Alnwick Area
Friends of the Earth

Letters to our MP – Anne-Marie Trevelyan

Leading up to COP26 in Glasgow a few of Alnwick Area FoE members wrote to Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP about a number of key issues linked to the climate emergency. The following are a summary of the main points from those letters.

- Terry wrote to Anne-Marie Trevelyan in February 2021, to ask her and the Government to oppose the creation of a coal mine in Cumbria in the belief that establishing of a coal mine anywhere in this country is contrary to current government policy. He wrote that he was opposed to the creation of the coal mine for the following reasons. 'It is not needed. There are other solutions to the production of steel. Other ways of producing steel are under development and more sustainable jobs would be created in a Green Recovery. It would be very polluting. The UK is legally required to deliver 'net zero' emissions by 2050. The development of this mine, with long timescales of operation, is incompatible with these legal requirements'.

  Furthermore, Terry expressed concern about COP26 talks. 'We will be chairing this conference and need to be credible in our leadership. Going ahead with this mine would undermine our leadership and make this country and its government appear hypocritical and humiliated'. 'Going along with the establishing of the proposed coal mine will jeopardise our leadership'.

  A general reply was received in April supporting the requirement of a new coal mine. This was before the Government intervened in the local approval for the mine and set up a public enquiry on the need for the coal mine.

- Terry wrote in June to ask Anne-Marie Trevelyan in June 2021 to ask her and the British government in their role in the G7 to support the establishing of a Global Plastics Treaty. 'An international Global Plastics Treaty could be an important step to tackling the plastic crisis that effects countries and communities across the globe'.

  Terry wrote that Friends of the Earth nationally and locally have been concerned about plastic pollution for some time. 'As a group in Alnwick we have seen how much plastic is used by shops and supermarkets. This usage has increased over time. We have witnessed how little plastic is recycled. We were initially concerned about plastics going to land fill. When that practice was considerably reduced, plastics were sent to other countries where much was burnt, with serious negative effects on the health of the indigenous population. Some, possibly much plastic ended up in the sea. We are concerned that so much plastic goes now for incineration. We are convinced that this is practice that is detrimental to the environment'.

  A reply was received from Anne Marie Trevelyan dated 18/8/21- received 24/8/2021, with additional response from Rebecca Pow MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Environment & Rural Affairs.

- Peter wrote to Anne-Marie Trevelyan in August 2021 in respect of refugees and asylum seekers in Northumberland and about the Government's proposed new Borders Bill which was making its way through the House of Commons. He expressed huge concerns about the damage the Borders Bill will do to the perception of refugees living in our communities, to their ability of these people in need of sanctuary to come to the UK, settle in our communities, contribute, work, live and find a new safe home here.

  Peter said –'It is right that as the sixth richest economy in the world we support people in desperate need of sanctuary who have fled from religious, racial or gender persecution'. 'This is our civic duty to the International community and a necessity of being an International and Moral leader to the world. The Borders Bill will mean that asylum seekers can be locked up for up to four years for trying to gain asylum in the UK. This will be costly to the tax-payer:- supporting a prisoner costs over £40 000 a year. It is also immoral.'

  Peter goes on to write that 'as a member of Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth I am aware of the link between climate change and refugees. One of the elements of this will mean that we will have to become aware of and be able to deal with the issue of large movements of people due to climate change and global heating. Climate change will mean that frequent large scale environmental disasters such as increased rainfall, flooding, fires and desertification will become more common. Natural resources will become scarcer and crops and livestock will struggle to survive. When this is combined with already political unstable situations within a country it will exacerbate the conflict and cause an even larger displacement of people. This is happening already. Climate change will cause climate refugees which as a global and local community we will have to deal with'.

  Peter writes – 'the government has recently cut the overseas development budget which will undoubtedly increase the pressures that cause people to move. Friends of the Earth argue that the overseas development budget is essential to tackle the effects which cause climate refugees by helping to introduce sustainable farming methods and protecting land rights among other elements'. 'I hope you will consider reinstating this in the future as it is surely better to ensure that communities across the world being secure within their own countries rather than taking dangerous journeys'.

  No reply has been received from Anne- Marie Trevelyan M.P. (Sept 30 2021)

- Terry wrote in August to Anne- Marie Trevelyan on the issue of climate change and in particular the global and local injustices that come from this. He wrote-'the IPCC report brings home a number of key points. Climate change is down to human activity on the planet. It is intensifying to the point where there can be no return. Extreme heating will become more frequent and the seas will continue to rise. Climate change is here and it is already affecting us and in particular the world's poorest. We in this country have a specific historical responsibility for climate change and as one of the wealthiest countries a particular responsibility for addressing the issue'.

  He went on – ' I am not convinced that our government has really got the message. The ten (now nine) targets set are very modest in comparison with the degree of seriousness of the issue. There is very little evidence of a swift response to what is, after all, an emergency. Many of the decisions taken by this government are in conflict with the just tackling of climate change. In particular the cuts in aid to other countries, the treatment of refugees, the granting of extended licences for oil fields, the ambiguous attitude to coal and in particular the proposed coal mine in Cumbria. I could go on but I and others need to seek reassurance that you and the British government are treating this emergency with the seriousness it warrants'.

  Terry then asked 5 questions - '1. How far the government have got in de-carbonising our economy? 2. What specific plans have the government got to address climate change with some

explanation of time scale? 3.Whether oil field licences are to be extended or have already been extended and the rational for the decisions taken? 4. Specifically, in your role, how will the wealthy nations address the disparity of the effects of climate change on the poorest of the world? 5. Specifically for Northumberland – how will the government address the challenges of sea level rise in Alnmouth and Holy Island (access issues) and what plans, if any, are there for the mitigation of flash flooding in Alnwick?'

No reply has been received from Anne- Marie Trevelyan M.P. (Sept 30 2021)

- Gilly wrote to Anne-Marie Trevelyan in September asking her to step up her action for climate justice. Gilly wrote that – 'the world is looking to the UK Government, as host of COP26, to hold world leaders to account in turning commitments into action urgently needed to deal with the climate crisis. So that in addition to keeping global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, the commitments made in Paris 2015 for the richer nations to provide $100bn per year in climate finance to the poorest and most climate-vulnerable communities must be fulfilled. Sadly, this is far from the case. You will know that this is an issue of justice, since these communities have contributed the least and yet are suffering the most, particularly women.'

  Gilly, asking for a re-instating of the UK aid budget made the following point. 'The recent cuts have sent a contradictory message to donor countries at the very time the UK government should be using its diplomatic pressure to persuade other donor countries to provide more money for climate finance'.

  Gilly also asked our M.P. to push for debt cancellation to climate vulnerable nations, so they can adapt to urgent priorities. She also requested that Anne-Marie Trevelyan inform her of 'what process the UK is constructing to ensure that COP26 will deliver finance for climate induced loss and damage?' This being a significant strand along with mitigation and adaptation.

  In her letter Gilly makes the point that many countries may refuse to agree to ambitious action to mitigate global heating unless these issue of justice and resources are addressed.

  Finally, Gilly invited our MP to come and meet the Young Christian Climate Network's RELAY to COP26 passing through our area in the middle of October.

  No reply has been received from Anne- Marie Trevelyan M.P. (Sept 30 2021)