when X happens.
- How to do good communications/publicity.
- We would like follow-up sessions too, e.g. if we have been learning how to talk to people at DSEI, can we have a debrief, follow up peer support session afterwards, to help us see how well we did and what we could improve?

## Online Resources

- Want to take care about how materials are presented and catalogued - needs to be usable and easy to navigate, and accessible for people with different needs.
- Checking and monitoring what's in our resources - need to think about what gets added. Everything must be in alignment with our values and how would we fact check if materials are credible and trustworthy? This is a lot of work. Could we have a process for members to peer review resources?
- CND used to have resources called 'link series' e.g. CND and Christianity, CND and Feminism etc. - Old now but may be useful still?
- Link to other organisations who have resource lists.
- Getting inspiration and learning from historical precedence and activism.
- Can we have songs, quotes, poems and music videos too?
- Would like to have a system where anything offered as part of the series of events (see above) can have accompanying resources that can be added to the resource list i.e. the topics named in the above list as what we want from an event series, we would also like to have resources and materials for them.

## Peace Education

- Would like to see the PPU working to get peace education into the curriculum N.B. curricula are devolved around the UK, so we must not be London centric!
- Do we need a strategy for getting SMT buy in, and then work with the schools?
- Can we have some specific offerings that support teachers to use examples and snippets of peace education in their usual lessons, assemblies etc.? For example, Oxfam had some resources like this: Maths teachers were asked to work with students to cut up a banana into the percentages of the price paid, that went to all the different people involved. Only a tiny piece of banana went to those grow it, some of it went to land owners, some of it went to transportation services, some of it went to retailer etc.
- Teachers could point students to further peace education resources, to keep their curiosity going.
- Support teachers to set up peer group forums and ways of convening.

- Make sure we link this with the other work in schools on Armed Forces visits and recruitment.

## Online Group

- Pacifism does not mean passivity. It requires action and often great courage.
- It's important we give examples of the success of nonviolent action e.g. Gandhi, Greenham Common, Freedom Flotilla to Gaza.
- Northern Ireland Peace talks ended up with politicians in a room - We must not forget the political dimension. Go-Betweens were used for Good Friday Agreement, and the NI Women's Coalition were influential.
  - PPU needs to concentrate its resources to produce an in-depth paper on one example.
  - We need to focus on the positive.
- Changing people's minds is difficult, the notion that 'there will always be war' is a powerful, deep-seated belief, even among those who we might expect to be 'on our side'.
  - The idea that 'war works' is not true. Einstein's definition of insanity applies here – 'Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result'.
  - The Quakers have a slow detailed process of consensus building – which we can use.
- We need to link up with other PPU members in our vicinity.
- Alliances
  - XR had 200 allies in a recent action.
  - There are a multiplicity of (mainly small) peace organisations here in the UK and worldwide. We clearly need to link to be more effective. One way is to collaborate, perhaps with a (wiki-style) online document that creates a common pathway to a more peaceful world.
  - We could also call a World Peace Day, where, at sunrise in each region, a positive message is put up by each organisation in turn, which will emphasise the planetary nature of our enterprise. [This worked very well on a World Poetry Day: it has a profound emotional impact, as people in each time zone became active in turn. It brings in to us that we actually share a spherical planet with other people].

## PACIFISM AT A TIME OF GROWING MILITARISM

*How should pacifists be responding to developments in the current moment, including responding to the growing consensus around increasing military spending, as well as the rise of far-right organising, Trump's foreign policy, the horrors unfolding in Palestine, and the ongoing war in Ukraine? How can the PPU best speak out about growing militarism in this context, how can we make space to speak about these worrying trends with other pacifists, and how does this shape both our campaigning and how we act in the world?*

## Office Group

What are the new developments in the current moment the PPU hasn't properly digested yet? How can we respond to these new developments as pacifists?

- Bombing Iran
- Rise of far right
- Racist riots



- Military spending increasing to 3-5% GDP
- The machinery is being put in place for ever more militarism
- One war after another

How do we respond to the growing consensus in Westminster that more military spending is needed? What we can do:

- The anniversary of the start of WW2: Prepare for difficult conversations. Get ahead of the curve. Pre-empt conversations.
- Have more resilient support and discussion spaces.
- Show not tell (embody conversations, provide facilitated space).
- Make it meaningful for people when we talk about financial spending on militarism e.g. is the % GDP being promised 4 or 40 hospitals worth?
- Go back to the Peace Hub idea, use the space here.
- Although we have absolutist stance, be able to have conversations with different perspectives.
- Roleplay difficult conversations.
- Have online Zoom discussions but link them to tangible campaigns.
- Utilise the resources of PPU members AND reach out to other organisations. Collaborate.

## Online Group

- Alternatives and Alliances
  - Showing (as simply and concisely as possible) what the Alternative to War/A Roadmap to Peace looks like, with a refreshed slogan.
  - This can be like a banner with which we approach those many groups with which we want to strengthen our alliances.
  - One idea could a global day of peace, with each organisation, in succession, describing its take on Peace.
- The "Carbon Boot-print" of militarism links us to climate change movement.
- Mythbusting
  - Quaker Council of European Affairs has a useful Mythbusting page on refugees: <https://www.chooserespect.eu/myths>
  - A very common throwaway comment is "war is inevitable, just part of human nature". It is widely operative assumption, not just in our adversaries, but in people who are our natural allies.
  - We have to counter this assumption, by demonstrating that measurements show wars are diminishing as democracy grows. People are not essentially warlike; they just want to get on with their lives.
  - There is a gulf between political leaders and those who are actually affected by war. George III was the last king who actually went on the battlefield. There are 100 synagogues in Iran who have existed there peacefully for years.
  - We need to study the causes of current wars. These are - in order of importance - religion, dictators, ethnic distinctions, militias, foreign intervention, secessionism, crime, resources, ideology, herder/farmer clashes, and poverty.
  - As with wildfires, prevention of war is far easier than stopping them once they are started.
  - The arms industry is the only institution that benefits from war, and we must be aware of their influence. Once weapons exist, they must be used.

## **CLOSING**

After each of the discussion groups fed back, Peter closed the AGM by thanking everyone for their attendance and participation. He noted how excellent the speakers were, and thanked them for their contribution, and reflected that the discussion groups were also engaging and fruitful.

Peter felt it was clear everyone enjoyed coming together, and that there was a lot of enthusiasm in the room and online, with people being inspired to take the ideas and energy forward. He voiced his hope that we'll be able to build on this and do more together, both in the office and as an organisation.

Lastly, Geoff drew everyone's attention to the '10 ways to get involved with the PPU' document, and encouraged everyone to have a look before leaving.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next AGM will likely be late spring or early summer 2026. This will be confirmed by the new PPU Council and circulated to members in due course.