



Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) Annual Report January to December 2016

Introduction

Highlights of 2016 included the two visits of Nicaraguan Minister Paul Oquist, an important contribution to highlighting the impact of climate change on Nicaragua and the country's carbon reduction programme; wider distribution and increased recognition of the quality of our publications especially Nicaragua Now and our briefings; and the depth and diversity of the work of twin towns all over the country. Despite an adverse funding environment and the difficulties of keeping Nicaragua on the map in the UK, our membership and income remained relatively stable. Income from affiliations and related donations was £28,555, £5,000 more than in 2011 and the total raised through fundraising and sales was £30,519, also very good. We would like to thank our many loyal members and supporters who have continued so generously to support our work.

Nicaragua, global warming and climate justice

In our campaign we focused on Nicaragua as an example of the vulnerability of a small impoverished country to the impact of climate change while at the same time highlighting the steps the country is taking to reduce its own carbon emissions. In articles and presentations we also explained Nicaragua's reasons for refusing to sign the Paris Agreement.

- We participated in The Climate Coalition (an umbrella network of over 100 UK national and local organisations working on climate change) by disseminating materials illustrating the above.
- We organised two public events with key note speaker Dr Paul Oquist, Minister Secretary for public policy to the Nicaraguan presidency, and Nicaraguan representative to the Paris Climate Agreement. Paul's presentation illustrated the enormity of the challenges that climate change poses, the actions that Nicaragua is taking to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and why international financing is so critical for developing countries.
- We published a briefing entitled 'Nicaragua, global warming and climate justice' that was widely distributed to our members and supporters, environmental activists, and also through organisations in the US.

Nicaraguan elections, November, 2016

Presidential and National Assembly elections that took place on 7 November were won decisively by the FSLN. With NSCAG we published briefings, articles and did interviews highlighting the reasons why political and economic stability and poverty reduction were such key factors in determining the choice that Nicaraguan voters made.

Communications

- Publication of two issues of our magazine 'Nicaragua Now'. We improved the quality of articles and layout and encouraged greater involvement of Wales NSC and twin towns, promoted the print and electronic version of the magazine to ensure wider coverage in the UK and Nicaragua and aimed individual articles at specific audiences. The magazine was also published on a Nicaragua related website in the US.
- Website and social media. We improved the layout of our website, ensured regular updates of news from Nicaragua and UK-Nicaragua solidarity events and expanded our use of social media in particular to promote events.
- We published a regular UK-Nicaragua solidarity news bulletin with news from Nicaragua, and UK – Nicaragua events. We used this bulletin to keep our members and supporters updated.
- We published briefings on the Nicaraguan elections and on 'Nicaragua, global warming and climate justice'. See above.

Events

*In February we worked with a Yorkshire based group called Viva Bradford! to organize a Latin American contingent on a CND demonstration against trident renewal. Using our two gigantonas (Nicaraguan giant women) and flyers we highlighted the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean have been free of nuclear weapons since 1967 when the Treaty of Tlatelolco was signed, the first of its kind in the world. Our message was 'If Latin Americans can live without nuclear weapons why can't we?'

*Young volunteers in Nicaragua: an evening of talks, music and images of the experience of young volunteers who had recently volunteered in Nicaragua through Raleigh International and Progressio International Citizenship Service (ICS) rural development programmes.

Latin America Conference

The 13th 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 fifty speakers, including leading parliamentarians, academics, activists 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 is critical particularly given all the global political convulsions and uncertainties caused by the election of Donald Trump. Together with the Embassy of Nicaragua, we co-ordinated the participation of Dr Paul Oquist, Minister Secretary to the Nicaraguan presidency who was a keynote speaker and also took part in a workshop on climate change with the Bolivian ambassador, and representatives of Friends of the Earth and the Green Party.

Providing support for researchers

There is an increasing interest among academics in the history of the insurrection, the Sandinista Revolution and international solidarity in the context of the Cold War. We provided information to a PhD student at LSE writing her thesis on UK, German and Dutch policy on Nicaragua in the 1980s and solidarity movements in the respective countries. We also supported two other researchers focusing on the 1980 literacy crusade and gender and fair trade.

Collaboration with and support for Wales NSC, twin towns and other groups

We collaborated with and supported Wales NSC, twin towns and local groups in Bradford, Bristol, Islington, Leeds, Leicester, Lewisham, Norwich, Oxford, Reading, Tavistock, Sheffield and Swindon, and the Nicaragua Education, Cultural and Arts Trust (NECAT). We carried this out through facilitating transfers of funds, providing advice and information, promoting their work in the solidarity section of *Nicaragua Now* and in our news bulletin, and providing practical support in Nicaragua for groups without representatives.

Further collaboration of relations with Raleigh International and Progressio was particularly important in involving new, younger activists in NSC and twin towns work. A newly formed Yorkshire based Latin America solidarity organisation called *Viva! Bradford* was formed in 2015 and in 2016 also reactivated a long dormant link between Bradford and the town of Tisma in Nicaragua.

Liz Light, the NSC representative in Nicaragua, organised performances by an international circus troupe called by Performers with Borders (PWB) at schools supported by IMFA and the Santa Rosa Fund as well as at the Children's hospital and at a school to celebrate International Down's Syndrome Day.

'I am blown away by the generosity of spirit and commitment that is evident in the work that you carry out, and the tangible, positive impacts on the communities involved, both in Nicaragua and in the UK.' Ross Denny, UK Ambassador to Costa Rica and Nicaragua, February, 2017 in a message to twin towns.

Co-op Bank account closures and threats of closures: In the wake of spates of apparently politically motivated bank account closures and threats of closures, NSC collated information from Wales NSC and the five twin towns affected. This fed into wider advocacy carried out by Amnesty International to hold the Bank accountable for its actions, and to deter the Bank from extending such actions to other groups. The bank accounts of Wales NSC and the Sheffield Esteli Society were closed down but a further four twin towns who were apparently under investigation heard nothing further from the Bank.

Twin towns research project: Holly Ryan, senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations, Manchester Metropolitan University, secured funding to carry out research on twinning. This will enable her to carry out research in the UK and also travel to Nicaragua in summer 2017 to meet twin towns partner organisations. The key areas she will be focusing on will be: how twinning has evolved, the different types of twinning including issue to issue and sector to sector; scope of activities undertaken in UK and in Nicaragua; what international friendship and solidarity mean in practice; and looking at examples of best practice. We have contributed to the project through providing information and contacts.

Fundraising and Sales

* In the never-ending search for new fundraising efforts we had several disappointments: no-one wanted to walk the route of the Circle Line, dance for 7 hours or swim the Serpentine. However, overall the year was a success. The total raised through fundraising and sales was £30,519, just over that of 2015 (£29,928). This included money from leasing out two desks in our office and Give-a-Car. A further £7,225 was made through claiming Gift Aid.

* It was a pleasure to have three runners from Mexico and one from Switzerland for the London marathon. We had four

runners in two half-marathons, and did very well again in the festival season providing bar staff for the Workers Beer Company. On the downside we had fewer students in our Latin American Spanish classes so income and the chance to involve more new people in NSC activities is going down.

* Sales made £6,488, the highest for many years (2015 was £5,024). Ken Loach films on DVD, Jeremy Corbyn mugs and some comic t-shirts were very popular. The *Gift for Nicaragua* on the catalogue raised money for Mend-a-Roof whereby the Nicaraguan trade union UNE replaced or mended the roofs of impoverished public sector workers; a total of £1,343 was sent including money from an appeal and the marathon and almost £3,000 was raised by NSCAG.

Membership

All members received regular mailings including the magazine *Nicaragua Now*. We also email our Solidarity News to all members who have given us their email address.

- Income from affiliations and related donations was £28,555 as against £28,067 in 2015. Much depends on whether there are any particularly large donations during the year. We are continuing efforts to ensure greater income stability through standing orders and at the end of 2016 77% of individual members were paying their membership fees in this way which is excellent.
- For the last 3 years the number of individual members has remained almost the same. There were 7 new members compared with 9 last year and 25 in 2010. The fact that we no longer send study tours has been a factor; also there is so much information available online that fewer people want to pay to join an organisation.

Membership	Dec 11	Dec 12	Dec 13	Dec 14	Dec 15	Dec 16
Individuals	470	465	451	450	449	440
Wales NSC, twin towns and other groups	16	16	15	14	14	14
Trade Unions: national, branches and regions, trades councils	76	82	79	123	131	128
Overseas subscriptions (libraries)	4	4	4	1	1	1
All groups	96	102	98	138	146	143
TOTAL	566	567	549	588	595	583

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.

Staffing and Governance

NSC Staff: *London Office:* Stella Embliss, Helen Yuill, Susie Steven. *Representative in Nicaragua:* Liz Light

NSCAG staff: Louise Richards.

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

Board of Trustees: NSC is governed by a Board of Directors/Trustees which develops NSC's overall strategy and monitors activities and outcomes. 2016 Board members: Dave Cosgrave, John Drewery, Rita Drobner, Gill Holmes, Bob Hardie, Marie Kingston, James Poke, Andy Waterworth

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