

## Action for Life on Earth 2021 conference

Action for Life on Earth 2021, the 43<sup>rd</sup> annual conference of the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales (NJPN) held 23<sup>rd</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> July, attracted 200 participants to Derbyshire activists from every diocese. Caritas and the Diocese of Salford played an important part contributing key speakers including Fr Eamonn Mulcahy (Spiritans), Mark Rotherham (Northern Diocese Environment Group), Dr Emma Gardener (Head of Environment, Diocese of Salford) and Bishop John Arnold.

The conference, chaired by Christine Allen, Director of CAFOD, was characterised by the impressive number of young people attending who spoke passionately about the urgent need for a radical change in behaviour if the Earth is to recover from the damage inflicted on it by those in power.

Fr Eamonn led the Friday evening reflection on Laudato Si and Let Us Dream – two inspirational works by Pope Francis on the need to recognise our place in the order of the world and understand the inter-connectedness of creation of which we are only a part of as creation was for all life. Speaker Mark Rotherham, of the Northern Dioceses Environmental Group, felt it essential we transform our current economic system so that it promotes both social equality and environmental protection. “A good life-sustaining economy is about slowing down and recognising planetary boundaries” he said. He described the arms industry as “a huge shadow over our nation” and felt that we need to withdraw legitimacy from this draw on global resources and energy. Emma Gardener explained the national work of the Bishops in setting targets for carbon reduction in their dioceses. Bishop John Arnold of Salford, lead bishop on the environment for England and Wales, said Churches and faiths are making clear they want action. He shared that he has been in dialogue with COP26 president Alok Sharma MP, “trying to speak loudly to politicians”.

With less than 100 days to COP26, the NJPN conference has mobilised activists gearing up to the November COP26 climate talks in Glasgow. Dedicated work and a massive political will is now needed if COP26 is to galvanise the leaders of the world to reduce carbon emissions and increase bio-diversity.