Report to the Pledge to Peace Secretariat, the Percorsi Association, from Peace Talks Oldham (Sept. 2015 – Sept. 2016)

Introduction:

Peace Talks Oldham was established in 2014 to “raise awareness of the residents of the Metropolitan Borough of Oldham of the message of personal peace advocated by the Ambassador of Peace, Mr. Prem Rawat, and the work of Words of Peace Global and The Prem Rawat Foundation”.

Peace Talks Oldham is comprised of individuals who listen to the message of Mr. Prem Rawat, and are dedicated to promoting his message that “peace is possible” within the borough of Oldham and beyond.

Our 2016 Peace Plan:

Peace Talks Oldham established a Peace Plan for this reporting period:

Commitment 1: Have stalls at prestigious public events to promote this message and the Pledge.

Status: Peace Talks Oldham had a stand at the Voluntary Action Oldham Annual General Meeting in Nov. 2015

Commitment 2: Deliver the PEP with interested partners.

Status: A Peace Education Programme has been delivered to two teachers from one of the signatory schools. Two potential host organisations – University Campus Oldham and Inspire Women – have been identified with whom we intend to work to establish PEP over the coming months.

Commitment 3: Encourage and support local partners to become signatories to the Pledge to Peace.

Status: During this period, Maria and Richard supported the following local and national organisations to become signatories, or to begin applications to become signatories:

- Oldham Youth Council
- Voluntary Action Oldham (now Action Together)
- St Pauls School, Royton, Oldham
- Burnley Brow School, Chadderton, Oldham
- St. Chads School, Saddleworth, Oldham
- Knowsley Junior School
- Peace Talks Tameside
- Peace Talks Manchester  
- The Tim Parry and Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace  
- The Stockport Liberal Democrat Council Group

Peace Talks Oldham is leading on the organisation and delivery of Oldham’s first ever Peace Week with a range of activities and events from 21st – 26th September. During the week, nine organisations signed the Pledge – a separate report on Peace Week will follow.

**Commitment 4: Build links with the Oldham Schools Peace Education project**

**Status:** On 4th November 2015, Oldham Council adopted the following resolution (drafted by Richard from Peace Talks Oldham):

“This Council notes that:

- Today (4th November 2015) is the 69th anniversary of the founding of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) whose mission statement is “building peace in the minds of men and women”.

- In 1974, the member states of UNESCO recognised the necessity of peace education in order for students to acquire the values, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviours to live in harmony with oneself and with others, and to help promote a culture of peace.

- Article 26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that education shall be directed to “further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace”.

- In signing the European Parliament’s Pledge to Peace, Council has agreed to support the “dissemination and promotion of peace, employing resources and tools such as education”.

- Many international bodies, including UNESCO and the United Nations Association, have produced excellent free educational resources that can be accessed on-line.

Council believes that Oldham should, as the first UK local authority to sign the Pledge to Peace:
• Seek to encourage local schools, academies and colleges to deliver peace education within their curriculum.

• Support Peace in the Classroom, a new Pledge to Peace initiative.

Council therefore resolves to appoint a Council Champion and propose the nominee is Cllr. Derek Heffernan”.

**Commitment 4 – Part 2**

An event was held on 27th November to mark the 4th Anniversary of the foundation of the Pledge to Peace. The 24 Oldham Peace Schools were invited to the event and three schools attended. Two of these schools, Burnley Brow and St. Chads, signed the Pledge at the event; St Pauls had previously signed the Pledge at the September 2015 Oldham Peace Day Event.

Knowsley Junior School also signed the Pledge in May 2016 and the paperwork is now about to be completed ready for a formal application for membership.

Signatory schools are now represented on the Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum.

Several local schools have also expressed their desire to sign the Pledge in the near future – Alexandra Park, Friezland, Kingfisher, Lyndhurst, St. Martins, St Marys Greenfield and Saddleworth Schools.

Maria has established a group of five Youth Peace Ambassadors, who are young people from the Oldham Youth Council. Four of these ambassadors study at local senior schools; it is anticipated that links with these schools will be made in the new academic year. The fifth was attending Oldham College and has provided a contact person for us to liaise with. He has now moved to Bradford University.

**Commitment 5**: Develop links with the women’s groups involved in the “Women Building Peace” project.

Status: Maria has made some initial contact with Coldhurst and Westwood Women’s Group. She is also working with Inspire Women to establish a Women Peace Ambassadors’ network and run the Peace Education Programme.

**Commitment 6**: Establish an Oldham Peace Forum with these groups to deliver collaborative working on peace issues in the borough.

Status: The Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum was established at an event held on Friday 15th January 2016, chaired by Oldham Council’s Champion for Peace, Deputy Mayor Cllr. Derek Heffernan, and addressed by Nick Taylor, Chief Executive of the Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace.

*Working for a more peaceful Oldham borough*
The Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum has since met regularly and its membership is expanding. As part of Peace Week, the Forum will hold its AGM, elect officers and trustees, and adopt a constitution and an action plan for the next twelve months.

Richard has also established the Oldham Peace Times, a bi-monthly journal of the Forum, and so far four issues have been published. The circulation list includes sister organisations and peace activists in the USA, Australia and Europe.

**Commitment 7:** Explore the possibility of visit by the EU Ambassador to the Pledge to Peace, Mr. Prem Rawat, and other honoured guests from Sicily and the Percorsi Association to the borough of Oldham during a 2016 Oldham Peace Week.

**Status:** An invitation and a suggested itinerary was sent to Mr. Prem Rawat on his birthday 10th December via his UK based events team. A visit was not possible in 2016, but a high-level meeting was hosted with Mr Rawat’s event management team with a view to arranging a visit in 2017.

**Our Other Achievements to Jan. 2016:**

**AGM of Voluntary Action Oldham**

At its Annual General Meeting (22nd October 2015), Voluntary Action Oldham, an umbrella body providing training and support to 250 voluntary, community and faith organisations across the borough of Oldham in North West England, became a signatory to the European Parliament’s Pledge to Peace initiative.

The pledge was signed at Gallery Oldham by the Chair of VAO Ursula Hussain and by Chief Executive Liz Windsor-Welsh at the end of the momentous Annual General Meeting in the presence of Maria Ellis and Richard Outram from Peace Talks Oldham.

Speaking about the reasons VAO signed the Pledge, Liz-Windsor Welsh said: “VAO are thrilled to sign the Pledge to Peace and are looking to increase the work we do to raise the profile of the importance of working towards peace and sharing the amazing work of people and groups in Oldham that promote the ideas behind peace.”

*Working for a more peaceful Oldham borough*
Celebrating United Nations Day

On United Nations Day 24th October 2015, Peace Talks Oldham attended a celebration event hosted by the Stockport Branch of the United Nations Association to mark the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations.

Held at a church outside Stockport, the evening included performances of classical music from the Sale Orchestra and of traditional Persian music, as well as a speech by the Mayor of Stockport and the reading of part of the original United Nations Charter.

The event finished with an international buffet and a ceremonial cutting of a special UN birthday cake. 6 members of Peace Talks Oldham and 2 from Peace Talks Tameside attended the event. Maria and Richard from Peace Talks Oldham were seated with the Mayor of Stockport and the new Member of Parliament for Cheadle, The Hon. Mary Robinson MP, and they assisted the Mayor in the cutting of the cake.

Over £2,000 was raised on the night for UNICEF.
TEDx ‘Peace and Compassion Salon, Leicester:

Richard and Maria attended and spoke on the Pledge to Peace at a TEDx ‘Peace and Compassion’ Salon event held in the Hansom Hall, Leicester on 20th Nov. 2015. This was organised by friends in the city who are seeking to promote the Pledge to the City Council and other civic organisations.

Celebrating the Fourth Anniversary of the Pledge to Peace:

On 27th November an informal event was hosted by the Mayor Councillor Ateeque ur Rehman and Mayoress Councillor Yasmin Toor in his parlour for local schools wishing to sign the Pledge to Peace.

At the event, two local schools – Burnley Brow, Chadderton and St. Chads, Uppermill – became signatories. The Council Champion for Peace Councillor Derek Heffernan was also present, as was Richard and Maria from Peace Talks Oldham.

On 28th November, an event was held in the Council Chamber to mark the 4th anniversary of the launch of the Pledge. This was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress, the Champion for Peace, the Cabinet Member Cllr Barbara Brownridge,a
representative from Mr. Prem Rawat’s events team, and delegates from signatory organisations and other interested parties.

The events on the 27th (above) and 28th (below).

Maria and Richard can be spotted in their teal Peace Talks Oldham tops.

Our Other Achievements after Jan. 2016:

Please refer to past issues of the Oldham Peace Times.

Our Peace Plan for 2016 – 17:

**Commitment 1**: To invite the Ambassador to the Pledge to Peace, Mr. Prem Rawat, to visit Oldham in 2017

**Commitment 2**: To work with the Youth Peace Ambassadors and develop a Women’s Peace Ambassadors network

*Working for a more peaceful Oldham borough*
**Commitment 3:** To promote peace education in schools specifically:

- more peace activities before Oldham’s Mayor of Peace leaves office in May 2017
- to organise a peace education workshop at the Oldham Head-teachers’ Conference in Manchester in March 2017

**Commitment 4:** To actively encourage other schools and organisations to sign the Pledge to Peace and ensure that they have a Peace Plan in place

**Commitment 5:** To work to establish a programme of arts, crafts, poetry and book readings in schools, libraries and community settings to help develop a culture of peace

**Commitment 6:** To work to expand the peace book section in our central library and establish a new peace book section for children and young people

**Commitment 7:** To work to deliver the Peace Education Programme in Oldham

**Commitment 8:** To work to develop peace parks and gardens in our borough

**Commitment 9:** To otherwise work as a full and active member of the Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum

**Commitment 10:** To look at the possibility of organising a one-day Peace Slam for young people working with Peace Jam, local signatory schools and the Youth Peace Ambassadors as part of a Second Oldham Peace Week in May / June

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

Please contact Maria Ellis and Richard Outram by email to

peacetalksoldham@oldham.gov.uk

or contact via Facebook Peace Talks Oldham