

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) Annual Report January to December 2014

Communications and events

- **Published the first in a series of briefings on the Nicaragua canal presenting the benefits and risks of the mega project.**

This briefing was distributed widely through websites, social media and as a hard copy to NSC members. We also distributed it to journalists with an interest in Nicaragua in general and the canal in particular. Four journalists approached us for meetings and/or further information on the canal and commented that they found our briefing valuable as the only source of condensed information that is reasonably objective. It was also an important document in counteracting some of the prevailing anti-government media coverage of Nicaragua.



- **Publication of our magazine 'Nicaragua Now'** We have improved the quality of articles and layout and encouraged greater involvement of Wales NSC and twin towns; promoted the print and electronic version to ensure wider coverage in the UK and Nicaragua and promoted individual articles to specific target audiences.

- **Provided briefing and support in UK and Nicaragua to journalist Oliver Balch** on rural development, climate change and co-ops in Nicaragua. He visited Nicaragua and wrote three excellent pieces for the Guardian development section.

- **Website and social media:** improved the layout of our website and ensured regular updates of news from Nicaragua and UK-Nicaragua solidarity events. Expanded our use of social media in particular to promote events.

- **Published a regular UK-Nicaragua solidarity news bulletin** to highlight news from Nicaragua and UK – Nicaragua events.

- **Secured funding for the production and distribution of a publication focusing on Alba** and Nicaragua in the context of Latin American regional integration.

- **With the Central America Women's Network (CAWN) organised an international women's day event** with presentations on incorporating the unpaid work of women into pricing of fair trade sesame and coffee and showing the film 'En la cama, la casa y la calle.' The film highlights the work of the Nicaraguan feminist organisation Puntos de Encuentro in addressing sexual violence through a drama series shown on TV and combined with an extensive outreach programme.

Latin America conference

The 11th Latin America conference, coordinated by the Venezuela and Cuba Solidarity Campaigns, was attended by over 600 people, making it the biggest and best attended yet. Over 50 speakers, including leading parliamentarians and trade union leaders from the UK and Latin America, introduced plenary sessions and workshops. For NSC this was a key opportunity to raise awareness of the progressive changes happening in Nicaragua and highlight why regional integration, in particular ALBA, is so critical from a Nicaraguan perspective.



We co-ordinated the participation of the Nicaraguan minister responsible for foreign cooperation, Valdrak Jaentske. He was a keynote speaker at the conference and also took part in thematic region wide workshops. Together with the Environmental Network for Central America (ENCA) we also organised a successful workshop on volunteering in Central America, highlighting the issues related to volunteering and presenting examples of the volunteering opportunities available.

Collaboration with the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign

We worked closely with other organisations that promote solidarity and/or have projects and undertake advocacy related to other Latin American countries, and the region as a whole. With the dramatic escalation of US aggression against Venezuela we collaborated very closely the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (VSC) in supporting the region wide condemnation of this aggression. We carried this out through publicising VSC events, postings and articles, providing speakers for VSC events, and encouraging our members and supporters to sign up to VSC actions relating to building support in the UK.

Participation in European solidarity meeting in Rome

We participated in this solidarity event organised by a European coordination of organisations in solidarity with the Sandinista government and attended by around 60 people from Spanish state, Catalunya, Italy, France, Switzerland, Wales, and Sweden. The purpose of the meeting was to strengthen mutual relations, exchange information, promote, coordinate and take concrete actions with other networks of solidarity with the peoples of the Americas.

Support for Wales NSC, twin towns and other groups

We supported Wales NSC, twin towns and local groups in Edinburgh, Bristol, Islington, Leeds, Leicester, Norwich, Oxford, Reading, Tavistock, Sheffield and Swindon, and Nicaragua Education, Sustainability and Technology (NEST) and the Nicaragua Education, Cultural and Arts Trust (NECAT) by facilitating transfers of funds, providing advice and information, promoting the work of Wales NSC and twin towns in the solidarity section of *Nicaragua Now*; and providing practical support in Nicaragua for groups without representatives. In November we organised a well-attended twin towns meeting that provided a forum for an exchange of ideas and experiences, and identified areas of work where NSC could play a coordinating role in the UK and Nicaragua that would benefit all organisations.

Key areas of work: liaising with the UK ambassador in Nicaragua; contact with Raleigh International and Progressio in UK and Nicaragua regarding involvement of their returned volunteers in the work of NSC, Wales NSC and twin towns; collating a list of volunteering opportunities in Central America; collating a list of UK organisations working in Nicaragua. The consolidation of

relations with Raleigh International and Progressio was particularly important in involving new, younger activists in NSC and twin towns work.



Fundraising and Sales

The total raised through fundraising and sales was £34,179, an increase on 2013 (£33,380) which was one of the highest results for many years. This included £1,864 from leasing out two desks in our office (last year it was only one). A further £7,890 was made through Gift Aid.

- We raised our second highest income ever from sponsored events (marathon and half-marathon), had another fantastic festival season providing bar staff for the

Workers Beer Company and our Spanish classes did very well indeed. This helped to compensate for lower income from appeals.

- Sales made £5,224. The *Gift for Nicaragua* on the catalogue was popular; £950 was raised for a group of women bakers in Managua, *Mujeres en Accion*, to buy large-scale equipment such as kneading equipment and ovens. The baked goods are sold on the street in Managua; this work is very tiring and can be dangerous but the women are supported by their trade union, the Confederation of Self Employed workers (CTCP), a relatively young union which supports thousands of workers in the informal sector.

Many thanks to everyone who took part in our events, donated or bought things from us during the year.

Membership

All members received regular mailings including the magazine *Nicaragua Now*. We also email our Solidarity News to all members and the Nicanet News to those who request this service.

- Income from affiliations and related donations was £25,456. In 2013 it was £21,091 and in 2012 £29,005. Much depends on whether there are any particularly large donations during the year. In 2012 quite a few members raised their standing orders which will be of lasting benefit.
- We are continuing efforts to ensure greater income stability through standing orders, and at the end of 2014 76% of individual members were paying their membership fees in this way which is excellent.
- On the downside, there only 4 new members compared with 11 last year and 25 in 2010. The diminishing number of people attending delegations and study tours continues to have a negative effect, but also there is so much information available online that fewer people want to pay to join an organisation.

| Membership | Dec 10 | Dec 11 | Dec 12 | Dec 13 | Dec 14 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|---|
| Individuals | 505 | 470 | 465 | 451 | 450 |
| Wales NSC, twin towns and other groups | 17 | 16 | 16 | 15 | 14 An additional 5 groups receive mailings but are not paid-up members |
| Trade Unions: national, branches and regions, trades councils | 92 | 76 | 82 | 79 | 123 |
| Overseas subscriptions (libraries) | | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 |

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|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| All groups | 109 | 96 | 102 | 98 | 138 |
| TOTAL | 614 | 566 | 567 | 549 | 588 |

NB. All trade union work is carried out through the separately constituted Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group (NSCAG). Further details on trade union affiliations are provided in the NSCAG annual report.

Board of Trustees: NSC is governed by a Board of Directors/Trustees, which develops NSC's overall strategic plans and monitors activities and outcomes.

2014 Board members: Carmen Barreda, Dave Cosgrave, Rita Drobner, Pauline Fraser, Gill Holmes, Bob Hardie, Christine Oddy (now deceased), James Poke

NSC Staff: *London Office:* Stella Embliss, Helen Yuill and Mathews Chanza followed by Susie Steven.

Representative in Nicaragua: Liz Light

NSCAG staff: Louise Richards

Note that all staff are employed on a part-time basis.

Volunteers and supporters: We would like to thank all those who have contributed to NSC's work: those who have bought sales goods, donated to appeals, sold raffle tickets, attended Spanish classes, run marathons, done translations, helped us organise events and volunteered at Workers Beer Company festivals.

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