

Human Trafficking and more

Having not met at Doncaster in living memory, NJPN continued with its plan to make the quarterly meetings more accessible to those living outside London. The Maridon Pastoral Centre in the heart of the historic northern city gave us a warm welcome and a comfortable room with the service of a young volunteer named John, providing drinks with a smile as and when we paused for rest.

Detective Chief Superintendent Nick Kinsella has for the last year been head of the UK Human Trafficking Unit based in Sheffield. He gave us a graphic account of the work of their first major project, 'Operation Pentameter' tracking down those involved in trafficking women, principally from Eastern Europe, for prostitution in the UK. A recent court case has resulted in the ring-leaders being sentenced to up to 19 years in jail. The work of his unit is revealing how extensive are the criminal networks for trafficking, the appalling ways the victims and their families at home are deceived in the first instance and the brutal way young women are forced into, and kept in prostitution.

This was one of the most truly moving presentations which NJPN has had the privilege to hear. However, for me, the questions and comments which followed showed the extent to which NJPN members are already involved in their own areas in addressing this sordid trade. It was clear to me that NJPN is well placed in its knowledgeable and extensive network of individuals and organisations to take this issue further.

Other speakers who presented equally challenging accounts of their work spoke of the dangers of opposing the illegal logging in Honduras, and the need for further lobbying; of the ministry to sea-farers at our ports and at sea; and the growing research on the needs of recent migrants to the UK.

In all, this was a most stimulating meeting which packed in not only the Annual General Meeting of the Network but reports from all the Dioceses and Organisations present.

Kevin Burr