



Earth and Economy



News on economics and sustainability from Quaker Peace & Social Witness

Issue 4

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This issue includes

| | |
|--|---------|
| The Co-op Bank: Should I stay or should I go?..... | page 3 |
| The rising cost of fuel | page 4 |
| A vision of a new economy | page 8 |
| Momentum builds against settlement trade..... | page 9 |
| Zero Carbon Britain: can we rise to the climate challenge? | page 11 |

Fossil fuel disinvestment

“If it’s wrong to wreck the planet, then it’s wrong to profit from that wreckage.”

By Sunniva Taylor

Quakers in Britain have agreed that their funds should not be invested in fossil fuel extraction companies, and that “our existing investments in these should be sold”.

Friends have discerned that investment in these companies is incompatible with a commitment made by Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) – the formal organisation of Quakers in England, Scotland and Wales – to become a low-carbon, sustainable community.

Why disinvestment? In the words of 350.org, the global fossil fuel divestment movement, “if it’s wrong to wreck the planet, then it’s wrong to profit from that wreckage”. But it’s not just a question of integrity. Climate change presents humanity with a challenge of such magnitude that solutions must come from multiple fronts. We need to use all the resources we have available to change the system that encourages fossil fuel production at the cost of the Earth, and discourages clean and fair alternatives. These resources include our lifestyles, our voices, our bodies and our money.

There is now a general consensus that we must keep global warming below two degrees Celsius if we are to avoid catastrophic climate change (though in December 2013 a prominent group of scientists including James Hansen and Jeffrey Sachs released a paper showing how even two degrees would be “disastrous” for the world).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has now produced a figure for how much carbon that means we can burn. There are two worrying things about this figure. Firstly, by 2011, more than half of that total “allowance” had already been emitted. So we are on track to reach two degrees warming in only 30 years if we continue as we are. Secondly, this budget is only a fraction of the carbon embedded in the world’s indicated conventional fossil fuel reserves, which are mostly owned by fossil fuel companies.



Sunniva Taylor at a panel debate with Bill McKibben and other activists on the Fossil Free UK Tour. Photo: 350.org

And yet each day these companies continue to look for more fossil fuels. For example, according to *The Economist*, just one company, Exxon Mobil, spends £463,000 on exploration every ten minutes. Companies have now branched out into extracting unconventional fossil fuels too (such as fracked gas, tar sands oil and coal gasification), making the proportion of total fossil fuel reserves we can burn even smaller.

As part of our campaign to “end fossil fuel dependency”, Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) is supporting the fossil-free divestment movement through our work with Operation Noah, who are campaigning for all churches to disinvest from fossil fuels and become fossil-free.

The fossil-free movement is mobilised by the belief that we need to challenge the fossil fuel system at source, by confronting those whose very business model is to get fossil fuels out of the ground.

On many ethical issues, investors can have a powerful influence on companies in which they invest by engaging and challenging them to improve their practices. However, this strategy cannot possibly be effective in the case of fossil fuel extraction companies because extraction is their core business (just as arms are an arms company's core business). As such, divestment is deemed the only option. The aim of divestment is not to financially bankrupt the companies, but rather to politically and morally delegitimise them. A fair and sustainable energy system will not have fossil fuel companies at its heart.

BYM has now disinvested funds from Statoil and BG Group. Withdrawal from Statoil, which operates an oil (tar) sands project in Canada, will make QPSW's campaign to block tar sands fuel from Europe easier and more effective. As the first UK denomination to disinvest, BYM's decision has also been an inspiration and example to other churches and campaigners.

As QPSW's Sustainability & Peace programme manager, I travelled on the Fossil Free UK Tour in November and December 2013, sharing the divestment message with thousands of people across the country. It was organised by 350.org, People & Planet and Operation Noah. At each stop – Edinburgh, Birmingham, and London – news of Quakers' divestment was celebrated. There are now active divestment campaigns in the Church of England, Church of Scotland and Methodist Church, as well as over 40 universities.

What next? Britain Yearly Meeting has disinvested, but of course many of us are lucky to have investments ourselves, or belong to other

institutions that invest in fossil fuels. You may also wish to consider what impact these are having in building a low-carbon, sustainable world?

Act

Personal and institutional finances:

- Explore the Your Faith Your Finance website – www.yourfaithyourfinance.org
- Bright Now: towards fossil free Churches, report and website www.brightnow.org.uk

Pensions:

- Look at Share Action's Green Light campaign – www.shareaction.org.uk

Learn more and speak out:

- Read QPSW's briefing *Ending fossil fuel dependency*: www.quaker.org.uk/speak-out or request paper copies from Sunniva Taylor, Sustainability & Peace programme manager (details below).
- Speak out to block tar sands from Europe: www.quaker.org.uk/speak-out.
- Explore Operation Noah, Bright Now: Towards fossil free Churches.
- Sign up to the *Earth and Economy* mailing list: www.quaker.org.uk/earth-and-economy.

Get the next issue – free

Welcome to *Earth and Economy*, where you can explore issues of faith, money, justice and sustainability. Every issue is free, so please visit www.quaker.org.uk/earth-economy-signup or call 020 7663 1035 to sign up for a paper copy or email version. There are three issues per year. The newsletter is published by Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW), but it's not just about what QPSW is doing centrally. It's also a chance for you to share news about how you've been taking action, helping Friends to learn from each other. You can also add your own thoughts to the Quakernomics blog at www.quaker.org.uk/quakernomics.

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The Co-op Bank: Should I stay or should I go?

It's a question lots of people are asking. Should ethical customers leave the scandal-ridden Co-operative Bank? And if so, where can we go? Symon Hill investigates.

Media interest in the Co-op Bank shot up in November after former chairperson Paul Flowers was filmed apparently buying cocaine. But for the bank's own customers, the more important issue had come some time earlier.

Until recently, the Co-op Bank was owned by the Co-operative Group, which is owned by its customers. The Group also owns the Co-op supermarket. In 2013, the bank revealed its financial problems and announced that it will now be floated on the stock market, with the Co-op Group keeping only 30 per cent.

Much of the rest is expected to be bought up by two hedge funds, Aurelius and Silver Point. They are both labelled 'vulture funds' for their practice of buying up unpaid debt and suing for full repayments.

Sticking with ethics?

The Co-op Bank insists that its ethical policies have been written into its constitution and cannot be changed by new owners. Therefore, the bank should continue to avoid the arms trade, cosmetic animal testing and certain environmentally destructive practices.

Some are happy with this; others predict the hedge funds will get around it; yet others object to the bank no longer being a co-operative, regardless of its ethical policies.

Supporters of the 'Save Our Bank' campaign say, "Don't switch yet, stick together and we can influence the outcome". The campaign is supported by Ethical Consumer magazine. However, the Jubilee Debt Campaign insists that "a bank owned by vulture funds cannot be ethical".

The alternatives

If you decide to leave the Co-operative Bank, there are several options available, although views and preferences differ:

- Building societies are owned by their members, each of whom has one vote. You can find out which ones offer current accounts, along with an assessment of their ethics, on the Move Your Money website.
- Credit unions allow people to pool their savings and take out loans. They lend money only to their own members – those who have put money into



them. Members share a 'common bond', such as living in the same area. The staff are usually subject to an elected voluntary board. Some offer current accounts. You can find a list of them on the Move Your Money website.

- Islamic Bank of Britain rules out "immoral" industries such as alcohol and gambling. Rather than paying interest, customers share a proportion of bank profits.
- Reliance Bank, a bank that rules out involvement with arms, alcohol and the sex industry, is owned by the Salvation Army. Reliance offers both current and savings accounts.
- Triodos Bank puts funds only into projects it deems socially beneficial. It offers savings accounts but not current accounts.

We want to hear your thoughts on the Co-op Bank and the alternatives. Please visit www.quaker.org.uk/quakernomics to keep up the discussion.

Association of British Credit Unions – www.abcul.org or 0161 832 3694

Scottish League of Credit Unions – www.scottishcu.org or 0141 774 5020

Move Your Money – www.moveyourmoney.org.uk

Your Faith, Your Finance – www.yourfaithyourfinance.org

Save Our Bank – www.saveourbank.coop

Islamic Bank of Britain – www.islamic-bank.com or 0845 145 1200

Reliance Bank – www.reliancebankltd.com or 020 7398 5440

Triodos Bank – www.triodos.co.uk

The rising cost of fuel

Chris Walker says it's time for a radically transformed energy system.

Both consumers and campaigners were left angry at the end of last year when the “Big Six” energy companies announced another rise in fuel bills. It's now a regular occurrence: energy price hikes cause public outrage, followed by stern words from political leaders. But with the latest threat of expensive bills pushing many people further into poverty, it's time we took more radical action to change our energy system.

The latest price rise announcements do indeed appear to have caused a moral panic among political leaders. Since October 2010, the Big Six have increased prices by 36 per cent. That's eight times faster than the UK average rise in earnings and far exceeds the price rise of wholesale energy. With 4.5 million households already in fuel poverty, rising living costs and cuts in welfare support, parliament has sensed the need to appear to take the problem seriously.

In late November, David Cameron responded by announcing a scaling back of the “green levies” that are added to consumer bills and that oblige companies to help make people's homes more energy-efficient. This angered Liberal Democrat Energy and Climate Change Secretary Ed Davey, who had previously pledged to “fight like a bull” against such a move. Meanwhile, Labour leader Ed Miliband has gone further to irk the Big Six by calling for a price freeze, a proposal branded a “left-wing gimmick” by Cameron and “intellectually bankrupt” by Davey.

The government's action on fuel poverty is both short-termist and incoherent. Not only will the scaling back of energy efficiency obligations for suppliers not guarantee savings for consumers, but it will actually make it harder for the poorest to save energy, and therefore money. Further to this, the measures do nothing to challenge the corporate-controlled fossil fuel-based energy system that creates vast energy injustice.

It is becoming increasingly clear that it is both possible and vital to deliver affordable and sustainable energy in the UK. With large-scale investment in renewable and efficient energy, and measures to protect the poorest, the UK could make energy more affordable and more sustainable. Just one step towards this would be for the government to commit now to an energy sector decarbonisation target for 2030, a proposal sadly narrowly defeated in both the House of Commons and the House of



Picture: Jono Brennan

Lords in 2013 and thus not contained within the Energy Act. The main cause of energy price hikes has been shown to be the rising price of gas, and many have accused the Big Six energy suppliers of working together to push up prices.

Communities have already started to take control of the energy market away from the Big Six, developing community-owned and more democratic models of renewable energy production. But at the same time we need to challenge the nature of the relationship between the government and energy companies.

Whilst rounding on green measures in order to reduce bills, the government ensures profitability and security for the fossil fuel industry at extensive, yet often hidden, cost to the public purse. Through tax breaks, subsidies and diplomatic support, the state is propping up the industry as it invests in fossil fuel. It's these government resources and expenditures that could be redirected to support robust climate policy and deliver renewable, efficient and affordable energy.

In October, Quakers in Britain committed to disinvest from fossil fuels (see page 1). They joined calls by Operation Noah and 350.org for other faith groups and institutions to do the same and “go fossil-free”. But we are also among the many voices calling more widely for sustainable and just energy. Our current energy economy is benefitting the few. By reclaiming control of our energy system and demanding action from government, that can change.

Ending fossil fuel dependency

Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) recognises that our environmental crisis is deeply connected to economic inequality and destructive forms of economic growth. That's why QPSW is working with Quakers at the grassroots to speak out and create pressure in the UK for an energy economy that does not rely on fossil fuels.

With this in mind, QPSW has produced a briefing called *Ending fossil fuel dependency*. It aims to help you to explore the relevant issues and work towards this aim. The briefing recognises that we live in a fossil fuel economy. There are few economic activities in the UK that do not currently rely on the extraction, combustion or trade of coal, oil or gas. Of course, this dependency on fossil fuels has damaging effects on the Earth's ecosystems and our global society.

In this context, QPSW insists that more sustainable and just alternatives to our current energy economy are possible.

As the briefing puts it: "Through their policies and investments, those in political and economic power play a large role in determining how energy is produced, sold and used. The UK government could make choices that would end this country's fossil

fuel dependency. This would enable the UK to play its part in cutting global greenhouse gas emissions, limiting demand for extraction, and influencing other states to do the same.

"However, powerful companies and individuals have strong financial interests in maintaining our current energy economy. Despite the damage caused by fossil fuel dependency, the government and others are yet to take adequate action to transform our energy system."

The eight-page briefing looks at how fossil fuels are deeply embedded in the British economy. It explores possibilities for a fossil-free future at a time when the Earth is hitting – or exceeding – the limits for a stable climate. There are sections on "extreme" extraction, the links between fossil fuels and war and how our current use of energy perpetuates poverty and inequality. There are case studies on tar sands in Alberta, oil and war in the Niger Delta and fuel poverty in the UK.

Ending fossil fuel dependency can be downloaded from www.quaker.org.uk/speak-out or ordered by phoning 020 7663 1047.

Your faith, your finance

How do you use your money? How does it relate to your faith? Are you overwhelmed by ethical complexities? A new website can help you!

You may already have visited Your Faith, Your Finance, which is published jointly by Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) and the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR). If so, we would love to know what you think. If not, now's a good time to have a look.

The site can be found at www.yourfaithyourfinance.org. It aims to help churches, Quaker meetings and individuals to explore ethical and spiritual questions about how they use their money.

This is not a site designed to give the official "line" from Quakers or from ECCR. It gives space to a range of different views and voices. It offers guidance on ethical controversies around banking, investment and spending.

There is bite-sized information about the history and theology of money, from Jesus' economic parables to the origin of banks. There are materials for group discussion and personal reflection. These range from an exercise to explore how your meeting spends its money to questions for small groups

looking at money in the Bible.

You're not alone if you find it hard to make ethical decisions. You may feel ill-informed or worry about guilt feelings. Or you may have strong views and want ideas for getting others interested.

Advices & queries asks us to bring the whole of our lives under the ordering of the Spirit. Using our money in Spirit-led ways can have big impacts and is a powerful testimony to a faith that begins from a different starting-point to the world's dominant values. It is not an alternative to campaigning but works alongside it, helping our struggles to live with integrity rather than falsely separating the personal, political and spiritual.

We would very much like to know your thoughts as we develop the website. Please email feedback@yourfaithyourfinance.org with your comments and questions.

Quakers disagree on many issues. But we share a conviction that our use of money cannot be separated from the rest of our lives and our faith. As Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also".

Solidarity at the grassroots

Friends and Quaker meetings around Britain are supporting people hit hard by poverty and standing alongside them to call for change. Symon Hill gives a round-up of just some of the local projects that Quakers are engaged in.

Economic graphs are not known for their shock value, but when Lancaster Quakers attended a course on money and politics, it was a pie chart that took them by surprise.

Some people would have been happy simply to discuss the chart. But in Lancaster, they decided to get it printed – on T-shirts.

The course was Mythbusters, run by the New Economics Foundation in conjunction with Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW). The chart showed how the welfare budget is spent. Contrary to assumptions, less than two per cent goes to unemployed non-disabled people, while much more goes on pensions and benefits to people in work.

“We have used the shirts as discussion starters in all sorts of places, from Lancaster market square to pubs and festivals,” says Phil Chandler. They are now on sale at the Quaker Centre bookshop, London.

Lancaster is one of many Quaker meetings to have found creative ways to respond to government cuts and the sharp growth in poverty in the UK.

Personal support, political action

“I realised that children who have free school meals in term time don’t necessarily get a midday meal in the holidays and that got me going,” explains Hilary Mayne of Redland Meeting in Bristol. She collects food donations from Quakers and delivers them to food banks.

As reported in the last issue of *Earth and Economy*, some Friends have struggled with decisions about food bank involvement. Are they just a sticking plaster rather than a challenge to the system?

The issue came up when Friends assembled for a “Gathering for action” at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham. They explored ways forward for Quakers tackling growing poverty in Britain.

A number of Friends are seeking to combine practical help for individuals with resistance to injustice.

Quakers in Swansea/Abertawe are collecting



Lancaster Quakers have used their T-shirts as discussion starters in a variety of places.

local case studies of unfairness towards benefit claimants. They can use these to seek change for the individuals and also to highlight the injustice of the system. They are exploring the possibility of training from Citizens’ Advice so that they can accompany claimants for disability-related benefits to the infamous Atos assessments.

Meanwhile, Central Manchester Meeting is allowing a room in their building to be used rent-free for a weekly advice surgery to people appealing against benefit decisions.

“There is no explicit help for people in court, or help filling in forms to appeal against ‘bedroom tax’ decisions and so on,” explains River, a local Quaker who volunteers in the surgery. “Helping people assert such rights as the law gives them does seem like something Quakers could do with a clear conscience.”

Finding alternatives

Friends in Ludlow are horrified by the reality of payday loans. “I was so shocked to learn that payday lenders such as Wonga could legally charge an annual percentage rate of 5,000 per cent”, says Ludlow Quaker Margaret Bennett. “Many people are

running up huge debts because in desperation they had taken out such a loan.”

They decided to back an alternative. Ludlow Quakers turned up at the offices of a local credit union to become members. Credit unions allow people to pool their money and take loans from the common pot that results. Each member has one vote.

Friends elsewhere have taken individual decisions to join credit unions or similar organisations. Some have concluded that the best way to help a credit union is not simply to join but to take out a loan, making the union financially stronger and more able to lend money to people in vulnerable situations.

Several meetings have sent members to meet with their MPs to talk about austerity. MPs including David Ruffley in Bury St Edmunds and Stephen Mosley in the City of Chester have been lobbied by Quakers in recent months.

Wanstead Friends have gone a step further and launched their own campaign. The Fair Penny campaign is based around a petition that declares “I’d pay an extra penny per pound in income tax to protect the most vulnerable from austerity cuts”. The petition can be found on the website Change.org, while paper copies are available from Wanstead Meeting.

Kate Green of Wanstead says the campaign’s message “has to be simple and direct in order to succeed”. She also emphasises that “the extra taxation would be for those in need, not for weapons”.

Many Quakers back the petition, which has more than 1,000 signatures. Others urge caution. A group of Lancaster Friends suggested that the campaign is in danger of affirming, rather than challenging, the rhetoric around austerity.

They say, “Despite the claims of the government, we do not have historically high levels of government debt”. They believe the cuts are more to do with the government’s own political priorities. They want Friends to call for more tax to be paid by corporations and the wealthy.

Lancaster Friends made clear that they were offering their comments “in the spirit of Friends all trying to grapple with these difficult issues and seeking to find positive and constructive ways forward”.

That of God in everyone

Of course, many Quakers have been tackling poverty since long before coalition cuts. Oxford Friends Action on Poverty (OXFAP) awards small but often vital grants, usually between £30 and

£130. Examples include clothing for a rough sleeper and a deposit on a flat for someone facing eviction.

Some have taken this logic further. Several older Friends in Craven & Keighley Area Meeting realised that they were well-off enough to do without their Winter Fuel Allowance and donated it to local funds to support people in poverty.

In Bromley, Quakers have taken the lead in a local campaign that challenges the borough council over the vast difference in pay amongst its employees. Emily Williams of Forest Hill Meeting says some are on minimum wage or zero hours contracts, while the highest paid employee receives £97 per hour.

“A large proportion of the welfare benefit budget is paid to those in low-paid work,” she explains, echoing the evidence displayed on the Lancaster T-shirts. She adds, “Quakerism holds ‘there is that of God in everyone’. Therefore we need to create a society that properly values the contribution of all.”

Emily wants Quakers in Britain “to be more vocal in challenging the national and macro-level discourses which are causing these very serious problems and to show moral leadership in promoting Quaker values”.

Do you have ideas for action other Friends could learn from? Or questions that they may be able to answer? Share your thoughts, requests and ideas on the Quakernomics blog by visiting www.quaker.org.uk/quakernomics.

For more information from Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW), a department of Quakers in Britain, please contact Suzanne Ismail at suzannei@quaker.org.uk or on 020 7663 1055.

Association of British Credit Unions: www.abcul.org or 0161 832 3694

Church Action on Poverty: www.church-poverty.org.uk or 0161 236 9321

Christianity Uncut: www.christianityuncut.wordpress.com

Disabled People Against Cuts: www.dpac.uk.net

Fair Penny: www.thefairpenny.org

New Economics Foundation: www.neweconomics.org or 020 7820 6300

Quaker Homeless Action: www.qha.org.uk or 07557 878252

Quaker Social Action: www.quakersocialaction.com or 020 8983 5030

UK Uncut: www.ukuncut.org.uk

A vision of a new economy

Sue Tyldesley of the Economics, Sustainability & Peace committee explores Quaker priorities at a time of swingeing welfare cuts.

Being part of the Economics, Sustainability & Peace (ESP) sub-committee of Quakers in Britain is a really inspiring experience. We never cease to be amazed at and thankful for the amount and quality of the work that our staff Suzanne, Sunniva, Alison, Clare – and until recently Chris and Symon – achieve on what is a very broad area of work. The ESP committee was born out of the recognition that these three elements of our Quaker witness are inextricably linked. However, the issues of the day emerging from individual Friends' concerns are ever changing and ever growing. One of the key tasks for the committee is to hold that strategic overview and discern where our limited staff resources are best used.



Members of the Economics, Sustainability & Peace sub-committee pausing in their work.

The latest and strongest of the imperatives for new work concerns benefits cuts, which are quite rightly causing great concern to Friends.

This, however, has not been included in the team's already bulging work plan. A conference was held at the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in October exploring Quaker responses to these cuts. There is clearly a need for information and networking and a re-examination of resources available from the recent past.

Whilst applauding the work carried out by individual Friends and groups, we feel that working on a strategic vision of the type of economy and society where Quaker testimonies can flourish is a higher priority for the committee itself. Many Friends have been asking for some help in working towards this vision.

This is not to ignore practical action. The 'Mythbusters' course (which involved our staff in rather more work than they had anticipated) seems to have been well received. This course was about dispelling some of the myths that are being deliberately put forward and which deny the truth of the situation. This can now be downloaded (see page 6). The need to tackle the "strivers versus skivers" rhetoric has struck a particular chord with Friends. There have been challenges locally and nationally when incorrect information has been put forward. Whilst all this has been happening,

Suzanne has continued to work on Israeli settlement goods, and she and Symon have developed the 'Your Faith, Your Finance' project (see page 5).

The importance of joined-up thinking was highlighted in our discussion about investments in fossil fuels held by Britain Yearly Meeting (the formal organisation of British Quakers). The sustainability agenda, which was so strong after Yearly Meeting in 2011 has been taken up by Friends in many practical ways but the urgent priority now feels to have switched more to economic concerns. The September committee meeting was a wake-up call for me. Before then, I don't think I had fully appreciated the magnitude of the difference that wider exploration has made to the potential quantity of fossil fuel reserves. It is not a case of not having enough fossil fuels but having far too much if all potential resources are exploited. Chris Walker has prepared an excellent information paper on fossil fuels (see also his article on page 4).

In this context the committee felt very strongly that BYM should not hold investments in companies that are involved in exploration or exploitation of fossil fuels. Some weeks later, BYM's Investment Committee took the formal decision to divest from fossil fuel companies (see page 1). This remains a vital issue for local and area meetings and individuals to consider.

Momentum builds against settlement trade

Suzanne Ismail reports on recent successes and the difference campaigning can make.

If you've ever doubted that consumer campaigns can have an impact, reports about European trade with the illegal settlements should provide pause for thought.

According to recent reports, European trade with settlements in the Jordan Valley fell by 14 per cent in the last year – largely because supermarket chains, particularly in the UK and Scandinavia, are no longer buying agricultural produce from the area.

This news is the latest sign that the growing anti-settlement trade movement is picking up speed. It's a movement in which many individual Friends and meetings play a part, along with Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW).

It follows several other recent developments including the publication of official guidance warning UK companies about the risks of doing business in the settlements. Then there was the news that PGGM, the largest pension fund in the Netherlands, is to divest from five Israeli banks over their links with the settlements.

The UK government guidelines were published in December 2013. They fall short of categorically telling UK businesses that they should not do business with the settlements. However, they are clear that the settlements are illegal, that the government does not encourage or assist UK companies to do business with them and that such deals are likely to be accompanied by significant legal, financial and reputational risks.

Official guidelines discouraging companies from doing business with the settlements were one of the recommendations made in the report *Trading Away Peace: How Europe helps sustain illegal Israeli settlements*, published by a group of 22 organisations including QPSW and the Quaker Council for European Affairs.

PGGM's announcement was made in January after the banks in question informed it that they could not practically or legally (under Israeli law) close their branches in the settlements or sever their ties with companies involved in settlement construction. The sums of money divested were said to be relatively small by global financial standards. Nevertheless, the announcement sparked concerns in some parts of the Israeli media that more foreign investors will re-examine their relationships with the settlements. As such, it is becoming apparent that the anti-settlement trade movement is starting to have both

a real as well as a symbolic effect.

That the settlement economies are starting to feel such pressure is a testament to the power of campaigning. When QPSW first joined with other organisations to campaign on this issue almost every large supermarket chain in the UK was selling fruit and vegetables from the settlements. Furthermore, these were often labelled in a misleading way, meaning that customers could not easily make an informed choice about what to buy. Today, it is recognised that selling them brings 'reputational risk'; only one chain (Tesco) stocks them on a regular basis, and when they do they are properly labelled.

Many *Earth and Economy* readers have played a part in making this happen – be it through shopping choices, taking part in demonstrations, letter-writing, dialogue with decision-makers or others in your communities. Thanks to you all.

There remains work to do. Tragically, for all sides in this conflict, the Israeli government continues its policy of settlement expansion. For the best chance of success, we need to continue to look for opportunities to keep up the pressure.

What can I do?

Go to www.quaker.org.uk/settlement-produce for more information, a list of settlement products to avoid and to sign up for information and action alerts on this topic.

Sign up for QCEA action alerts on this issue at www.qcea.org.

Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law. They are a major barrier to peace and a source of poverty and hardship to many Palestinians. Informed by the experience of Palestinian Quakers and the Quaker-managed activities of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, QPSW has been working to stop trade with the illegal settlements since 2009. We do not support a boycott or ban on trade with Israel.

News in brief

Buy green energy and save money.

A new scheme will help Quaker meetings to buy green energy collectively.

The Renewable Energy Group Buying Initiative (REGBI) enables its members to buy 100 per cent renewable electricity on an annual joint contract. Power is supplied by Good Energy, and members include charities and faith groups. Members keep costs down through group purchasing discounts.

The idea behind REGBI began at Huddersfield Friends' Meeting. Thirty-seven Quaker meetings, along with the national Quaker offices at Friends House in London, have already joined the scheme. The project was created by 2buy2, a procurement service helping voluntary groups to save money.

Chayley Collis, a Huddersfield Quaker, explained "We wanted to make a strong commitment to renewable energy sources and to demonstrate the widespread support for clean energy in the UK."

Green Advices & Queries

Friends in Carlisle have chosen to act on their environmental principles by following the traditional Quaker practice of asking questions to themselves and each other. They have produced Green Advices & Queries.

The short questions operate in the spirit of the more general Advices & Queries, which provide a starting-point for spiritual reflection to thousands of Quakers and meetings.

Carlisle Friends emphasise that the document is not a set of rules or intended to be judgemental. Advice 1.3 reads "Do not be discouraged by your own shortcomings or daunted by the task as a whole. Engage prayerfully with our commitment and seek to discern where your service lies."

Nonetheless, the next point reads: "Do you recognise the urgency of the need to take action and of considering the effect the way you live has on the world's limited resources?" The final query asks: "Do you recognise the importance of speaking truth to power?"

Green Advices & Queries can be found at www.ncam.org.uk/CarlisleAQ.htm.

Quakers challenge Lobbying Bill

Quakers in Britain have been working with other faith groups, charities and campaigning

organisations to defend their right to speak out on social and political issues.

They called for changes to the Lobbying Bill, which became an Act in January. It will restrict the activities of a large range of voluntary groups. Jessica Metheringham, Parliamentary Engagement Officer for Quakers in Britain, was one of a core group supporting the Civil Society Commission.

Jessica explained: "The wording of the final Act is so ambiguous that it seems that following the letter of the law allows departure from the spirit of the law, while following the spirit of the law burdens organisations with red tape."

The law will come into force in September. The Electoral Commission will be responsible for implementing it. Quakers are seeking a meeting with the Electoral Commission to ask for clarity.

Quakers and climate change at the UN

Lindsey Fielder Cook of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) says that climate change is a peace and justice issue.

In 2012, QUNO formed a new programme, Human Impacts of Climate Change (HICC). In January 2014, I was appointed as Climate Change Representative. The focus of the programme is twofold.

In "quiet diplomacy", QUNO acts as an even-handed presence to offer "safe", informal and off-the-record spaces in which delegates from various countries can meet, speak frankly and explore ideas. We held "quiet diplomacy" dinners last year at the UN climate change conferences in Warsaw and Bonn. We will intensify this work in 2014. The climate talks continue to face serious blockages.

We also produce briefing papers and explore connections between climate change (one of several planetary processes affected by human activities) and our work in human rights, food and sustainability, peacebuilding and natural resource conflict, and co-operation and conflict.

Climate change is called "the greatest challenge to humanity". Efforts to sufficiently mitigate global greenhouse gas emissions due to human activities involve our political, economic, social as well as environmental relationships. How we face this challenge is the legacy we leave our children and grandchildren; our efforts are strengthened by our spiritual foundation and our Quaker testimonies.

Zero Carbon Britain: can we rise to the climate challenge?

Danielle Paffard of the Centre for Alternative Technology says that a sustainable society is not a dream but a practical possibility.

On the one hand we have the incredible advances of medicine, science, education and entertainment. But on the other, we must witness the rapid destruction of the planet on which we depend. Redefining our relationship with fossil fuels and energy usage to ensure a habitable planet into the future is the defining challenge of the era. But are we doing enough? And is it even possible?

Zero Carbon Britain (ZCB) is the flagship research project from the Centre for Alternative Technology. It is an evidence-based future scenario, set in 2030, of a climate-positive modern society run on zero emissions. The latest report 'Zero Carbon Britain: Rethinking the Future', launched in July 2013 (building on two previous reports), contains the most detailed research to date on managing supply and demand with 100 per cent renewable energy, and eating a healthy, low-carbon diet.

The report is unique as a decarbonisation scenario for starting from the physical reality of what climate science demands – rather than political expediency – as well as considering non-energy emissions and land use implications. The result is rapid and far-reaching in scope, demonstrating integrated solutions across the whole of society. Although enormous behavioural change is required – particularly in meat consumption and air travel – a modern standard of living is maintained and only currently available technology is used.

The detailed energy modelling uses the last ten years of hourly weather data – 88,000 hours – to ensure that even in the depths of cold, dark, winters we can always keep the lights on with renewable energy. The dietary modelling shows how we could provide the population with a healthy diet, reduce our agricultural emissions by 75 per cent, decrease our impact overseas (by increasing the food we grow at home) and leave enough land to grow biomass for our energy system and natural space for our wildlife.

The aim is to show that technically feasible solutions to our problems do exist. Although that in itself isn't enough to solve our problems, we hope it answers some key questions, dispels myths and gives us the space to think differently about the future. The task ahead is no small one. If anything, ZCB shows just



Dani Paffard, Communications Officer for Zero Carbon Britain.

how huge the challenge is. But with this report, we hope to provoke discussion, encourage debate and build consensus for action.

What you can do

The report, with a summary version and flyers, is available to download for free (or buy at the CAT Eco-store) at www.zerocarbonbritain.com, alongside sample presentations, films and other information resources.

We hope the research is useful to you for understanding the scale of the challenge and the nature of the solutions available and possible.

In turn, we hope this is helpful in furthering the important work you do on sustainability, and convincing others of the importance of action, as well as the possibilities for change.

Please feel free to use the findings from the report and the resources in whatever way is useful to you in your work towards a positive future.

We will be holding a public event on 9 April 2014 to present key findings in more detail. Please visit the website for more information and to sign up.

Transatlantic trade partnership: Handing power to corporations?

A new trade deal between the EU and the US may give corporations more power over governments. Chris Diskin of the Quaker Council for European Affairs gives the details.

Peace and prosperity were the founding objectives of the European Union (EU).

Over sixty years, numerous trade deals have been established in pursuit of these goals. Britain is one of many countries that has enjoyed significant benefits from some of these deals, as well as from unprecedented levels of peace in Europe.

Today, the EU continues to complete trade pacts across the world. One of the largest deals currently being negotiated is the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a comprehensive agreement with the United States of America (US). It is potentially worth an extra €119bn (£99bn) annually across the EU economy.

Those who champion TTIP argue that the deal will increase growth in both economies through the removal of tariffs, a reduction in bureaucracy and the unification of regulation. Mutual recognition of standards will (it is hoped) result in cost savings for businesses, leaving capital for reinvestment or reduced prices for consumers.

However, there continues to be significant apprehension over TTIP (and several other EU free trade deals currently being negotiated). One pressing concern is the inclusion of investor-to-state dispute settlements (ISDS). These settlements provide a mechanism for investors (often multinational corporations) to initiate legal action against governments for loss of profit. For example, the tobacco firm Phillip Morris is currently pursuing the Australian government through an international arbitration court using an ISDS established in a trade pact between Australia and Hong Kong. Phillip Morris claims that a law requiring cigarette packets to be a single colour with only strong public health warnings interferes with their intellectual property rights, resulting in a loss of profits.

In the short term, this form of 'justice' could see governments incur substantial losses for enacting legitimate legislation. In the long term, legislation could end up being dictated by corporate powers, as politicians avoid making crucial laws that could result in heavy financial losses for a nation. These financial and democratic losses potentially outweigh any economic benefits.

Beyond the inclusion of ISDS, stakeholders from many sectors (including labour rights, environmental regulation and food quality) have raised concerns that TTIP will create an economic environment that could drastically reduce Europe's higher regulatory standards. Claims have already emerged that the US negotiating team has attempted to pressure its EU counterparts into lowering greenhouse gas reduction targets to open the EU market to US-refined tar sands oil.



Both negotiation teams have denied that standards will be reduced. Accepting or analysing such statements is difficult as the negotiations are confidential. Campaigning groups are calling for more transparency to allow stakeholders to have an opportunity to provide meaningful input.

So, what action can be taken? While there is broad opposition to TTIP, there is still significant support, particularly from business leaders. Wholly opposing TTIP is unlikely to have any impact. However, what could be advocated is improved transparency and the inclusion of a sunset clause – so that this is not an indefinite agreement. This would allow both parties to evaluate the deal and end or renegotiate.

A democratic change in public opinion (perhaps expressed through an election) could also potentially be accommodated through such a clause. If those advocating TTIP are so convinced it will have a positive impact, incorporating a sunset clause should be no problem.

To find out more, please contact the Quaker Council for European Affairs – www.qcea.org or call 00 32 2230 4935.

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