

WREXHAM - FIRST FAIRTRADE COUNTY IN WALES



In July 2003, Wrexham became the first county in Wales to be awarded "Fairtrade" status by the Fair Trade Foundation (FTF) following lots of hard work by the Wrexham Fairtrade Coalition (WFTC). According to the FTF, *"the purpose of a Fairtrade Town is to contribute to the Foundation's aim of tackling poverty by enabling disadvantaged producers from poor countries to receive a better deal, through encouraging support for the FAIRTRADE Mark."* The project in Wrexham has been spearheaded by Trefnu Cymunedol Cymru (TCC), the Wales Broadbased Organisation, based at the Peace & Justice Centre on Kingsmills Road in Hightown. Chris Pilsbury of TCC said: *"We found that many people had been buying and selling fairtrade for years... what we did as a coalition was pull all this effort together... and we had some fun on the way!"*

Wrexham Fairtrade Coalition is a new organisation, founded during Fairtrade Fortnight in March 2003, with a membership which includes local voluntary groups, schools and colleges, churches, businesses and the local council. Wrexham County Borough Council gave its support by voting to join the coalition and by allocating officer time to the project. The County is now examining its catering contracts and plans to write in a requirement for fairly traded goods in future contracts.

In order to gain Fairtrade status, Wrexham had to meet a set of five criteria:

- 1 Local council passes a resolution supporting Fairtrade, and agrees to serve Fairtrade coffee and tea at its meetings and in its offices and canteens.**
- 2 A range of (at least two) Fairtrade products are readily available in the area's shops.**
- 3 Fairtrade products are used by a number of local work places and community organisations.**
- 4 Attract media coverage and popular support for the campaign.**
- 5 A local Fairtrade steering group is convened to ensure continued commitment to FT status.**

It is credit to the hard work of WFTC that these requirements were met so quickly, with Fairtrade status being awarded to the County just four months after the group's inception. However, it is clear that these criteria are only the beginning of fair trading in Wrexham, and WFTC is keen to expand the availability of fairly traded products in local shops, and to encourage wider use of fairly traded products in workplaces, schools and community organisations. Education, awareness-raising and publicity work will be crucial to the success of this project.

I attended WFTC's Annual Meeting in November. We were treated to a fascinating presentation about all that has been achieved to date. As well as all the work towards gaining Fairtrade status, WFTC has organised lots of events in the community which have had the dual benefits of being fun and raising awareness about Fairtrade: a penalty shoot-out at a football match, a "trade rules" game, lectures and a Fairtrade fashion show to name a few.

The meeting then looked forward to the coming year. Work has to be done to ensure that Wrexham retains its Fairtrade status. Events are planned for Fairtrade Fortnight, 1 - 14 March 2004, plus other events spread over the year, such as a Fairtrade quiz night, talks and lectures and work in schools. WFTC plans to produce a Fairtrade Directory which will detail all the Fairtrade outlets in the County. Membership of the WFTC Steering Group was agreed, and it was decided that the next open meeting of the Coalition will take place at NEWI on **Wednesday 14th January** at 6.30 pm. Anyone interested in Fairtrade is welcome to go along to this meeting.

At our last business meeting, Wrexham Peace & Justice Forum voted to affiliate to WFTC. My hope is that Fair Trade status will encourage all of us in Wrexham to think about the connections between the decisions we make as consumers and the effect of those decisions on the lives of other people, near or far.

For information about local supplies of Fairly traded goods, see page 5.