

Successes

When campaigning against nuclear weapons, it's easy to think that we've not made any progress in the past and we're not making any progress at the moment! Because our campaign isn't finished – nuclear weapons **are** still here – it's easy to forget the progress that has already been made.

There are lots of factors that influenced the changes discussed below, perhaps most notably the collapse of the USSR. And whilst neither CND Cymru – nor any other organisation – could claim sole credit for any of the successes below, all were achieved following campaigns involving CND Cymru and many other organisations and individuals, in Wales and internationally.

More inspirational writing, and some quotes which could be boxed, would be welcome!

Nuclear weapons

When CND Cymru was formed on 12 September 1981, there were seven states with nuclear weapons – USA, USSR, UK, France, China, Israel and South Africa. These states between them had over 60,000 nuclear weapons, the vast majority held by the USA and USSR, with Britain having about 520 nuclear weapons.

Forty years later, there are nine countries with nuclear weapons (India, Pakistan and North Korea have joined the “nuclear club”, but South Africa became the first country to totally dismantle its nuclear weapons programme). However the number of nuclear weapons has dramatically reduced: there are currently about 14,000 nuclear weapons (still 14,000 too many, of course!), with Britain's arsenal having been reduced to about 225 nuclear warheads.

Perhaps most famously of all the huge protests against nuclear weapons in the 1980s was the Greenham Common Women's' Peace Camp, initiated by “Women for Life on Earth”. This group of Welsh women who organised the 1981 march from Cardiff to USAF Greenham Common, where it was planned that US Cruise missiles would be based. The sustained presence at Greenham Common over many years eventually led to the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which resulted in the destruction of both the American Cruise missiles and the USSR's SS20 missiles. The Peace Camp continued until the Greenham Common base was closed down, with the land being returned to civilian use, including a Peace Camp memorial garden. [Picture ?](#)

A major focus of protest within Wales was the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Llanishen, Cardiff, where beryllium and depleted uranium were used to manufacture parts of nuclear warheads. The work force of 400 also serviced and disassembled components for nuclear warheads, until the work was transferred to Aldermaston, and the Llanishen site was subsequently closed in 1997. [Picture ?](#)

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

This United Nations treaty, which entered into force in 22 January 2021, prohibits states from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, transferring, possessing, stockpiling, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons, or allowing another state's nuclear weapons to be stationed or deployed on their territory. The treaty also prohibits states from assisting, encouraging or inducing anyone to engage in any of those activities, including financing nuclear weapons production.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons (ICAN) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 for getting the UN to adopt this treaty. CND Cymru is ICAN's partner in Wales.

54 states have signed and ratified this United Nations treaty; a further 34 countries have signed the treaty and are in the process of ratifying it. At the UN, 130 countries voted to welcoming this treaty, showing the degree of international support for this treaty.

Unsurprisingly, none of the nuclear weapon states have signed this treaty.

Nuclear Weapon Testing

A success of the 1990s was the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which bans all nuclear weapon test explosions in all environments (air burst tests were banned by the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963). 170 states have signed and ratified this treaty, including the UK, and although it has not entered into force*, only 6 nuclear weapon tests have occurred since 1999 (all North Korean) compared with over 2,000 nuclear weapon test explosions between 1945 and 1999. The UK was exploding a nuclear weapon every year, on average, from 1981 to 1991.

* For the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to enter into force, China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the USA have to ratify the treaty, and India, Pakistan and North Korea have to sign and ratify the treaty.

Nuclear Free Wales Declaration

After successful campaigns in each of the then eight Welsh County Councils to pass "Nuclear Free Zone" motions, the Nuclear Free Wales Declaration was signed on February 23rd 1982, making Wales the first country in the world to declare itself a nuclear free zone. Although a bold statement of intent, it was often ridiculed by some for having no influence on the government's defence policy.

[web link /picture?](#)

However, the Nuclear Free Wales Declaration might have helped inspire the New Zealand government to adopt a Nuclear Free Zone policy in 1984. *I believe that this is true, but am I making this up?* When the Greenpeace "Rainbow Warrior" ship docked in Auckland in 1985, on the way to protest against French nuclear weapon tests, it was blown up by French secret service agents, causing the death of on Greenpeace photographer. But New Zealand persisted with its policy, and other countries joined New Zealand in 1995 to create the South Pacific Nuclear Weapon Free Zone with the Treaty of Rarotonga.

Further nuclear weapon free zones have been created since then: the Bangkok Treaty (1995) created the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, the Treaty of Pelindaba (1996) created the African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, Mongolia became a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in 1998, and the Treaty of Semey (2006) created the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. These add to the Latin America and Caribbean Nuclear Weapon Free Zone created by the Treaty of Tlatelolco (1968).

US Military Facilities in Wales

In the 1980s there were 3 US military facilities in Wales: an ammunitions store at Caerwent near Newport, with an associated transport facility at Barry docks, and a submarine listening station at Brawdy, Pembrokeshire. Now there are none.

Caerwent was one of the largest ammunition stores in Europe, storing up to 80,000 tonnes of weapons; during the first Gulf War (1990 – 91), 12,000 tonnes of munitions from Caerwent were supplied to US forces fighting in Iraq. The Americans stopped using the site in 1993, and it is now used for a variety of civilian and (British) military training activities.

The US Navy submarine tracking station at Brawdy operated until 1995, and was the scene of many peace protests. The adjacent Cawdor Barracks, currently used by British Signals “specialist electronic warfare”, is to close 2024; the Ministry of Defence is still considering the future use of the site .

In 1990 it was announced that a massive US “over the horizon” radar station would be built at St Davids. [Size ?](#) Following an active campaign by Pembrokeshire Against Radar Campaign, the plans were finally dropped in 1991.

Nuclear-powered Submarine Berths in Wales

In the 1980s there were two “Z-berths” in Wales, at Barry and Cardiff, where British nuclear powered (but not nuclear armed) submarines could dock. In 1989, a third was announced for Swansea. Following active campaigns, including simulated distribution of iodine tablets (which would have been issued if there had been a leak of radiation from a submarine whilst in port), all three were closed in 1992 – the Swansea one without ever having been used.

Nuclear Bunkers in Wales

In the 1980s the Westminster government insisted that all County Councils should build nuclear bunkers where a select few would shelter during a nuclear war before emerging to re-establish local government. There were massive campaigns against the building of two of these bunkers in Wales: one successful, in Bridgend, which ended in the partially built bunker being abandoned, and an ultimately unsuccessful campaign in Carmarthen, which delayed the construction for months. [Photos / web link to “no bunkers here”](#)

Non-nuclear weapons Treaties

Since 1980 there have been three major international treaties which limit some aspects of “conventional” warfare: the Ottawa Treaty (1999) banning the use of Anti-Personnel Land Mines, the Oslo Convention (2010) banning the use of Cluster Munitions, and the Rome Statute (2002) which established the International Criminal Court, where individuals can be prosecuted for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Arms Fairs in Wales

The “Defence Procurement, Research, Technology and Exportability” arms fair was last held in Cardiff in 2018, and following protests, it was announced it wouldn’t occur again in Cardiff. Obviously we don’t want to see arms fairs being held anywhere !

The British military in Wales

There is still a massive British military presence in Wales, most notable the Epynt military training area, the Castlemartin ranges, RAF St Athan and RAF Valley. These sites are used to train both British

and overseas armed forces. Although outdated, the best source of information on the military in Wales is still “Khaki Cymru” [web link www.cymdeithasycymod.org.uk/khakidragon.pdf](http://www.cymdeithasycymod.org.uk/khakidragon.pdf)

The plans, announced in 2007, to expand and develop St Athan into a Military Academy training armed forces personnel from all over the world, were scrapped in 2010. However, there are still plans to increase the number and variety of British military forces that are based in St Athen.

The Iraq war

Although the massive protests in Wales and worldwide against the Iraq war didn't stop the war, it did result in the US government saying that they would not use Britain as a base for bomber aircraft in future wars because of the level of protest at airbases. It also resulted in the power to go to war being shifted from the Prime Minister to Parliament, and was a key factor in Parliament's vote against a military attack on Syria in 2013.

Nuclear Power Stations

In the early 1980s, there were two nuclear power stations operating within Wales, at Trawsfynydd and Wylfa, and three more across the Severn Estuary, at Berkeley, Oldbury, and Hinkley Point.

Trawsfynydd ceased producing electricity in 1991, and is about 20 years into a predicted 125 year decommissioning process. This involves the creation of a “safestore” for the reactor and an Intermediate Level Nuclear Waste dump the size of a football stadium.

Reactor 2 at Wylfa ceased operating in 2012; reactor 1 closed down at the end of 2015. The proposed new Wylfa B nuclear power station, sometimes called Wylfa Newydd, is being fiercely opposed by PAWB. [web link/picture / logo](#)

Berkeley was the first nuclear power station in the UK to start the decommissioning process after it closed in 1989. The next step in its decommissioning will be the care and maintenance stage of the nuclear reactor structures, scheduled to commence in 2026, then there will be a pause until radiation levels reduce sufficiently so that the power station can be demolished and the site completely cleared between 2070 and 2080. In the meantime, it is the preferred interim store for Intermediate-level waste from the Oldbury nuclear power station, which is just starting the decommissioning process have closed at the end of 2012.

Hinkley Point B continues to produce electricity, with closure planned for July 2022, and a new Hinkley Point C station is planned to start generating in 2026 (Hinkley Point A nuclear power station ceased producing electricity in 2000). Opposition to the new nuclear power station is being led by the Stop Hinkley. [web link/ picture / logo](#)

Following the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986, CND Cymru members helped set up Chernobyl Children Project groups in Wales, bringing children from radioactive areas of Belarus to Wales to breathe uncontaminated air and eat uncontaminated food. [Any still going ? link ?](#) In 1996 [? CND Cymru](#) raised enough money to provide an ambulance, stuffed full of medical equipment, and deliver it (overland !) to the Chernobyl area (along with other ambulances provided by Irish CND and other Chernobyl related groups). [Photo ?](#)

Nuclear Waste Dumps

Attempts to establish a nuclear waste dump in Gwynedd or Powys in the 1980s were defeated by campaigners led by Madryn (Welsh for Cunning Fox). They successfully stopped an IGS (Institute of Geological Sciences) survey team from operating in the designated areas in June 1980, and Forestry Commission offices in Aberystwyth were also occupied to protest against permission being given to IGS to carry out surveys.

An attempt to establish a nuclear waste dump in the tunnels of the former Royal Navy Armaments Depot, Trecwn, Pembrokeshire in 2002 was defeated by active local campaigners.

In 2019, the Welsh Government launched a consultation on potential sites for an underground nuclear waste store, called a GDF – Geological Disposal Facility – alongside a similar consultation in England. We persuaded 6 county councils, 19 city or town councils, and 57 community councils to oppose these plans, and because “too many people wanted to attend” both planned public consultations were cancelled and replaced by webinars.

Ships used to be loaded with low level nuclear waste at Sharpness, Gloucestershire, before sailing out to the sea to dump the waste at one of “15 sites in the North East Atlantic or 18 other sites off the British Isles”. Following a campaign led by activists in Bristol and the National Union of Seamen, this practice was halted in 1983 and is now banned under the Basel Convention of 1992 (disposal of high level nuclear waste at sea was banned by the London Convention of 1972). However, the United Nations believes that countries have been, and still are, illegally dumping nuclear waste off the coast of Somalia, damaging marine life and threatening the fishing industry, as there is no functioning government there to prevent this practice.

International Court of Justice ruling on nuclear weapons