



Yearly Meeting of
the Religious Society
of Friends in Britain

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

22 January 2016

Meeting for Sufferings will be held on Saturday 6 February 2016

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you all at the start of 2016.

Our last meeting, the residential at Woodbrooke in December, was in many ways full and deep. Arrangements Group has planned our February meeting in the hope that we can continue our journey together, building on work we did last year.

As usual, please prepare both prayerfully and practically - reading the papers in advance so you know what will come up, and where appropriate discussing the matters with others in the Meeting or group you represent.

Last year, we considered refugees and asylum seekers at three of our meetings. Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) will ask us to help test whether Quakers might support a possible Private Sponsorship scheme which would enable a significant number of additional Syrian refugees to be welcomed into the UK. Such a scheme would rely on local commitment, so please talk about this with Friends in Area Meetings if you are able.

Another important part of our business last year was our adoption of 'Our Faith in the Future'. In December, considering Area Meetings, we thought about *where we are now*. In February we will spend time exploring how to move towards the vision set out in Our Faith in the Future. We'll start with home groups again, in the morning, to prepare for a plenary worship session in the afternoon.

We will also have the chance to hear about the agenda for Yearly Meeting this coming May.

As I sign off this calling letter, I am preparing to travel to Peru, for the World Plenary Meeting of Friends World Committee for Consultation. Within the overall theme, *Living the transformation: Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God (Romans 8:19)*, the programme includes fellowship, inspiration, and (of course) Quaker business. Which sounds quite like Meeting for Sufferings, actually!

I look forward to seeing you when I'm back.

Yours in Friendship

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ethel Livermore". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Ethel" and last name "Livermore" clearly distinguishable.

Ethel Livermore,
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

News and Views/Practicalities

MfS Arrangements Group minutes 2015 12 15

MfS 2016 02 03 Minutes from Area Meetings, Central Committees and other
bodies not taken elsewhere.

MfS 2016 02 04 Yearly Meeting

MfS 2016 02 05 Our faith in the future: mind the gap

MfS 2016 02 07 BYM Sustainability Group report

Meeting for Sufferings

6 February 2016

George Fox room, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London
NW1 2BJ



Agenda

09:00 Arrivals

10:00 Session starts
Opening Worship

1. Welcome and introductions

2. **Membership**
(MfS 2016 02 02 – tabled paper)
Adoption and acceptance of the agenda

3. **Minutes sent to MfS from Area Meetings, Central Committees and other bodies not taken elsewhere**
Church Government Advisory Group minute CGAG 15/41 from the meeting held on 14 October 2015 regarding budgeting and updates to *Quaker faith & practice*.
Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee consultative paper regarding private sponsorship of refugees.
(MfS 2016 02 03)

11:00 Shuffle break

4. **Yearly Meeting**
a) To hear from the Yearly Meeting clerk about the proposed agenda for Yearly Meeting 2016.
b) To receive **Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee minute 2015/10/15** regarding numbers attending Yearly Meeting.
c) To agree dates for Yearly Meeting 2018.
(MfS 2016 02 04)

5. **Our Faith in the Future: Mind the Gap**
The clerks will introduce this item, and we will consider it in home groups
(MfS 2016 02 05)

12.45 – 14.00 Lunch in the Restaurant
Informal lunchtime gatherings:
- Meet the Trustees in the Restaurant
- Meet the BYM Sustainability Group in the Margaret Fell room

6. **Our Faith in the Future: Mind the Gap (continued)**

Plenary session.

7. **BYM Sustainability Group**

To receive the report from the BYM Sustainability Group.

(MfS 2016 02 07)

15:00 Shuffle break

8. **Appointments**

(MfS 2016 02 08 – tabled paper)

9. **Preparation for the April 2016 Meeting for Sufferings**

Information and advice from the clerks.

16:00 Close
Tea, coffee and departures

News & views – February 2016

The newsletter of the MfS Support Group

Welcome Friends, to the fourth meeting of this triennium.

Please remember that the Support Group is here to help and to act as Meeting for Sufferings Elders and Overseers during our Meeting for Worship for Business. We welcome any comments and enquiries and you will know us by our yellow-topped name badges.

Contacting us

Janet May-Bowles, (Convenor) Chilterns AM - janet.may-bowles@dsl.pipex.com

Ann Banks, Brighouse West Yorkshire AM - annbanks101@gmail.com

Sylvia Boyes, Craven & Keighley AM - robinandsylvia@aol.com

Debbie Cates, Cambridgeshire AM - debzcates@hotmail.co.uk

Judith Mason, Banbury & Evesham AM - judithmason@talktalk.net

Angela Pivac, Thaxted AM - angelapivac@gmail.com

Gillian Turner, South London AM - gillianturner033@gmail.com

- You will find members of the Support Group at the welcome desk, (where the name badges are laid out for collection), until 9.50am. They will be looking for volunteer microphone stewards, as usual.
- Other members of the Group will be collating the extra papers at a table in the landing by the George Fox room – you will also find spare copies of the mailed papers – and hole-punches, staplers and expense forms there.
- Two of the group will be in Elizabeth Fry 1 (up to 9.50 am), and are always glad to meet with other members of Meeting for Sufferings, especially if this is your first time.

Usually, on the Friday evening before Sufferings, a few of us go out for a meal, such as an Italian or a curry, and we would welcome extra company if any Friends would care to join us. We meet in the Friends House Lobby at about 6.45 pm. If you want to find out more, please contact one of the Support Group members

During the meeting

You will see that some of us sit in the front row, to the right (as we face it) of the clerks' table. This is the nearest thing we have to an "elders' bench".

At Meeting for Sufferings we start our Opening Worship by gathering in silence, so that the worship starts as soon as the first Friend settles down. After 10:00, any Friends who arrive late will be able to worship in the Margaret Fell room until the doorkeepers open the doors of the George Fox room to admit any latecomers at 10:30.

We trust that Friends will continue to work to strengthen the discipline of our meetings; we remind ourselves of the useful advice in *Quaker faith & practice* 3.01 to 3.11. We recognise that there is little time during the day to socialise, but nevertheless ask that shuffle breaks are for shuffling not chatting; paper rustling is kept to a minimum; and conversation in the Large Meeting House at lunchtime ceases 5 minutes before the session begins so that we are worshipping together when the clerks enter.

Practicalities

As usual, you will be asked to register for the meeting in advance. Please visit forms.quaker.org.uk/sufferings and input your details. This will help us make sure the correct badges are available, provide sufficient refreshments as well as checking all members of Meeting for Sufferings are represented. When you arrive and collect your badge, if you have not registered online please 'sign in' by ticking your name on the sheet.

For this meeting, we are in the George Fox room which is on the Second Floor – South wing of Friends House. We have the William Penn Suite for the refreshment room which is on the Second Floor – North, and on the north side of the landing from the George Fox room. The cloakroom will be in Elizabeth Fry 2 which is at the end of the Second floor – South wing corridor.

The Support Group will be based in Elizabeth Fry 1 which is the penultimate room on the Second Floor – South wing on both Friday and Saturday.

The restaurant in the Basement will be open at lunchtime as usual to buy hot food and the Quaker Centre Café on the Ground Floor – North wing will also be open along with the Bookshop.

Wi-Fi at Friends House

The best Wi-Fi for you to use is the FH Conferencing Wi-Fi. The code for this is **@BritishQuakers**

Hampstead meeting Bed & Breakfast scheme

Members of Hampstead Meeting offer Bed and Breakfast for Friends attending Meeting for Sufferings. They charge £15, which covers costs and also contributes to Meeting funds.

For more information please contact Mary Barnes by telephone 0207 485 3850 or marybarneslineone@btinternet.com

Agenda mailing

Volunteers are always needed to help with the Meeting for Sufferings agenda mailing.

We would appreciate any offers of help in preparing the Meeting for Sufferings agenda mailings (collating and envelope-stuffing) on mornings of the following Fridays (all travel expenses are paid and a free three course lunch in the Restaurant is provided):

18 March 2016

17 June 2016

If you are within easy reach of Friends House and would like to offer some help, please contact Graham Spackman on grahams@quaker.org.uk or 020 7663 1021.

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Minutes of Meeting on 15th December 2015

Present: Sue Goodson, Ursula Fuller, Ethel Livermore, Jane Pearn, Anne Ullathorne (convenor), and Juliet Prager.

1. Reflections on MfS held on 4 – 6th December 2015

The meeting in December was a residential weekend at Woodbrooke and we had tried to have an agenda that not only covered the received items of business but also was to help strengthen relationships and to consider the health of our organisation and, in particular, our Area Meetings. The proportion of open worship enabled us to grow as a community and the longer time helped relaxation. The reflective session led by the Book of Discipline Revision Preparation Group added to our experience, and time in geographically-based home groups was well-received. Some agenda items had to be taken at specific times due to the availability of the introducers.

2. Papers

The information in the calling letter will be included in the e-mail notification as we do like to receive comments from Representatives in good time. We are exploring ways of sending out papers in a timely manner. At present papers are e-mailed two weeks before the meeting. We will experiment by sending out the agenda and the calling letter a week earlier.

3. Forward agenda

We have considered the forward agenda which helps our planning. We would like to ensure that all aspects of *Our Faith in the Future* are covered in our future agendas and have considered how to do this.

4. Agenda Planning for MfS on 5th February 2016

We have planned the agenda.

5. Yearly Meeting 2016

We note that we will need to work with Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee in preparing for our April agenda and for YM 2016.

6. MfS Annual Report.

We agree to circulate by e-mail the final draft of our report to Yearly Meeting with the amendments made by MfS in December, and then forward it to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee.

7. Venues for Meeting for Sufferings in 2016 and 2017

Several venues in the north of England have been suggested to provide accommodation for a meeting in 2016 or 2017. If we are meeting somewhere other than Friends House, we need to ensure that there are additional benefits in meeting with local friends and in being less London-centric. We will make further investigations into options for meeting outside London in 2017.

8. Date and time of next meetings

We plan to meet (11am to 4pm) on the following dates in 2016:

Monday 22 February

Monday 6 June

Tuesday 6 September
Monday 24 October

Signed in and on behalf of MSAG

Anne Ullathorne
Convenor

**Meeting for Sufferings 2016 02 06 – minutes received from
Central Committees and other bodies**

1. Church Government Advisory Group minute CGAG 15/41 from the meeting held on 14 October 2015 regarding budgeting and updates to Quaker faith & practice.
2. Quaker Peace & Social Witness: consultative paper regarding private sponsorship of refugees.

Church Government Advisory Group: Yearly Meeting Budget Setting in *Quaker Faith & Practice*

Introduction

The following paper is sent to Meeting for Sufferings by Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG). This is a Meeting for Sufferings working group, set up to identify and draft any church government amendments required to Quaker faith & practice, consulting as necessary; and to advise and report to Meeting for Sufferings and/or the Recording Clerk.

In December 2014 Meeting for Sufferings received a minute from Northumbria Area Meeting and forwarded it to CGAG for its advice (minute MfS 2014 12 05). This paper contains CGAG's response.

Britain Yearly Meeting budgeting process

This report to Meeting for Sufferings is provided to respond to the request from Meeting for Sufferings contained in their Minute MfS/14/12/05(1), asking for advice on the budget setting process. That in turn arose from a Minute from Northumbria Area Meeting [see attached Appendix] asking for clarification regarding Yearly Meeting budget setting as expressed in *Quaker faith and practice*.

The Church Government Advisory Group has concluded that there is no need for additional text to be included in *Quaker faith & practice* at this time.

This paper is intended to provide a fuller response to Meeting for Sufferings.

Guidance on Creating the Budget:

The guidance on budget setting in *Quaker faith & practice* is somewhat scattered through various chapters, but is clear both in principle and in practice.

Guidance on the Principles of Setting the Budget

14.01: (part): A fundamental principle of....our church governance is corporate integrity. All Friends share responsibility for upholding this principle. At every level Friends, personally and corporately, must be seen to be above reproach in our handling of finance and property.

15.11 (part): It is the responsibility of the meeting, committee or other Quaker body to exercise the necessary care [when dealing with finance] and in particular to set bounds to the latitude of decision allowed to its treasurer and others acting on its behalf.

20.64: (part): Friends who hold moneys on behalf of others should have regard to the importance of the proper safeguarding and wise administration of such moneys.

14.12: (part): If Trustees do not have the expertise to manage property and investments, they should seek professional advice.

Practical Work of Setting the Budget:

7.02 (part): The functions of Meeting for Sufferings are:

a) to set the priorities for the centrally managed work in its long-term plan, which would interpret the wishes of the Yearly Meeting and the concerns of the area meetings, taking into account its knowledge of the detailed aspirations and plans of the central and other standing committees, the advice of the Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and the funds available;

8.16: (part): Yearly Meeting appoints Trustees to act on its behalf as managing Trustees of the work, assets and property held directly by BYM.

Trustees recognise and listen carefully to the discernment of Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings, and their committees and ensure that it is followed, within legal and financial constraints.

Trustees approve annually an operational plan and budget for the forthcoming year.

8.17 (part): Trustees may delegate any of their powers to a committee that includes two or more of their number. Trustee-appointed committees may cover, for example, areas of finance and property, employment, and audit.

8.19 (part): Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees employ staff in order to service the centrally managed work. The staff provide many of the resources and much of the expertise required to carry out Britain Yearly Meeting's work effectively in a manner consistent with Friends' testimonies and beliefs. Much preparatory, ongoing and follow-up work falls to the staff, and they need the full support of all Friends

8.17(part): Trustees are accountable to Yearly Meeting.

In Conclusion

The Church Government Advisory Group consider that Quaker faith & practice gives the broad information that:

- Meeting for Sufferings can set priorities for the centrally managed work, which needs to take account of the advice of BYM Trustees and funds available (7.02a).
- BYM Trustees approve the budget each year (8.16), and that they are enabled to employ staff to carry out BYM's work effectively (8.19): this could include preparing budgets.

Quaker faith & practice gives the general approach to where the responsibility for setting the budget lies, without going into the minutiae of precisely how the budget is prepared and by whom. Trustees are free to decide what process should be followed to set a budget and this may vary over time.

Church Government Advisory Group believes that *Quaker faith & practice* does not need to be prescriptive about the process unless the yearly meeting so wishes.

CGAG is always mindful that text in Quaker faith & practice needs to be written to stand the test of time, and to express primarily the general principles underlying how the Yearly Meeting is organised.

To avoid the need for further updating of *Quaker faith & practice* in the future, Church Government Advisory Group advises Meeting for Sufferings that it is therefore neither desirable nor necessary to include additional detail at this time.

Appendix

Text of original minute sent to Meeting for Sufferings

Northumbria AM Minute 11/09/14 Reports and Concerns

b) Concern – Britain Yearly Meeting Budgeting process

This matter came before Area Meeting Working Group on August 26th, 2014 when Joel Wallenberg (Newcastle) and Rose Oliver (Newcastle) were prevented from attending. We have received a further Minute from Newcastle Local Meeting:

‘Minute 2014/9/2 Concern regarding BYM Budgeting process:

We have heard and considered Joel Wallenberg’s concern about Church Government regarding the budget, believing that there is an ambiguity there about who actually decides on how much money is spent on various areas on behalf of BYM. Reference is made to various groups of people, but the net effect is confusing, and we can find no clear written statement in *Qf&p* of who actually sets the budget. We recognise that difficult budgetary decisions do have to be made, and we do trust those who make them, but we ask that Church Government should state clearly and exactly, in the interests of transparency, who sets the budget, both revenue and capital.

Newcastle Local Meeting forwards this Minute to Northumbria AM, hoping that it may share our concern that the description of budget issues, both current and capital expenditure, in *Qf&p* is not as clear and helpful as it could be, and ask that the concern may be sent on to Meeting for Sufferings, asking that it considers passing the issue to Church Government Advisory Group for their discernment.

Sue Lawson
Clerk, Newcastle Local Meeting’

Joel Wallenberg has spoken to this Minute. The process of budget setting is not clearly documented in *Quaker faith & practice*. Our Meeting for Sufferings representative confirms that Meeting for Sufferings would find this move helpful. We feel that there is a lack of clarity about accountability.

Following a period of discernment we agree to forward this concern to Meeting for Sufferings.

Susan Bennet,
Clerk to Northumbria Area Meeting

Quaker Peace and Social Witness: Private Sponsorship of Refugees

A consultative paper

1 Summary

1.1 The clerks of Meeting for Sufferings have agreed to allow this additional item to be brought to the Meeting at short notice. At the end of February Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) will be considering a paper of options for possible work to address the refugee crisis. Before then, the clerks of QPSWCC wish to consult Meeting for Sufferings on one very specific proposal, so that QPSWCC can take your response into account when they decide whether to proceed with it. If MfS Representatives are able to take some informal soundings locally, that might be helpful, but this is primarily a process of ‘taking the temperature’ of MfS as a wider and representative body of Friends.

1.2 The Government has stated, in general terms, that it is willing to run a Private Sponsorship scheme for refugees, in which community groups and individuals would agree to provide full support for a refugee, or a refugee family, for their first 12 months in Britain. Some national or regional bodies are registering their serious interest in becoming umbrella bodies who would encourage and support their members to participate in the scheme. The question is should Quakers in Britain take this step towards involvement?

2 Background

2.1 Quakers have been concerned about the plight of refugees for many years. We were deeply involved in the Kindertransport and other schemes for rescuing and supporting Jews escaping from Nazi Germany, and helped displaced persons during and after World War II. The Quaker concern continues to find effective expression today through the practical and campaigning actions of individual Quakers, many of them members of the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN). Some Meetings are also involved.

2.2 The current heightened numbers of refugees in the world, including large numbers fleeing from war in Syria, and their efforts to find safety in Europe, have led Friends to express their concern through several minutes to Sufferings. Quakers in Britain has made public statements and submissions to government in response to the changing situation, often working with QARN, and continues to address many of the drivers of forced migration, including war and climate change, but has not yet embarked on any substantive project to directly address the needs of those seeking asylum in Britain.

2.3 Britain Yearly Meeting has recently received a request from Citizens UK that BYM join other organisations in supporting refugees through Private Sponsorship. This scheme may provide us with a suitable channel to express our concern, working alongside, for instance, Liberal and Reform Judaism and the Methodist Church, who have already registered their support for the scheme.

3 The proposal

3.1 Citizens UK is working through the National Refugee Welcome Board, a new organisation set up in response to the refugee crisis in Europe in summer 2015. The National Refugee Welcome Board is sometimes known simply as “Refugees Welcome”.

3.2 The National Refugee Welcome Board is setting up a new public register listing people, groups and institutions who have agreed in principle to support refugees in their communities. As this is an in principle decision, we are not being asked for funding or anything else at this point.

3.3 This is in response to the government's stated willingness to set up a refugee sponsorship scheme similar to that used in Canada. Under such a scheme groups or institutions would be able to apply to the government to bring in a refugee known to them from overseas or to indicate to the government their willingness to take on a referred refugee. In both cases, if successful, the sponsor would then fully support (materially, financially and in other ways) that refugee for 12 months. The government has not yet made a firm decision, and so the National Refugee Welcome Board is gathering names of supportive organisations in order to demonstrate that it is a workable scheme.

4 Private Sponsorship – what it might mean for individual sponsors

4.1 The shape of the scheme is not yet fully negotiated so the following details may change to some degree.

4.2 The National Refugee Welcome Board asks for three essential commitments from every group – which might be a local Meeting - wishing to sign up to be a refugee sponsor, above and beyond desire and commitment to sponsor a refugee.

That the organisation/group has or could raise sufficient funds to provide all the financial and material needs of a refugee or refugee family for 12 months (this would be between £10 & £12K for an individual, between £12-20K for a family, depending on size). Some resources might be provided in kind, reducing the monetary commitment.

A small group within the organisation are prepared to devote sufficient time to go through training and preparation to become a sponsor (at least a couple of days when the hours are added up).

The organisation/group is prepared to provide considerable non-financial support to the sponsored refugee for the 12 months of the sponsorship period (and perhaps beyond). Things like welcoming, orientation, mentoring, befriending.

5 Private Sponsorship – what it might mean for BYM

5.1 We have been invited to register because it is felt that a body with our reputation would strengthen the initiative, and help to demonstrate a willingness in the British public to participate in such a scheme. BYM, if it registers, would not itself sponsor refugees, but would expect to be represented on the National Refugee Welcome Board to play our part in negotiating with the Home Office.

5.2 If the negotiations are successful and we agree the scheme is acceptable to us, we would then be expected to play a role in encouraging and supporting Quakers – particularly Quaker Meetings – to sponsor refugees. We might well act as a broker, receiving offers from Meetings and commending them to the government agency charged with allocating refugees to sponsors. All this would take staff time, of course,

and need to be planned and budgeted for. It may be possible to fund extra staff time for this from legacy funding, but this would be decided later.

6 Some arguments in favour

It would enable more refugees to enter the UK. The National Refugee Welcome Board is clear that scheme would only go ahead if the government agreed to the refugees being admitted in addition to present limits. (The government has made and begun to implement a commitment to resettle 20,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees over the next five years. The Gateway scheme re-settles 750 refugees per year from other countries.)

It would give many people a practical way to express their deep concern for the present acute refugee situation.

It would draw more people into relationship with individual refugees, with all the benefits that are likely to flow from that – including deeper cultural and political understanding in the hosts, and speedier assimilation into British society for the refugees. In Canada, sponsorship has hugely increased public sympathy for refugees.

It would counter the ‘politics of hate’, showing that the community is prepared to work together in a substantial way to meet human needs across cultural, national and faith ‘boundaries’. Being welcoming is a mark of civilization.

It would enable family re-unions – sponsors could ask for a specific family member to be admitted, to join someone already here.

7 Some arguments against

The scheme would – at least as currently envisaged by the Home Office - exclude refugees who have already reached Europe. This can be seen as ‘jumping the queue’ and failing to address the many problems developing within the EU, including the Calais refugee camp.

There are many needy - and indeed destitute - refugees already in this country. It would be important not to divert support from them towards this new scheme. That would include trying not to divert Quaker effort.

Similarly, many Friends and others are campaigning against the worrying and harmful changes in legislation and regulations which the government is bringing in. It would be important not to let involvement in the scheme reduce our opposition, whether at local or at national level.

It will be expensive for sponsors. It would be important not to divert giving from other causes whose needs are great. If individual Friends or meetings were to give less to BYM as a result of taking on sponsorship responsibilities, other Quaker work would have to close down.

Some may feel that increasing the number of refugees will inevitably heighten community tensions, especially where there is already a shortage of resources, as there is with affordable housing.

8 Conclusion

What is wanted at this stage is guidance, to feed in to QPSWCC's discernment process. Meeting for Sufferings is invited to comment on any aspect, but specifically on the following:

Can you envisage local meetings – or other groupings of Quakers – being willing and able to become sponsors?

Would you wish BYM to register in-principle as an umbrella body and contribute to negotiating the scheme with the Home Office?

If so, would you want this to come back to Meeting for Sufferings, perhaps at the stage when the shape of the scheme has been agreed, for approval of the full involvement of Quakers in Britain?

Helen Drewery
General Secretary, Quaker Peace & Social Witness
18 January 2016

Yearly Meeting

There are three parts to this item. First, Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) will have the opportunity to hear from Deborah Rowlands, clerk designate of Yearly Meeting 2016, about the planned agenda. This will be a verbal introduction, and there isn't any detail in this paper. When more information is ready, it will be sent to Meetings and available at: www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/ym

MfS has also been sent two minutes by Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee (YMAC), which are copied below. MfS is asked to receive and note a minute from about numbers attending Yearly Meeting.

MfS is also asked to record dates of Yearly Meeting 2018. This is a MfS responsibility: previously, MfS has agreed a pattern for arranging dates so it is not possible at this meeting to suggest alternatives.

At a meeting of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

held 2- 4 October 2015 at Friends House, London

2015/10/15 Numbers attending Yearly Meeting - part

Minute 2014/12/14 Use of Space at Yearly Meeting 2015 refers.

We receive paper YMAC 2015 10 14 from our group set up to consider the church governance issues relating to the size of Yearly Meeting.

- i) We agree that for practical reasons some restriction in numbers may be required for both Yearly Meetings in London and Yearly Meeting Gatherings. To make this change a substantive decision of Britain Yearly Meeting and amendments to *Quaker faith & practice* would be required.

We ask the Recording Clerk to consult with Church Government Advisory Group, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees, Meeting for Sufferings clerks and Britain Yearly Meeting clerks as required to take this forward.

- ii) We agree to introduce registration for future Yearly Meetings held in London.

We ask staff to implement this, taking into account the issues raised in our discussion, and to consult as needed and keep us informed.

We ask that this be included in the calling letter referred to in minute 14.

We send this section of the minute to the Swarthmore Lecture Committee and to Meeting for Sufferings for information.

Clare Scott Booth
Clerk

At a meeting of Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

held at the University of Warwick 27 – 29 November 2015

2015/11/14 Dates and venue for Yearly Meetings 2018 & 2019

Minute S/11/02/8 of Meeting for Sufferings sets out a three yearly cycle for the pattern of dates for Yearly Meetings. In accordance with this, we propose to Meeting for Sufferings that Yearly Meeting should be held 4-7 May 2018 and 24 – 27 May 2019, both at Friends House London.

Minute 2015/01/06 asked staff and clerks to consult with other relevant groups about alternative proposals. While alternatives have not been found for the 2018 – 2020 cycle, we hope that this issue can be revisited for the subsequent cycle. We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Clare Scott Booth
Clerk

Mind the Gap: MfS engages with Our Faith in the Future

This paper contains:

- An introduction to the topic
- Relevant MfS minutes **2015/09/07**, **2015/12/14** and **2015/12/2**
- Collated responses from MfS home groups, December 2015

'Our Faith in the Future' also refers – if you don't have a copy to hand, it can be read at www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/our-faith-in-the-future
Copies will also be available at the meeting.

At our meetings in September and December 2015, Meeting for Sufferings has grappled with some important issues. Now, at the beginning of 2016, we need to consider how we are going to put some of our decisions into practice. In September 2015, we looked forward at our vision and we accepted *Our Faith in the Future* as our new framework document, 'as a guide for our future discernment and decision-making.' We asked for various versions to be produced for our use and we commended this to our local and area meetings.

This is our vision of our Religious Society of Friends in Britain: what we could be and how we should be in twenty-first century Britain. We are trying to re-focus once again so that we follow the leadings of God, using the leadings of the first Christians and the early Quakers and our leadings today to build the Kingdom of God here, where we are.

We have acknowledged six key strands to our vision:

Facing turbulent times, Quakers in Britain seek a future where...

- Meeting for worship is the bedrock of living as a Quaker
- Quaker communities are loving, inclusive and all-age
- All Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline
- Quaker values are active in the world
- Quakers work collaboratively
- Quakers are well-known and widely understood

In December last year we looked at where we are now. Our minute records that we considered the 'nature and state of our area meetings in Britain.' We heard of many common issues both of hope and of struggle and emphasised that 'communication and education are both key in taking this forward'.

So we have a gap between where we want to be and where we are now. How can we fix this gap? How can we take this forward so that our local meetings have a sense of empowerment and not of frustration? Are we making the right changes that will lead in that direction? What is the role of Meeting for Sufferings and how can we guide Quakers in Britain?

A traditional, organisational gap analysis tool may be found in the world of planning or project management. It entails articulating our vision (which we have done in *Our Faith in the Future*), describing what that means in terms of actualities (making the vision real) and then identifying what needs to be done to move from where we are now, and

what the barriers and the difficulties that we need to overcome in order to make that reality.

Thus 5 columns (if you like to see it like that!):

- 1) What we are aiming for from Our Faith in the Future?
- 2) What this would mean in practical terms/ how would we recognise achieving the vision?
- 3) What is happening now?
- 4) What are the barriers that stop us now becoming as we wish?
- 5) How can we overcome these barriers? What needs to be done within RSOF?

We would like members of Meeting for Sufferings to begin to think about this so that we can have a positive discussion at our February meeting, starting in small groups as before and then feeding into a plenary worship session.

Let us remind ourselves that as a faith-based organisation, we are called to bring Light to the World, to bring Good News to the poor and indeed, first and foremost to love one another.

Anne Ullathorne
9 Jan 16

Relevant minutes

MfS 2015/09/07 Long Term Framework

Julia Gordon, clerk of the Long Term Framework working group, has introduced the draft framework, titled 'Our faith in the future' (paper MfS 2015/09/03 revised).

We agree to adopt this text, to replace A Framework for Action 2009-2014, as a guide for our future discernment and decision-making. We ask staff to prepare appropriate versions for use by a wide variety of Quaker groups. We commend it to Local and Area Meetings. We forward it to BYM Trustees and to central and standing committees, asking them to use it as a template for their work and to reflect on progress with it in their reports to us. We forward it to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee for information.

We thank the Group for their work and look forward to receiving their final report.

MfS/15/12/14 Long Term Framework

Further to minute MfS 2015/09/07, we note that the Long Term Framework Working Group has prepared a final report. We have noted the key points, set out in paper MfS/2015/12/10; the full report is available on request.

We lay down the Working Group, and thank its members for their work.

MfS15/12/22 Area Meetings

Yesterday morning, our Clerk introduced paper MfS/2015/12/08, inviting us to consider the nature and state of area meetings in Britain. We have spent time together in home groups, and have heard this morning a collation of the issues that have been raised.

We have heard of some of the common issues experienced by many area meetings: low attendance; heavy workloads on a few Friends; property matters; commitment of Friends to the local meeting rather than the area Meeting; the relationship between area meetings and trustees; why does business feel a burden rather than a spiritual exercise?

We have also heard signs of hope, where Friends are successfully building a vibrant community within the area meeting. We have also heard some suggestions that AMs might take forward. A starting point may well be a review of area meeting to develop a clear sense of purpose: - what is AM business? – what needs to be done, and when? – looking at how to build a sense of community – fellowship, fun and food.

Communication and education are both key in taking this forward.

We forward this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee and hope it will inform its developing strategy. We also encourage representatives to find ways to take it back to their AMs.

Meeting for Sufferings, December 2015

Area Meetings: collated responses from home groups.

Area Meetings now

There were lots of worries about Area Meetings, and in some places a sense of gloom. Friends also shared experiences where AMs are working well; several representatives reported that changes had brought a sense of community, energy and purpose to AMs. In some cases, these experiences were also shared as suggestions.

This paper brings the different home groups' responses together in two parts: first the problems and challenges; and then positive experiences and ways forward.

A. Problems and challenges

Attendance

The increasing Age of Friends who keep Area Meetings going; and an absence of Children

- Some meetings are seeing an increase in the proportion of attenders.
- Activists attend Meeting for Worship, but don't want to become members.
- Sometimes, strong-minded individuals can cause difficulties; they can be dominant and block change.

Overcoming challenges of Geography

- Some AMs cover a large area, with long distances to travel between meetings. In rural areas, public transport is poor.
- Some meetings are growing, while others are shrinking. Generally, local meetings function well; but often AM doesn't, except for special gatherings.

Lack of Commitment to Area Meeting on the part of many/most Friends

- Although gatherings are good, they often rely on a small 'core' with local Friends only attending when it's at their meeting.
- Some areas feel an imbalance between large and smaller meetings. Small meetings can struggle to send representatives to AM.
- AMs can seem boring or ponderous. They can also feel 'sad' or 'weary'. For some, there is too much business and not enough spiritual stimulation.
- Some believe that AM is only for members. Others have the idea that business meetings are for others ('more experienced than me'). Some feel that people who attend AM regularly are a 'cliquey' core group.
- Some Friends feel that real Quaker life is local. They lack confidence in the AM; there is not necessarily a feeling of AM being a community. Some local meetings are effectively 'disconnected' from their AM. When AM is held on a Sunday, some don't want to leave their own meeting.
- Friends don't always prepare for AM – e.g. by reading papers in advance.
- Friends who are the only Quaker in their family, or have busy work commitments, can find it difficult to make time for AM.

Workload

Nominations, clerking, treasurer – these roles take a lot of time and energy

- It is often difficult to find people to take on roles – even when they're shared. Sometimes the same group of people circulate between roles. Succession planning is difficult, and nominations becomes a hard job.

- The quality of clerking skills makes a big difference. It can be problematic if the agenda, draft minutes etc. are not well-prepared.
- There is a decline in knowledge of Quaker Business Method.

Burdens

- For some, Quaker Business Method feels like a burden
- For some, meetings are held too often; although others have found on reflection that meeting less frequently is not helpful.
- There is not always enough time for the business
- There are too many jobs to do.
- Small Area Meetings in particular can feel burdened
- Property takes up time and energy. It's felt to be important but many find it boring.
- Even when Friends want to change, it seems hard to make change happen. In a few places, changes helped temporarily but then things reverted.

Purpose of AM

Friends raised some questions about the purpose and nature of AM:

- What is AM for, now that we have Trustees who do the 'legal' work?
- What does the purpose of AM mean for Being a Quaker?
- What business must be done?
- How do we develop a Sense of community?

B. Positive experiences, and some ways forward

Clear sense of purpose

This helps the AM itself, but also helps to clarify the relationship with other Quaker bodies, including Meeting for Sufferings and local meetings.

- AM is both a community and an event: regular events/gatherings are good.
- Friends come to AM for community, relationships and fellowship as well as (or even instead of) for business.
- Paying attention to the AM has helped in some places – reviewing and asking questions led to clarity, more energy and more commitment.
- The strength of a meeting is in who's there – not how many are there.

What is AM business?

It helps to be clear: How much? How often? Are AMs for business and/or for gathering?

- Special themes or topics are often valued.
- People welcome inspirational speakers, and 'personalised' issues.
- For gatherings, it's helpful to agree responsibilities in advance: e.g. hosting and suggesting themes.
- It's important to support people locally and individually – this can nourish the whole AM.
- Change ways of working: for example, reconsider whether everything has to be done triennially; outsource some of the treasurer's duties.
- In some AMs Trustees do a lot of the business, which can open up space for Quaker life.
- Preparation beforehand can help shorten business (sending information in advance; LM clerks meet before AM to prepare; not giving spoken introductions).
- It helps to recognise challenges together, and to work together to resolve issues.

Food & hospitality

- Ministry of hospitality is valuable but needs some organisation (it's important to make sure everyone understands what 'bring & share' means) but it can be very welcome and an important part of AM.
- AMs can be helped by strong regional gatherings – where Friends meet and know each other better, across AMs.
- Related events (e.g. camp or residential events) can draw in different (younger) people.
- Name badges can help.

Spiritual nurture/learning

- Good clerking is crucial – being a confident clerk; understanding business method; maintaining discipline; taking an interest in all local meetings.
- Eldership during AM is also important.
- Encourage attenders to go to AM.
- Members and attenders need to be nurtured and helped to grow as Quakers; including learning about Quaker structures and practice.
- Offer a children's programme alongside AM.
- Inter-visitation – within the AM and between AMs – can be energising.
- Travelling in the ministry.
- Listen to our children.
- Meetings for Learning or study groups are popular in some areas.
- Listen to each other: why does business mean 'boring, not spiritual' to some?
- Recognise and value the gifts offered by those who serve the meeting, in whatever role (confidence, energy, enthusiasm, skills, money). Leadership – within the AM and externally – is important and can be valued.

Identify responsibilities, work out how to make jobs possible

- It is worth experimenting
- Sharing roles, and teamwork, works in some places.
- Doubling-up can work (e.g. one person as both local and area meeting treasurer)
- Clusters for activities.
- Two or more AMs can share their organisation.

Community and communication

- Pay attention to communication, because it matters.
- It's important to maintain links between Quaker bodies.
- Using phone/Skype has worked in some places – including for AMs, nominations meetings. In this case, routine material must be well set out in draft.
- Ask local meetings: 'How does the truth prosper among you?' and ask them to report this to AM.
- Nominations can visit local meetings to meet and get to know Friends there.
- There is a worry that 'membership means jobs' – we could ask for help rather than say what jobs /tasks have to be filled.
- How about a more appealing name - from 'X Area Meeting' to 'Gathering of Friends in X'?

Northumbria model

Northumbria AM has successfully changed its ways of working. Now:

- AMs are held on Sundays
- AM meets four times a year ... not eight.
- Each of the eight LMs hosts AM once every two years; but LMs are 'paired' to share organisation
- The model AM programme involves offering overnight accommodation to enable Friends to join the Area Meeting hosts in morning worship. Following Worship from 10.00am, there is a short refreshment break; a presentation, exhibition or speaker; shared lunch; a spiritual exercise to put the Friends in a frame of mind to approach important matters. From 2pm, a smaller and shorter Area Business Meeting. There is a big and inclusive welcome for children and children's events.
- The AM Working Group works to absorb as much of the routine business away from the day which is set aside for getting to know each other socially and spiritually.

compiled by Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk
January 2016

BYM Sustainability Group

Report to Meeting for Sufferings, February 2016

The BYM sustainability commitment is increasingly part of our life and witness as a faith community. This report identifies three main areas where more work is needed:

- 1) Strengthening the sense of community around the commitment among Friends and meetings. We are working on this, for example through the BYM Sustainability Gathering at Swanwick in March.
- 2) Developing a shared story about our sustainability commitment and its base in *Quaker faith and practice*. We propose to work on this through a new project entitled Nurturing Our Sustainability Ministry.
- 3) Implementing the commitment in the lives and practices of Friends and Meetings. We need to define responsibilities for support within BYM structures. This requires communication and discernment, new resources, and learning by doing.

BYM Sustainability Group is a working group of Meeting for Sufferings, set up to oversee and encourage progress in relation to the Yearly Meeting commitment to become a 'low-carbon, sustainable community'. Our terms of reference describe the Group as having 'a leadership role, similar to eldership and oversight, in relation to the commitment'. They require us to work closely with Friends, Meetings and Quaker organisations as they implement the commitment, and to 'engage actively' with Meeting for Sufferings, Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees and other Central and Standing Committees of Britain Yearly Meeting.

During our first year of work we have been forming our own understanding of the Yearly Meeting's needs in relation to the commitment, and of our own role. We regularly monitor progress in implementing Recommendations for Action: Becoming a low carbon sustainable community, adopted by Meeting for Sufferings in June 2014 (MfS 2014 06 11). The Recommendations cover:

- strengthening our community,
- changing our lifestyles,
- Quaker core activities and property, and
- taking political action and promoting system change.

Much of the recommended action lies within the remit of Quaker Peace & Social Witness, Woodbrooke and Living Witness, each of which has a staff member on the BYM Sustainability Group ex officio. We seek to maintain contact with organisations carrying out the work, identify gaps, and support and encourage existing and additional action (see Annex – Progress against recommendations). Our own work falls mainly in the area of strengthening our community.

Our sense is that the commitment is increasingly embedded as part of our yearly meeting's Testimony. Low carbon, sustainable living is seen as part of being a Quaker, and it comes up in conversations about membership, living faithfully, and 'letting our lives speak'. Most Quaker meetings and organisations are paying attention to energy use and climate change in the design and management of their buildings; some have

made very substantial investments in low carbon technology. Friends are also active in community organisations such as Transition Towns, in charities and businesses providing low carbon and sustainable products and services, in policy work and campaigning, and as political representatives.

Meanwhile there is a need for a stronger sense of connection and community among Friends working in a variety of ways for the necessary transformation. This might mean more regular meetings and conversations among parts of our yearly meeting. BYM Sustainability Group's terms of reference require us to hold a national face to face gathering at least every two years. Our next BYM Sustainability Gathering will be in Swanwick on 18 to 20 March 2016, exploring the practical, spiritual and community dimensions of being a transformational community. We anticipate strong attendance from area meetings, and hope that central and standing committees and other Quaker organisations will consider sending representatives.

We also increasingly see a need for shared stories about our sustainability commitment, its basis in *Quaker faith and practice*, and its expression in Quaker witness. What does it mean to us? What we are doing about it? In August 2015 we collaborated with Woodbrooke on a threshing meeting with a group of invited Friends as the preliminary stage in a proposed project, Nurturing Our Sustainability Ministry. Our proposal includes organising a series of events in partnership with other Quaker committees and bodies, to support ministry from Friends ranging from theologians to musicians, and from poets to activists. Output might include publications, presentations, exhibitions, drama workshops and video clips of creative actions.

Substantial staff and committee time within BYM and also in international Quaker organisations is devoted to addressing climate change as part of policy and system change. However, we still have a long way to go to reflect the commitment in the work of all Quaker meetings, bodies and committees. There are particular gaps in routine support for Friends and Meetings in changing our lifestyles and making our Quaker core practices and property low carbon and sustainable. Some of the apparent needs are:

- discerning who could take responsibility for different aspects of the work
- ensuring resources are available (including funding and staff with appropriate experience and expertise)
- taking practical action, learning by doing, making changes as necessary
- communication to make sure Friends, meetings and committees understand what is happening
- reflecting responsibilities in our Book of Discipline, committee terms of reference etc.

Over the coming months we hope to deepen our conversations with central and standing committees and other Quaker bodies about the way the sustainability commitment connects with their work.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to:

- encourage all Area Meetings to ensure they are sending someone to the Sustainability Gathering on 18-20 March
- encourage Quaker committees and bodies to keep looking at the ways their work connects with our sustainability commitment; this might include sending a staff or committee member to the Sustainability Gathering
- reflect on its own engagement with the commitment and its own role in
 - building community
 - developing a shared story
 - establishing responsibilities for practical action in our structures

Annex: Progress against Recommendations for action (MFS 2014 06 11)

Strengthening Our Community

The Canterbury Commitment should be owned and implemented by BYM as a whole including individual Friends, local meetings, central committees, Woodbrooke, listed informal groups and other Quaker organisations. We all have a responsibility for embedding the Commitment in every group and every decision we participate in. Our witness should also be connected to the work of international Quaker organisations, other yearly meetings and non-Quaker organisations.

Recommendation	Current Activity	New Activity	Gaps/needs	BYMSG Action
1. Regular and ongoing dialogue involving Friends House, local meetings and other Quaker organisations is needed to build community and share resources. We suggest a review of existing communications from Quaker organisations related to the Canterbury Commitment to see how they can be more effective, coherent and better coordinated.	Regular newsletters: Earth & Economy (ESP) monthly e-updates earthQuaker (LW) Blogs (Wb Good Lives, QPSW Quakernomics, LW Human Dimensions) Being Friends Together E&E Quaker twitter account Quaker Centres Gathering? Articles in The Friend	Updates to BYM website – expected to be finished in early 2016 Newsletters for MFS members. QPSW has set up a staff group to review and coordinate communications	Need to find out how Friends experience/ receive/use communications e.g. “People get too much info but don’t know what’s happening.” Is this true?	QPSW, Wb and LW report back regularly. Digest of research on communicating climate change? Invite George Marshall to talk to us? Facilitated session for BYMSG on communication?
2. Face-to-face gatherings are also vital for maintaining and developing our community and our focus on becoming low-carbon and sustainable. We see a need for such events to take place regularly, ideally every year, but at least every two years.	Swanwick Gathering 18-20 March 2016			Organising gathering
3. Regional and national networks can be ways for Friends and meetings to build community and share resources without relying on paid staff at Friends House. Following the Swanwick gathering an email network is being set up for Friends to engage with psychological, social and spiritual aspects of climate change. Further networks will be needed. We welcome the proposal from Quaker Life that a Network Cluster be developed on various issues, perhaps including community, lifestyle and property aspects of the Canterbury Commitment. There is also a need for a network of Friends engaged in working for policy and system change.	QPSW Quakernomics blog & correspondents’ mailings ESP focus on sharing local meeting activity and supporting regional networks QL Property Network Cluster LW blog, e-list, gatherings on human dimensions of climate change. QPSW Activist gatherings	New round of QPSW New Economy and Sustainability grants almost finalised. Methodology changed to be more about facilitating local activity.		Nurturing our Sustainability Ministry project. Conversations with potential partners.

Abbreviations: ESP=QPSW Economics, Sustainability & Peace Group. LW=Living Witness. Wb=Woodbrooke.

Changing our lifestyles

Lifestyle change is about more than carbon reduction, it is about all of our priorities and choices including patterns of family and social life, consumption and work. We recommend ongoing and increased encouragement and support for local meetings to be adventurous in helping Friends to live sustainably – adopting, in doing this, approaches that are sensitive and loving, while also radically transformative. This means sharing the joys we find in a simple lifestyle freely chosen, while offering compassion and support to those who find change difficult.

A wide variety of resources are required to address Friends' different and changing needs. For some, personal climate impact calculators are a vital part of understanding and reducing their carbon emissions; for others it is more important to have opportunities to talk about feelings. Some want simple, practical guides to action; others like to do their own research.

Recommendation	Current Activity	New Activity	Gaps	BYMSG Action
1. Regular revisions are needed in resources for sustainable living such as those included in the QPSW/Living Witness Sustainability Toolkit (footprint guides, guides for practical action, study group session plans). Updates are needed at least every two years to keep the information current. New versions should be brought to Friends' attention in a variety of formats.	QPSW and LW working towards update of calculators and Walk Cheerfully, Step Lightly.	Proposal to 'package' up existing support for Friends for lifestyle change, plus potentially additional material ready for YM 2016.	Limited staff or resources committed to this work.	Encourage revisions to material and regular reminders to do footprints
2. We hope that Living Witness and QPSW will continue to work together to support Friends in deepening dialogue and making lifestyle changes, in particular through group activities. A variety of approaches are available. QPSW Economics, Sustainability and Peace Subgroup is currently planning support for meetings using the 'Footpaths' community carbon reduction resource developed by Transition Leicester.	QPSW: publicising Footpaths & Carbon Conversations Woodbrooke/QL: Being Friends Together Sustainability Pathway Stocksfield Footpaths training June 2015		Limited staff or resources committed to this work.	
3. We need to provide opportunities for Friends to connect with each other through talks, workshops, etc. Friends' experience of the practical, social and spiritual aspects of lifestyle change should continue to be shared regularly in a variety of ways, from face-to-face contact and networks to blogs, newsletters, talks and workshops.	Wb courses on ministry, testimony, co-housing, plain dress, green spirituality. LW earthQuaker and Human Dimensions network blog and gatherings LW occasional workshops for local meetings & talks at Quaker events. ESP supporting/participating in regional events e.g. Cornwall transition gathering; Friends in Wales; Capel LQM		Limited staff and resources committed to this work.	Face to face gathering. Nurturing Ministry – conversations with potential project partners

Quaker Core Activities and Property

Quaker meetings, organisations and committees may struggle with the complexity of addressing their core purposes in low-carbon, sustainable ways. They may need support to get beyond seeing these as conflicting goals, and they may need technical help with addressing buildings, land, travel, food, waste and use of money. Friends particularly face dilemmas about travelling to meetings and maintaining historic meeting houses, which are seen as vital for maintaining and developing community.

Recommendation	Current Activity	New Activity	Gaps	BYMSG Action
1. Local meetings, central committees and other Quaker organisations should be encouraged to organise themselves in low-carbon, sustainable ways. This includes looking at how they meet, where and how often. Resources should be developed to support Quaker bodies in discernment that takes account of the Canterbury Commitment, including weighing up the effects of their decisions on a wide variety of issues, and considering creative alternatives.	Reductions in committee size & travel MfS travel/accom review. Could extend to other groups. Increasing use of teleconferencing Wb group engaging staff on greening buildings and operations.	BYM working with Carbon Smart on emissions associated with FH as a building. Possibly extending to other aspects e.g. food, travel.	Need resources for LMs, AMs and other Quaker bodies to support discernment taking account of sustainability commitment. (Ongoing) evaluation of GHG/ sustainability impacts of MfS & other groups.	Conversations with committees and staff
2. A new resource is needed to offer expertise on property ownership and management, particularly in developing and changing buildings to make them more sustainable. Consideration should also be given to updating the Handbook on the care of meeting houses.	Recording Clerk's Office developing proposals on support for care of meeting houses. Quaker Stewardship Committee Property Advice Sheets on BYM website include sustainability aspects		Need an appropriate model for supporting meetings on these issues, backed by financial/staff capacity, and clarity about governance/oversight.	Conversations with committees and staff
3. We propose the introduction of a simple energy monitoring system for use by all local meetings. We have trialled an approach called Yearly Energy Statements (YES). This would require less than an hour of work by local meetings each year. The data could easily be collected, enabling Yearly Meeting to produce an indicator of our aggregate progress in reducing CO2 emissions.	YES proposal produced by Canterbury Commitment Group		Need corporate clarity about going ahead with YES or alternative. Oversight, staffing, funding for implementation.	Conversations with committees and staff
4. Encouragement and support should be given to all parts of the Quaker community to follow the example of BYM trustees in ensuring that our investments are consistent with being low-carbon and sustainable, and in particular to disinvest from fossil fuels.	Fossil fuel divestment by BYM and some local/area meetings QPSW ESP work on disinvestment. Your Faith, Your Finance webpage and resources		Need clear, simple information on ethical investment for AM trustees and treasurers.	Conversations with committees and staff

Taking Political Action and Promoting Systemic Change

We have heard that Friends want to take more political action and to be supported to call for and create systemic change in economics and society. We propose an increased emphasis on this area of action. In particular:

Recommendation	Current Activity	New Activity	Gaps	BYMSG Action
<p>1. Friends and local meetings need stronger support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to use their experience of the joys and challenges of changing their lives and meetings as a foundation for engaging others in their local community, national businesses and politicians • to take radical action for change from the current system • to be part of building the alternative • to speak out for systemic change and for climate justice. <p>This support should come from the centrally managed work (where the lead committee is the QPSW Economics, Sustainability and Peace subgroup) along with other Quaker organisations including Living Witness and Woodbrooke.</p> <p>2. Many parts of the centrally managed work are engaged, including Turning the Tide, Parliamentary Engagement, Peace Education, and the Peaceworker scheme. A continuing effort is needed to strengthen and connect up the Canterbury Commitment aspects of their activities.</p> <p>3. British Friends should be supported to connect better with work on climate change and sustainability beyond BYM. There are opportunities to share our experience and contribute to work for change, in particular with international Quaker bodies, other churches and faith organisations, campaigning organisations and movements.</p>	<p>QPSW Sustainability Stories section on website; campaigns on energy justice and economic inequality; draft statement on economic principles; New Economy Project</p> <p>Quakers active, e.g. in Climate Mass Lobby, climate marches/days of action etc. with QPSW support.</p> <p>LW earthQuaker and Human Dimensions Network.</p> <p>Woodbrooke courses on political and practical engagement (e.g. cohousing)</p> <p>Turning the Tide campaign support model including to support Friends developing campaigns</p> <p><u>QPSW ESP:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - links to Operation Noah etc. - work on fossil fuel divestment - work on tar sands & fracking <p>Activist gatherings</p> <p>Briefings & campaigns on infrastructure bill, General Election, Paris conference</p> <p>Various BYMSG members working with QUNO on UN climate negotiations. Articles in The Friend</p> <p>ESP work on energy inequality/justice & fuel poverty. Partnership with Fuel Poverty Action. Endorsement of Energy Bill of Rights</p> <p>QPSW climate negotiations work framed as 'climate justice'. Focus on drawing on equality concerns.</p> <p>QPSW work on fossil fuel divestment</p> <p>Facing the challenge of climate change, global statement by Quaker bodies: http://www.quaker.org.uk/facing-challenge-climate-change</p>		<p>Getting more Friends engaged</p> <p>Focus on UK policy making?</p>	<p>Revive existing process on resilience</p> <p>Nurturing Ministry project – including creative activism</p> <p>Overview paper on promoting systemic change</p> <p>Consulting re: potential connections with Quaker Council for European Affairs</p> <p>Connect Wb resilience work with this?</p>
<p>4. New work should be considered on climate justice. This could include finding ways to connect with people suffering from the impacts of climate change, perhaps offering accompaniment and enabling their voices to be heard.</p>				
<p>5. We recommend that Quaker bodies of all kinds speak out publicly on systemic change and climate justice, making the links to traditional Quaker concerns for peace and justice. Advice and other resources are needed to help them to do this. Public statements can help to strengthen our Quaker community and identity, and affirm our shared values.</p>				