



29 Shap Links to Other Organisations

The Religious Education Council (REC)

From its role as a founder member of the RE Council of England and Wales in 1973, Shap continually pressed the argument for inclusivity with its fellow member organisations. Shap Members have held key positions in its hierarchy and its offices have hosted the official address required by the Charities Commission for several years. It's assemblage of representatives from a wide variety of faiths/traditions has provided a beneficial context in areas where Shap membership has sometimes been more restricted.

RE:Online

In 2012 James Robson and David Francis approached Shap with a view to posting some of our Calendar materials on the RE:Online website. This gave rise to considerable hesitancy on two grounds. Hitherto we had avoided any leakage of the Calendar onto the world wide web, anxious that this might imperil our income from existing sales. And fearfulness that since RE:Online was largely sponsored by Church of England based funding, we might lose or seem to lose our independence of any one religious tradition.

In the end we overcame our fears and reached an arrangement whereby the dates and descriptions from our eBooklet are replicated each year in their pages. We also incorporated into our descriptions the practice RE:Online had pioneered of adding keys to a number of websites which give further detail of festival practice from within a wide range of communities. Both sides are richer today for this happy partnership, although there is a major operation twice a year in checking that these sites are still functioning. Tracey Francis is the current liaison officer who helps keep the system functioning.

The Inter-Faith Network (I-F N)

The Standing Conference on Inter-Faith Dialogue (SCIFDE) and subsequently The Inter-Faith Network (I-F N) have run amicably alongside Shap from our very early days – first in the personages of Brian Pearce, who gave us great support in packaging our early Shap Mailings at the Community Relations Commission; and then of Harriet Crabtree and Hannah Cassidy who worked hard to persuade us that our Calendar



ought to be freely available on the web. Since they already purchased copies of all Shap documents for each of their members, we reached a compromise whereby they currently post the text of the Shap eBooklet on their website.

In other cases we allow a number of organisations, chiefly Local Authorities, Universities and Hospitals, to post our materials on their intranet sites, on condition that these do not leak our text and dates onto the web. Not totally consistent, but it works. Several Shap members are also involved in I-F N activities, and a member of their staff regularly attends Shap Working Party meetings.

PREG (The Professional Religious Education Group)

PREG is a very informal - approximately biannual - meeting of the chairs of the main (English) national Religious Education Committees - AULRE, AREIAC, NASACRE, RECouncil, Shap, plus representation from TRS-UK (the Professional Association of HEI departments/units of Theology & Religious Studies, and related subject associations). PREG makes no decisions, takes no actions and has no fixed agenda. It has become an informal forum for the English RE Associations to keep up with what each other is doing.

PREG Meetings comprise reports made on behalf of the different associations, and discussions of pressing issues of the day. For example in recent meetings discussions have focussed on the exclusion of RE from the Ebacc, on the loss of accountability and timetabled RE through increased academisation, on A level and GCSE reform, on political lobbying undertaken by the Religious Education Council, NATRE, and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Religious Education, and on the work of the Commission on Religious Education. Conferences organised by or across the subject associations have been discussed in this forum, both at the planning stage and in reports. Its last meeting was in June 2018.

Shap in Ireland and Scottish Shap

Shap's ambition that its priorities might be successfully developed beyond England met with mixed results. Our initiative to penetrate in curriculum terms to Northern Ireland was overcome by local resistance, but it did lead to the happy appointment of John Greer to the staff of the new university of Ulster in Coleraine. Even now its aims seem far more likely to be achievable in the Republic than in the North.



The hopes of developing a Scottish Shap Working Party gained some momentum through Stewart Sutherland; it ran out of steam, but in individual terms Frank Whaling's long-term membership of Shap ensured that there was two-way north-south interaction.

Euro-Shap

In Continental Europe, thanks principally to the efforts of Herbert Schultze, EAWRE – the European Association for World Religions in Education – or more simply, EuroShap, came into being. From his base at the Comenius Institute, Herbert kept in touch with various European countries, but he also encouraged direct collaboration with Shap. He invited a sub-group of Shap members as main presenters at a conference on World Religions in Education and subsequently over a twenty-year period he convened regular EAWRE meetings across Western Europe, in such locations as Amsterdam, Crete, Geneva, Hanover, Lancaster and Strasburg. For some time, there was an EAWRE tri-lingual version of the Shap Calendar. Then there was a proposal for a European Teaching Passport for World Religions, and an application to Brussels for funding – which never materialised. Herbert himself was an inveterate member of Shap, but following his death EAWRE ceased to convene. Happily, Shap-related interests find expression in EFTRE (European Forum for Teachers of RE) in the persons of Leslie and Paul and in COGREE (Co-ordinating Group for RE in Europe) through Peter Schreiner. Above all has been the breakthrough represented by the *Toledo Guiding Principles*, published by the OSCE in 2007 as guidance for governments in making provision for the study and knowledge about religions and beliefs in schools. Bob's part in this, in subsequent endorsements by the European Council of Ministers, and in the REDCo Project is testimony to the advancement of Shap's aims.