

2025 Nominations for LASER Executive Committee and Officers

Name	UNA Group	Nominator	Seconded	Role
Patricia Rogers	Westminster	David Wardrop	Antony Vallyon	Chair
Antony Vallyon	Westminster	Patricia Rogers	David Wardrop	Secretary
Peter Webster	Streatham	Patricia Rogers	David Wardrop	Treasurer
Jane Beeley	Tunbridge Wells and Wealden	Marguerita Morton	Gillian Douglas	EC
David Cheesman	Luton	Nazia Khanum	Patricia Rogers	EC
Gillian Dare	Westminster	Antony Vallyon	David Wardrop	EC
Jessica Giles	Medway	Alan Wells	John Castle	EC
Ali Hessami	Enfield and the Barnetts	David Cheesman	Salem Mezhoud	EC
Salem Mezhoud	Westminster	David Wardrop	Catherine Pluygers	EC
Valeria Minisini	Canterbury	Carl Wright	Patricia Rogers	EC
Catherine Pluygers	Wandsworth	Salem Mezhoud	David Wardrop	EC
Suheil Shahryar	Harpندن	Ali Hessami	Antony Vallyon	EC
Sarah Winterbottom	Blackheath & Greenwich	Neville Grant	Patricia Rogers	EC

LASER Nominee's Personal Statements

Jane Beeley



I have chaired Tunbridge Wells & Wealden branch for over thirty years. I am now co-chair. I joined the LASER committee in 2014 and became Secretary of LASER in 2021.

My full-time career as a chartered librarian focused on education and health, including work with students for the Open University, where I gained my degree, and running two hospital libraries. For fifteen years I was special needs governor at a local primary school.

In addition to a longstanding interest in promoting education and health for all, and in humanitarian issues, I am keen to work to achieve climate SDGs.

David Cheesman



I have a PhD in South Asian history (SOAS). I am: founder-Secretary of UNA Luton (established 2009); Board Member (former Chair) of Squared Housing Association, Luton; Patron of *Purbachal – The Eastern Sky* (Bangladeshi cultural organisation); Policy Advisor at the Financial Conduct Authority; Joint Director of Equality in Diversity (independent research, management and training consultancy). The UNA working group I convened last year has developed/is promoting a framework to enhance accountability in the use of UN Security Council Vetoes without amending the Charter. I was: External

Examiner and Visiting Professor (Sheffield Hallam University); Head of Policy, Research and Statistics (Housing Corporation).

Gillian Dare



Former Diplomat working in Sub-Saharan Africa and on Middle East including Iraq and Jordan and South Asia issues and in Brussels; specialised in political and security policies in conflict-affected and fragile counties; represented the UK on multi-lateral platforms. Senior Policy Officer for WPS in international contexts. Trustee for NGOs working with refugees, minorities in the Middle East (*Mosaic Middle East*), women in Afghanistan (*WPP*) and Chair of *Beyond Conflict*, an NGO addressing trauma of frontline workers & victims of violence,. Member of UK FORB Forum, Chair of its Iraq Working

Group and a member of several All Party Parliamentary Groups.

Jessica Giles



Jessica is a senior law lecturer at the Open University researching into the interdisciplinary field of law and theology, with a particular focus on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion as a constitutional tool for peaceful plural living together. She recently defended her PhD at Leiden University in the Netherlands. Jessica is Chair of the United Nations Association Medway a group she collaboratively started in 2023. She is currently researching into the inter-relationship of the rule of law and freedom of thought, conscience and

religion as well as the law of Outer Space and FTCR. She regularly presents at conferences at home and abroad in her field

Ali Hessami



As a systems engineer and technologist, I have always considered social impact as a key aspect of societal concern with emerging technologies. This is well illustrated in the evolution of Artificial Intelligence technologies that are heralded to bring many benefits to the humanity alongside many potential harms and threats. I believe the UNA movement and the LASER group have a key role to promote peace, common human values and equity/equality and collective prosperity values from the UN. I will be willing to support LASER in promoting and disseminating

these ideals

Salem Mezhoud



I have a cross-functional experience as Head of region/programmes with the UN and NGOs in Human rights and humanitarian affairs: OHCHR, OCHA, UNICEF, ILO, HRW, MRG. I held academic posts at the Sorbonne, Columbia, Wilson Center (DC) and King's College London; and broadcasting roles: BBC World Service, VOA, RFI, specialising in Africa and the Mediterranean, covering conflict, post-conflict, Counter-terrorism. My involvement with UNA since 1984, included representing UNA at the European Social Forum (Paris). I serve on the Executive Committee of UNA Westminster and on the Board and Executive Committees of the Foundation

for Endangered Languages and United Against Inhumanity.

Valeria Minisini



Valeria is a communications professional, working across issues of human rights, sustainability, gender and peacebuilding. She holds a BA (Hons) in Politics and International Relations and a MA in International Law, both obtained from the University of Kent. She is passionate about combining her experience in creative communications and campaigning with grassroots activism. She has been the chairperson of UNA Canterbury since 2021, having been a member of the branch since her university days in 2015. Valeria also

attributes her interests to her international upbringing in Europe and Africa and speaks four languages: English, Italian, French and Spanish.

Catherine Pluygers



I am a musician and have always had an interest in development issues. I studied for a degree in development at Birkbeck University. I am vice-chair of UNA Wandsworth and a long-standing committee member of UNA Westminster. Currently I am chair of UNA LASER Trust and was chair of LASER from 2015-19. I have been on the executive committee of WILPF and have a particular interest in the welfare of women. Over the years I have helped deliver some very large projects for UNA, WILPF and Voices of African Women.

Patricia Rogers



I am an educator and internationalist. I have taught – and written– in the UK, Nigeria, Pakistan and South Korea. I have been Chief Executive of the Council for Education in World Citizenship, the Pestalozzi International Village and Jubilee Debt Campaign. I have been a trustee of Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs), the UNA-UK and the British Humanist Association (now Humanists UK). I have worked in mathematics education, including with the Open University and for the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics.

Suheil Shahryar



As the Chair of UNA Harpenden for the past five years, I have successfully rejuvenated the group to be a highly active group of over 300 supporters, with regular public lectures, discussion groups, book group, church services and social events.

I would like to use my analytical and technical skills to collaborate with other UNA group leaders and, where possible, youth leaders, to achieve impactful objectives in line with UNA-UK's strategic vision, such as systemic transformation and drafting resolutions on peace and justice, including climate justice, and ask our government to take action.

Antony Vallyon



I am a Member of Westminster branch, LASER Policy Committee, a Trustee; and also a working group for an International Environment Court, and of the Academic Council for UN System (ACUNS). I became inspired by working for UN University in Tokyo and at the UN Secretariat in New York in 1997 on peace, development, human rights and UN reform. I became active in UNA-USA, Australia, then New Zealand. I was President of UNA New Zealand from 2007-2010. I led the NZ delegation to the 2009 WFUNA Plenary in Seoul, and was Rapporteur for the UN Renewal session.

Peter Webster



I am chair of the Region's Policy Committee, and of Streatham & Clapham Branch. Outside UNA, I work in the field of Responsible/Ethical Investment. I have a University degree in Mathematics and an MBA. I believe UNA is an important means: for people to show their support for the UN's principles; for educating people about the UN's work; for campaigning to strengthen it; and for ensuring that our own government acts in line with international law, advances shared global goals and plays a constructive role as a UN member state and permanent member of the Security Council.

Sarah Winterbottom



Since studying French literature at Goldsmiths' College, I have worked predominantly in healthcare communications. I was Environment Editor for award-winning amenity publication, *The Westcombe News*. During this time, working alongside other local groups, including Greenwich and Blackheath Societies, to campaign against developments incompatible with a conservation area, and Greenwich's UNESCO World Heritage status. Together we helped to prevent the demolition of historically significant public baths, The Arches. I have long been a member of UNA Blackheath & Greenwich (except when living away) and am now

their Secretary.