

## **Annual Report for East Cleveland WDM for 2014**

The WDM rebranding process and the reasons for it were discussed during the year. Various names were suggested and we were not too satisfied with any of them or with the final choice, particularly with the word 'Now'. However we have been able to drop that in our own name. We also decided to use the opportunity to better describe our geographic area by becoming 'Global Justice Cleveland.

The new director expressed a wish to visit our group but since we had hosted the previous director in January 2013 it seemed rather too soon to arrange another visit. We decided to consider it again in the future and try to use it as part of our campaigning.

We supported the People not Profit film night in April. This group tends to have younger supporters so it is useful for us to join forces with them as we are involved in similar issues. This particular film was called 'Black Gold', and was about Ethiopian coffee growers. This linked in with our new agri-business campaign as Ethiopia is one of the countries being adversely affected by land grabs as well as by the removal of trade restrictions and the development of 'growth corridors' ie the wholesale corporate takeover. Andy gave a short talk before the film was shown.

The Euro elections took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Two of the previous MEP's who we had developed good relationships with over the years stood down at that time. We recognised the need to start building links with the new members. We therefore contacted Jude Kirton-Darling (Labour) who came to support our stall at the Farmers Market in Saltburn in June just two weeks after her election. This gave us the chance to meet and have a brief discussion.

We used the stall to promote the Africa campaign. This is about agri-business and the way in which the UK government financially supports and promotes multi-nationals in controlling the global food system at the expense of small producers. One of our members made a large 'cake' in the shape of Africa. It was actually a piece of Kingspan covered with green and blue icing. It was a very eye catching prop. Alongside that we had edible home made cakes. We used our usual campaigning tool of asking people to pick a card which either named a multi-national or described the effect of a multi-national on a particular peasant farmer. Following their choice people were rewarded with either a large or a small piece of cake as appropriate. We asked people to sign an action card addressed to their MP. Instead of taking shifts on the stall we all turned up at the same time. This was more effective as it gave the stall a buzz and it allowed us to talk to more people. We used up all 150 of our action cards and no one signed a card without first having a discussion about the campaign and developing an understanding of what they were signing for.

We sorted the cards into constituencies and sent many of them to WDM to be forwarded to the appropriate MP. We took the rest of them, over half, to Tom Blenkinsop, the local Labour MP. Four of our members went to talk to him about this campaign and also about TTP. Tom is disappointingly right wing. He supports Trident and Fracking and is very pro-business. Coming as he does from a Trade Union background he believes that effective brakes and controls can be put in place in

order to regulate the actions of corporations. We had a discussion about the difficulty of achieving these ideal standards in Africa.

As an offshoot from the monthly Farmers Markets, Lorna has been running an annual summer Food Festival. The second one took place this year and it was a very successful event. She asked us if we could provide a speaker for the film tent to discuss an appropriate food topic. She said that there would also be an opportunity to do a five minute slot on Radio Cleveland. We thought this was a good opportunity to highlight some of our campaigns. Andy was away on holiday at the time so we asked WDM if they would be able to provide a speaker but they could not. In the end we asked Ben Young from Newcastle to come down to speak. This proved to be rather embarrassing as the film tent was only a small gazebo and Radio Cleveland did not have him on their list. There was no opportunity to for him to speak. Another year we will have to think harder about the most appropriate involvement for us at this event.

We had our summer walk in July. We walked on the cliffs above Saltburn and had a picnic on a lovely summer's evening, followed by a drink at the Ship.

In the autumn we discussed the TTIP campaign and agreed that it was the most important issue to concentrate on at the moment. We contacted Jude about this. It turned out that she is a member of the Trade committee and that she therefore has a key role in discussing and negotiating the proposed trade deal. This should be a useful link in the future. We had an exchange of emails with her and we also signed various online petitions. These petitions have been very successful tools and many thousands of people have contacted their MEP's in order to raise concerns about TTIP.

We decided to arrange a public meeting in November to discuss TTIP and we asked Ben Young to come to talk at it. We asked 4 People not Profit to support the event and we contacted other organisations that might be interested. The attendance at the meeting was disappointing with only about 15 people present. In the past we have organised better attended meetings. We will need to work to build more effective links with other groups.

Our membership remains steady at about twelve people, all of us now over 50. Realistically we are unlikely to attract younger members. The best we can hope for is establishing links with other groups campaigning on similar issues. Fortunately Justin decided to develop a coalition group under the 4 People Not Profit banner. He arranged a couple of meetings and compiled a newsletter to be included in Talk of the Town and also to be available online. This means that in the future we will be aware of other campaigns in the locality and we will be able to support each others initiatives.

We ended the year with a Christmas meal at the Lemon Grass in Redcar. To summarise, we have been reasonably active during the year. We organised a public meeting and a street stall and we have also lobbied both our MP and our MEP.