

## **Canterbury SDG Forum and annual Service for Peace**

UNA Canterbury is a long-established, small UNA branch/group with strong relationships with a number of local activist groups including the Canterbury Climate Action Partnership founded in 2019 (by Canterbury UNA's Vice Chair, Dr Carl Wright), Amnesty International Canterbury, Canterbury Interfaith Forum and Campaign Against the Arms Trade. Two of the group's ongoing initiatives have enabled the branch to gain national and international recognition for its work around the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) and promoting peace beyond the United Kingdom's borders. These are the Canterbury SDG Forum and the Service for Peace.

### **Canterbury SDG Forum**

- Canterbury SDG Forum is a coalition of individuals and local groups in the Canterbury district with the aim of: promoting public awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and encouraging individuals and groups to reflect the Goals in their own behaviour, as well as advocating for the implementation of the SDGs by lobbying local, regional and national governments to adopt policies guided and informed by the Goals
- The Forum was set up in 2015 by Richard Norman, Professor Emeritus at the University of Kent, and Michael Vince, UNA Canterbury's previous secretary and long-time supporter of advocacy in the areas of healthcare and climate.
- Today, the forum meets on a quarterly basis and includes representatives from Canterbury City Council, UNA Canterbury, the Canterbury Climate Action Partnership, Canterbury Business Improvement District and Greenpeace, as well as other grassroots organisations.
- The SDG Forum played a vital role in lobbying Canterbury City Council to declare a climate emergency which it did in 2019. As a result of this declaration, the council adopted a [Climate Action Plan](#) in May 2021, which set out how the local authority plans to meet net zero for their own services and buildings as well as how they will support climate resilience across services, public buildings and infrastructure.
- The SDG Forum also has various working groups including the Biodiversity Forum, the Schools Group (which is an opportunity for school leaders to come together to discuss how they will create awareness of the SDGs in the curriculum) and the Poverty Group (which, with contributions from UNA Canterbury and support from the Canterbury Society, published in April 2023 [a harrowing report on poverty levels in Canterbury district](#), uncovering the harsh reality that some individuals in the city face every day).
- In 2023, the forum supported several hustings in the city in preparation for the local elections, which took place in May. This was a chance for forum members to grill candidates on their plans for promoting net zero and reducing inequalities. The forum plans to maintain strong links with the new council.

### **Service for Peace**

- Each year, UNA Canterbury brings together a community of activists, climate guardians, peace makers and local leaders in Canterbury not only to celebrate United Nations Day on October 24<sup>th</sup> but also to reflect on our efforts to promote peace around the world.

- The service is attended by about 300 people from all backgrounds, faiths, ages. The service is also livestreamed on Canterbury Cathedral's YouTube channel.
- Its key supporters include Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury City Council, and Kent County Council.
- One of the highlights of the service is the procession of peacemakers, involving about a dozen grassroots organisations, such as the Canterbury SDG Forum, Mother's Union, Soroptimists Canterbury Branch and Christian Aid Canterbury.
- Over the years we have been honoured to welcome some notable keynote speakers including:
  - The Rt Hon Helen Clark, former High Representative to the UNDP
  - Rose Hudson Wilkins, Bishop of Dover
  - Linda Scott, High Commissioner of Namibia
  - Natalie Samarasinghe, former Executive Director of UNA UK
  - Professor Emeritus Jan Pahl, author of the SDG Forum report on poverty in Canterbury