



Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers) in Britain

22 September 2023

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

We meet together over three days at a residential meeting for the first time since the Covid pandemic. I'm looking forward to the additional time this gives us for both our meeting for worship for business and to deepen our connections with one another.

Beyond our routine business our substantive business is varied. On Friday evening we will be hearing a report from **Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales** on how Friends in Wales are living out their faith in response to their current concerns.

Our day together on Saturday is divided into three sessions. In the morning, we will reflect on where we have reached following yearly-meeting-wide discernment on **membership**. Many area meetings and other bodies have sent us minutes and we will hear from Quaker Life Central Committee's group considering non-geographic membership. Minutes responded to the questions why do we have membership? and is it still necessary? It's unlikely we'll find final answers to these questions at the meeting but we might be clearer about where we are being led.

We will hear from **BYM's trustees** in the afternoon and consider a new **memorandum of understanding** between the charitable bodies that make up our yearly meeting. We'll also hear from the group that's been working on **reviewing Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings** – they ask us if we are in agreement with their proposed way forwards.

The preparatory session on 28 September, to which you've all been invited, is an opportunity to learn more about the memorandum of understanding – what it is and the substantial work and consultation that's already taken place – ahead of the meeting.

We devote our session on Saturday evening to **sustainability** and the climate emergency. We receive a report from our Sustainability Monitoring Group and we will spend more time discerning our response to area meeting minutes on Ecocide.

On Sunday morning, our focus will be on other **minutes from area meetings** covering three different topics: the situation in Sudan, modern-day slavery and Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences.

We also intend to spend time concluding our meeting with worship before departing at lunchtime on Sunday.

In Truth,



Robert Card
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

Minutes from MfS Arrangements Group 12 July and 6 September

MfS 2023 10 05 Report from Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales

MfS 2023 10 06 Quaker Recognised Bodies

MfS 2023 10 09 BYM Trustees report

MfS 2023 10 10 Memorandum of understanding

MfS 2023 10 11 Dates for next triennium

MfS 2023 10 12 Group to review Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings

MfS 2023 10 13 Sustainability Monitoring Group report

MfS 2023 10 14 Ecocide

MfS 2023 10 14a Ecocide – spoken introduction from the QPSWCC clerks

MfS 2023 10 15 Minutes from area meetings

A reminder of how you can prepare for the meeting

- Read the agenda and papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks (sufferings@quaker.org.uk), before the meeting to be received by morning of **2 October**.



Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers) in Britain

Agenda

Meeting for Sufferings, October 2023

Held over the weekend of 6 – 8 October at Hinsley Hall
62 Headingley Lane, Leeds LS6 2BX

Time	Item	Paper
Friday		
16:00	Arrivals	
18:00	Evening meal	
19:30	Session 1	
1	Opening worship	
2	Welcome and introductions	
3	Agenda Adoption and acceptance of the weekend's agenda	
4	Membership of Meeting of Sufferings	MfS 2023 10 04 To note
5	Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales To hear how Friends in Wales are responding to Yearly Meeting concerns	MfS 2023 10 05 For information
20:45	Epilogue	

Saturday		
7:45- 8:30	Breakfast	
8:30- 9:00	Optional morning worship	
09:15	Session 2	
6	Quaker Recognised Bodies To approve and re-register several bodies	MfS 2023 10 06 For information

7	Membership 1: Quaker Life Central Committee To hear from the Quaker Life Central Committee group considering membership	Minutes received on Membership from area meetings and other bodies have been collected into a separate supplement
	Membership 2: Personal reflections In groups, to share personal reflections on the meaning of membership	
	Membership 3: Worship sharing In worship sharing, to consider where we have reached in our discernment of membership across the yearly meeting, and where we are now led	
12.45	Lunch	
14:30	Session 3	
8	Appointments	MfS 2023 10 08 For approval
9	BYM Trustees report To receive minutes of the recent meeting and hear from the Clerk of Trustees and the Yearly Meeting Treasurer	MfS 2023 10 09 For information
10	Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) To consider the introduction of a MoU between constituent charities in BYM, and a process for Meeting for Sufferings to oversee compliance	MfS 2023 10 10 For approval
	Tea and coffee break	
11	Meeting for Sufferings meeting dates for next triennium	MfS 2023 10 11 For decision
12	Group to Review Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings To hear from the group on its progress	MfS 2023 10 12 For decision
18:15	Evening meal	
19:30	Session 4	
13	Sustainability and climate justice To receive a report from the Sustainability Monitoring Group	MfS 2023 10 13 For information
14	Ecocide To consider minutes regarding the criminalisation of ecocide. To receive a spoken introduction from the QPSWCC clerks (14a)	MfS 2023 10 14 For decision
20:45	Epilogue	

Sunday		
8:00-9:15	Breakfast	
9:30	Session 5	
15	Minutes from area meetings To receive minutes from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surrey and Hampshire Border AM on Modern Day Slavery • Sheffield and Balby AM on the Situation in Sudan • Central England AM on Imprisonment for Public Protection 	MfS 2023 10 15 For decision
16	As led	
11:15	Break	
11:45	Worship	
12:30	Lunch and departures	



Yearly Meeting of the
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(Quakers) in Britain

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online 12 July 2023

Minutes

Present: Robert Card, Caroline Kibblewhite, Jean Scott Barr, Jane Wilde

Prevented: Ivan Hutnik

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Neil Jarvis

1. Review of Meeting for Sufferings on 1 July

We have reflected on our meeting on 1 July, particularly in our experimentation with inviting all Friends to join the Meeting.

We have considered the feedback from the Support Group and the initial report of the evaluation forms from Friends who attended.

We are of the view that the feedback was positive about greater involvement.

We have reviewed the minutes of the meeting and identified two minutes – 9 and 10 – as continuing minutes. We have asked our secretary to add Ecocide and the practice of giving a loyal address and the faithful relation of church and state to our Forward Plan so that we bring these matters to Friends for further discernment when the time is right.

2. Prison and court register

We have heard that some Friends wishing to uphold Friends acting under concern sometimes wish to send messages of support. We have asked staff to confirm if it is possible to include a staff contact email in the Meeting for Sufferings minutes so that when a Friend is added to the register, emails can be sent via the staff member. The Friend being added to the Register would need to be in agreement.

3. Residential meeting in October

We meet on 6 September to plan the agenda for our residential. For now, we have considered some of the main areas of business, Sustainability, Ecocide, Climate Justice and Membership, and ask our staff to commission reports and give notice to

any visitors and presenters who we think will be joining us. We ask staff to draft a note from the Clerks to be sent to members of Sufferings to give fuller details of the timing and location of the meeting to help representatives with their planning.

4. Nominations

We note Christine Habgood-Coote has been approached and is willing to serve on as the Meeting for Sufferings member of the newly-formed 'Reparations Group'. We agree to this nomination and ask for Christine's name to be brought to MfS in October for appointment.

We have agreed for Robert and Caroline to be the representatives from Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group to serve on the 'Group to Review BYM Central Structures'.

5. Preparing for the next triennium

We have heard updates from staff on preparations for the next triennium. There will be a call to all area meeting clerks soon for nominations to Meeting for Sufferings to be received in time for appointment at Yearly Meeting in 2024.

We ask staff to prepare a paper to bring to MfS in October with a proposal for meeting dates in line with our discussion this evening.

6. Close of meeting

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 6 September to plan our residential meeting in October. Thereafter, our meeting dates in 2023 are as follows:

- 18 October
- 1 November
- 13 December

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Caroline Kibblewhite, Clerk



Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers) in Britain

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online 6 September 2023

Minutes

Present: Robert Card, Ivan Hutnik, Caroline Kibblewhite, Jean Scott Barr

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Neil Jarvis

1. Meetings attended by the Clerks and others

Robert confirmed that he had attended the first formal meeting of the Group to Review Central Structures made up of representatives from central committees.

2. Forward plan

We have considered our forward agenda which informs our planning. Neil and Siobhán outlined specific details which we found to be most helpful.

3. Meeting for Sufferings in October

We have considered potential business for our residential meeting in October. Key items were highlighted, and we shared the view that the weekend would allow sufficient time to manage thorough discernment of proposed matters. We ask the clerks to finalise the agenda in consultation with staff.

4. Residential arrangements

We have planned the timing of the sessions. We have considered how to make the best of our three days together at the residential meeting.

We ask our Support Group to help with providing pastoral and community support.

We have heard from the Deputy Recording Clerk on the arrangements for safeguarding.

5. Any other matters

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 18 October to review Meeting for Sufferings in October. Thereafter, our meeting dates in 2023 are as follows:

- 1 November
- 13 December

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting

Caroline Kibblewhite, Clerk

Record of minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

This is a record of all minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group since the last Meeting for Sufferings with information about any decisions that have been taken. It also includes minutes received in the past where there are updates. If representatives wish to see a copy of a minute, or wish to contact the Clerks, please email sufferings@quaker.org.uk.

Minutes received since last Meeting for Sufferings

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
BYM Trustees	BYMT/23/06/09 MoU between constituent charities of BYM	12/6/23 Minute received 6/9/23 Tabled at MfSAG Agreed to bring to MfS in October		MfS in October 2023
BYM Trustees	BYMT/23/06/06 Yearly Meeting 24 [decisions on reviewing central structures]	12/6/23 Minute received 6/9/23 Tabled at MfSAG MfS will receive in October as part of report from BYM Trustees		MfS in October 2023
Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations	QCCIR/23/6/12 Governance and discernment	12/6/23 Minute received 6/9/23 Tabled at MfSAG Received for information noting the minute and report also sent to relevant review groups		
Book of Discipline Revision Committee	BCRC 23-7-9 Sharing text [Marriage declaration]	17/7/23 Minute received 6/9/23 Tabled at MfSAG Agreed to bring to MfS – probably in December as October agenda full		MfS in December 2023

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
Group to review Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings (GRYYM)	GRYYM 23-08-03 and 06 [Reporting to MfS]	21/8/23 Minutes received 6/9/23 Tabled at MfSAG Agreed to bring to MfS in October		MfS in October 2023
Central England AM	2023.050: Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP)	Minute received 6/9/23 Tabled at MfSAG Agreed to bring to MfS in October		MfS in October 2023
Devon AM	49/2023: update on Ecocide	31/7/23 Minute received 6/9/23 Tabled at MfSAG Agreed to bring to MfS in October		MfS in October 2023
Gloucestershire AM	23/30: Ecocide manifesto	Minute received 6/9/23 Tabled at MfSAG Agreed to bring to MfS in October		MfS in October

In addition, there is an open call at present for AMs to respond to questions of membership to be discerned at Meeting for Sufferings in October 2023. Over 40 Area Meetings and some other bodies have submitted minutes and have been compiled into a supplementary paper.

Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales: report to Meeting for Sufferings

This report has been compiled by Carolyn Sansom and, Jane Harries, co-clerks, and Frances Voelcker, assistant clerk, and will be presented by Jane online and Frances in person

1. Introduction

Although Wales features hardly at all on the national news, the context in which Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales is working is significantly different from that over the border. The Welsh Government has devolved powers over many areas of life, and has used those powers to pass some quite radical legislation – notably [the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act \(2015\)](#) which means that all public bodies in Wales are legally bound to take into consideration the long-term effects of any policies or initiatives.

The new curriculum for Wales is a flexible, skills-based curriculum, organised according to four core purposes.

Policy making is in the main collaborative and politicians tend to be responsive to their constituents.

The Welsh Government aims to become a Nation of Sanctuary, where refugees and asylum seekers are welcomed and also to be an [Anti-Racist Nation](#).

Peace has gained a more prominent role in Welsh life recently with the creation of [Academi Heddwch Cymru](#) – the UK's first Peace Institute, which is part-funded by the Welsh Government.

Wales is also a bilingual society, which means that cultural and linguistic diversity are a recognised part of everyday life.

All the above elements influence the way Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales operate as part of wider society. We are also part of the family of Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales) and are able to take action with other churches on matters which are of concern to us.

2. Sustainability and refugees

For some time before the covid interruptions, what was then Meeting of Friends in Wales (now Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales) set up Focus groups across Wales and the Marches to link Friends interested in/actively working on how to live sustainably, looking at our Quaker buildings and activities and also at our own lifestyles; facing up to our colonial history and the damage done by our exploitative economy, and what we can do to address/redress inequality and injustice.

There were active Economic Justice and Sustainability groups in all four Area Meetings holding public events, meeting their Westminster and Senedd representatives, and working with other faith and voluntary groups. Sadly, covid shut-downs disrupted some of these activities.

A fruitful affiliation for Crynwyr Cymru is with Climate Cymru, which brings together more than 200 organisations concerned about nature, climate, and social impact, and has built an effective channel of communication between a broad range of Welsh society and the Government of Wales. [The Directory – Climate Cymru – View all our partners.](#)

South Wales has managed to keep its Sustainability Climate Justice work going, with regular meetings between reps from most of the Local Meetings, holding a monthly vigil at the Senedd throughout 2022, and taking their banners and signs to other events, sometimes alongside XR. South Wales Friends were involved in Climate Cymru's Big Green Week in 2022 which included an event at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff. Some of South Wales' Local Meetings use Bristol's Sustainability Advices and Queries, and this has inspired Crynwyr Cymru to work in the context of Wales and our culture on our own bi-lingual version, starting by asking the Children and Young People what they feel and need. Cardiff Meeting House has already achieved Bronze level eco church and discussion about possible changes there keep low-environmental impact at the forefront.

In Southern Marches, members of Ludlow Meeting were involved with the Quaker Art Network 'Loving Earth' textile panels exhibition over the weekend of 'Earth Day'.

Ludlow is in the Churches Together 'Caring for Creation' group, and they put articles about environmental issues in their monthly Journal.

Hereford meeting held a vigil on 22 April, in support of the Climate Justice gathering in London. About 30 people gathered for 1 hour with banners, placards and information boards and collected signatures on a letter to their MP Jesse Norman, to send it to government ministers.

Until 2022, **refugees and asylum seekers** arriving in Wales had been sent to just three locations, Swansea, Cardiff and Wrexham, where some Friends were involved in supporting them. Soon after the major invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Government of Wales asked every county in Wales to find accommodation for Ukrainian refugees. In Bangor, the university made an empty hall of residence available for solo refugees, while families were placed with host households. In partnership with existing refugee support groups, Bangor Quaker Meeting House set up Dyma Ni (Here We Are) as a welcoming support hub for the Ukrainians. This operated for over a year, latterly with the Ukrainians taking responsibility for organising the weekly sessions, with support. A more recent development is that Asylum Seekers too are being dispersed around Wales, and in Bangor we are now busy meeting and supporting them.

Similarly, in Ludlow, the Meeting House is used every week to help with Ukrainian refugees, with three days of English lessons and Saturday afternoon of social time.

Many meetings wrote letter to their local MPs about the Refugees and Asylum Seekers Bill going through Parliament.

3. Our Peace Testimony

Several projects have created more public awareness of peace and peace issues in Wales in recent years. These include:

- [Cymru dros Heddwch / Wales for Peace](#) – a project which uncovered a host of Welsh peace heritage stories from the last 100 years during the centenary of WWI and explored their relevance for today. This was the subject of the Quaker Lecture ‘A oes Heddwch?’ (‘Is there Peace?’) at the 2019 Eisteddfod.
- The creation, on 21 September 2021 of [Academi Heddwch Cymru](#) – the UK’s first Peace Institute – to raise awareness of peace as part of public dialogue in Wales and to commission independent research. All the universities in Wales are partners. The first pieces of research are currently underway – exploring the idea of Wales as a Nation of Peace and reviewing Peace Education in Wales.
- The return to Wales of the [Women’s Peace Petition](#) (1923–24), containing the signatures of 390, 296 women requesting that the United States join the League of Nations, and the desire to celebrate a related [joint Churches petition](#), signed in 1925 and including the Society of Friends.
- The creation of a **Cross-Party Group on Peace and Reconciliation** in the Senedd.
- The launch in 2023 of [‘Heddwch ar Waith / Peace Action Wales’](#), funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Foundation to increase collaboration and action between peace and justice organisations in Wales. This initiative will map the extent of militarism in Wales, establish methods of sharing information on non-violence and build a network of lobbyists for peace and justice.

Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales has raised awareness of and acted on peace issues on several occasions.

- On 22 January, 2021, the Clerks drafted a declaration supporting the coming into force of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
- In October 2022 our main speaker was Ameerah Mai, Coordinator for Academi Heddwch Cymru.
- In June 2023, Wendy Jones, a Friend from North Wales, was supported to travel to an international summit for Peace in Ukraine which took place in Vienna. Wendy has written [a report](#) on this event.

- CCQW has recently joined with EMES and Quakers in Britain to protest about the arrest of Yurii Sheliazhenko, a peace activist and conscientious objector in Ukraine.

Following the discovery of the [1925 Churches Peace Petition](#) and the realisation of its significance as the first time an inter-denominational declaration was made in Wales, work with **Cytûn** (Churches Together in Wales) on peace is likely to increase in the next few years.

Individual Quakers and Quaker Meetings across Wales are involved with peace issues in various ways, including the development of Peace Education, concern about the increasing militarisation of society, alternative Remembrance and support for the Urdd's annual [Message of Peace and Goodwill](#).

4. Anti-racism work

At Yearly Meeting 2022 Quakers in Britain recognised that we have work to do to become a truly anti-racist church, and respond to the question 'What do love and justice require of us?'

Following a workshop on racism held in Mid-Wales, Friends were asked in a paper whether, as individuals, they might not be 'fully cognisant of their, possibly unconscious, racist and colonial attitude towards Wales and the Welsh Language and culture.' We engaged with this at the meeting of Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales (CCQW) in June 2022. The discussions illustrated the complexity of identities within our Quaker communities and the 'othering' that sometimes occurs within and beyond them, historically and in the present time.

At Crynwyr Cymru's February 2023 Meeting, Edwina Peart (online) led us to examine how the development of nation states in Europe including Britain was linked to both internal and external slavery. She suggested that asking the question 'Why are the rich, rich?' in historical times and now, leads to a better understanding of the way that the global economic system is built upon and widens inequities. Edwina told us of the Quaker role in slavery, and encouraged us to think about how we might take forward our understanding and actions on anti-racism.

At our June 2023 meeting, Meredith Freeman and Kate McNally, Eva Koch Scholars, helped us further our understanding when we heard about their work on anti-racism. <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/resource-library/anti-racism-in-meetings-a-call-to-right-order/>

The title of Meredith's scholarship was 'No Justice, No Peace: A call to Right Order.' Meredith was moved to carry out the research after experiencing the rally in Newport following the murder of George Floyd, and by the BYM anti-racism training, when she recognised herself as 'being white'. She invited us to experience our own identity, and to risk fear, complexity and discomfort as we work out our 'vision to live.'

Kate spoke about her scholarship, surveying Friends in Britain to see where we are in terms of racism. She received one hundred responses. We reflected on our understanding of racism in the culture we live in, in Wales. Racism is a lens through which we see the world, in a complex picture which includes intersectionality of various characteristics which individuals can use to see a person as 'the other'. Kate said that people move through three main stages when doing anti-racist work, circling back to repeat earlier stages more deeply. These are opening hearts; building skills; and making change. Resources for Friends are being developed for each of these stages.

Kate encouraged us to join the anti-racism network she organises, via antiracism83@g-mail.com, to enable conversations and reflections to continue.

Crynywr Cymru also looks for links to other organisations to learn more and to act on anti-racism. The Urdd is one of the largest national youth organisations in Wales. It was founded in 1922 and is the only youth organisation which sends an annual message of peace and goodwill from young people to the world: recently, we shared this year's message: it declares that 'there is no place for racism in the world, and if we see it, we must call them out.'

Our newly-formed Advocacy and Support Circle will consider how to link individual Friends who are educating themselves about anti-racism work, as well as ways in which CCQW might act corporately on this issue.

5. Symud Ymlaen (Moving Forward) process

Each of the five bodies (the four Area Meetings and Crynywr Cymru) is a separate charity, so that we have had to find and appoint over 40 trustees. This was becoming almost impossible, aggravated as elsewhere by the increase in our average age, decline in membership, and the increased legal requirement to demonstrate systematic and careful practice.

So, back in the autumn of 2019, we decided to look at the possibilities of amalgamating the five charities into a single charity, while keeping the Area Meetings and Crynywr Cymru–Quakers in Wales. The Symud Ymlaen (Moving Forward) group was set up to carry out this charity-merging work. To ensure that no single Area Meeting or national lobby dominate, it has been clerked since the start by Lesley Richards of Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Meeting.

Over the last three-plus years our focus has been finding less burdensome methods of ensuring we remain in Right Ordering. Charity Law does not ask us to do anything against our Quaker principles: it just uses different words. By combining the five charities into one, and pooling our assets and experience, we will need far fewer trustees, avoid much duplication of effort, and we will be able to afford professional advice if we need it, for instance on building work, legal work, or accounting.

By early 2023, all four Area Meetings and Crynwyr Cymru had agreed both as Area Meetings and as bodies of trustees to amalgamate the charities. The draft constitution has been through 28 iterations, a suite of policies has been drafted, Memoranda of Understanding have been drawn up, and all these have been consulted on both in person and through many online meetings.

The new single Charitable Incorporated Organisation is planned to be registered later this year, followed by the transfer of assets and liabilities, and the five old charities will be laid down as this process is completed during 2024. This transition is a lot of work but we believe that it will free many of us up for more directly spiritual and social action.

6. Conclusion

Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales takes seriously its responsibility to ‘represent and advance the life and witness of Quakers in Wales’ (*Quaker faith & practice*, 5.04). We do so bearing in mind our limited capacity and the need to work with and support others.

Nevertheless it’s exciting to be working in a part the UK that is forward looking and supporting human rights in a way that accords well with our Quaker values.

Quaker recognised bodies

Report to Meeting for Sufferings October 2023

Introduction

This paper covers reviews of existing Quaker recognised bodies and applications for registration as a new Quaker recognised body (QRB).

Background

The guidelines for groups that would like to be a Quaker recognised body are on the BYM website www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups. That page also contains a list of current QRBs with their contact details and brief description.

A QRB is an independent group where concerned Friends explore a common interest, seek affirmation, or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker body because its Quaker roots are an important part of its identity or constitution.

Each QRB is allocated a BYM link staff member.

A) Applications

One application for registration as a Quaker Recognised Body is ready to come to Meeting for Sufferings this time.

- Quaker Voices on Mental Health

Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to approve this organisation as a Quaker recognised body for a period of two years, as it is a relatively new group.

Quaker Voices on Mental Health (QVMH)

Constitution: The group has a constitution which was adopted at the Annual General meeting on 23 March 2023.

Governance: General Meetings shall be held at least once per calendar year and will be clerked and conducted in accordance with Quaker principles. There is a Steering Group comprising up to six Friends nominated by a QVMH Nominations Group and appointed at a General Meeting. A general meeting is quorate if at least fifteen members from the most recent QVMH e-mail list are in attendance and includes at least four members of the Steering Group.

Type of Group: Emergent

Foundation: Quaker Voices on Mental Health was the subject of consultations with interested Friends in August 2020 and established in January 2021. The Quaker Mental Health Forum, previously administered directly by the Quaker Mental Health

Fund (formerly The Retreat Benevolent Fund), has run annually since December 2017. Quaker Voices on Mental Health (Voices) operated as an activity of the Quaker Mental Health Fund (QMHF) from January 2021 until December 2022 under the guidance of their Mental Health Development Officer. At the Annual General Meeting in February 2023 steps were taken to establish QVMH as a formally constituted free-standing body that would take responsibility for the annual Mental Health Forum. A constitution for QVMH was adopted in March 2023.

Aims:

- To provide a network through which Friends can safely explore issues in mental health, guided by Quaker testimonies to equality and truth and informed by the legacy of William Tuke (founder of The Retreat, York);
- To create opportunities for Friends to meet together in person or virtually in a spirit of worship, to uphold one another in their different capacities and for discernment on matters associated with mental health.
- To explore the relationships between spirituality, creativity and mental health wellbeing;
- To promote awareness and understanding of mental health issues across Britain Yearly Meeting, thus informing pastoral care in Local, Area and Yearly Meeting levels;
- To act as a Quaker Voice on aspects of mental health and wellbeing policies and practices in Britain today.

Changes in how Quaker Life supports meetings, including the conclusion of the Mental Health in Meetings Project, has led to some Friends looking to QVMH to provide a focus for mental health support to meetings and individual Friends. The steering group is clear that this is not the remit of QVMH. The network's role is to provide mutual support, uphold a Quaker approach to mental health issues and promote greater awareness, but as a group of volunteers the network is not able to provide an advisory support service to meetings.

Publications and activities:

- A regular newsletter 'News from QVMH'
- An annual online Members Meeting
- The Quaker Mental Health Forum – held once a year in person
- Day retreats for Quakers working in mental health
- Small online groups focussed on specific topics. The four active at the moment are: Creativity and mental health; Nurturing children: nurturing schools; Dementia friendly meetings; Mental health and that which is eternal.

Membership: Any Friend or attender from Britain Yearly Meeting is eligible to attend the meetings. Membership is confirmed by agreeing to be part of the QVMH e-mail list and e-mail group. Others (non-Quakers and Friends from other Yearly Meetings)

may be invited to attend meetings, normally as observers. There are currently approximately 100 members.

Finance: The accounts are audited or examined in accordance with their constitution, presented annually to a General Meeting and sent to Britain Yearly Meeting for information.

Winding up: If Quaker Voices on Mental Health ceases to exist or if a General Meeting that is quorate decides to wind up the network, then any funds go to the Quaker Mental Health Fund or its successors to use the money for work on mental health.

Records of all Forum meetings and Business Meetings will be stored online.

Current contact details:

Email: quakervoicesonmentalhealth@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.quakermhfund.uk/Quaker-Voices-on-Mental-Health>

Staff link: Sophie Smith, Team Leader – Spiritual Nurture, Quaker Life
sophies@quaker.org.uk

B) Reviews

When Meeting for Sufferings grants QRB status, it asks for each organisation to be reviewed in due course.

For each of review an update from the staff link about recent activities and key information from the original application to Meeting for Sufferings is included.

There are four reviews submitted this time:

1. Claridge House
2. Quaker Africa Interest Group
3. Quaker Congo Partnership UK
4. Quaker Social Action

Action required

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to renew the registration of each of these organisations as Quaker recognised bodies to be reviewed during 2028 (that is in five years' time).

Claridge House

Initial recognition July 2018, review due 2023, externally regulated charity.

Claridge House is a residential centre for healing, rest and renewal offering courses and group or individual retreats. It provides a space where people of any faith or none may stay in peace and stillness before returning, rested and renewed, to their everyday lives. Courses are run on various topics and activities such as yoga,

relaxation, led spiritual retreats, creative activities, led gentle walks in the local countryside. Therapies such as massage and spiritual healing are also available.

Staff link: originally Suze Lidbury, now Eamonn Cole eamonnnc@quaker.org.uk

Claridge House is returning to strength since the pandemic and continues to be an active centre for healing, rest and renewal, offering courses and group or individual retreats. They follow Quaker principles and Claridge House also acts as a Meeting House offering a weekly public meeting for worship.

The manager attends the Quaker Centres Gatherings, and this year Claridge House co-hosted the gathering, together with The Royal Foundation of St Katharine where the Penn Club is now based. Claridge House is in touch with other centres and is a keen supporter of this network to develop their support of each other.

Previously, there has been a strong connection with BYM staff, as the BYM Head of Facilities had been closely involved with the Quaker Centres Gatherings, and in an individual capacity, been a trustee to Claridge House. Roles have changed at BYM and through the General Manager of the Quiet Company we anticipate these links will build up again. Claridge House continues to consult with BYM on various matters.

Claridge House would like to raise its profile within BYM and to consider what it can do to support Quaker work and education.

Quaker Africa Interest Group

Initial recognition July 2018, review due 2023, externally regulated charity.

Facilitates networking with Quakers in Africa and between those interested in or involved in Quaker work in Africa. Members share their initiatives and experiences and discuss cross-cutting issues. This enables them to keep abreast of current work in the continent and learn from each other in order to become more effective in their own work.

Staff link: originally Lisanne Fridsma, later Michael Booth, now Lisa Cumming lisac@quaker.org.uk

When Michael Booth took over as staff link, he was able to attend a meeting of the Quaker Africa Interest Group at Watford FMH. Since then he has responded to the occasional enquiry from the group. The group is active and is in contact with BYM staff members on topics such as reparations. To improve ongoing links, Lisa Cumming has taken over as the staff link.

Quaker Congo Partnership UK

Initial recognition July 2018, review due 2023, externally regulated charity.

Works to relieve poverty and to improve physical and mental health and education amongst the people in the Great Lakes region of Africa. QCP work particularly with

those in the area of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Projects include: support to Community Hospital Abeka; access to clean running water; working for peace; providing psychosocial support; microfinance with women.

Staff link: originally Tobias Wellner, now Lisa Cumming lisac@quaker.org.uk

When Lisa Cumming took over as staff link, she has been in contact with the group particularly regarding violence in Eastern DRC. Since then she has responded to the occasional enquiry from the group and attended the group's SIM as part of the preparation for Yearly Meeting 2023. The group is active, this includes being an active member of Quaker Africa Interest Group. QCP UK have also discussed reparations and relevant BYM Minute.

Email quakercongo@gmail.com

Website: <http://quakercongo.org.uk/>

Quaker Social Action

Initial recognition November 2018, review due 2023, externally regulated charity.

Quaker Social Action is an independent charity founded 150 years ago as the Bedford Institute Association, changing its name to Quaker Social Action (QSA) in 1998. It enables people in low incomes in East London and across the UK to seek solutions to the issues affecting their lives. To do this, it listens and responds to the needs of the community by running practical, sustainable and collaborative projects. QSA shares its work with others when it is clear that it has the potential to bring benefits to their communities.

Staff link: Suzanne Ismail suzannei@quaker.org.uk

QSA continues to deliver practical anti-poverty projects in London and some other parts of the UK. There is occasional contact between QSA and BYM staff however this has become more limited since QPSW discerned the need to focus resources around climate justice & peace issues.

Email info@qsa.org.uk

Website: www.quakersocialaction.org.uk

Michael S Booth
Church Government Adviser
Quaker Church Affairs
September 2023

BYM Trustees report

Since much of the 1 July Meeting for Sufferings metamorphosed into Yearly Meeting, you are receiving the minutes from both our June and September trustee meetings at this Meeting for Sufferings. In June we met, mainly face-to-face, for a whole weekend at Woodbrooke. Our September meeting traditionally runs from lunch time on Friday to lunchtime on Saturday and was held entirely online this year, mainly moving along work already underway. As usual, this cover note seeks to draw your attention to the most significant minutes and the Treasurer and I will try to bring them to life during our introduction at Meeting for Sufferings.

At both meetings (minutes 23/06/05 and 23/09/13), we considered both how to get the accounts approved in time to meet statutory deadlines, and what we might have done differently. In June, we were joined by the External Auditor (as in most years), and in September by non-trustee members of the Audit Committee who will draw up recommendations to us in due course. (We will share those with you through the minutes and/or a future introduction). We expect to meet on 23 October to approve the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts ahead of the submission deadline to the Charity Commission at the end of the month and will fix a time to share them with Friends later in the year.

It was helpful to have the Clerk of Yearly Meeting and one of the co clerks from both QPSW Central Committee and Quaker Life Central Committee with us for minute 2023/06/06 where we reflected on what the May Yearly Meeting had asked of us in relation to simplification. (This was considered further at the Away Day for Clerks of various committees in September and I will say more about that in my introduction at Meeting for Sufferings). We agreed the terms of reference for a wider group to continue the work on central structures and asked our Nominations Group to find names – that were later appointed in minute 2023/09/09. We returned to simplification in September to reflect on the further guidance from the Yearly Meeting in July and how the various simplification processes were continuing (minute 23/09/15).

In June, we were joined for a session by the Clerk of Quiet Company and the General Manager, Quiet Company (minute 2023/06/07), and were pleased to hear how well the company is recovering from the pandemic and maintaining its commitment to *People* and *Planet* as well as producing the profit which is one of the key sources of income to fund the work of BYM. Alongside Quiet Company, we are in a discernment process about how much, and in what ways, Quiet Company should grow longer term.

We held one of our June sessions with Woodbrooke trustees and reflected on how we best support Friends to build thriving communities in response to the session at Yearly Meeting about the tabular statement. When we considered the annual

safeguarding report (2023/06/12), we were conscious of how critical that is for all our communities and that it is a huge responsibility for Friends entrusted with this work locally.

In minute 23/09/16 you can see that we were encouraged both by the new format of the operational plan that seemed to bring to life the work that staff are doing, and that the plan is near on track. It feels as though BYM is now well on the way to recovering from the pandemic and that the benefits of restructuring are feeding through. Some of the highlights of recent work are noted in minutes 23/06/13 and 23/09/18 where we considered reports from the Recording Clerk.

It there are points that you would like the Treasurer and me to cover in our introduction, please email sufferings@quaker.org.uk though we will, of course, respond to any questions on the day too.

Caroline Nursey,
Clerk BYM Trustees

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Friday 9 to Sunday 11 June 2023, Woodbrooke

Minutes

Present: Georgina Bailey (except minute 23/06/14, online), Alison Breadon, Catherine Brown (minutes 23/06/01–23/06/13, online), Kit Fotheringham, Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding (except minute 23/06/14), Carolyn Hayman, Marisa Johnson, Caroline Nursey (Clerk), Silas Price, Graham Torr (Assistant Clerk), Frances Voelcker, Danielle Walker Palmour, Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk (except minutes BYMT23/06/22–23/06/23); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk (except minute BYMT23/06/23); Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship (except minutes BYMT23/06/22–23/06/23); Lorna Service, Interim Head of Finance and Resources (minutes BYMT23/06/01–23/06/05, online)

Visitors: Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives (minute BYMT/23/06/11, online); Harry Albright, Co-clerk Quaker Life Central Committee (minutes BYMT/23/06/06 to 26/06/13); Matt Baker, Clerk Quiet Company (minutes BYMT23/06/07–23/06/08); Adwoa Burnley, Clerk Yearly Meeting (minute BYMT/23/06/06, online); Eamonn Cole, General Manager Quiet Company (minutes BYMT/23/06/07–23/06/08, online); Tim Gee, General Secretary Friends World Committee for Consultation (minute BYMT/23/06/14); Judith Miller, audit partner Sayer Vincent (minute BYMT/23/06/05, online); Mark Mitchell, BYM Safeguarding Officer (minute BYMT/23/06/12, online); E Elize Sakamoto, Co-clerk Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (minute BYMT23/06/06, online)

We are also joined for one session by trustees and senior staff of Woodbrooke: Peter Allen-Williams, Sandra Berry (Director), Miranda Bird, Val Brittin, Catrin Davies, Joycelin Dawes, Sarah Donaldson, Rosemary Elias, Martin Ford (Co-CEO), Ingrid Greenhow (Clerk), Kevin Smith (Finance Director), Kersti Wagstaff

BYMT/23/06/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check

We welcome Marisa Johnson, who was appointed by Yearly Meeting as a trustee with effect from 1 May 2023, and will take up service as our clerk from January 2024. There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest. We confirm our agenda. During our opening worship, we heard *Quaker Faith and Practice* 25.05.

BYMT/23/06/02 Continuing business

We receive a list of continuing minutes including the extracts from the following minutes of our last meeting: BYMT/23/04/08 Decision to meet auditor; and BYMT/23/04/09 Advice to Meetings on hirings. These matters return to us at this meeting.

BYMT/23/06/03 Minutes received

We receive the following minutes:

- Quiet Company, 16 May 2023
- Audit Committee, 25 May 2023
- Finance & Property Committee, 1 June 2023.

BYMT/23/06/04 Audit Committee annual report

We receive the annual report from our Audit Committee outlining its work in 2022 (BYMT 2023 06 03). We thank the committee for its work and look forward to receiving its continuing support.

BYMT/23/06/05 Trustees' report and financial statements

We welcome Judith Miller from Sayer Vincent our external auditors. We have spent part of the session without staff as is good practice.

The 2022 annual report and accounts are not ready for approval this weekend so we regret that we will not be able to present them to Yearly Meeting on 1 July as we had intended.

We are assured by our auditors, and have been given explanations from management, that this is a systems matter, that most of our income and expenditure and assets have been reviewed, and that what remains to be finalised is around debtors and creditors. The auditors are still gathering and reviewing evidence in order to finalise their audit report, but they are clear that there is no issue about the financial health of BYM, and have expressed no concern about wrongdoing. We are able to confirm that the accounts will be prepared on a going concern basis. Several factors have meant it has taken longer than usual to complete the year end procedures and produce the accounts: the work involved in installing a new finance system; high staff turnover in the finance team; and the challenges of rapid change in the wake of the pandemic. We recognise that we as trustees could and should have ensured that Management Meeting had in place sufficient resources earlier to produce the accounts this year for both BYM and Quiet Company. We regret the pressure this has put on staff and thank them for all their work. We have now arranged for additional specialist support and will file the annual report and accounts before the statutory deadline of 31 October.

We will reflect on our governance of key matters like this and how we can spot problems as early as possible, communicate well between and with our committees, and be alerted to emerging issues by staff. We need to use the tools that we already have and develop new ones to ensure that we are monitoring effectively. We ask Management Meeting to reflect on these matters and to bring us proposals. We will work with YM Agenda Committee to consider how best to bring the annual report and accounts before Friends later in the year. Our Treasurer will speak to this matter on July 1 and be ready to answer questions from Friends.

We send this minute to Yearly Meeting.

BYMT/23/06/06 Yearly Meeting 2023

We are joined by our Friends Harry Albright, Co-clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC) (through to minute 23/06/13), Elize Sakamoto, Co-clerk of Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC), and Adwoa Burnley, Clerk of Yearly Meeting.

We receive paper BYMT 2023 06 05 to support our discernment on taking forward the tasks that have been given to us by Yearly Meeting. We receive and note Yearly Meeting minutes 12, 20, 21, 27, 30 and 32.

a) Immediate steps for considering new forms of central structures

Minute 21 of Yearly Meeting 2023 asks us to form a group to consider what form a new committee structure should take, building on work already done.

We have considered the terms of reference at Appendix B of the paper for a group to review BYM Central Structures. We will make changes and return to this tomorrow. We want to be clear that simplification of our processes is and must be spirit led. We agree that the group should include three trustees. We note that the terms of reference are about simplification of structures, but that we as trustees need also to consider simplification of processes.

We ask our Nominations Group to bring us this weekend the names of three trustees to serve, taking into account the need for continuity from the work done over the last two and a half years. We will agree other members of the group by between meeting procedures. We ask our Nominations Group to bring the name of a convenor to the group too.

We ask the group to work to the plan set out in our paper with a view to taking proposals to Yearly Meeting 2024. We ask that a paper comes to each of our meetings so that we can be involved in discernment as appropriate and keep track of progress, and we are ready to take part in online threshing as needed.

b) Possible models for central structures

We have heard from one of the co-clerks of QPSWCC on the committee's recent experience of simplifying their own governance arrangements. We note their reflections and will take them into account in the next stage of our work.

We have considered the latest thinking on possible models from our trustee group drawing on their work over the last two and a half years and the contributions of Friends during dozens of workshops – many of them Friends who are not involved in our structures currently and whose voices are not otherwise heard.

We are called by Yearly Meeting to be 'bold, imaginative, careful and joyful'. QPSWCC has told us its experience of coming to a realisation that complexity was getting in the way of truth and engagement in the wider world. We need to help Friends appreciate the spiritual basis for simplicity.

Drawing on our work so far and Minute 21 from Yearly Meeting, we hope the group will think beyond minimal change and towards bringing the current QLCC, , QPSWCC, and some trustees together in a single body that is able to allocate resources of Quakers in Britain between different areas of work.

We ask the group to bear in mind what is already happening in parts of the Yearly Meeting. We ask the group to ensure that they continue to engage with as wide a range of Friends as possible and to find ways to involve staff. We ask the group to engage deeply with QPSWCC and QLCC in particular.

c) Planning for Yearly Meeting on 1 July

We welcome the opportunity to receive further guidance for our work on central structures from Friends at Yearly Meeting.

We hope that Graham Torr will introduce the item on our behalf and have given guidance on questions that would be helpful.

d) Reviewing Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings

We note that continuing work on this task is the responsibility of Meeting for Sufferings, and that Yearly Meeting has asked Sufferings to work with the Recording Clerk, the Meeting for Sufferings group to review these bodies, and BYM trustees.

We agree that the paper (reproduced in BYMT 2023 06 05 appendix D) that we submitted to the group last year still reflects our view. We see an urgent need for reform of the central structures of the Society. We have suggested that features of Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting should be combined to give a single body that is the final constitutional authority with BYM trustees appointed from within the body and reporting to it.

We are ready to support Meeting for Sufferings and the Meeting for Sufferings review group in any ways that they would find helpful.

We send this minute to: QPSWCC; QLCC; Central Nominations Committee; the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gatherings and Meeting for Sufferings; and Meeting for Sufferings.

BYMT/23/06/07 Quiet Company

Matt Baker, Clerk of Quiet Company, and Eamonn Cole, General Manager Quiet Company, have joined us for this item.

We receive the annual report of the board of directors of Quiet Company for 2022 (paper BYMT 2023 06 06).

We note that in 2022 the company made great strides in recovering from the pandemic, with numbers of delegates, revenue and financial contribution to the charity increasing markedly, industry awards for its performance, and new senior leadership and the re-building of the staff team. The board has increased its focus on leadership and management training and on measures of success.

Looking to the future, the company is some way short of a comfortable maximum occupancy rate of 75% in Friends House, but this will probably be achieved in the next 3–5 years. This would mean a plateau in company growth, perhaps achieving inflationary increases, and while this might keep company profits steady, it is insufficient to meet the charity's need for funding, given the difference in size between company profits and charity costs.

We recognise that the company provides services to the charity to promote Quaker work, including operating Swarthmoor Hall and the Quaker bookshop as well as running a commercial hospitality business. We are broadly willing for the company to consider lines of business that would allow more growth, consulting us where this goes beyond the Hospitality and Facilities Agreement. We recognise that such new ventures may incur greater volatility.

We applaud the company's continued commitment to the triple bottom line of People, Planet and Profit through which the directors consider its social and environmental impacts when making business decisions.

We note the importance of re-opening Swarthmoor Hall at Easter 2024 in good time for the celebrations of the 400th anniversary of George Fox's birth and of the work on re-interpretation of the Hall now underway.

We thank Quiet Company staff for the high quality of the support and services experienced by Friends at Yearly Meeting.

BYMT/23/06/08 Update on BYM property

We receive a paper from the Head of Estates and Head of Facilities and Property Services on BYM's estate (BYMT 2023 06 07). It updates us on plans and developments at Friends House, Drayton House, and other properties.

We note that our Property Development Steering Group is overseeing the development of our large properties, but that we need to improve the reporting line on property overall to our Finance and Property Committee. We ask our Nominations Committee to consider whether Finance and Property Committee needs strengthening in this area.

BYMT/23/06/09 Memorandum of understanding between the constituent charities of Britain Yearly Meeting

We receive an update on the work to produce a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between area meeting trustees and BYM trustees (BYMT 2023 09 10). It sets out the process that has been followed so far as well as the current draft of a potential MoU. We are pleased to hear of the legal advice received, and consultation so far and thank all those involved for their work. We note the proposed timetable for concluding this work.

Given that all the bodies addressed by the MoU are represented on Meeting for Sufferings (MfS), we ask MfS to consider and hopefully endorse the MoU before it is sent to the constituent charities to be signed. In the longer term, we feel that it would be appropriate for Quaker Life Central Committee to oversee the operation of the agreement. This would support Quaker Life in the work they have inherited from Quaker Stewardship Committee.

In due course it may be sensible to consider whether some other Quaker bodies that sit outside the formal structure of the Yearly Meeting should be included in such an arrangement.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and Quaker Life Central Committee.

BYMT/23/06/10 Exploring opportunities and threats to building a thriving Society of Friends

We have spent time together and in small groups with trustees of Woodbrooke considering how we are working together to support our communities of Friends.

BYMT/23/06/11 Annual report on collections management

We thank our Head of Library and Archives, Libby Adams, for her report (BYMT 2023 06 09) and for joining us to introduce it.

We have heard how work has progressed since we agreed the Collections Development Policy in 2021.

We note that:

- Friends have become used to accessing printed material remotely and that the shift to digital is causing all libraries to re-think their holdings and services. This is a long-term process.

- Reviews are underway of mainly 20th century published material relating to racial justice, community relations and similar topics and of the significance of items located at Swarthmoor Hall.
- Given that storage space at Friends House is at capacity, we are pleased that a focus is planned on addressing the backlog of material awaiting appraisal and reviewing existing collections in line with our collecting priorities.

BYMT/23/06/12 Safeguarding annual report

We are pleased to have Harry Albright (Co clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee) with us for this item and for the interest that Quaker Life is taking in this area.

BYM's Safeguarding Officer, Mark Mitchell, has joined us and introduced his report of work in the past year (BYMT 2023 06 11). We have also heard from Siobhán Haire about operational challenges.

The report covers safeguarding in area meetings, BYM's policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities, training and development, recruitment practice, record keeping and governance, and oversight. Mark has told us of his recent and planned priorities. We note that that our safeguarding policies have been reviewed and no updates are needed his year.

Safeguarding is at the centre of building thriving communities. We are pleased to hear of the progress made in implementing the safeguarding improvement plan, and about the support and guidance we are giving to area meetings.

We agree that responsibility for scrutiny for safer volunteer processes should sit with Employment Committee with the involvement of our safeguarding lead. We hope that ways can be found to keep us informed at trustee level. We ask that we are told whether or not there have been any safeguarding incidents within BYM programmes in the previous period in our papers for every meeting, perhaps as part of the Recording Clerk's report.

We ask the audit committee in its 2024 plan to consider including BYM safeguarding processes, particularly around recruitment and management of volunteers.

BYMT/23/06/13 Recording Clerk's report

We receive a report from the Recording Clerk (paper BYMT 2023 06 12a) and additional Health & Safety report (BYMT 2023 06 12b).

The Recording Clerk's report gives updates and news under the headings of BYM's strategic priorities, and we note a few key points:

Thriving Quaker communities.

- We are pleased to hear that staff are considering both outreach and the links between Quaker Peace & Social Witness and Quaker Life.

Sustainable and peaceful world:

- We note that a peace campaigning and advocacy review is underway and that it includes open sessions to enable a wide range of Friends to feed in their views and that the Police Bill Alliance, in which we played a major role, won a national award for Best Coalition Campaign.

Simpler structures and practices:

- For the time being we continue to allocate disproportionate resource to service our governance structures. We hope that potential changes will in due course release this energy for other purposes.

The report also includes an update on other matters including: the lettings policy for Friends House; the work on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion and on reparations for the transatlantic slave trade; recent meetings with the Heads of Quaker Agencies; and work that has started recently on staffs' 2026 vision for their workplace.

There have, unusually, been two RIDDOR reportable accidents in the past few months where the injured parties have needed to attend hospital for treatment. These are being dealt with through our Health & Safety Committee. We have also reflected on the organisation and management of Junior Yearly Meeting, and lessons from the procurement of the new customer relationship management database.

We have heard that Management Meeting plan to experiment with a dashboard format for the Recording Clerk's report and we look forward to seeing that.

BYMT/23/06/14 Evening session

We were pleased to meet Tim Gee, General Secretary of Friends World Committee for Consultation yesterday evening.

BYMT/23/06/15 Terms of reference for group to review BYM central structures

Further to minute BYMT/23/06/06, we agree the revised terms of reference for a group to review BYM Central Structures subject to final proof reading.

BYMT/23/06/16 BYM Reparations Group

We have received the terms of reference for this group (BYMT 2023 06 14). We approve the terms of reference as amended in our meeting.

BYMT/23/06/17 Appointments

Our Nominations Group brings us the following nominations:

Assistant Clerk of Trustees:

- Danielle Walker Palmour, (1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024)

Finance & Property and to represent on Property Development Steering Group:

- Steve Pullan, Northumbria Area Meeting (11 June 2023 to 31 December 2025)

Letting Policy Group:

- Kit Fotheringham and Carolyn Hayman (lifetime of the group)

Simplification Group:

- Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding (convenor) and Carolyn Hayman

Reparations Group:

- Paul Whitehouse
- Kit Fotheringham

We agree to these appointments.

We note that our Nominations Group is working on finding names to fill roles in 2024 and looking ahead to 2025 to ensure continuity on some committees when four trustees finish their terms at the end of this year and three at the end of 2024.

BYMT/23/06/18 Discernment of Yearly Meeting agenda for 2024

We have been invited by the Clerk of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee to provide a report and representative for their meeting in September to discern Yearly Meeting's agenda in 2024.

We ask Graham Torr to prepare a report taking into account our views from our discussion. We ask Kit Fotheringham to attend the meeting on 16 September to represent us.

BYMT/23/06/19 Trustees' news

We receive a report of recent activities of trustees (BYMT 2023 06 16).

BYMT/23/06/20 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting on 1 July.

BYMT/23/06/21 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT/23/06/22 Time with Recording Clerk

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

BYMT/23/06/23 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

Caroline Nursey
Clerk

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Friday 1 to Saturday 2 September 2023, by video conference

Minutes

Present: Georgina Bailey (from minute BYMT/2023/09/11 onwards), Alison Breadon, Catherine Brown, Kit Fotheringham, Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding, Carolyn Hayman, Marisa Johnson, Caroline Nursey (Clerk), Silas Price (from minute BYMT/23/09/15 onwards), Graham Torr (Assistant Clerk), Frances Voelcker, Danielle Walker Palmour (from minute BYMT/2023/09/11 onwards), Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer).

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk (to minute BYMT/23/09/20); Vipin Narang, Finance Director (to minute BYMT/23/09/15); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk (to minute BYMT/2023/09/21); Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship (to minute BYMT 2/2023/09/20); Lorna Service, Interim Head of Finance and Resources (to minute BYMT/2023/09/13).

Visitors: External members of BYM Trustees' Audit Committee: John Ashcroft, Tina Leonard and Janet Slade (minutes BYMT/23/09/11 to 13); Michael Eccles, Executive Secretary, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Europe and Middle East Section (FWCC-EMES), Tracey Martin, Director, Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) Friday evening; Suze Lidbury, Head of Governance (minute BYMT/23/09/06); Clare Wood, Head of Peacebuilding Projects (minute BYMT/23/09/16).

BYMT/23/09/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check

We welcome Vipin Narang, who has joined BYM today as our new Finance Director.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

During our opening worship, we heard *Quaker faith & practice*, 12.03.

BYMT/23/09/02 Continuing business

We receive a list of continuing minutes including extracts from the following minutes of our last meeting: BYMT/23/06/05 Trustees' report and financial statements; BYMT/23/06/06 Yearly Meeting 2023; BYMT/23/06/08 Update on BYM property; BYMT/23/06/12 Safeguarding annual report; BYMT/23/06/13 Recording Clerk's report.

We also receive the annual list of gold minutes (BYMT 2023 09 03a) to which have been added relevant minutes from trustee meetings held from September 2022 onwards.

BYMT/23/09/03 Minutes received

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, 9-11 June (BYMT 2023 09 02a). We ask Management Meeting and Finance and Property Committee to consider minute QCCIR/23/06/04 (separated minute in paper BYMT 2023 09 10) as they prepare the budget for 2024. We note we are to consider separated minute QCCIR/23/06/12 'Governance and discernment in BYM' later in this meeting (BYMT 2023 09 12b).

- Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee, 21-22 July (BYMT 2023 09 02b)

BYMT/23/09/04 BYM Trustees' meetings in 2025

Having considered paper BYMT 2023 09 03b, we agree our meeting dates for 2025 based on our current pattern of meetings.

- Saturday 8 February (9.30am to 4.30pm), online.
- Friday 6 to Sunday 8 June (6pm Friday to 12 pm Sunday), residential.
- Friday 5 to Saturday 6 September (12.30pm Friday to 1pm Saturday), online.
- Friday 7 November (9.30am to 4.30pm) to be decided whether face-to-face or online.

We agree to cancel the session currently planned for 4 April 2024.

BYMT/23/09/05 Trustees' news

We receive a report of recent activities of trustees (BYMT 2023 09 04).

BYMT/23/09/06 Governance strategy update

We welcome Suze Lidbury, Head of Governance, who has joined us for this item. We receive a report updating us on the plan to deliver the *Governance Strategy 2021-2025* that we adopted in 2021 (BYMT 2023 09 05).

The strategy covers four areas:

- statutory charity governance of BYM – where we want to ensure that it continues to be well governed
- support for committees exercising governance of our yearly meeting (the national church, and centrally-managed work) – where we want to sustain and standardise how the work is done
- developing governance structures fit for the 21st century – seeking to simplify, innovate and be inclusive
- support for statutory governance in area meetings – clarifying and consolidating how they perform their function.

We note the progress so far in each area and are pleased that additional short-term staffing should make it possible to move faster in some of these areas.

BYMT/23/09/07 Property update

We receive a paper from the Property Development Steering Group (BYMT 2023 09 06) and have heard from Frances Voelcker and Graham Torr the trustee members of the group. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with the group to discuss the issues in greater depth.

BYMT/23/09/08 Appointments to Quaker United Nations Committee Geneva

We receive a minute from Quaker United Nations Committee Geneva (QUNC) from its meeting in May 2023 (QUNC 16.1) concerning representation on the committee (BYMT 2023 09 07a). QUNC asks BYM, which appoints five Friends to the committee, to consider appointing Friends from outside BYM so that the global North is not over-represented.

Staff recommend we continue to appoint the Head of Witness & Worship and two other Friends from within BYM to the QUNO Committee (of whom at least one would be a link to Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee), and that we appoint

the two other Friends from outside BYM to ensure more diverse representation. These two Friends would be found by Central Nominations Committee working with Friends World Committee for Consultation for appointment by Meeting for Sufferings.

We welcome this proposal and agree to it.

We send this minute to Quaker United Nations Committee Geneva and, with the QUNC minute, to QPSW Central Committee, Central Nominations Committee and Friends World Committee for Consultation.

BYMT/23/09/09 Appointments

We receive the following nominations and requests for release (BYMT 2023 09 07b):

Quiet Company

- Jane Stephenson, West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM, to serve a second term 2024–26
- Joe Warren, Luton & Leighton AM, to serve a second term 2024–26
- Silas Price to serve immediately to end of 2026
- Carolyn Hayman to serve a second term 1 January to 31 December 2024
- Release Ellie Harding from service with immediate effect

BYMT Audit Committee

- John Ashcroft, Sussex East AM, to serve on the committee and to serve as Clerk for a second term 2024–26
- Kit Fotheringham to serve a second term 2024–26

BYMT Finance & Property Committee

- Catherine Brown to serve immediately to end of 2025
- Danielle Walker Palmour to serve a second term for 2024 (as an ordinary member)
- Release Kate Gulliver with immediate effect

BYMT Elder

- Catherine Brown to serve 2024–25

Senior Staff Grievance & Disciplinary Group

- Kit Fotheringham to serve a second term 2024–26
- Ursula Fuller to serve 2024–26

Health and Safety Champion

- Ursula Fuller to serve for 2024

BYM Reparations Group

- Ann Floyd, QPSWCC
- Klaus Huber, QLCC
- Ann Morgan, QCCIR
- Susan Seymour, QWRC

We agree to these appointments.

We confirm we will no longer appoint trustees to advise on the BYMT annual review and report and accounts.

We note the 'Communication guide task and finish group' will have finished its work by the end of 2023 and no further appointments are required.

We note our Clerks agreed to the following appointments as a between-meetings decision:

Group to Review Central Structures

These appointments have been made for the lifetime of the group.

- Chris Skidmore, Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering & Meeting for Sufferings
- Mike Coote and Elize Sakamoto QPSW Central Committee
- Harry Albright and Rachael Swancott QL Central Committee
- David Lewis and Lucy Parker, Central Nominations Committee
- Robert Card and Caroline Kibblewhite, Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

We agree to consider at our November meeting whether the arrangement for linking trustees with BYM teams should be continued, and if so in what form. We ask our assistant clerk to prepare a short options paper to introduce the item.

BYMT/23/09/10 BYM Trustees Nominations Group

Having considered paper BYMT 2023 09 07c, we agree terms of service on this group should be extended from two to three years to enable better rotation for the three serving trustees.

We agree to reappoint Kate Gulliver for a second term to serve for 2024 and 2025 and to reappoint Silas Price for a second term to serve 2024–2026.

Our clerks will bring a third name to serve from 2024 to our November meeting.

BYMT/23/09/11 Finance Director

We record the appointment of Vipan Narang as Finance Director to serve on Management Meeting.

We are pleased that he has been able to join us on his first day with BYM. We look forward to working with Vipan and hope he enjoys his role.

We thank Lorna Service for her hard work, perseverance and resilience as Interim Head of Finance.

BYMT/23/09/12 Finance reports

We are joined by members of BYMT's Audit Committee – John Ashcroft, Tina Leonard, Janet Slade – for this session.

We receive minutes of our Finance & Property Committee held 18 July 2023 (BYMT 2023 09 08a) and Danielle Walker Palmour has spoken to them.

Lorna Service has introduced the management accounts up to the end of June (BYMT 2023 09 08b).

BYMT/23/09/13 Preparation of 2022 annual accounts

We have heard an update on the preparation of the 2022 annual accounts from our Treasurer.

We agree to hold an online meeting to approve the accounts in the week of 23 October.

Yearly Meeting minute 48 asked us to arrange an online meeting to present the accounts to Friends when the audit is complete (BYMT 2023 09 12a). We expect to hold this in November.

Members of the Audit Committee have raised prompts for us to consider regarding the preparation of accounts this year (paper BYMT 2023 09 09). Under the headings of systems and processes, management and governance, we have reflected on what could have been done differently and lessons for the future. Individual trustees will send any further thoughts to the clerk of Audit Committee and the Recording Clerk and Treasurer will respond formally – initially by 11 September.

We note that further learning may emerge from the final stage of producing the audited reports and from the Management Letter that will – as is normal practice – be sent to us by the external auditors. We suggest too that the Audit Committee should have a session with the Quiet Company Board.

We ask our Audit Committee to make recommendations to us in due course.

BYMT/23/09/14 Evening Session – Friends World Committee for Consultation and Quaker Council for European Affairs

We met informally with Tracey Martin, Director, Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and Michael Eccles, Executive Secretary Friends World Committee for Consultation, Europe and Middle East Section (FWCC-EMES).

BYMT/23/09/15 Simple, inclusive and sustainable structures

We receive Yearly Meeting minutes 50 and 52 from the additional session of Yearly Meeting held on 1 July this year (BYMT 2023 09 12a). Yearly Meeting was given a further opportunity to contribute views before the next steps to be taken by the Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS) and the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings (GRYYM).

Paul Parker has updated us on the work of GRYYM. We look forward to being part of continuing consideration in October at Meeting for Sufferings.

The newly formed Group to Review Central Structures met in August for the first time and its convener, Ellie Harding, has updated us. We are pleased that the group has formed and started to understand its work. We are conscious that Friends serving on the group are already giving a lot of their time to central work as clerks or members of various bodies and this makes scheduling meetings of the group difficult.

We are pleased to hear of the efforts to keep the overall work on simplification coherent between the groups involved, as Yearly Meeting requested. We are conscious that it is very important over the year ahead that Friends across the yearly meeting are aware of the work underway and emerging thinking, and that conversations continue across the whole of BYM. We recognise that we need to allocate some resource from the Communications team to support this and hope the paper that some trustees produced a few years on communications may prove useful.

We receive paper (BYMT 2023 09 12b) from Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations about governance and discernment. We thank them for their contribution. We will draw on this thinking as the work on simplification continues.

BYMT/23/09/16 Operational plan for 2023

We receive an interim update (BYMT 2023 09 13) from operational managers on the delivery of the operational plan for this year. We are joined by Clare Wood, Head of Peacebuilding Projects, who has introduced the item.

We like the new format for the report that brings to life the processes and people behind the work that BYM carries out of behalf of the yearly meeting. We are encouraged to hear how it is being used by managers to keep work on track and focus on steps along the way to achieving impact – particularly for work that involves many teams. We want to find ways to share some of the content more widely.

It is right that the report covers what is not working as well as what is. We have suggested some minor amendments to the format of the report and raised internal work that we would like to hear more about including on Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

We are pleased that 81% of our work is on schedule which is a considerable improvement from last year when only 50% of our work was on schedule at the 6-month review. Operational managers believe that we are in a more predictable period following the restructure of several departments and the disruption of the COVID pandemic, and we are pleased that they are learning to plan more realistically. We are grateful for all that staff have achieved in the first half of the year.

BYMT/23/09/17 Management reporting to trustees

Siobhán Haire has summarised the ideas contributed by trustees and Management Meeting since our last meeting about ways to make reporting more efficient using a dashboard.

We have considered this further and look forward to receiving a first experiment in this way of reporting for our next meeting.

BYMT/23/09/18 Recording Clerk's report

We receive a report from the Recording Clerk (paper BYMT 2023 09 15) and have asked questions and made comments.

The report gives updates and news under the headings of BYM's strategic priorities:

- Thriving Quaker communities: including the all-age Yearly Meeting in July organised at very short notice, plans to recruit a youth development worker for London using a legacy from a local meeting, and the Local Development Worker team now fully staffed and working as part of the wider Quaker Life team. We note that considerable discernment will be needed on how best to focus work on helping people to find Quakers and to want to stay when they do.
- Sustainable and peaceful world: including the Open University agreeing to an open access peace education course, recruitment of a new Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer, preparation for the DSEI arms fair (including awareness that police powers are much increased since the last set of protests), and the EAPPI programme in Israel and Palestine.
- Simpler structures and practices: including how well the Book of Discipline Review Committee is working.

The report also includes an update on other matters: including statements and sign ons, and progress on implementing various Yearly Meeting minutes from the last few years.

We have heard also from the trustees reviewing our hirings policy for Friends House, and discussed the holding of Junior Yearly Meeting, and letters received by our clerk.

BYMT/23/09/19 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings in October.

BYMT/23/09/20 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT/23/09/21 Time with Recording Clerk

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

BYMT/23/09/22 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

Caroline Nursey
Clerk

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the organisations together comprising the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, as represented by their Trustee bodies

I remember an outburst in Meeting for Sufferings, when Friends felt that Britain Yearly Meeting was becoming 'just a well-run charity'. 'I don't want to be part of a well-run charity, I want to be part of a religious group, a church,' said a weighty Friend. The point is that we need to be an ordinary well-run organisation, with good structures and sensible practices, which we then make extraordinary by transcending, not discarding them.

Beth Allen, Quaker faith & practice, 8:25

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain is comprised of more than 70 charitable bodies. Trustees and other interested members and attenders of these bodies have been working with Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) staff to develop an MoU which would set out the nature of the cooperation and mutual support that are needed to underpin the health of our Society.

The latest draft of the MoU is available [here](#).

This paper:

- updates Meeting for Sufferings on the rationale for this document
- shares the drafting process which the document has been through
- shares information on a proposal for governance reporting from AMs to the Yearly Meeting via Meeting for Sufferings; and
- asks Meeting for Sufferings to consider approving this document.

Accompanying documents and preparation

This paper is accompanied by a **slide deck** (appended to this document) which articulates the rationale for creating the MoU, as well as the drafting and consultation process so far. The group working on the MoU will additionally be holding an online preparation meeting open to all Meeting for Sufferings representatives and alternates in advance of the Meeting for Sufferings residential weekend in October. This preparation meeting will include an overview of the rationale for the MoU, as well as a walk through the document and a chance to ask questions.

The rationale for putting this document in place was first identified by Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC, now laid down), in part because Quakers' participation in the IICSA (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) had highlighted that we had no central mechanism for ensuring that child safeguarding matters were being handled effectively across the Society. QSC considered that in

addition to providing trustees of Quaker organisations with support from Britain Yearly Meeting staff, alongside paid for services, all the bodies forming the Society of Friends in England, Scotland and Wales would benefit from clear routes and criteria for sharing information about serious actual or potential governance issues (including but not limited to safeguarding issues) arising across the Society.

As the working group has worked on this document, it has become more and more clear to us, that this document, legalistic as it may appear, provides methods by which we can show our care for each other and for our Society.

We have taken care in our drafting, and have felt clearly in our discernment, that the purpose of this document is not to lay new obligations on the trustees of all the organisations which we hope will sign it, but to clarify and write down in one place our existing obligations of communication, support and care.

Process

As we thought initially about the MoU, we consulted with a reference group of eight interested current and former Area Meeting (AM) trustees who had volunteered to support us.

Later, during our drafting process we have consulted with Clerks to AM Trustees, AM clerks, attendees at a Yearly Meeting special interest meeting and attendees at 4 additional open consultation sessions (c184 attendees total).

Feedback

In consultation meetings Friends have generally found the content of the appendices of the agreement uncontentious, although the consultation has generated discussion about tone and use of language. The thoughtful input which we have received has made the document stronger and we believe that it is now ready to be sent to the trustees of Area and General Meetings, as well as BYM Trustees, for signature.

The role of Meeting for Sufferings

We feel it is important that Meeting for Sufferings is content with this document as it is the Quaker body which has oversight of Area Meeting governance matters, following the laying down of Quaker Stewardship Committee (although much of this work is delegated to Quaker Life Central Committee, hence our proposal that QLCC is asked to work on amendments to the MoU when required). Meeting for Sufferings is also the place where all the bodies which we anticipate will sign the MoU are represented.

Reporting on area meeting compliance

The MoU, if approved, will sit alongside the existing processes for annual compliance reporting from Area Meetings to Britain Yearly Meeting. Staff are working to bring the current reporting processes into a single annual survey asking for key information from Area Meeting Trustees. This information is passed to Quaker Life Central Committee, then to Meeting for Sufferings, which reports on it

annually to Yearly Meeting in session. Requesting this information from Area Meetings allows Quaker Life Central Committee to:

1. In most instances, confirm compliance across the Society;
2. To draw attention to areas where compliance requirements are not being met; and
3. Enable support to be given where compliance obligations are not being met.

This process enables QLCC to undertake the work given to it by Yearly Meeting.

This proposal is brought to Friends while Meeting for Sufferings is under review and it is possible its functions and membership may change in the future. Meeting for Sufferings does however need to agree how to discharge its current responsibilities of compliance. If changes to Meeting for Sufferings are agreed in the future, all of its responsibilities will be considered as part of that process.

What happens next

If Meeting for Sufferings is content with the MoU, we expect to send it for signature by Area Meeting, General Meeting and BYM trustees, with the aim that most will have signed it by February 2024. We would be happy to discuss the document with any trustee bodies who wish to do so before signing. If Meeting for Sufferings raises concerns about the subject matter of the MoU which mean that it cannot approve it at this time, then the working group will continue to refine the draft before bringing it back.

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to consider the MoU and if it is minded, to approve it, so that it can be sent for signature with a recommending minute.

Annex: Related minute from BYM Trustees

BYMT/23/06/09 Memorandum of understanding between the constituent charities of Britain Yearly Meeting

We receive an update on the work to produce a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between area meeting trustees and BYM trustees (BYMT 2023 09 10). It sets out the process that has been followed so far as well as the current draft of a potential MoU. We are pleased to hear of the legal advice received, and consultation so far and thank all those involved for their work. We note the proposed timetable for concluding this work.

Given that all the bodies addressed by the MoU are represented on Meeting for Sufferings (MfS), we ask MfS to consider and hopefully endorse the MoU before it is sent to the constituent charities to be signed. In the longer term, we feel that it would be appropriate for Quaker Life Central Committee to oversee the operation of the

agreement. This would support Quaker Life in the work they have inherited from Quaker Stewardship Committee.

In due course it may be sensible to consider whether some other Quaker bodies that sit outside the formal structure of the Yearly Meeting should be included in such an arrangement.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and Quaker Life Central Committee.



Towards a
Memorandum of Understanding
for Quakers in Britain

Why do we need an MoU?

To clarify the relationship between the charities of Quakers in Britain.

To provide a mechanism to explain the interdependency of the Area Meetings and Britain Yearly Meeting within the Society, Quakers in Britain, whilst also maintaining the independence of the separate charities.

To support and articulate the sharing of resources and information between Area Meetings and Britain Yearly Meeting.

To help mitigate the possible impact of reputational risk within the church due to failures within one part of the Society



How did it get started?

Quaker Stewardship Committee raised the suggestion in 2020

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, asked to take it forward November 2020

Meeting for Sufferings December 2020

working group got started January 2021

Held a series of open Zoom sessions plus one-to-one calls with some AM clerks of trustees

Focus group of volunteers formed August 2021



The focus group discerned an MoU had to



Clarify relationship. It was not creating one.

Bring into the light what relationship we already have ~ to share the understanding of what are our duties to, and expectations, of each other BYM:AM and AM:AM

Be sure the guidance from BYM does not impinge on the independence and decision making of AMs as separate charities, but at the same time respects and reminds them of their liability for their decisions

Key points

The church is supported by charities who hold property, and carry out the legal, health and safety, financial and employment work necessary to enable us to meet and worship and witness.

Each of those charities is a separate legal entity, but they are bound together by their purpose and charitable objective to further the general religious and charitable purposes of the Religious Society of Friend (Quakers) in Britain and beyond, as laid down in our Book of Christian Discipline

Our central and local charities within the church exist solely to support our worship and witness as a Quaker community.



Key points

Right ordering requires us to work together to ensure we are best able to support worship and witness, to discern together and to follow the promptings of love and truth.

Area meetings must work together with other area meetings and with BYM to uphold the integrity and reputation of the church.

This places upon us mutual obligations for Area Meetings, General Meetings and BYM to work together, to ensure we live out our commitments to truth, equality, inclusion, sustainability, peace and provide a safe environment for those who come to our meetings.



Key points

We must consider the risks to others in our national church, at the same time as valuing the uniqueness of each of our Quaker communities

AMs recognise their obligation to raise the funds needed to carry out the central work they ask of BYM

BYM's role is to support the life and aspirations of our diverse Quaker communities



The focus
group
agreed
three parts
were
needed



There needed to be an overarching statement of principle - that the different charities which form our national church are mutually interdependent .

Possibly included in the revision of Quaker Faith & Practice

A document which sets out the headings of issues which are of relevance to the relationship between the various charities within the church (the trustee bodies of AMs, General Meeting for Scotland, Quakers in Wales, YFGM and BYM).

An MoU, developed by BYM Trustees working with AM Trustees and other Friends.

A 'Toolkit' of documents and resources, with details about how to uphold these mutual responsibilities.

Resources developed and updated with BYM staff.

Where have we got to

Met with solicitors to get written guidance on legal position

Work started on drafting an MoU
December 2022

Consulted with focus group
February 2023

Consulting with AM Clerks of Trustees and AM Clerks

Special Interest Meeting at Yearly Meeting

May
Open sessions

June
BYM
Trustees



Where are we going

October
Meeting for
Sufferings

February
2024
MoU
signed and
in place?



Any queries or suggestions
please contact:
Siobhán Haire
SiobhanH@quaker.org.uk



Dates of Meeting for Sufferings in next triennium

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group is proposing to maintain the current pattern of meetings in the next triennium: four meetings a year and to hold two residential meetings in the three-year plan of meetings. The Arrangements Group took into account the time we need for our business, the impact of our meetings on the environment and the financial cost of our meetings.

The last residential weekend cost just under £30,000 and this weekend's meeting in Leeds is also likely to be slightly higher than that figure (at the time of writing the travel costs are unknown).

The current triennium began in 2021 and we have settled into a new routine which now includes preparatory sessions ahead of each meeting giving additional time for members of Meeting for Sufferings to prepare for some of the upcoming business. The Arrangements Group has heard widespread support from Friends for these additional meetings. In the early days of the Covid pandemic several of our meetings were held entirely online but we now routinely hold hybrid meetings. It is proposed that all these arrangements will continue.

The Arrangements Group hopes this pattern of meetings, including the residential meetings and preparatory meetings, ensures we provide sufficient time for our routine business, to receive our regular reports, and to discern concerns from area meetings and other committees.

To help welcome new members, the first meeting of the triennium will be open to both representatives and alternates and the third meeting will be a residential gathering to help us build our community.

Meeting for Sufferings (proposed dates for next triennium in bold)

2024	2025	2026 (provisional)	2027 (provisional)
<i>2 March</i>	28 Feb–2 March (residential)	7 March	6 March
<i>1 June</i>	May: Yearly Meeting in session, London	May: Yearly Meeting in session, London	5 June
26–30 July (gathering): Yearly Meeting in session	5 July	4 July	August (gathering): Yearly Meeting in session
5 October	4 October	2–4 October (residential)	Following triennium ↓
7 December	6 December	5 December	

Notes: Final meetings of this triennium (in 2024 and marked in italic) already agreed by Meeting for Sufferings.
Yearly Meetings are to be agreed.

Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings (GRYYM)

Introduction

A decision was taken in 2019 to review Yearly Meeting (YM) and Yearly Meeting Gathering (YMG) and our group began work in 2021. The work was envisaged as a two-stage process. We gave an interim report to Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) in March 2022 when we reported there was an underlying issue with the relationship between MfS and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (BYMT). We thought that it would not be possible to complete our work without addressing this. Our remit was subsequently expanded to include an extra stage to review MfS. GRYYM identified the issue as being lack of clarity about the respective remits and accountabilities of MfS, BYMT and YM.

For example

- which body can initiate change,
- who is responsible for strategic planning and the setting of priorities,
- how consultation between the bodies should work,
- whether BYMT should take instruction from YM, MfS or both.

We reported to MfS in December 2022 presenting three possible options. MfS referred the matter to YM 2023, which endorsed the need for change, asked the group for further work and agreed six criteria (see table) against which any proposals should be assessed. GRYYM is working with BYMT on simplification and the Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS) to ensure any proposals for change are consistent.

Proposal

In the light of the discussions at YM 2023, we are increasingly convinced that the only option that meets the criteria laid down by YM is for MfS to become part of a continuing YM. We consider that this should ensure the centrality of spirit-led decision making. The strongest message we have heard throughout our work is the importance of time being available for spirit-led for discernment and this option will also strengthen this.

We envisage that a continuing YM would be both representative and open to all. It is likely that there would be an annual extended multiple-day session as now, and some one-day 'continuing' sessions would be held. The format of these one-day sessions might be blended or online. In essence the one-day sessions would be able to exercise all the functions of YM between the annual extended session. All YM sessions should be inclusive, so as to maintain a diverse and all-age community throughout the year.

However, while a continuing YM would have a clear relationship with BYMT it is unlikely that it would have the time to attend to all the business that is currently asked of MfS. Another body, possibly a smaller committee, should take on some current MfS functions, for example the Court and Prison Register and approval of Quaker Recognised Bodies.

The table below gives our detailed thinking, measuring the current structure and this proposal against the six criteria agreed by YM. YM asked for change, so to keep the current structure is not an option. Other options, previously presented to MfS and YM do not meet the six criteria agreed by YM on 1 July.

Does MfS agree with this way forward for MfS and YM?

We are asking MfS at this time only whether it supports taking forward this option.

There are many details we need to work on, including:

- How agenda setting will take place
- The exact composition, role and name of the smaller body
- Future clerking arrangements
- How the representative system would work in practice
- The number and timing of continuing YM sessions.

This and the many other questions we have been posed, will be written up in a full report to MfS containing clear proposals. We would expect any final proposals to be considered by YM in 2024.

If members of MfS have ideas or suggestions for the review group, or would like to suggest important issues that will need to be worked on as we develop this proposal, we are open to comment at any time and can be contacted through our secretary Michael Booth, michaelsb@quaker.org.uk

Ann Kerr
Interim Convener

Comparing Current Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting with our recommendation

	YM Criteria (minute 50)	Present arrangement	Our recommendation
1	continue to place spirit-led discernment at the heart of all decision-making across BYM	Yes, but limits spirit-led decision-making about priorities and strategy to a smaller body of trustees in between YMs.	Yes, a continuing YM would remain the ultimate authority, able to make all the same decisions that YM can currently make. More opportunity for trustees to take direction from Friends. Any Friend would be able to participate in the discernment.
2	ensure our structures and our processes are agile and capable of translating our discernment into action	No. Certain decisions can only be taken by YM. As it meets once a year, it is difficult for it to be agile.	Yes. With the ultimate authority meeting more frequently, it would enable continuing engagement with issues, making action easier.
3	release energy within our Quaker community	No. It is questionable whether MfS representatives often feel they have spent their time with 'energy'.	Somewhat. More Friends would be able to give their time and energy, but there would be some flexibility over the extent of their attending meetings. Having the additional small body would release time and energy for matters of concern.
4	clarify the lines of accountability; explain clearly the roles and responsibilities of the different bodies; meet the requirements of charity law, good governance practice and Quaker Gospel order	No. BYM trustees are legally responsible for compliance, accountable directly to YM, though this can only happen once a year. The distinct roles of trustees and MfS are not clear despite many efforts to clarify them.	Yes. BYM trustees are legally responsible for compliance, accountable directly to YM; but this can, if necessary, happen more frequently. A continuing YM would be able to direct trustees in the same way as YM can now. The roles of YM and trustees would be clearer and easier to define, without having to also define a distinct MfS role. The role of the small body can be clearly defined with no overlap.

5	promote greater diversity and wider participation in our decision-making	No. There is a tendency for AMs to appoint the same sorts of Friends to be their MfS rep, leading to a body which lacks even the limited diversity amongst members of BYM.	Yes. Openness together with formal representation at all YM sessions should enable more diverse participation. This would enable greater energy and wider lived experience to contribute to our discernment. Costs would need to be considered, but bursary support could be extended to targeted groups.
6	improve communication between all Friends involved in our local meetings, area meetings and all the different parts of our structures	No. This is something that is not currently working.	Yes, as having both representation and all Friends able to attend YM sessions, responsibility is retained whilst reliance on reporting back is reduced.

GRYYM Reports and relevant minutes from Yearly Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings

Interim report

Taking forward the review of Meeting for Sufferings

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2022-03-agenda-papers-package>

pp33-41

2nd report

Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering

& Meeting for Sufferings: Second Report to Meeting for Sufferings:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/mfs-2022-12-agenda--papers-package>

pp22-29

Minutes

1. Yearly Meeting

YM 2017 Minute 38: Living out our faith in the world: working with others to make a difference

We have heard the call to examine our own diversity, particularly in our committee and organisational structure, locally and nationally. Diversity has several key dimensions and more may emerge in the future. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to look at how we can remove barriers and actively seek wider participation in the full life of our meetings, paying particular attention to race and age diversity and to keep Yearly Meeting informed in their annual report.

YM 2019 Minute 6: Agenda

We receive and accept the report of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee in appendix A of the Yearly Meeting Programme and accept the agenda as listed in section 4.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to carry out a review of the purpose and function of Yearly Meeting and Gatherings, liaising with the Book of Discipline Revision Committee, and consulting more widely as appropriate, and to bring any recommendations to a future Yearly Meeting.

YM 2021 Minute 12:

The work of our national representative body: receipt of annual report from Meeting for Sufferings.

The relationship between Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees has the opportunity to be a creative and trusting partnership and it is important to keep working on it. We have encouraged Meeting for Sufferings to keep experimenting with its ways of working and welcome the time that has been available to reflect on how the truth prospers

YM 2021 Minute 20: The work of our yearly meeting trustees: receipt of annual report of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

We have heard a strong sense of gratitude for the gift we have been given by the service of Friends serving us on committees, those who serve us as staff and serve us as trustees.

We have heard concerns in ministry about the communications between our trustees and Meeting for Sufferings. We trust that the efforts of these bodies to work productively together, and for regular communications between their respective clerks, will continue.

YM 2021 Minute 28: Review of the terms of reference for Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

...

The group found that the overwhelming view was that Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees works successfully according to the current terms of reference, but that there was a need for greater clarity about the respective roles of Meeting for Sufferings and Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees in developing vision and strategic direction, as well as some other updating.

We affirm that Yearly Meeting in session retains its central role as the body with the ultimate authority for church affairs for Quakers in Britain.

“The intent and holy design of our annual assemblies, in their first constitution, were for a great and weighty oversight and Christian care of the affairs of the churches pertaining to our holy profession and Christian communion; that good order, true love, unity and concord may be faithfully followed and maintained among all of us” (*Quaker faith & practice* 6.03)

The different parts of our governance are inextricably intertwined and we know the importance of their working well together. We have opportunities to examine this when they report to us at Yearly Meeting. We acknowledge that there are unresolved tensions that impact on the role of Meeting for Sufferings and that their role may now need review. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to consider this and return to us.

We accept the revised terms of reference for Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, noting that further revisions are likely to be required as part of the revision of our book of discipline.

YM 2023 Minute 30: Looking at Meeting for Sufferings – continued

We recognise that a change in the relationship between Yearly Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, and Meeting for Sufferings is needed to address the overlap in current roles and responsibilities. We ask Meeting for Sufferings to bring to a future Yearly Meeting session proposals for what that change could look like. We are seeking changes that could release energy within our corporate

structures, emphasise the importance of spirit-led discernment, allow wider and more diverse participation in decision making and improve communication between individual Friends, local meetings, area meetings and Meeting for Sufferings.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to work with the Recording Clerk; its Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings; and BYM Trustees.

We must trust our spirit-led nominations and appointment process and the Friends we have asked to serve on our behalf. Trust within our community and between our different bodies is a vital part of making our structures work.

Minute 50: Looking at Meeting for Sufferings – continued

Further to minutes 27 and 30 of this Yearly Meeting, in which we asked Meeting for Sufferings to bring proposals for change to us, we have heard how the Friends working on this are approaching this work.

We agree that proposals which meet the following criteria would adequately reflect our wishes for the way forward:

Changes need to:

- continue to place spirit-led and informed discernment at the heart of all decision making across Britain Yearly Meeting
- ensure our structures and our processes are agile and capable of translating our discernment into action
- release energy within our Quaker community
- clarify the lines of accountability; explain clearly the roles and responsibilities of different bodies; meet the requirements of charity law, good governance practice and Quaker Gospel order
- promote greater diversity and wider participation in our decision-making
- improve communication between all Friends involved in our local meetings, area meetings and all the different parts of our structures.

We look forward to hearing more about this work at Yearly Meeting in 2024.

2. Meeting for Sufferings,

MfS/22/03/10 Review of Yearly Meeting and Yearly Meeting Gatherings

We agree with the review group's assessment that a review of MfS is needed alongside that of YM and YMG, in order to resolve issues of accountability and transparency.

MfS/22/12/08 Review of Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings

We have received the second report of the group appointed to review Yearly

Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings (paper MfS 2022 12 11) and Sarah Donaldson, convenor of the review group, has introduced it to us today. It was the main item for consideration at the preparation meeting held online on 28 November and it focuses on stage two of their work – a review of the current role of Meeting for Sufferings within the structures of Britain Yearly Meeting.

We thank the review group for its clear report and presentation of its principal findings.

In searching for a way to respond to the report's conclusions we recognise that some changes are in our gift. We affirm that spirit-led discernment is central to Meeting for Sufferings' role and that the Clerks and Arrangements Group have a key part to play in enabling it to be done well. We recognise that there may be challenges for the exercise of discernment in a predominantly online meeting for worship for business.

We encourage Arrangements Group to continue experimenting, making use of creative treatment of agenda items and temporary or time-limited working groups so that agendas are planned to provide sufficient time and space, and to allow for more open participation and threshing as needs arise.

The wider education of Friends in the essentials of spirit-led discernment is not a matter for Meeting for Sufferings or the Arrangements Group alone. We ask Quaker Life Central Committee to give serious thought to how to address the need for the continuing education of Friends in this matter.

As the report says, improvement in communication is more problematic. It involves both the yearly meeting externally and internally and also Meeting for Sufferings' role in communicating throughout the structures. All communication needs to reach Friends on the bench effectively. This may mean thinking about the relationship between area meetings, local meetings and Meeting for Sufferings, especially as some area meetings are consolidating. It is therefore a substantial yearly meeting-wide issue, as good communications are crucial to supporting our lives as a worshipping community at every level.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group to consider how to take this recommendation forward and to bring a proposal back to a future meeting.

The relationships between Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings and Trustees are the responsibility of Yearly Meeting. The original impetus for part of this review was a request that we look at how Meeting for Sufferings can work well alongside BYM Trustees without duplication or confusion, and in ways which comply with charity law.

We believe it is right that the recommendations should be taken to the wider forum of the Yearly Meeting for discernment. We therefore ask Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee to give agenda time to addressing the relationships between and respective authority of Meeting for Sufferings, Trustees and the Yearly Meeting itself.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee, Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee and the Book of Discipline Revision Committee.

Sustainability – living up to our commitment

Sustainability Monitoring Group's report to Meeting for Sufferings October 2023

1. About this report

The Sustainability Monitoring Group (SMG) exists to help Meeting for Sufferings review whether Quakers in Britain, including our centrally managed work, are meeting our 2011 commitment to becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community.

This report gives an overview of the current learning and actions being taken, with links to further information so that Friends can find out more if they wish. It covers five broad areas:

- Eldership
- Oversight
- Living Faithfully
- Right Ordering
- Witness

We cover all these in order to show the many ways that Friends are putting our concern for the care of creation into practice. There are many tasks for many hands and Friends do different things, as their gifts and the world's needs lead them.

Our commitment to sustainability and climate witness has changed and adapted to Friends concerns and wider developments in climate change and climate justice. We remain committed to sustainability as part of a wider concern for climate change; recognising that Friends will engage in this in different ways, from solar panels on Meeting Houses to involvement in Extinction Rebellion.

As Friends we need to balance how we engage with a changing approach to sustainability and climate change, and our approach to discernment and concerns. At times it can be very challenging for new approaches (e.g. Ecocide) to engage with Quaker structures. However, we need "spikey" new ideas that do not sit well with our seemingly "marshmallow-y" structures, as they challenge us as Friends and move us forward.

2. Our commitment

Meeting for Sufferings adopted [A Quaker Response to the crisis of climate change](#) in 2009. Two years later, in 2011, Yearly Meeting made a [commitment to sustainability](#) and asked Meeting for Sufferings to work with area meetings and our staff to make better known our current witness and to give thought to appropriate aims for our corporate commitment and the framework which will allow our successes to be shared.

In 2021, Yearly Meeting minuted its commitment to faith-based action for climate justice, recognising that seeking to reduce carbon emissions is an urgent priority, but

without interrogating and disrupting our existing economic systems, this will only [lead] us back to an unjust system, and may encourage corporations, governments and individuals to delay necessary action and avoid systemic change.

Below we describe the ways we are seeking to give these commitments life.

2.1 Eldership

This section is about understanding, articulating and deepening the spiritual underpinning of the commitment.

- The ongoing legacy-funded [Climate Crisis: Spiritual Nurture and Learning Project](#) was delivered by Woodbrooke to enable Quakers in Britain to deepen and articulate the spiritual basis of our commitment. As part of this project, Woodbrooke is supporting a group of spiritual accompaniers to provide support and spiritual grounding to those engaged in taking action on the climate crisis or addressing their fear of doing so. It has also focused the annual Eva Koch scholarships (where people undertake a piece of short-term research of interest to Quakers) to be climate focused for the last couple of years.
- From June 2022 to July 2023 BYM and Woodbrooke staff ran a [year of learning and spiritual reflection on climate justice](#). Through freely available resources and a pay-as-led online course, 149 participants (including Friends from across East Africa) developed understanding about climate justice and tended to their relationships with others working towards this goal. We have seen Friends making use of the resources in ways that support and align with other yearly meeting conversations about anti-racism and reparations.
- The next FWCC World Plenary is happening in South Africa in 2024, bringing Quakers worldwide together. As with the last two world gatherings, Care of Creation/Sustainability will be part of its overall theme 'Living the Spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with hope to God's call to care for creation and one-another', and the World Plenary is expected to produce a minute or statement on this issue.
- Some meetings have been meeting outdoors more often, initially as a response to Covid-19 restrictions, but which have enabled a deeper connection with nature.
- Mid-Essex Quakers have noted an increased attendance from individuals who have met Quakers and now have experienced Quaker worship via attendance at Extinction Rebellion meetings held at some of their Meeting Houses.
- We anticipate the Book of Discipline Revision Committee will include more about the spiritual basis of our commitment to sustainability and climate justice in the new book, and encourage Friends to give suggestions of passages on this and other topics to the group via <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/qfp-idea/>

2.2 Oversight

This section focuses on how Friends can connect, learn from and inspire each other.

- Many Friends attended the XR 'The Big One' demonstration in April, and in advance of that an active WhatsApp group of Quakers was established. Following the demonstration, there were follow-up Meetings for Worship and network meetings with Living Witness and other stakeholders; this work contributed to the formation of the Quakers for Climate Action network (QS4CA).
- BYM continues to work with the [Friends World Committee for Consultation](#) (FWCC), which facilitates a Global Quaker Sustainability Network. This includes a regular Zoom call for staff at Quaker agencies, activists and advocates around the world, helping link and inform people working on issues of environmental justice and peace, and identifying opportunities for greater collaboration.
- Locally and regionally, Friends have considered and taken action on sustainability together. In some parts of Britain this has been supported by the Local Development Workers employed by BYM. A small selection include: multiple meetings opening their meeting houses as 'warm spaces' over winter 2022, Friends speaking in public meetings about their sustainability work (including one who founded an eco-village in Hawaii), and setting up local climate emergency groups in meetings.
- Panels from the [Loving Earth Project](#), part of the Quaker Arts Network, have been exhibited in the UK Parliament (which led directly to discussions by BYM public affairs staff with politicians about truth and integrity issues) and at Quaker House Brussels, which houses the Quaker Council for European Affairs. The panels have also been shown in meetings and other venues across Britain.
- The Living Witness Project has seen a resurgence of activity over the past year, and is holding meetings for worship, planning events and restarting its EarthQuaker magazine.
- The Woodbrooke climate crisis project aims to support both Friends who are engaged in climate witness, and those who feel unable to engage due to fear, overwhelm, etc. Its activities have been refined to focus on things that either a) build a sense of community, or b) offer practical, tangible steps towards action. The families weekend exploring climate change, which was part of the project, filled up very quickly, with a waiting list. It encouraged intergenerational conversations as well as highlighting the need for separate age group work.
- Following on from the year of learning on climate justice, a group including Woodbrooke, BYM staff and course participants is being formed to explore what to take forward from the programme and to organise a residential gathering in November 2023.

2.3 Living Faithfully

This section is about how we, as individual Quakers, live out the commitment in our day-to-day life.

- Many Quaker communities have found ways for Friends to encourage and support each other. Again, there are too many to list here, but examples include: reducing plane travel, car-sharing to attend Meeting for Worship; use of zoom to avoid travel; sharing a glut of produce; practising simplicity in their purchases and eating habits; and developing and living in cohousing communities.
- In a mixture of sustainable living and peace witness, Chippenham Meeting created a white poppy wreath that was completely recyclable with a willow wreath, rosemary and bay from their gardens, and hand-stitched poppies.

2.4 Right Ordering

This section is about how Quaker communities organise ourselves.

- National Quaker committees now meet primarily online, with most only meeting once in person during each calendar year. Yearly Meeting sessions are routinely blended (online and in-person). Online and hybrid meetings have enabled a wider diversity of Friends to participate and feel included in discernment.
- BYM publishes sustainability information on the [Friends House website](#). The Quiet Company has adopted a [Strategic Environmental and Sustainability Plan 2021-2030](#).
- The latest audit of BYM's carbon footprint found that it was 115 tonnes of CO2 equivalent in 2022-23. Emissions from gas and electricity use are now near-zero due to purchase of green gas and electricity; usage of both also fell. As expected, emissions from travel rose significantly compared to the previous year (when Covid-19 restrictions were in place), and now constitute 36% of all BYM emissions.
- The Quiet Company, which operates Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall, has committed to becoming net zero by 2029. The Seed Café in Friends House is now a vegetarian and plant-based provider, while conference catering is now 1/3 plant-based, 1/3 vegetarian and 1/3 non-veg. These commitments may also help the future commercial performance of Quiet Company, as sustainability is becoming increasingly important to the meetings industry.
- BYM planted more than two hectares of woodland on property it owned near Jordans, Buckinghamshire in 2021. This was expected to sequester 12-20 tonnes of CO2 equivalent annually, but the unprecedentedly hot, dry summer of 2022 meant a significant proportion of the trees died. BYM is now looking at options for replanting.
- York AM commissioned an energy audit of its properties, including detailed options for replacement heating systems that do not involve burning fossil

fuels. Quaker premises may need to particularly consider issues such as the noise impact of any system on the stillness of meeting for worship.

- Other meetings such as Malton LM in Pickering and Hull AM were also exploring air-source heat pumps for heating, while Rookhow Meeting House in Cumbria has installed an air source heat pump, underfloor heating, and new loft insulation to address the damp and cold in the main building. The result is a much warmer, more pleasant, building for people to visit and use.
- Pickering and Hull AM, as part of its wish to become a zero-carbon area meeting, agreed in September 2022 that a research group should look at their properties to identify what might be done to reduce energy consumption as near to zero as is practical.
- An increasing number of area meetings now provide online or blended area business meetings, enabling participation without the environmental impact of travel. This has had particular impacts for large, dispersed meetings, such as North Scotland AM.
- Some meetings have worked to re-wild or set aside outdoor spaces for nature, including gardens and burial grounds. Swarthmoor LM has started wildlife surveys for birds and plants at its renamed gardens and grounds, now called the 'Friendship Gardens'. They received gold awards at the Cumbria in Bloom awards for Diversity and Woodland Copse. Lincolnshire AM planted 200 trees at the foot of the Millennium Bridge in Newark, with another 400 planned, and manage a site for nature conservation and wildlife. The wildlife garden at the Chelmsford Meeting House has observed a number of burrows, evidence that it is now home to various wild animals.
- Mid-Essex AM has a sustainability sub-committee of its Finance and Property Committee, which is looking among other things at the use of solar panels and batteries in meeting houses.
- Some meetings looked at changes to energy use and efficiency with more urgency, due to the rapid rises in energy costs in 2022. However, others found that rising prices meant they were unable to progress on planned greening of buildings.
- Cambridgeshire AM is planning to use funds dedicated to the relief of poverty in Cambridgeshire to help retrofit and insulate properties of people who otherwise couldn't afford it.
- Take up of and enthusiasm for the A Rocha UK EcoChurch award scheme <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/> continues to grow among Quakers. Woodbrooke has continued the development and support of a network of meetings that have applied, or intend to apply for, an EcoChurch award. There are now 40 meetings in the Quaker Ecochurch network, many of whom have achieved the silver award with an additional 12 having joined during this period.

2.5 Witness

This section is about Quaker faith in action.

- Yearly Meeting delegates the work of translating our faith into action to Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC). There is a wealth of information available about QPSW's work to date on [climate and economic justice](#).
- With others, particularly interfaith partners Faith for the Climate, BYM organised a Loss & Damage Action Day in September 2022. This was an evolution from the first ever Loss & Damage Awareness Day in September 2021 and encouraged participants to organise their own local actions (14 were reported). There was also good social media and faith media traction. Following this, the UN climate summit in 2022 (COP27) agreed to establish a Loss & Damage Fund to compensate countries for unavoidable climate impacts. This had been a key ask for BYM and others, supporting groups in the global South that had been calling for this fund for decades.
- BYM's experience working on Loss & Damage inspired and informed colleagues at the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) to put together a publication exploring [Fair Sources of Finance for Loss and Damage](#). The paper was finalised and distributed at the UNFCCC (international climate change) negotiations in Bonn, in June 2023. QUNO colleagues report there was very good feedback on the paper from those working on the issue, and that paper copies were distributed throughout the two weeks for negotiators to pick up and read. They also reflected that they found it really helpful to be part of a Quaker/interfaith voice pushing boundaries to imagine what can be done, and done in fairness.
- QUNO Geneva, which has observer status at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), made over 60 interventions in negotiations on the IPCC summaries for policymakers and synthesis report. These reports are the most comprehensive and influential climate reports globally, and QUNO has been described as "the ethical voice in the room". (BYM is the major funder of QUNO Geneva and appoints half its committee.)
- BYM started a new campaign under the Insure Our Future coalition campaign umbrella, with the aim of stopping companies from insuring fossil fuel projects. Key highlights within the campaign included a Friend taking part in corporate AGM actions and securing an invitation to meet with the Chief Executive of a large insurance company. Staff coordinated an interfaith letter about the Insure Our Future campaign which was published in the Times and generated an unprecedented level of media attention for the campaign. Finally, staff coordinated workshops with small groups of interested Friends to develop their understanding of the campaign and engage them in decision-making on its direction.
- Staff are working with War on Want (WoW) to run a global climate justice event at Friends House on 24 February 2024. They are aiming for an

attendance of around 1,000 people and will be inviting 20-30 climate justice activists from around the world to come and lead sessions and speak. It is going to be a significant moment for the climate justice movement and WoW have asked Quakers in Britain if we can work together to hold the event.

- Many Friends have been actively involved in acts of witness, including with Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil, or engagement with elected representatives. Some have faced criminal proceedings as a result.
- Chelmsford Meeting supported twelve Just Stop Oil activists, who were arrested for protesting at an oil delivery site and were put on trial at Chelmsford court, offering the use of the Meeting House during the trial. Other local Friends supported them in their homes.
- Mid-Somerset Climate Emergency Group held monthly vigils in towns in the area meeting's geography, joined by other (non-Quaker) groups. At vigils template letters for writing to MPs were provided. A Climate Crafting Group worked to create a large puppet and cloak to increase visibility at climate events.
- Several meetings have adopted minutes supporting the campaign for ecocide (severe, widespread or long-term destruction of the natural environment by unlawful or wanton acts), and asked the Yearly Meeting to adopt this also. Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee has been in dialogue with many of the concerned meetings.

3. Committees for centrally managed work

3.1 What are the committees doing?

We have reviewed committee papers and minutes. Please note that committee meetings and their agendas have had to adapt to the pandemic as well as in other respects. Since October 2022 (when we last reported):

- **Meeting for Sufferings (MfS)** recorded the witness of six Friends who hold a concern about climate change, in the Prison and Court Register, and received and considered minutes on ecocide.
- **Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC)** has climate justice as one of its two priority themes, alongside peace & peacebuilding. Staff-led work is focused on Loss & Damage as part of the Make Polluters Pay campaign, and on the Insure Our Future campaign to stop financial organisations insuring fossil fuel projects. QPSWCC members have engaged with Friends supporting the Stop Ecocide International campaign.
- **Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC)** has not considered sustainability specifically at its meetings. QLCC oversees Local Development Workers, who are actively involved in working with local Quaker communities, including on sustainability and climate issues.

- **Quaker World Relations Committee** (QWRC) has asked its clerk to remind committee members of the Yearly Meeting's commitment to climate justice and racial justice at the start of every meeting.
- **Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations** (QCCIR) has found that interfaith networks to be more fertile ground for sustainability discussions than ecumenical ones, due to their international links and the concern for climate justice. One-off events like COP26 in Glasgow bring faiths together, but it is hard to maintain links and momentum.

3.2 Co-ordination

In 2018, Meeting for Sufferings agreed that there should be a meeting of representatives from key committees: ...to ensure collaboration, resourcing, effective communication, and co-ordinated responsibility for all required tasks... (minute MfS 2018 04 06).

The first gathering took place in 2018, and later that year Meeting for Sufferings reflected:

Experiments in holding meetings of representatives of BYM committees, like the one held in July, seem a good way forward and there are often unexpected benefits in gathering together for liaison and mutual encouragement. ... we ask for these to be held regularly. (minute MfS 2018 07 20)

There have now been six of these meetings. A member of the Sustainability Monitoring Group joined the meetings held in 2022 and 2023. These were helpful meetings, and it was good to hear how much is being done.

4. Local and regional Quaker communities

All Area Meetings have been asked to include information in their annual reports about their actions on sustainability (minute MfS 18/07/17, Sustainability: Reporting on Actions' refers). Before it was laid down, Quaker Stewardship Committee collected and reviewed the annual reports. In its report, it noted that there may be quicker ways to share sustainability information than relying on annual reports and accounts, which can mean information is many months out of date by the time it reaches Meeting for Sufferings. We are continuing to consider the best way forward on this.

Some [stories of how local meetings are living out the commitment](#) are shared on BYM's website – for inspiration and mutual encouragement.

5 About the Sustainability Monitoring Group

The Sustainability Monitoring Group (SMG) is responsible for monitoring the Yearly Meeting's commitment to Sustainability. The group supports Meeting for Sufferings in overseeing the Yearly Meeting's commitment to sustainability. SMG monitors receipt of reports from Trustees, committees and area meetings that are sent to MfS;

that agreed activities are undertaken; and that MfS pays attention to our sustainability commitment in its meetings.

5.1 Membership

The Group should have three members but currently has two, Caroline Howden (East Kent AM) and Dawn Snape (Bristol AM).

We ask MfS, with assistance from the Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group, to strengthen the group's membership.

Prepared by:

Caroline Howden (SMG)

Oliver Robertson (Head of Witness and Worship)

September 2023

Ecocide

[Ecocide](#) is the destruction of the natural environment by deliberate or negligent human action. Stop Ecocide International (<https://www.stopecocide.earth/>) is campaigning to make ecocide an international crime.

Area meetings have been sending minutes to Meeting for Sufferings since 2020. At its last meeting, Meeting for Sufferings considered Ecocide and made the following minute:

MfS/23/07/10 Ecocide

We receive minutes from Hampshire & Islands, Bristol, Pickering & Hull, Manchester & Warrington, Cornwall and Devon area meetings asking Britain Yearly Meeting to support the aims and campaign of Stop Ecocide International.

We have heard from Elize Sakamoto and Jonathan Lingham of Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee on the committee's priorities in this area and about the informal group of central committee members with members of the area meetings with an interest in making 'ecocide' an international crime. We thank our Central Committee for their thinking on this matter.

All area meetings with an interest in this are invited to join this informal group to consider this further and details will be shared following this meeting.

We agree to allow additional agenda time at our residential meeting taking place over three days in October when we shall be considering climate and sustainability matters at length.

Previously received minutes are in the following sets of papers:

- [April 2020 Meeting for Sufferings papers](#) (pages 14-17)
- [July 2023 Meeting for Sufferings papers](#) (pages 18-20)

Minutes received since the last meeting:

a) Gloucestershire AM, July 2023

23/30 Ecocide manifesto

Further to the minutes 2020/50, 23/08 and 23/19, Oliver Muller brought us the proposal that we sign the manifesto for the criminalisation of ecocide. We have heard from all our local meetings who have all supported this, many of them also asking their own clerks to sign on behalf of their local meetings. We therefore ask the

Clerks to sign this on the behalf of our Area Meeting. We also ask the Clerks to forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

We ask Area Meeting to consider ways to keep abreast of this issue.

We thank Oliver for bringing this to our notice.

b) Devon AM, 15 July 2023

Minute 49/2023 Update on Ecocide

In a follow up to previous DAM minute 38/2023 on “Stop Ecocide”, DAM has now signed up as an organisation to the Manifesto for the Criminalization on Ecocide as one way of expressing public support. We have also joined Faith for Ecocide Law where there are informative resources relevant to deeper reflection around this.

We have received a paper with initial ideas raised at Devon Quakers Climate Café on ways to develop our conversations, activities, and resources around this issue, especially those that build on current Local Meeting activities, strengths, and leadings.

As a next step we hope to create some opportunities during the camp at Spiceland in August to reflect further together with Friends across the region. We have received a report presented to Meeting for Sufferings and have an opportunity to be involved in further discussion with a group from QPSW central committee and those Area Meetings engaged on this issue. We agree to forward the ideas raised so far, along with a note about the Good Law Project which has been drawn to our attention as relevant.

We ask all Friends in DAM to liaise with those already involved in this work and ask our LMs to bring forward names to Nominations Committee.

We ask Nominations committee to find a link person and alternates to continue liaison with the QPSW engagement group.

Devon AM also supplied this supplementary information

Follow up to Ecocide Law – some ideas discussed at Devon Quaker Climate Café

Further to DAM Minute from March, 22/2023 Ecocide Law, we have received Minutes of support from Exeter, Totnes, and Exmouth Local Meetings.

We are aware of a jigsaw of big and small ways that Friends are led to respond to the climate and biodiversity crisis. All approaches are needed and interlink including an overarching one to address long-term damage and mass destruction of ecosystems and we agree to sign the Manifesto for the Criminalisation of Ecocide (see attached). After a time of discernment, we realise that the signing is but one way of signalling our concern for the matter. We ask the Climate Café to examine this further and advise DAM on what practical activities could be undertaken to promote this.

- What makes this a Quaker concern or a Devon Area Meeting activity?
- Which aspects for Q to bring their experience, explorations or give a voice to?
- “Our jigsaw of ways to respond” - How to link, support and amplify actions or deepen reflections already happening in our Quaker communities?
- What’s significance of signing the Organisational manifesto for Ecocide Law?

Ideas for ways to follow up

Reflection, exploration, contemplation in Local Meetings and during the event at Spiceland? Exploring:

- Our relationship to planetary home
- Our Peace and other testimonies in relation to Ecocide.
- Sharing this with other churches, faith and community groups?

Faith in Ecocide Law resources – A4 leaflet and Booklet on faith perspectives

<https://www.faithforecodelaw.earth/resources/>

Polly Higgins: Inspiration from her life & work on Ecocide via books or Ted Talks. “Ecolibrium Now” Collection of essays, poems artwork in support of Ecocide Law

Build on climate actions, creative initiatives & community collaborations.

- **Collaborating on arranging leaflets & talks** with Climate hubs/groups
- **A film night.** Polly Higgins TED talk/ Hants & IoW AM video?
- **Creative ways to explore theme**– e.g. following in footsteps of
 - Loving Earth; Quaker Arts network; Green Spirits;
 - Outdoor public MfW at Unite to Survive;
 - Exhibits/ events/creating materials or – over time- a study pack?
- **Experiment with Light** – meditation on the world

Press articles and public witness – time with news or our events, vigils etc?

Good Law Project – Public Trust Doctrine

With regards the Ecocide issue I’ve recently discovered (thanks to the Good Law Project) that a sort of precursor already exists in UK law, i.e., the Public Trust Doctrine. I’ve added a link below and would be very grateful if this could be passed on to those Quakers who are active in the promotion of Ecocide law, as the Public Trust Doctrine may provide a quicker route to actually holding this government and water companies, etc., to account?

The Good Law Project are on the case already but some sort of Quaker alliance and support may be invaluable?

<https://goodlawproject.org/update/the-public-trust-doctrine-an-ancient-legal-principle-which-could-protect-our-environment-now-and-for-future-generations/>

The Public Trust Doctrine: An ancient legal principle which could protect our environment now and for future generations

Many of our vital environmental laws and protections are being put at risk by the long and dark shadow of Brexit. It beggars belief that this comes at a time when the

Government should be urgently strengthening and expediting our response to the ongoing climate emergency.

Good Law Project is a not for profit campaign organisation that uses the law for a better world.

We know that the law, in the right hands, can be a fair and decent force for good. It is a practical tool for positive change and can make amazing things happen.

Stay up to date and be the first to hear about how to take action.

But there is an old English common law legal doctrine which we believe could now be revived to hold the Government to account when it comes to environmental protection.

The Public Trust Doctrine (PTD) has been recognised by the English Courts since at least 1299. It says that the state has a fiduciary duty to safeguard vital natural resources and hold them in trust for the benefit of both current and future generations. It enshrines the right for people to fish, gather food and navigate our shared tidal waters.

In England at least, we know the Government is failing to meet this safeguarding duty. Pollution is making our shores, rivers and waterways inhospitable for marine life and unsafe for swimming and recreation.

The Government's [Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#), which gives water firms until 2050 to tackle the current sewage pollution crisis, is a devastating example of its neglect.

Sewage dumping is already doing unmitigated damage. We think that the Government allowing this environmental vandalism to continue for another 27 years is not only unconscionable, but also unlawful.

This is why we have brought [legal action](#) alongside Marine Conservation Society, Richard Haward's Oysters and surfer and activist, Hugo Tagholm. We want the Government to rewrite its plan, with much tighter deadlines for water companies to take decisive action.

Our challenge relies in part on the Public Trust Doctrine, which we say requires the Government to take positive steps to safeguard our coastal waters.

We believe that the Public Trust Doctrine is part of the UK Constitution, although it has not been relied on much in our courts and its scope is unclear. Winning this case could set a landmark precedent which would enable campaigners to use the Public Trust Doctrine as a foundation for legal challenges to compel the Government to protect our shared natural environment.

There is an opportunity for us to follow the example set in the United States, where the Public Trust Doctrine – adopted from our English law – has long been accepted by the US Courts as imposing a duty of environmental stewardship in several states.

In the 1980s, the Public Trust Doctrine was used successfully in a landmark case to stop the biggest water company in California from diverting water away from Mono Lake. At the time, there was no specific legal precedent to support the case, but the

use of the Public Trust Doctrine helped to protect the lake and its biodiverse habitats for generations to come.

Now the Public Trust Doctrine is being used across multiple states not just to protect bodies of water, but also to challenge developments that exacerbate exposure to air pollution.

We are very excited about the potential of the Public Trust Doctrine on our side of the Atlantic.

If you would like to support our case against the Government over sewage dumping in our coastal waters, you can do so [here](#).

This article is part of our [Clean Waters case](#)

A deluge of untreated sewage is being discharged by water companies into our rivers and along our coastlines. But the Government is failing to face up to the scale of the problem. This is why we have launched legal action alongside [Marine Conservation Society](#), [Richard Haward's Oysters](#) and surfer and activist, [Hugo Tagholm](#), to demand action.

c) Hardshaw & Mann AM, 17 September 2023

58/23 Meeting for Sufferings

Our friend Diana Jeater, a Meeting for Sufferings representative explained that there has been much discussion and discernment regarding Membership. Minutes from Liverpool, Southport and Wigan have been submitted.

The Memorandum of Understanding between BYM Trustees and Area Meetings is currently under discussion.

Ecocide is a major item of discussion within MFS, in particular moves to make Ecocide illegal under International Law. Hardshaw & Mann Friends felt that Ecocide should indeed be illegal and would encourage further exploration on how it would be possible to enforce this in practice. Should a Working Group be set up we would suggest that the group learn from experiences where there has been some success in reducing Ecocide throughout the world even in the absence of International Law. This Minute will be forwarded to the Clerk to MfS.

Ecocide – A spoken introduction to Meeting for Sufferings in July 2023 from the QPSW Central Committee clerks

Background

Meeting for Sufferings has received minutes from five Area Meetings, between October 2022 and May 2023 (Hampshire & Islands, Bristol, Pickering and Hull, Manchester and Warrington, Cornwall, and Devon). These minutes ask Britain Yearly Meeting to support the aims and campaign of [Stop Ecocide International](#), which consist principally of working to add ecocide to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). This would be achieved by recognising ecocide as a fifth crime against the peace and security of humanity, alongside war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and aggression. The Area Meeting minutes also encourage all other AMs to consider supporting the campaign.

Since a paper (in fact an earlier minute from Bristol AM) was provided to Meeting for Sufferings in April 2020, the campaign for an international law of ecocide has made some progress. An expert panel has [developed a definition of ecocide](#);

For the purpose of this Statute, “ecocide” means unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.

Supports the proposal for a law under the Rome Statute has been raised in numerous national parliaments around the world and at the United Nations. There is support from the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

The campaign argues that the lack of a global framework to deal with mass damage and destruction means that “corporate activity follows a path of least resistance, operating most damagingly where there is the least protection, and simply budgeting for civil lawsuits. A crime of ecocide creates a new moral baseline whereby anything causing mass damage or destruction of natural ecosystems will become unacceptable”. The intention is for the law to act as a deterrent and promote positive behaviour change.

Friends in Britain Yearly Meeting have produced a short video, which has been circulated to Meetings encouraging them to support the campaign.

Although the AM minutes were initially sent to Meeting for Sufferings, following liaison between staff it was felt that the bulk of the work required by these minutes would likely fall on colleagues within QPSW and the BYM Communications team, and most naturally sits alongside work already anticipated in the QPSW strategy.

The response from BYM and QPSW’s Central work

There are a range of ways in which Friends can take action about the climate crisis, as Devon AM expressed in their Minute :

We are aware of a jigsaw of big and small ways that Friends are led to respond to the climate and biodiversity crisis.

Many Friends are taking action about climate change through organisations which do not have formal links to BYM, and where a specifically Quaker based approach is not essential.

QPSW Central Committee considered the issue in February 2023 and agreed to set up an engagement group involving concerned AMs and Central Committee members. The following is an extract from the relevant minute:

QPSWCC 23/17 Ecocide

We share the sense of urgency and grief in the face of the terrible damage being done to our shared environment. We support the principle that those most responsible for acts of ecocide should be held accountable. We are unsure of the most effective ways to achieve this, and in our meeting have several possible ways to address this concern.

We are mindful that within QPSW's small central team there are only 2 staff members working on climate justice issues, both of whom are part time. As minuted in 23/15, this team has made incredible progress, including supporting the successful campaign for a Loss and Damage Fund, and we would not want to lose momentum on that work. In line with our strategy of increased engagement with wider Friends, we would like to explore ways in which QPSW's existing work on climate justice could potentially link to a wider group of Friends active in campaigning on ecocide.

This group has met on 3 occasions and has increased its understanding of the possibilities for Quaker action supporting this campaign. The engagement group has begun to explore these issues, specifically

- to summarise the key points about the strategy of the Stop Ecocide Campaign,
- to set out how the Stop Ecocide Campaign approach is in line with existing Quaker principles for faith in action work
- to set out how it might enhance our progress towards becoming actively anti-racist
- to clarify and prioritise the range of options for faith in action work setting out how each might be worked towards

The specific issues which we have looked at, as requested by the concerned AMs include:

- the possibility of some central endorsement of the campaign
- the possibility of some centrally organised campaigning – for example building a campaign among faith groups
- encouraging Friends and BYM staff involved in Quaker peace and climate justice witness to inform themselves about ecocide
- spreading information about ecocide and the campaign to other influential bodies, in particular the Quaker Council for European Affairs and the Quaker United Nations offices
- investigating the attitude to ecocide in national government and seeking avenues to influence this towards support of the objectives of the Stop Ecocide Campaign
- using national communications (e.g. the weekly Quake! e-newsletter) to draw other Friends' and meetings' attention to ecocide and the campaign, asking interested area meetings to communicate their support of the campaign to Hampshire and Islands Area Quaker Meeting and to Meeting for Sufferings.

As Central Committee expressed in its Minute, there is already considerable work underway linked to the climate crisis, by central staff, which is a small and limited resource. This work has made significant progress and has recently launched a new campaign with Insure our Future.

Clearly the climate crisis is a major concern, and it would be possible for BYM in its central work to ally with many organisations active in the field. We have been careful in doing this for a variety of reasons, which underpin our strategy:

- we use approaches that support others to grow and develop believing that changing the attitudes of those in power will lead to longer term and more profound change
- we focus on approaches which have support from those most likely to be harmed by the current system, and work with them where possible, supporting our aim to become an actively anti racist church
- we are genuinely active, for as long as it takes, in the areas where we discern that Quaker approaches can make a distinctive difference which is aligned with our testimonies

Criticisms of the proposal for an international law of ecocide focus on concerns about the effectiveness of the International Criminal Court, whether it perpetuates an existing unjust international order, and the role of criminal justice generally in bringing about positive change. QPSW's approach to criminal justice in our Crime, Community and Justice programme (now laid down) argued that criminalising actions rarely prevents harm and that those prosecuted under criminal laws are rarely those with the most power and resources. The following nations are not part of the ICC: India, China, the USA, Russia, Saudi Arabia and other gulf states, Indonesia.

Among the questions to consider in discerning the way forward may be the following:

- a. What are the likely implications of ecocide being listed as a crime under the Rome Statute?
- b. What kinds of actions have been taken under the existing Rome Statute, and with what consequences? (i.e. is there evidence to suggest a law would deter ecocide?)
- c. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a criminal law approach to this issue vs a rights-based approach such as the newly adopted UN right to a healthy and sustainable environment?
- d. How would the ICC approach of prosecuting individuals interact with the role of corporations – would it be possible in practice to identify individual culprits and build a sufficient case against them?
- e. What do indigenous groups, global south-based campaigners and the UK climate justice movement think of this campaign? Does it align with principles of environmental justice?

We continue to work in the engagement group towards the aims that we agreed, and it is taking longer, and requiring more energy than expected. There is no direct involvement of staff time or resources. Those involved from the concerned AMs have been frustrated by the amount of time being taken, and would have hoped for a quicker and more positive resolution with the allocation of some central resources. Those involved from Central Committee are gaining a better understanding of the amount of information, coordination and cross referencing needed to enable a sound discernment. A meaningful allocation of central resources to this campaign would mean diverting away from other work, with existing partners, which has been carefully discerned and is making progress.

We continue to look in the engagement group at possibilities for next steps, including some form of endorsement of the campaign ideas by BYM, thinking through how becoming a Quaker Recognised Body might be helpful to grow understanding and engagement with the issues among Friends, how communications routes such as Quake! can be accessed and how links to QUNO can be set up. This process probably needs to include ways in which the uneasy fit between our existing approaches to criminal justice and endorsing a legalistic, offence and deterrence based approach can be explored and potentially be reconciled. The hope is that through the engagement group we can find ways to enable Friends to take forward their concerns themselves, with communication and coordination with central QPSW initiatives. This novel process needs more time to reach some firmer conclusions, and we would hope to be able to report to Meeting for Sufferings in the coming months.

Area Meeting minutes received

Minutes previously received and deferred from July's Meeting for Sufferings:

- 1) **Surrey & Hampshire Border AM** minute 23/03/03 on **modern-day slavery**
- 2) **Sheffield & Balby AM** minute 8 on situation in **Sudan**

Minute received since the last Meeting for Sufferings:

- 3) **Central England Area Meeting** minute 2023.050 on **Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP)**

1) Modern-day slavery

Surrey & Hampshire Border Area Meeting, March 2023

Minute 23/03/03 Slavery

At our last business meeting we wrote the following minute:

23/01/03 Yearly Meeting minutes 27 & 33

We have considered our response to the Yearly Meeting 2022 minutes 27 & 33.

We do not see a clear way to make any reparations meaningful for the harm done in the past. We find we are concerned about modern day slavery and that our time would be better used looking at present problems and toward the future.

We have had a specific suggestion to write to our local MPs about the current problems of inequality, low wages and modern day slavery. We ask Gregory Valatin to draft a letter for passing to LMs for them to consider sending to their local MPs.

A letter has been drafted and circulated to local meetings for sending to their MPs. Farnham local meeting has asked, by way of LBM Minute 26/2/23, whether AM would consider forwarding a copy of the letter to Meeting for Sufferings, to which we agree.

We note that an important context from which our minute on slavery arose, with its leaning toward modern day slavery, which was not captured in our minute, was that some earlier Friends were slave owners and we did not want to repeat their mistake by being complicit in slavery today.

We have heard how it is hoped that a workshop can be organised to help us understand, not only reparations from harm done in the past but also reparations in terms of trying to put right present problems, e.g. where structural inequality

stemming from the past continues to cause problems for individuals and communities in the present day.

We ask our Clerk to forward this minute to MfS. We hope that MfS would consider this further, such as:

- Send a similar letter to the Government on behalf BYM;
- Encourage other AMs to send similar letters to their local MP;
- Whether QPSW could consider not only reparations but also modern day slavery.

Template letter to MPs

Modern Day Slavery and Corporate Supply Chains

I am writing to you on behalf of Members of [Local Meeting name] Quaker Meeting (of the Religious Society of Friends) to express concerns about the need for the UK to do more to counter modern day slavery.

Despite the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights article stating “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms”, estimates suggest there are currently around 27 million people worldwide, including in the UK, in conditions of forced labour.

The 2015 Modern Slavery Act, with its Transparency in Supply Chains Clause requiring businesses with an annual global turnover above £36m to publish an annual Modern Slavery Statement, is welcome. However, to date its largely voluntary approach does not appear sufficient to drive the scale of needed change in corporate behaviour.

A legal duty for companies and other entities to conduct due diligence across their operations and supply chains, together with significant penalties for offences (e.g. along similar lines to some of the sanctions for tax evasion or bribery in the UK Criminal Finances Act 2017 and the Bribery Act 2010) is needed if the incidence of slavery in UK supply chains is to be further reduced significantly.

Without stronger controls on global supply chains, the UK may appear complicit in the on-going scandal of modern slavery. Therefore would you support introducing mandatory reporting with strong legal sanctions to ensure that there is no forced labour used by any company operating in the UK within their global supply chains?

Yours sincerely

P.S. Please let me know if it is okay to share your replies with other Quakers interested in the same issues.

2) Sudan

Sheffield & Balby AM, 14 May 2023

8. Situation in Sudan

Balby (Doncaster) Friends have sent a letter of concern from their Meeting for Worship for Business on 7th May. The letter calls on church leaders in their area and beyond to show public support for the large Sudanese Community in Doncaster and as a whole, at this time of conflict in Sudan and around the world. We express our concern for all refugees and asylum seekers and encourage all Friends to recognise their value and humanity. We are glad that this community is here. Balby Doncaster's letter is attached to these minutes and we ask our clerks to send this as an Area Meeting concern also to Meeting for Sufferings.

Letter attachment:

Balby (Doncaster) Local Meeting From business meeting 7th May 2023

There is now an established and recognisable exiled Sudanese community in Doncaster. Doncaster, like other 'asylum dispersal areas' across the country, has become a meaningful place for hundreds of Sudanese refugees as they strive to rebuild their social worlds by working and paying taxes, by sending their children to local schools, and by sharing the joys and sorrows of the settled community. This scenario is replicated in many communities across the nation.

As Doncaster approaches the launch of its Be Kind initiative, it would be appropriate for local churches to recognise the presence of this community in Doncaster, who are currently experiencing great pain and suffering as Sudan lurches dangerously close to civil war. We ask that others elsewhere do the same. The world must not look away from what is happening in Sudan. The Sudanese community have shown us how the conflict is not isolated from what is happening in Russia and Ukraine, as Russia seeks to exploit Sudanese gold to finance its war.

We call on church leaders everywhere to publicly show their support for this community at this time, by acknowledging their contribution to community life and the positive values of humanity, resistance to war, resilience and search for justice which they demonstrate to us, and by reassuring them of our continuing welcome: we have been enriched by their coming to live among us.

Sent as a concern by Balby (Doncaster) Quaker Meeting

3) Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences

Central England AM, 17 June 2023

2023.050 Minute from Community Justice Group: Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP)

We have received Minute 2023/08 from our Community Justice Group which reads as follows:

IPP Sentences – “insidetime” the national newspaper for Prisoners & detainees carried on its front page an article on IPP. Last September 2022, the Justice Committee published its report into the Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentence. The Government provided its response to this report on 9 February 2023. The then Justice Secretary, Dominic Rabb, rejected the recommendations of this landmark report. IPP sentences were abolished in 2012, yet there are still 3,000 people in jail. CJG has previously raised this matter with CEQ AM and our concern was taken to Sufferings. We ask that renewed energy is put into lobbying the government on this matter, particularly in light of a new Justice Minister being appointed. The Clerk is asked to send this minute to AM.

We have also received a covering paper from Tricia Bradbury, clerk of the group, and Roderick Keefe has spoken to this matter. We support the concern of our Community Justice Group that the continued illegal use of Imprisonment for Public Protection should be brought to an end as soon as possible. We encourage our Community Justice Group to work with whatever organisations might help to bring this about. We hope very much that Quakers in Criminal Justice and Meeting for Sufferings, to whom we send this minute, will take whatever steps they can to bring our shared concern to the attention of Alex Chalk, who was appointed Justice Secretary in April this year, with the request that there should be a “re-sentencing exercise” brought in at the earliest opportunity for all Imprisonment for Public Protection prisoners.

Note to members of Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings will be aware that there are no longer any staff members at Britain Yearly Meeting focussed on criminal justice work. Meeting for Sufferings could ask its clerks to write to Alex Chalk, possibly alongside Quakers in Criminal Justice.

Background information on IPP sentences from Wikipedia is [here](#).