Ludlow Quaker Journal

April 2022

This Journal will publish anything that Friends think is of interest; so its range may be very wide. If you find it too long, select only what interests you from the Table of Contents. Please contact Barbara Mark if you would like to have something included or wonder if you have a subject that might be of interest. It will be published on-line only and will come out when enough articles have been gathered in. Comments and letters to the editor are also welcome. Do remember if this copy is pdf you can listen to it via Windows 10 'read aloud' option at the top of the sheet.

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Many thanks to everyone who has helped me on this issue.

Dori Ericsson was a much loved member of Ludlow Meeting over many years and her energy and enthusiasm for many campaigns, including her love of nature, was an inspiration.
Dori died on the morning of 2nd March at Hendra House Care Home. She was 93. We had known that she was in declining health for several weeks and a number of Friends had been able to visit her before her death.
Many Friends joined her friends and family at her funeral on Tuesday 22nd March at Wyre Forest Crematorium. Kidderminster.

Here is a letter from the family
Dear Friends of Ludlow Meeting,

I am writing on behalf of Marion, Rob and myself for all your support at Dori's funeral. It was lovely to see so many Friends and to know how much they valued Mum's contribution to Ludlow Meeting.

For the first many months of 'lockdown' Mum held her own Quaker Meeting in Hendra House. Often she was alone but I think she derived some calm and pleasure from that period each week of quiet contemplation. For Mum the 'lockdown' (as for many of you too) was very difficult but she remained full of hope and faith and constantly looked forward to 'better times' when she could return to the things she loved - one of the most important of those was a return to Quaker Meetings.

Thanks so much for those of you who kept in touch with her in Hendra House and for those of you who sat with her in her last few weeks. When we asked would she like one of the Friends to visit, even though she was very poorly, she <u>always</u> said oh - yes. These visits must have given her great comfort.

Thanks to you all and I hope we will meet again in times to come.

With very warm wishes and much thanks,

Marion, Wendy and Rob

9, Ffynone Close, Swansea. SA1 6DA

Memories of Dori by Esther Rees

It seems a long time since I offered to walk Gertie because I saw John struggling to manage her and his walking stick. I never had a dog but Gertie was funny with short legs and aggressive behaviour toward dogs bigger than herself, especially black ones.

How much I valued the chats with Dori afterward over a cup of tea. She told me about living in Birmingham during the war including sheltering in the basement with the bomb damaged house above.

Dori was an infant school teacher and enjoyed particularly the ones who needed a bit of extra help.

Later, Dori and John ran a B and B and made many friends. When they came to Ludlow they helped set up a cancer support group. Many of us will remember the fund raiser held at their house when rain poured down on the bookstall in the garden and the raw meat in their vegetarian kitchen which raised a lot of money for the cause. They were gracious and, seemingly, unperturbed by it all.

Dori talked a lot about the importance of bees and their garden was designed to be bee friendly. It included a lavender hedge that almost heaved with bees and a small pond for frogs and a wildflower meadow.

She was a good friend and we miss her.

Thank you Esther

Memories of Dori from Jenny Sayer

I have known Dori for only a few years; I first met her when I joined Ludlow Meeting. I have a clear memory of her warmth when she welcomed me and the warmth extended throughout our friendship. She had a particular love of the natural world and of wildlife. Her ministries were heartfelt and gave me the sense of genuine spirituality. Her wide range of interests and considerable knowledge coupled with a keen sense of humour made me value the times we spent together. I think what I found most striking about Dori was that, as time went by, however trying were her circumstances, she always appreciated the positives in her situation; this led to her

amazing capacity for feeling, and so readily expressing, gratitude. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to visit her several times at the end of her life and felt privileged to have that time with her. Although tired, frail and not able to say much, Dori's spirit shone through.

Thank you Jenny

Quaker Truth and Integrity Group (QTIG)

In the last Journal I asked you all to keep your eyes open for news of the Truth and Integrity Conference, details are now below.

'Living Truth – A Rallying Call for Quakers'

We ask:

Are you disturbed by the state of truth and integrity in our public life?

Do you share our concern that the issues of truth and integrity go beyond our current leadership and are fundamental to a healthy democracy?

Do you wish to join other Quakers and explore what we can do acting together?

Date – week commencing 25 April 2022

The conference will be held on Zoom and will take the shape of **3 evening sessions** – ***on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday -*** and one daytime session on the Saturday.

The sessions will be

Monday

Truth: a theological basis for Quakers – speakers: Rachel Muers and Ben Wood

Tuesday

*Impact of untruth on social fab*ric – *panel: Jane Dawson, who has worked at Friends House; Michael Lloyd who is a member of the Just Algorithms Action Group and young Friend John Martin.*

Wednesday

Lack of transparency and the use/abuse of power – speaker: Molly Scott Cato

The Saturday session will be a plenary to summarise and develop an action plan, including linking up with other groups.

All this is on the QTIG web site at https://quakertruth.org

Fairtrade Fortnight 21st February till 6th March

Dear Barbara and Friends,

The Traidcraft Spring Fair at the Mascal Centre, during the last Friday of Ludlow's Fairtrade fortnight, was beautifully displayed, with details of the producers and countries of origin. There was also, a Fair Trade afternoon tea and coffee, biscuits

and cake. This was a buzzing event, with many people, visitors, families and lively children.
We had worked steadily preparing for this event and marketed it effectively with a wider circuit of posters and shop's Leaflets. We had a group photo taken with a Banana balloon and our networking volunteer, wearing the banana suit , on the front page of the Shropshire Journal.
(40% of bananas imported into the U.k. are now via; the Fair trade routes.)
A considerable amount of money and some donations were raised, on a most enjoyable and productive team day, which was brilliantly guided by Liz Taylor.

The Traidcraft shop, is at the Mascal Centre, is open on Thursdays at 10-0 - 12:30 a.m. Well worth a visit. Their Coffee and Tea can be highly recommended.
In friendship,
Maiya.
Thank you Esther for your help with this event as well.

Here is the report from Liz.
How Fair Trade is Making a Difference
There was a constant flow of people through the doors and a buzz and vitality at our recent Traidcraft Spring Fair and Big Brew – wonderful! The success of the day just shows how much our local community and visitors coming into Ludlow are supporting fair trade and a more sustainable lifestyle. The Big Brew, including a cake sale, raised £170 for Traidcraft Exchange, Traidcraft's trade development charity.

But why do we still need fair trade after more than 40 years of Traidcraft starting up? Because trade is still far from fair and farmers and workers around the world are not getting paid enough to live and to thrive. There is lots more to do. Millions of people in the Global South are forced to sacrifice education, medical treatment and planning for the future just to survive.
In addition, the climate emergency is hitting hard but they are the ones who have a minute carbon footprint and are the least to blame for the situation. Crops are failing, extreme weather is ruining harvests and plant disease is rife.
The coronavirus pandemic may be being tackled with vaccines in the rich world but farmers in poorer countries are facing limited health care, an uncertain future and collapsing markets.
So the biggest challenge is that low incomes, severe climate change and the pandemic are causing lack of food big time, something many of us have never experienced and probably never will.

Fairtrade Mark products show rigorous Fairtrade Standards, meaning farmers and workers get a better deal and the product was produced in the most sustainable way possible. But Fairtrade is much more than a Mark. It's a global movement committed to urgent action to stop exploitation and fight back against the climate emergency.
Products Traidcraft sells carry the Fairtrade Logo, or are fairly and ethically traded. Traidcraft own labelled food products are organic, healthy sustainable soils enhancing a brilliant eco system.

Traidcraft can be trusted to make sure that every product it sells is supporting fair trade whether through the Fairtrade Logo, the World Fairtrade Organisation (WFTO), British Association of Fair Trade Shops (BAFTS), The European Fair Trade Association (EFTA). Traidcraft also seeks out small scale fair trade producers, often women's businesses which are to get a foothold in the market.
Traidcraft asks consumers to buy only what is necessary and to 'buy right' so they are taking care of people and planet. Each of us can make a difference when we are mindful of these two aspects of shopping – at times a real challenge!
Liz Taylor
Traidcraft fair trader in Ludlow Mascall Centre – liz@linzinludlow.co.uk
Member of Ludlow Fairtrade Town Group

Books to help Dementia Patients
Murri and Ian Smith have donated to the Meeting House a set of five illustrated books, which they have found very useful to take when visiting people with dementia. Looking at and talking about the photos can help stimulate both conversation and memory. They are entitled:

Travelling in Pictures
At the Seaside in Pictures
Inessential things Poems and Pictiures
In the Garden Pictures
A Funny Old World

When we meet again in the Meeting House, they will be displayed on the old children's room shelves, but for now they are with the Librarian, and if you want to borrow one or more them to use them, please contact John Cherry.
In Friendship,
John Cherry

Hereford Green Christian

Climate Emergency Toolkit
'Step by step, the Climate Emergency Toolkit provides a route map to help all members of your church or Christian organisation respond to the climate emergency with simple but powerful actions that will have an impact far beyond your own walls.'
A new improved version of the toolkit is available at
https://www.climateemergencytoolkit.com/.

Divestment from fossil fuels

The Diocese of Worcester has become the seventh Church of England diocese to make a divestment commitment. In October 2021, 72 faith institutions, including 37 from the UK, joined the largest-ever divestment announcement by religious institutions. Most UK Churches, including the Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church with £1.3 billion of assets under management, have fully divested from fossil fuel companies.

Green Christian Workshops
These include the following Joy in Enough monthly talks, on Wednesdays at 7.00 pm:
20th April – Robert Alexander: The Circular Revolution
Details at https://greenchristian.org.uk/gc-campaigns/green-christian-workshops/

Other dates:
Tuesday 26th April: 7.00pm Ely Cathedral's Environmental Vigil: join Zoom meeting https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9475251125?pwd=Z0xmTGhQdGFIeU1EZHdNQytBZnNLdz09
29th & 30th April: St Michael's Hospice Plant Fair, 10.30–4.00, at St Michael's Hospice, Bartestree, HR1 4HA. This free event, sponsored by Lyonshall Nurseries, features a wide range of items grown by the community, plus traders selling their wares. You can grow plants before-hand to be sold at the fair (https://www.st-michaels-hospice.org.uk/event/plant-fair).

Our next events:
Thursday 28th April: a talk on Welsh Water's sewage disposal system, in St John's Methodist Church Hall, at 2.30 pm.
Thursday 26th May: Annual General Meeting, in St John's Methodist Church foyer, 2.30 pm.

Sheila Milne, 57 Foley Street, Hereford HR1 2SQ, 01432 279740,
s.milne40@btinternet.com

Climate Cafes

OK so we have been using the Meeting House for our Climate Cafes and are very grateful for the opportunity, but what exactly are they ?
The idea is really very simple and was started a few years back by a group of psychologists and psychotherapists called the Climate Psychology Alliance. This doesn't mean that they are heavy on anything too analytical but they do provide a really interesting training for anyone who feels that it might be useful to set up a café in their local community. This means that the approach is now widespread with cafes in many different parts of the country. They have a good website if you want to find out more about them. At last year's Green Festival, two members of the Alliance came

to Ludlow and ran an introductory café in the lovely Japanese Garden which is part of the Angel housing development. Seeing how useful this could be, some of us undertook the training and are now facilitating the Ludlow cafes.
There has been so much information coming at us from every direction about climate breakdown and the terrible ecological crisis that we find ourselves in that it's really scary. And it's also very difficult to know what we can or should do about it. We are only just waking up to the fact that we have plundered the world's resources and they won't go on for ever. Trying to change this is frighteningly slow, too slow. Many of us live in fear that whatever we can do as individuals, is but a drop in the ocean whilst national and international policy makers take forever to reach any kind of agreement on tackling the multitude of issues. It feels as though they are trying to turn a whole fleet of those huge container ships in mid-Channel.
In the present world of 'fake' information, who do we believe when we hear about some of the frightening details or statistics that we can barely comprehend ? All of this can add to a sense of frustration, anxiety, fear and helplessness in the face of impending disaster. Climate Cafes aren't going to make these problems go away or provide solutions but the idea is that they will provide a thinking and feeling space where we can talk about anything suggested by all of this, and explore whatever feelings or worries we have. We don't have guest speakers or lecturers, nor do we give advice or expect actions, and it certainly isn't therapy, but we do have tea and cake in order to create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in which we can exchange thoughts. Then we talk, or not, whatever feels comfortable for the people who come along. Although we have been doing it on a monthly basis, people can come to a single café or several if it's useful to them.
So far we have held five cafes on Saturday afternoons but we hope to hold some evening sessions when the weather warms up a bit and we have more daylight hours. Apart from one evening session when there was a terrible storm, attendance has been good - usually about eight or nine people including two or three facilitators to get the ball rolling and put the kettle on. This feels like a comfortable number for the group but all comers are welcome.
Our next two cafés will be at the Meeting House on Saturday 9th. April and Saturday 14th. May from 4.30 – 6.00 pm. Please feel free to join us.
In friendship
Susie Green

News from AVAAZ
More than 50 governments have now agreed to protect 30% of the planet by 2030 -- but scientists say it isn't enough. For nature to regenerate, and to save our planet's life-support systems, **we have to protect half the Earth** -- and we need a global treaty to enforce action.
Humanity has now destroyed two-thirds of the world's rainforests, half the coral reefs, and 87% of all wetlands. Now a million species are hovering on the sharp edge of extinction.
The next five months are critical.
Avaaz campaigners are already shaping the treaty, in fact our team of nature defenders is just back from the preliminary Geneva talks! But too many leaders are siding with polluters, weakening agreements, and running down the clock. We can't let it happen!

SO please join our campaign.
(The UN are saying the same about CO2 emission. Governments are procrastinating)

Wildlife Trusts Work

The Covid pandemic has brought it home to many people how important nature is for our well being as well as for our planet.

Have you heard of the ‘Bugs Matter Survey’? It was initially developed by the RSPB in 2004 and is based on the ‘windscreen phenomenon’. This was developed because people were observing that there were fewer insects squashed on car windscreens than several decades ago. It was revitalised by the Kent Wildlife Trust in 2021 and made more easily accessible with a Bugs Matter App created in partnership with Gwent, Somerset and Essex Wildlife Trusts and Buglife. So anyone with a smart phone or tablet can record the insects on their car windscreen and send it to Kent Wildlife Trust. Last year there were nearly 5,000 journeys logged.

In Nottingham city centre there is a plan to transform a derelict shopping centre into a wildlife-rich green space. This ‘green heart’ project could become a blueprint for other city centre spaces post Covid.

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust has a ‘Team Wilder’ initiative and hopes to bring all those who are working on projects to help nature, together. They hope by creating links and making these groups more visible lots more people will be able to get involved with something. We heard about the countrywide group ‘Verging on Wild’ from Phi Evans a few Journals ago. Herefordshire Council is now planning on managing Herefordshire verges better for wildlife now.

The South Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Ludlow Branch continue to support community projects such as the Green Spaces project proposed by South Shropshire Climate Action, where they hope, with the help from schools and community groups, green spaces in Ludlow can be identified to furnish an information leaflet with a map showing the sites and a bit of information about each one. The Leaflet would be for the Green Festival with a walk to launch it but would also be available in the future for other events and in Ludlow’s Visitor Information Centre.
The Ludlow Branch and the South Shropshire Climate Action group may share a stall at the Green Festival on 10 June 2022.
There is to be an Eco Carnival on 18 June 2022 which will herald the start of the Ludlow Fringe Festival’s 10th anniversary and which this year has a green theme.

SIMPLE BUT LOVELY FRUIT SALAD

INGREDIENTS

3 large oranges
4 ripe (i.e. crinkly) passion fruits
20/25 green seedless grapes

METHOD

Pick the grapes and put them in a liquidiser. Pour the juice into a bowl.
Peel the oranges and with a sharp knife remove the white pith. Divide into segments and trim off any white pith left. Chop each segment into 2 or 3 pieces and put them in the bowl.
Cut the passion fruits in two and scrape the seeds into the bowl with a teaspoon. Mix up well, cover the bowl with clingfilm and store in the fridge. Finish eating within 5 days.

BLUEBERRY AND PECAN MUFFIN CAKE

This is a super Delia Smith recipe. My only change is to chop up the blueberries for the cake, put them in a sieve, run under the cold tap and dredge them lightly in flour. This stops the blueberries sinking to the bottom of the cake whilst baking.

INGREDIENTS

275g plain flour
1 level teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 level tablespoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
170ml milk
75g golden caster sugar
2 large eggs
110g block buter, melted and cooled slightly
275g blueberries
For the topping:
75g blueberries
1 heaped tablespoon demerara sugar
75g pecans, roughly chopped
icing sugar, for dusting

METHOD

With muffins it's a good idea to have everything weighed out and ready before you start.
Begin by sifting the flour, cinnamon, baking powder and salt into a bowl, lifting the sieve up high to give the flour a good airing. Now, in another bowl whisk together the milk, sugar, eggs and melted butter. Then return the dry ingredients to the sieve and

sift them straight into the egg mixture. (This double sifting is crucial because we won't be doing much mixing.) Next take a large metal spoon and fold the dry ingredients quickly into the wet ones – the key word here is quickly (i.e. in about 15 seconds). What you must not do is beat or stir the mixture – just do the folding, and ignore the uneven appearance of the mixture because it's precisely this that makes the muffins really light. Over-mixing is where people go wrong. After that, quickly fold in the blueberries (again no stirring). Now spoon the mixture into a 20cms loose base cake tin. Sprinkle the extra whole blueberries over, followed by the demerara sugar and chopped pecans. Place the cake near the centre of the oven and give it 1 hour, until it feels springy in the centre. Let the cake cool in the tin for 30 minutes, then loosen it all round with a palette knife. Place the cake tin on an upturned bowl or similar and gently ease the sides down. Then loosen the base with a palette knife and transfer the cake to a wire rack to finish cooling. Store in an airtight tin.

Dust with a little icing sugar just before serving.

Thank you again Peter for your lovely recipes

Ukraine

The situation in Ukraine is, I am sure, on every ones minds just now. Our hearts are breaking to see 'man's inhumanity to man'.
We have seen it in Syria, Yemen and many other places recently as well.

Ludlow Meeting had a meeting to discuss what we might be able to do for Ukraine. Things seem to be moving very slowly and it seems the government's visa system is complex and off-putting and it has no help with linking families with providers of shelter.

The following piece of information has been sent us from Shropshire County Council. People fleeing Ukraine and arriving in the UK can claim benefits immediately. Emergency regulations have been laid down so those arriving in the UK from Ukraine because of the Russian invasion can access Universal Credit and other benefits where eligible, and jobs support immediately.
Translation services are available to help new arrivals with phone applications, and Work Coaches and DWP staff are on hand to support people making claims online. Without the emergency legislation people arriving from Ukraine would be subject to the Habitual Residence Test, meaning they would have to wait up to three months before being able to receive income-related benefits, including Universal Credit.
You can find out more here:
English versions:
https://twitter.com/dwppressoffice/status/1505880154878398464(link is external)
https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6911646152555646976(link is external)
https://fb.watch/bU9GL1o1DA/(link is external)

Home for Ukraine Scheme
UK individuals, charities, community groups and businesses can now record their interest in **supporting Ukrainians**(link is external) fleeing the war through the government's new Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Those who sponsor a Ukrainian individual or family will not see their household benefit entitlements affected as a result.
The statement made by Therese Coffey, Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions can be found on the official site.

Healthcare
All Ukrainians arriving in England will be able to access NHS healthcare free of charge including GP and nurse consultations, hospital services, and urgent care centres.

Regards

Ben Marr
Partnership Manager (Shropshire) | Department for Work and Pensions | Work & Health Services | Mercia District |Telford Jobcentre, Telford House, Southwater Way, Telford TF3 4PD | Mob 07827 833878 |
web: **www.dwp.gov.uk**

Hope you find it useful.
Karen Ralphs
PA to Laura Fisher, Head of Housing, Resettlement & Independent Living

Tel: 01743 253738 Email: karen.ralphs@shropshire.gov.uk Website: www.shropshire.gov.uk
Shropshire Council | Shirehall | Abbey Foregate | Shrewsbury | Shropshire | SY2

There has been much discussion in Quaker circles about the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces. There are always many complex reasons for things like this to happen but , in the end, the fact is it has happened. The people of Ukraine had a choice, to allow Putin's government to take over their country or fight back. Either choice was bad, I fear. Look at Poland and Holland during the First World War. In my view Putin has lots of similarities to Hitler. I also know people in Orleton who's family were Ukrainian just before WW1, and all the cruel things which the Russian's did to them then. People living on the Russian borders remember these times.

It is difficult to know how to hold onto our Peace Testament in these dreadful times and have the integrity to understand those who have been invaded.

Maybe things could have been different if actions had been taken years ago when Russian opposition leaders were being murdered, poisonings in England were taking

place on those fleeing Putin's regime, and then the Crimea was invaded. But they did not happen and it is easy to be wise after the event. Look at the relationship with Germany. Germany and Russia have depend on each other for energy for a long time, namely Germany needs energy from Russia and Russia heavy needed German investment to develop its energy infrastructure. This was all due to government policy which Angela Merkel took over when she came to power. Her desire to work with Vladimir's Putin's government , through trade, instead of against it bore all the hallmarks of a desire to build a peaceful world order. However relations turned highly negative in 2014 in response to Russia's seizure of Crimea from Ukraine. Germany was a leader in NATO between the two countries. Even then action to sanction Russia was limited. We can think that there might have been many reasons for this including financial ones, but as I said earlier it is easy to be wise after the event.

Things are so complex it is not a time for theorising but a time for helping all the ordinary people who's lives have been destroyed. There are people also fleeing from Russia. We must remember they need helping as well. Just recently I was made aware of Linda McKinley's grandson's girl friend's plight as she has now fled Russia. Her name is Kseniia Kalugina and she is holding a recital on 20th April at College Hall in Hereford Cathedral Cloisters, to raise money for Ukraine but also to fund her further education outside Russia. (Linda is the chair of Fairtrade Town Leominster and runs Traidcraft sales around Leominster)

Here is a letter sent to The Friend publication last week by a very hard working member of Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN)

'*Regarding the two letters in The Friend of 18th March regarding the situation in Ukraine and our commitment to pacifism, I would like to reassure Elizabeth Gruar that among the three fundamental elements of being a Quaker as given in 11.01 of our Book of Discipline ("The Meaning of Membership"), pacifism is not included. I hope Elizabeth is also aware that certainly in 20th century wars a significant number of Quaker men joined the armed forces and were not shunned or disowned by their Meetings.*

On the matter of rigorous pacifism, I often recall a Flemish Quaker telling me that it was easy for British people to be pacifists, as we had never lived in a country which had been liberated by an army. Regarding Ukraine, I do not think that we have the right to dictate what citizens of another nation should do in the face of brutal military aggression and the prospect of annihilation, nor does it become us to expect others to submit to what could be several generations of cruel oppression under an occupying power. To me this indicates a lack of understanding of people's deepest emotions and loyalties, and a rather careless attitude to the suffering of others.'

Barbara Forbes
Central England AM

Prayer

At this point I would love to share with you some of the Ministry during a Meeting for Worship a few weeks ago about prayer.

Peter read out this letter from The Guardian, Saturday 19 March 2022

Gauging the benefits of prayers for peace
I have read with interest recent correspondence regarding the efficacy of prayer. The proposition is that if one prays for something, there should be evidence of answered prayer. When a study shows that there is no evidence (Letters, 17 March) it is fair to say that prayer, so understood, doesn't work.
I wonder if there is a study to measure the effect that prayer has on the person praying? Prayer, for many of us, is not magic, not seeking the intervention of a lofty god whose reluctant arms need to be twisted. It is, rather, a participation in and a growing in compassion. It is we who are changed, through contemplation and stillness, centred on divine love.
Painfully slowly (in my case at least), we then become better able to act compassionately and justly. We become the answer to our own prayer. That, truly, has the potential to change everything.
Rev Kenneth Cross

For the last Ministry of our Worship Sally Milner quoted Quaker Faith and Practice 20.10
'The place of prayer is a precious habitation:...I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet, when there was great stirrings and commotions in the world.'
John Woolman 1770

Positive Money on house prices

On 31st March Positive Money held a zoom conference to introduce their research paper about rising house prices. They had four speakers which included Kevin Hollinrake, Conservative MP who is on the treasury select committee on housing. He was an Estate Agent, and Labour MP Tulip Siddia, from a London constituency. These two made observations about the report but, on the whole, were supportive of the work done.
House prices, and rents, have been growing very fast and Positive Money was looking into why this is happening and suggesting what could be done. Although lots of homes are now being built it is a drop in the ocean of the properties out there and they could not find strong evidence this was the reason for price rises. They felt the biggest reason for price increases is because housing has become a financial asset, something to make money with, and the place of a shelter and home has been diminished. There is a big market for properties from private companies and even foreign buyers. The government actions has not stopped this money making aspect. In fact the continuation of Quantitative Easing is probably feeding this growth. Although Kevin felt the increase in prices during Covid could be the extra money people had in their pockets the general feeling was it was cancelling of stamp duty and mortgage back guarantee that pushed prices up.

The housing market is broken. When the economy shrunk by 10% during Covid, house prices went up 10%. The link between earnings and prices has gone. Even ‘affordable’ housing is a mis-domineer. In most places affordable does not reflect wages in the area.
Positive Money suggested three platforms of reforms. In the banking system, in tax and in planning. The Bank of England could have more control over price rises with a remit to keep it stable, as it is supposed to with inflation. It would be useful to study the German system of house buying. Council tax needs to be changed to make sure the price of the properties are reflected in the tax. Expensive properties sometimes pay less council tax at the moment. There were changes to planning laws which were also discussed. But most important was a long term strategy to slowly stabilise prices and allow the young and lower earners a chance to afford not just to rent, but also to aspire to buy a home.

This is the care we give refugees at the moment.

Excerpts from House of Commons Library (commonslibrary.parliament.uk)

Ping-pong stages

The Nationality and Borders Bill is in the final stage of the legislative process (“ping-pong” stage). There were 12 government defeats at Lords consideration of Commons amendments on 4 April. The Bill is scheduled to be considered again in the Commons on 20 April.

Legislative consent

The Scottish Parliament and Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament have both refused to give legislative consent to the Bill. The Government considers that the UK-wide measures relate to reserved matters and therefore none of the Bill’s provisions engage the legislative consent process.

Government amendments to three measures in the Bill were approved at report stage. They include new powers to apply visa penalties to applicants from countries considered to pose a threat to international peace and security. Those powers would come into effect upon Royal Assent. Ministers have confirmed that the Government intends to apply them to Russians, further to the military invasion of Ukraine.

A comment from QARN

This was a blow for government, when peers voted for the second time to scrap clause 11, which seeks to treat refugees differently based on how they arrive here, rather than their need for protection. Powerful speeches demonstrated that peers find this clause repugnant and in breach of the UN Convention for Refugees. And it reflected intense united action in Westminster by Together With Refugees members –

and all the work you have been doing to change the public debate on refugees over many months. Thank you so much for all you've done!
Peers also voted to force the government to publish how many refugees it will resettle each year. This represents another major win even if the revised amendment dropped a specific reference to a number. Together With Refugees is still calling for a minimum of 10,000 refugees to be resettled every year. However, pressuring Ministers to accept this will still enable the government and councils to set up systems to support refugees better, rather than the current ad-hoc, make-it-up-as-you-go-along approach. This means both our calls for change go back to the House of Commons where MPs must vote again.

That's significant because although the government has so far said they are not willing to budge, peers have shown they're prepared to dig in their heels. And the government is under pressure to finish a raft of bills before the end of this year's parliamentary session.

The government is also on the backfoot on its response on refugees from Ukraine and has failed to keep up with the public outpouring of support for people fleeing that crisis. We are keen to highlight the possible consequences of the new laws on Ukrainians and people fleeing all wars, and to use this to force concessions on the bill. And the more we galvanise public support, the more this will help the longer-term battle to shift the UK's whole approach on refugees. So, the fight for humanity and compassion continues.

Wed, 6 Apr at 09:10
Excerpts from the Lords Library (lordslibrary.parliament.uk)

This was concerning the regret motion for Napier Barracks, it does not include Penally Barracks which were used with Napier.

The Town and Country Planning (Napier Barracks) Special Development Order 2021 was laid before Parliament on 27 August 2021. Its purpose was to extend the planning permission for the Napier Barracks site to allow it to continue to be used as asylum accommodation until September 2026. That extension came into force on 21 September 2021.

On 7 April 2022, the House of Lords is due to debate the following motion:

Lord Paddick (Liberal Democrat) to move that this House regrets that the Town and Country Planning (Napier Barracks) Special Development Order 2021 (SI 2021/962) extends the planning permission for the Napier Barracks to continue to be used as asylum accommodation despite (1) a High Court judgment on 3 June 2021, which found standards and operational systems at the barracks to be unlawful, (2) concerns being raised over the unsanitary and crowded conditions, and (3) reports of intimidation and mistreatment of residents; and that, despite the current expiration date on planning permission being known for 12 months, the Order was laid when the House was not sitting.

Napier Barracks is a former military barracks in Folkstone, Kent, currently being used to house those seeking asylum. The site was ‘loaned’ to the Home Office by the Ministry of Defence in 2020 to provide temporary accommodation.