



# Governing Document of Britain Yearly Meeting

Version approved by Meeting for Sufferings held 5 July 2008, on behalf of Yearly Meeting.

Adopted on the twenty ninth day of May 2006 by Minute 28 of Britain Yearly Meeting and, as amended, on the second day of December 2006 by Minute 4 of Meeting for Sufferings, and as amended by minute S/08/07/ 13 of Meeting for Sufferings held 5 July 2008, and as amended on the seventh day of August 2014 by minute 34 of Britain Yearly Meeting.

## Definitions

In this document

1. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain refers to the church in England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, including all its local meetings for worship and constituent meetings for church affairs as well as all their work [referred to below as the Society].
2. Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) [Britain Yearly Meeting] refers to the centrally held and managed policy, property, employment and work of the charity constituted by this document.
3. Yearly Meeting in session [Yearly Meeting] refers to the annual assembly that is open to all members of the Society.
4. Area Meetings are the main local meetings for church affairs and these are the level of the Society at which individual membership is held. Each Area Meeting is a separate charitable entity and may be registered as such with the Charity Commission.
5. Quaker faith & practice is the current edition of the Book of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain.
6. Meeting for Sufferings is the standing representative body of the Society.
7. The term Friend refers to a member of the Society.

## 1. Governing Document

Britain Yearly Meeting and its property shall be administered and managed in accordance with the provisions in this Governing Document. Further guidance is contained in *Quaker faith & practice*.

## 2. Name

The name of the charitable body is Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

### 3. Object

The object of Britain Yearly Meeting is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain and beyond.

### 4. Application of Income and Property

Within Britain Yearly Meeting money and property are used to further the object by work such as:

1. Sustaining our church and faith: organising and maintaining the whole of the Society as responsive to the leadings of the Holy Spirit; this entails calling, briefing and running decision-making meetings with all the facilities necessary for them to work efficiently and effectively, and also conducting relations with other churches and faiths and ecumenical bodies;
2. Supporting meetings: supporting Friends in their local organisation by providing services and advice relevant to the current needs of the Quaker community: for example such work may relate to children, elderly people, those getting married, those looking after meeting houses, and those raising funds;
3. Promoting Quakerism: raising awareness and developing understanding about the basic tenets of Quaker faith and practice, such as spirituality, peace and human rights, within and without the Society;
4. Witness through action: putting Quaker thinking into practice in relation to the problems and needs of people at home and abroad: for example, through training, conferences, work with those in positions of power, and social and development projects.

### 5. Amendments

Amendments to this governing document must be agreed by Yearly Meeting in session and recorded by minute of that meeting.

### 6. The conduct of business meetings

Meetings for church affairs, in which the Society conducts its business, are meetings for worship based on silence, carrying the expectation that God's guidance can be discerned if members are truly listening together and to each other. The unity that is sought depends on the willingness of all to seek the truth in each other's utterances. There is no voting in the meetings, because the Society believes that this would emphasise the divisions between differing views and inhibit the process of seeking to know the right way forward, the will of God as expressed in the sense of the meeting.

The clerk of the meeting bears the final responsibility for preparing the business, conducting the meeting and drafting the minutes of the meeting. Minutes are drafted by the clerk during the course of the meeting, but the final decision about whether the minute represents the sense of the meeting is the responsibility of the meeting itself, not of the clerk.

### 7. Membership

The membership of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain consists of all those who are recorded as members of the several area meetings in England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

### 8. Meetings for Church Affairs

Yearly Meeting in session is the final constitutional authority of the Society. All Friends have the right to attend and to take part in its deliberations and decisions.

Between these sessions Meeting for Sufferings is charged with

1. deliberation and discernment, and the oversight of our corporate religious life; and with
2. receiving from the body of trustees constituted in Clause 12 of this governing document interim reports for information and when appropriate for consultation and guidance.

## 9. Notice of meetings

The dates and places at which Yearly Meeting is to be held shall be determined according to the procedure set out in *Quaker faith & practice*.

## 10. Membership of Meeting for Sufferings

The membership and frequency of meetings of Meeting for Sufferings are as provided for in *Quaker faith & practice*.

## 11. Clerks

The Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Suffering shall appoint clerks as set out in *Quaker faith & practice*.

## 12. Trustees

A body of 15 to 20 Friends shall be appointed by Yearly Meeting in session to act as trustees. Yearly Meeting shall appoint the clerks to the trustees and shall approve the trustees' terms of reference.

Trustees' terms of service shall be in accordance with guidance given in *Quaker faith & practice*. Meeting for Sufferings shall have the power to make interim appointments to the body of trustees, such appointments taking effect until the next Yearly Meeting.

## 13. Eligibility, disqualification and removal of trustees

A Friend who is appointed to act as a trustee may hold office unless he or she

1. notifies to the recording clerk of the Society a wish to be released from service as a trustee;
2. ceases to be a member of the Society;
3. is determined by the Yearly Meeting to no longer be a fit or suitable person to carry out the duties of a trustee;
4. becomes incapable by reason of mental disorder, illness or injury of managing and administering his or her own affairs;
5. comes to the end of his or her term of service.

Removal of a trustee under the terms of (c) or (d) above shall require a decision of Meeting for Sufferings, with confirmation at the next Yearly Meeting. The decision of Yearly Meeting shall be final and binding.

Friends who are legally ineligible to act or who are disqualified from acting as trustees shall not be able so to act nor to continue so to act.

Release of a trustee from office shall be recorded by minute of Yearly Meeting.

## 14. Meetings of the trustees

The trustees shall meet at least twice a year and otherwise as required, using Quaker business method as laid down in *Quaker faith & practice*, and recording their decisions by minute.

An effective working strength of the trustee body, normally represented by at least half of the trustees for the time being, should be present for decisions to be made in right ordering.

## 15. The funds and property of Britain Yearly Meeting

The trustees are guardians of the assets of Britain Yearly Meeting with responsibility for ensuring that they are properly used for the religious and charitable purposes for which they were given in accordance with this governing document. They have overall responsibility for the financial probity of the conduct of the business of Britain Yearly Meeting and for ensuring that it has appropriate systems of control, financial and otherwise, which will ensure high standards of governance and compliance with the legal and regulatory requirements.

The trustees shall have the following powers, in exercise of which they shall at all times be guided by *Quaker faith & practice*:

1. To raise funds from individual contributors and meetings; from legacy income; from grants and other sources outside Britain Yearly Meeting; from dividends and interest from investments; from rents from investment properties; and from the sale of goods or services provided in furtherance of Britain Yearly Meeting's objects;
2. To buy, lease or acquire property, and to dispose of it;
3. To borrow money;
4. To set aside income as a reserve;
5. To make investments in accordance with legal constraints and the ethical testimonies of the Society;
6. To co-operate with other charities, or to enter into partnerships;
7. To establish or support trusts or institutions or trading companies formed for charitable purposes within Britain Yearly Meeting's charitable object;
8. To employ staff;
9. To pay pensions;
10. To obtain and pay for goods and services;
11. To reimburse the reasonable expenses of Friends, including the trustees, incurred when acting on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting;
12. To open and operate bank accounts;
13. To effect insurance;
14. To appoint an independent auditor of Britain Yearly Meeting's accounts;
15. To insure themselves against the costs of a successful defence to a criminal prosecution brought against them as charity trustees or against personal liability incurred in respect of any act or omission which is or is alleged to be in breach of trust or breach of duty;
16. To delegate their powers or functions as set out in Clause 17 below;
17. To establish committees or working groups for carrying out agreed programmes of work;
18. To do all other such lawful things as are necessary for the efficient conduct of the charity's administration and the management of its property and affairs.

## 16. Trustees not to be personally interested

Subject to the provisions of the second paragraph of this clause, and subject to sub-clause 15(o), no trustee shall acquire any interest in property belonging to Britain Yearly Meeting (otherwise than

as a trustee) or receive remuneration or be materially interested (otherwise than as a trustee) in any contract entered into by the trustees.

Any trustee for the time being who possesses specialist skills or knowledge may charge and be paid reasonable fees for business done by her or him or her or his firm when instructed by the other trustees to act on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting, provided that at no time shall a majority of the trustees benefit under this provision and that a trustee shall withdraw from any meeting at which her or his own instruction or remuneration, or that of her or his firm, is under discussion.

## 17. Power of trustees to delegate

The trustees may delegate any of their powers or functions to a committee including two or more trustees, but the terms of any such delegation must be recorded by minute. The trustees may impose conditions when delegating, including the conditions that:

1. the relevant powers are to be exercised exclusively by the committee to which they are delegated;
2. no expenditure may be incurred except in accordance with a budget previously agreed with the trustees.
3. The trustees may revoke or alter a delegation.
4. All acts and proceedings of any committee with delegated trustee powers or functions must be fully and promptly reported to the trustees.

## 18. Repairs and insurance

All the buildings of Britain Yearly Meeting shall be kept in repair and *buildings and contents shall beadequately* insured. The trustees shall also insure suitably in respect of all appropriate liability insurances, including employer's, occupier's and public liability.

## 19. Annual Report and Accounts

The trustees' report and accounts shall be prepared on an annual basis and shall be presented to Yearly Meeting in session for consideration and acceptance. They shall form part of the printed *Proceedings* of Yearly Meeting. They shall be submitted to the Charity Commission upon completion.

## 20. Registered particulars

Britain Yearly Meeting shall be registered as a charity with the Charity Commission for England and Wales which shall be notified of any changes to this Governing Document.

Signed: ..... Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings

..... Assistant Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings

Aid to interpretation, not forming part of the Governing Document

The work of Britain Yearly Meeting

Meeting for Sufferings is the standing representative body entrusted with the general care of matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting and, in the intervals between Yearly Meetings, discerning priorities and issuing statements in the name of Yearly Meeting. Within our church government it

deliberates, it discerns major and long-term priorities and it considers reports from the Trustees who carry responsibility for the work.

The duty of the Trustees is to ensure that the priorities for the work set out by Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings from time to time are being followed as far as resources allow and that the governance and management of the work are being properly carried out according to the religious and charitable objects of Britain Yearly Meeting as set out in the Governing Document registered with the Charity Commission and to charity law.

There are four aspects to the work of Britain Yearly Meeting:

1. organising and maintaining the Yearly Meeting itself; this entails calling briefing and running decision-making meetings with all the facilities necessary for them to work efficiently and effectively, and also conducting relations with other churches and faiths and ecumenical bodies;
2. supporting Friends in their local organisation, by providing services and advice relevant to the current demands of the Quaker community: for example such work may relate to children, elderly people, those getting married, those looking after meeting houses, and those raising funds;
3. raising awareness and developing understanding about the basic tenets of the faith and practice of Quakers, such as spirituality, peace and human rights;
4. putting Quaker thinking into practice in relation to the problems and needs of people at home and abroad: for example through training, conferences, work with those in positions of power, and social and development projects.