

Calling Letter



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

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

23 March 2018

Dear Friends,

We are meeting together on 7th April – not in the George Fox room this time but in Sarah Fell (Small Meeting House) so please look out for directions and for where the tabled papers (yellow!) are and where the room for coats will be. We are experimenting with a different space for ease of hearing and general comfort, so please let us know afterwards how it compares.

We have a number of key items on the agenda (how should we describe them: deep, big, significant?) and I want to encourage you all to prepare well for our last meeting of the current triennium. The first main item is the receipt of the report of the Appeal Review Group and you will see the report makes four key recommendations that we need to consider. If we accept these, we need to ensure that Friends in local and area meetings have recourse to good support that will help the process of conflict transformation wherever it is needed.

An important item this time is the report of the BYM Sustainability Group Review Group and you will see that they have produced a full and detailed report which requires careful study. Do not forget that we heard from the BYM Sustainability Group at our last meeting. Again the report makes four recommendations and we need to think and pray carefully how we respond so that we do not make the same errors that have been made in the past - so we need to make sure that we are sufficiently clear in our expectations, that we work well within our organisation and that we do not set open-ended aims that are unachievable. Our vision (Our Faith In the Future) sets those ultimate aims!

In the afternoon we have a full programme of business including a minute from Southern Marches AM on truth and integrity; a report from BYM Trustees including the accounts; our letter to Ireland Yearly Meeting; and approval of more Quaker Recognised Bodies.

Friends, during appointments after lunch, we need to appoint a group of about 3 people who can serve us as a search group who will then bring nominations, to our July meeting, for representatives able to form the MFS Support Group for 2018-2021. Please think who might be able to do this service for us from our current membership (rep or alternate).

As usual, if you have any queries or comments about the agenda or items within it, please contact me in advance through sufferings@quaker.org.uk. It always helps to think beforehand!!

And, in the meanwhile, I hope we may also enjoy some spring weather whilst we pray and prepare,



In peace
Anne Ullathorne,
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

MfS Forward Agenda

MfSAG March 2018 meeting minutes with MfS Functions checklist for 2018

MfS 2018 04 05 Court and Prison Register

MfS 2018 04 06 Appeals Group Review

MfS 2018 04 07 BYM Sustainability Group review

MfS 2018 04 08 Yearly Meeting

MfS 2018 04 09 Minutes from Area Meetings

MfS 2018 04 10 Letter of greeting from BYM to Ireland Yearly Meeting 2018

MfS 2018 04 11 Quaker Recognised Bodies

MfS 2018 04 12a BYM Trustees – February minutes

MfS 2018 04 12b Summary of Annual Report and Accounts

n.b. the following papers will be available on the day of the meeting:

MfS 2018 04 03 Membership

MfS 2018 04 08 Appointments



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

Agenda

Meeting for Sufferings 7 April 2018

Sarah Fell room, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

	Item	Paper
09.00	Arrivals	
10.00	Session starts	
1	Opening worship	
2	Welcome and introductions	
3	Membership (tabled paper)	MfS 2018 04 03 (to note)
4	Agenda Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
5	Court & Prison Register	MfS 2018 04 05 (to record)
6	Appeals Group review To approve a review from the Meeting for Sufferings Appeals Group setting out recommendations to the Appeals Process	MfS 2018 04 06 (for approval)
	Short Break (please hold the silence in the meeting room)	
7	BYM Sustainability Group review To receive the report of the group reviewing the BYM Sustainability Group and consider its recommendations	MfS 2018 04 07 (for approval)
12.30	Lunch in the restaurant	
	Informal lunchtime gatherings Opportunities to meet with the following in the William Penn suite: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting for Sufferings Appeals Review Group and members of Quaker Life's conflict cluster • Members of Southern Marches AM regarding their concern over the post-truth world. • BYM Trustees (in the Restaurant). 	

8	Appointments	MfS 2018 04 08 (for approval)
9	Minutes received from Area Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern Marches AM regarding the post-truth world and Quaker response 	MfS 2018 04 09 (for testing)
10	Letter of greeting from BYM to Ireland Yearly Meeting 2018 To receive the draft letter of greeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting	MfS 2018 04 10 (for information)
11	Quaker Recognised Bodies To register some further Quaker Recognised Bodies.	MfS 2018 04 11 (for approval)
	Short Break (please hold the silence in the meeting room)	
12	BYM Trustees report To receive the minutes from the February BYM Trustees meeting along with a summary of the Annual Report & Accounts.	MfS 2018 04 12a and 12b (for information)
	Closing worship	
16.00	Close. Tea, coffee and departures	

Meeting for Sufferings Forward Agenda – April 2018

The following items are currently proposed or being considered by Arrangements Group for the rest of 2018. These plans may change.

Reports from all four standing committees are scheduled to come to the December meeting - this is an opportunity for MfS to consider all the work together, and should help MfS in its role of setting priorities across the centrally-managed work. This approach is new for 2018 and will be tried for at least two years.

Jul '18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Triennium: induction • YM 2018 – reflections and follow-up
Oct '18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people's participation day • Diversity and inclusion – taking forward the call from YM 2017 minute 38 • Central decision-making processes in BYM – sent to MfS Arrangements Group in July 2017
Nov '18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential weekend • Reports from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QLCC • QPSWCC • QWRC • QCCIR

Other matters expected to return in due course:

- **Pastoral and spiritual support to people who are not able to regularly attend local meetings** – sent to Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC), for advice, in February 2015 (update received Feb 2018)
- **Gender Equality and the Tabular Statement** – sent to Recording Clerk March 2015
- **Government sponsorship of Cadet Forces in Scottish State Schools** – forwarded to Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC) in October 2016
- **Integrity, accountability and truth in public affairs** – QPSWCC had indicated it was considering this and may wish to come back; which may now be superseded by the minute sent by Southern Marches AM.
- **Investments profiting from the occupation of the West Bank** – sent to BYM Trustees, Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) and QPSWCC in December 2017
- **Concern about the poverty of the public services** – sent to QPSWCC in December 2017
- **Payment of taxes for terrorism and war in the UK** – sent to QPSWCC in December 2017
- **Vibrancy in Meetings** – progress and evaluation update (possibly Feb 2019)



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Date 2 March 2018

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group Minutes

Present: Margaret Bryan (convenor), Ursula Fuller, Sue Goodson, James Johnson, Juliet Prager, Anne Ullathorne

1. Reflections on last Meeting for Sufferings

We felt that the group discussions worked well, and that reps welcomed the opportunity to talk about the QLCC strategy.

2. Correspondence

We have received correspondence concerning the use of the words representative and alternate. We agree to review this in 2019 in preparation for possible change in *Quaker faith & practice* following Yearly Meeting 2020.

3. Forward agenda

We have reviewed our forward agenda which informs our planning. In particular we considered the timing of correspondence to reps, and the balance between providing adequate information without being overwhelming.

We wish to find the best way to involve reps on an ongoing basis.

4. Agenda planning for the next meeting

- i) We planned the agenda for our April meeting.
- ii) 7 July. We will use the same format for induction that we have used before, with minor adjustments.
- iii) Essential Information 2018-2021. Anne Ullathorne and Ann Banks, in conjunction with staff, have completed work on this and it will be circulated to all reps and alternates after Yearly Meeting 2018.

5. MfS Area meetings prevented 2015-2018

We noted the list of AMs unable to send reps in the current triennium. We urge all AMs to seek Friends to attend if the reps are prevented.

6. MfS functions list

We note that in the last 12 months MfS has handled business relating to all the functions in 7.02 except m, n, o and q. m, n and o are occasional items and none have arisen in this triennium.

7. Date and time of next meetings (11-3.30pm)

21 May 2018

Margaret Bryan
Convenor

r	To authorise action and minute as required under other sections of Quaker Faith and Practice	1	1	3	2			7	4
s	To set up an arrangements group and support and working groups to assist its own work as it sees fit					1		1	1
	No. of minutes	13	18	26	18			75	
	No. of functions addressed (of 19)	7	7	10	11			13	

Court & Prison Register

Introduction

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) was established in 1676, to consider the sufferings experienced by Quakers for their faith. Gradually the practice of recording Friends' names in the 'Great book of Sufferings' lapsed; but in 1997 MfS decided to maintain a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience. This enables us to record events, as well as to uphold the Friends concerned and to share information about their witness

Last October, Meeting for Sufferings noted arrests outside the DSEI (Defence & Security Equipment International) arms fair held at the ExCel exhibition centre in London Docklands. This included recording that Jo Frew, an attender at Tottenham meeting, North London AM and Sam Donaldson, an attender at Hull meeting, Pickering and Hull AM, were arrested on 5th September 2017.

Both appeared at Stratford Magistrates Court in February this year. On 7 February, Jo Frew, along with three others, was found not guilty of obstruction of the highway. On 8 February, Hull Quaker Sam Donaldson, along with three others, was cleared of wilfully obstructing a public highway.

Meeting for Sufferings may wish to include this information in the Court and Prison Register.

Appeals

In July 2016, Meeting for Sufferings received a minute from Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG), which is a working group of Meeting for Sufferings.

CGAG recommended that the appeal process as described in sections 4.25 and 4.26 of *Quaker faith & practice* should be reviewed. CGAG's minute explained:

'In the light of a number of appeals we believe that the process should be reviewed to see whether improvements or simplifications can be made. We note that 'reconciliation' does not appear in the current text.'

Meeting for Sufferings agreed to set up a review group. The Group's report is copied below, and Beryl Milner, who has convened the group, will be able to speak to the meeting about the group's work and report.

Meeting for Sufferings Appeal Review Group final report

Contents

Executive summary

1. What we were asked to do
2. How we worked
3. What we found
4. What we recommend
5. A wider piece of work

Executive summary

The Group was appointed by Meeting for Sufferings in December 2016 to review the appeals procedures described in sections 4.25-4.26 of *Quaker faith & practice* and to propose any alterations required (clarifications, improvements and simplifications), whether reconciliation between parties could have a place, and whether the procedures should be extended to other bodies within the yearly meeting structure.

Through wide consultation with Friends who had experience of the appeals processes, and our other enquiries, we have found that:

- meetings are not immune to conflict, yet find it difficult to acknowledge openly or to handle it effectively – lack of familiarity with Quaker decision-making processes and their spiritual basis, and mental health issues in meetings appear to be factors in causing or failing to resolve conflict
- appeals processes within area meetings, or involving neighbouring area meetings, are not working well, partly because mediation and conflict transformation have not been attempted or have failed, and meetings are not well-equipped to handle appeals, so disputes do not get resolved and the parties involved suffer continuing distress.

We recommend that:

(1) the section 4.25 provision for a dissatisfied Friend's appeal to be heard by an area meeting (and, if that fails, by another area meeting) be removed, while greater priority is given to conflict transformation locally with appropriate external support;

(2) as a principle for the revision of section 4.25, a member dissatisfied with a final decision of an area meeting affecting him or her personally and adversely may appeal to Meeting for Sufferings if, and only if,

- (a) the decision concerns the termination of his or her membership; and
- (b) the grounds of the appeal are that the decision was not made in right ordering, or was not made with knowledge of the relevant facts, or was unreasonable; and
- (c) experienced mediators have been involved and have failed to resolve the matter;

(3) the section 4.26 provision for appeals to Meeting for Sufferings following disputes between area meetings should be removed, and provision should be made elsewhere in *Quaker faith & practice* for an area meeting in dispute with another to seek advice from the Recording Clerk;

(4) wider work is needed on further ways of supporting conflict transformation (including promoting familiarisation with Quaker processes and handling difficulties affected by mental health issues) within meetings at all levels.

If Meeting for Sufferings accepts recommendations (1) to (3), we suggest that it asks Church Government Advisory Group to draft appropriate text for *Quaker faith & practice*.

1. What we were asked to do

1.1 Appointed as the group to review appeals procedures we were asked, in our Terms of Reference, to review whether:

- clarifications, improvements or simplifications can be made to the appeal processes;
- a process to bring about reconciliation between parties could have a place;
- there should be an extension to include other bodies within Britain Yearly Meeting structures.

1.2. The processes set out in sections 4.25-4.26 of *Quaker faith & practice* provide for:

- an appeal process within an area meeting for a member dissatisfied with a final decision of that meeting affecting him or her;
- if that fails, the area meeting to ask a neighbouring area meeting to hear the appeal;
- an appellant to appeal to Meeting for Sufferings if still dissatisfied;
- and, in 4.26, a corresponding process of appeal to Meeting for Sufferings where an area meeting is dissatisfied with another area meeting's final decision affecting it.

- 1.3. We were given leave to consult widely and asked to take advice from Church Government Advisory Group, and reflect upon any advice they might give, before preparing a final report for Meeting for Sufferings. This we have done.

2 How we worked

- 2.1 In all aspects of our work we have functioned as a worshipping community. Each of our meetings has begun with a time of worship and of reflection. We have found it useful to make notes of matters raised in the time of reflection, and to refer to these notes as our work has developed.
- 2.2 Consultation with the Recording Clerk, and with staff in Quaker Life, has assisted and supported our work.
- 2.3 The first stage of our work was to gather information and reflections, mainly from Friends who have been involved in appeals either as appellants, or as members of a Meeting for Sufferings appeal group, or as a member or officer of an area meeting involved in an appeal. The Recording Clerk was our source for the names of these Friends. We also offered the opportunity to participate in this part of our work to Friends more generally, through the mailing to clerks and a letter from the Recording Clerk to The Friend.
- 2.4 To those who expressed willingness to assist we sent a list of broad questions that we hoped would act as prompts and assist their thinking, while in no way limiting or restricting what they might wish to say.
- 2.5 We also offered the possibility of a telephone conference or a face to face meeting, and met requests for those.
- 2.6 We express our thanks to all those who responded and assisted us in our work.
- 2.7 As responses came in we read them with care and reflected on them. As our conclusions began to emerge we checked them against what we had heard. The questions used, responses to them, and related material have been deposited with the Recording Clerk.

3 What we found

- 3.1 The responses we received made clear to us the devastating and lasting effects that conflicts that lead to the use of the appeals process can have on individuals and meetings.
- 3.2 It is clear that our meeting communities are not immune to conflict, even though many like to feel that as Friends we should not find conflict in our meetings and that we should be good at resolving it if it should arise. We should recognise and accept that conflict may arise as committed Friends seek to follow their leadings, and we should be open about how we should handle it. Two particular factors appearing to cause or exacerbate conflict are a lack of familiarity with our Church government and with Quaker decision-making processes and their spiritual basis, and mental health issues in meetings, All this leads us to conclude that there is a more fundamental problem to be tackled than simply reviewing the appeals process itself which was the primary task laid upon our review group.

- 3.3 We found that Quaker Life is engaged in general and specific work in this area, perhaps to a greater extent than is generally realised, and that it is probably not called on often enough to assist Meetings as they try to handle difficult situations. Where they are called upon they can help and support those involved. The staff member who works in this area helped our thinking with this observation:

We often refer to conflict transformation rather than resolution. In any situation no-one will get everything their way and so resolution can in some cases appear to be a barrier to success. Things change and rarely do things go as any party involved plans and so transformation feels a more appropriate way to view the changes that allow Friends to talk with openness again.

- 3.4 We have found that some area meetings, or groups of area meetings, have standing conciliation groups as recommended in *Quaker faith & practice* 4.23.
- 3.5 The evidence from the consultations and our own enquiries indicates that the appeal process within area meetings is not working well. Sometimes it appears that addressing the conflict with impartial mediation has not been attempted before the appeal is initiated; more often, that this has been tried but has failed, largely because it was introduced too late when opposing positions had become too entrenched, or because those involved had insufficient skills and experience of successful approaches to conflict transformation or did not seek external skilled help. Appeals processes within area meetings are sometimes not well-managed. The panel hearing the appeal may not be sufficiently independent since they may be compromised by prior knowledge of the case; there may be confusion or uncertainty about how the panel should operate; the relevant facts may not be agreed by all parties; appellants may feel they are not listened to fairly and sympathetically; there is a perception of appeal panel bias towards the authority of the area meeting.

On the other hand, the area meeting and individual members may feel unfairly criticised for decisions and actions they believe were taken in right ordering. Attempts to ask a neighbouring area meeting to hear an appeal often suffer from the difficulty of finding Friends to form an appeal panel who have appropriate skills and experience and have no prior knowledge of the case. It is hardly surprising that appellants tend not to accept adverse area meeting appeal panel findings, and feel bruised by the experience – as do other area meeting members. Often the appellant then proceeds to appeal to Meeting for Sufferings. Most such appeals seem to entail rehearsal of the evidence and views presented at the previous stage, with little or no new material. The outcomes of appeals – resulting in upholding either the area meeting’s decision or the appellant’s case – usually leave one or both parties dissatisfied that the original dispute remained unresolved and no effective remedy had been found.

4 What we recommend

- 4.1 Our Terms of Reference set a clear task, but the information we received as a result of our consultations with Friends, together with our own reflections, led us to a view that there is more to do than is encompassed in the framework of *Quaker faith & practice* sections 4.25 and 4.26 and our Terms of Reference.

- 4.2 However, with regard to the appeal process, we have identified 5 overarching and essential elements that we consider need to apply throughout the process. These are:
- a) worship and the expectation of being led, rooted in Quaker process and discipline;
 - b) listening and reflection;
 - c) careful use of communication (especially electronic communication), and clarity for all parties;
 - d) avoidance of unnecessary delay;
 - e) appropriate confidentiality by all concerned.

Proposed revised Appeals Process

(A) Appeals conducted at area meeting level

- 4.3 We consider that the existing multi-stage process in section 4.25 of *Quaker faith & practice* is too cumbersome and burdensome, and places insufficient emphasis on the need to seek impartial mediation – which could lead to conflict transformation - before a dispute is brought to appeal. We believe it would be beneficial if the first two stages – appeals conducted within the area meeting and by a neighbouring area meeting – were removed, and priority were given to effective mediation and conflict transformation processes within the area meeting. This would place the prime responsibility for seeking to handle the dispute by peaceful means within the area meeting where it has arisen, with external support for this where needed, while avoiding the often adversarial impact of a formal local appeal process upon the meeting and those involved. We therefore recommend that Qf&p section 4.25 provision for an appeal to be heard by an area meeting (and, if that fails, by another area meeting) be removed, while greater priority is given to conflict transformation locally with appropriate external support.

(B) Appeals to Meeting for Sufferings

- 4.4 We have explored the implications of this recommendation for the remaining stage of appeal to Meeting for Sufferings (which involves an independent appeal panel appointed by that Meeting).
- 4.5 We have considered the purpose of an appeal process and what it might achieve. We see it as a last-resort impartial mechanism to check that the decision made by the area meeting was properly reached in right ordering – that is, it was made in knowledge of the relevant facts, following the appropriate procedure, and was a decision that was reasonable for the meeting to make in the circumstances – and if not, to ensure that the decision is properly reconsidered locally. An appeal panel should not seek to substitute its judgement of the decision the area meeting might have made, in place of the decision actually made. Instead, if the panel concludes that the decision was not properly reached in right ordering, it should ask the area meeting to reconsider the matter reasonably in light of the facts and following the proper procedure. An appeal process should be used sparingly and as a last resort, on matters of fundamental importance where deep issues of natural justice and human rights are involved; it should not be used for trivial matters or minor mistakes which should be capable of being addressed locally. We recognise that an appeal process will not guarantee an outcome

desired by each of the parties – at best it might facilitate their acceptance of the position reached, and there may still need to be follow-up work locally on conflict transformation – but it should at least ensure that natural justice has been served, consistently with our testimonies on truth and integrity.

- 4.6 There is a general expectation that public sector bodies, charities and other institutions should have mechanisms for appeals to a higher level against decisions made at a lower level, in the interests of natural justice, where there is a suitable remedy available, and to minimise the risk of civil legal action by aggrieved persons against them. We have not discovered analogous mechanisms in other churches, but this may reflect differences in their structures and membership arrangements compared with Britain Yearly Meeting. We think it right to maintain an appeal mechanism at national level, against a final decision that has not been resolved locally, and which recognises the role of Meeting for Sufferings acting on behalf of Yearly Meeting which is our final constitutional authority. We therefore recommend that the section 4.25 provision be retained for an appeal to be made in defined circumstances to Meeting for Sufferings.
- 4.7 We have considered
- who may appeal
 - against what kind of decision
 - made by which type of meeting
 - on what grounds.
- 4.8 At present only a member may appeal, and we think that this should continue, as membership is at the core of our yearly meeting structure. We are not anyway aware of any evidence of attenders or others being in dispute with meetings over matters which could not be settled locally and could suitably be remedied by recourse to national appeal. It also seems right to continue to require that the appellant must have been personally affected by the disputed matter – and to assume that the effect must be adverse in order to justify an appeal.
- 4.9 Within the last decade, most appeals to Meeting for Sufferings have been against termination of membership (which section 4.25 quotes as an example rather than a restriction). We think this should continue to be an issue for appeal, as membership reflects our theological understanding of the nature of spiritual commitment to the religious community, and exclusion from the membership community is so fundamental a matter. We have considered other possible issues for appeal, but conclude that none is appropriate. For example, failure to nominate or appoint or re-appoint should not be an issue (no-one has a right to appointment or re-appointment which is a matter for discernment); and premature termination of appointment before completion of a term is very rare, and likely to involve discernment on factual evidence as to ineligibility to continue. Nor should a minute of disunity on its own (unless it leads to other action such as membership termination); nor should finance and property or other policy decisions (difficult to define, and hard to see how these might affect just an individual member personally and adversely, and not be capable of remedy locally through complaints procedures yet be remediable on national appeal). We note that policies and procedures should be in place in area meetings, trustee bodies, committees and other meetings at all levels in Britain Yearly Meeting, which may be used to handle complaints and other kinds of disagreement and could help to minimise the escalation of disputes.

- 4.10 As at present, only area meetings should be in the frame as only they are responsible for membership termination. As now, the only grounds should be those of natural justice: that the decision was made unreasonably, with insufficient knowledge, or not in right ordering (which we interpret as not following the requirements or guidance in *Quaker faith & practice*, or not in accordance with its spirit). Finally we suggest that there should be a requirement that experienced mediators should have tried, but failed, to resolve the conflict. (Several regions and area meetings have standing conciliation groups set up for mediation work.)
- 4.11 We therefore recommend, as a principle for the revision of section 4.25, that a member dissatisfied with a final decision of an area meeting affecting him or her personally and adversely may appeal to Meeting for Sufferings if, and only if,
- (a) the decision concerns the termination of his or her membership; and
 - (b) the grounds of the appeal are that the decision was not made in right ordering, or was not made with knowledge of the relevant facts, or was unreasonable; and
 - (c) experienced mediators have been involved and have failed to resolve the matter.
- 4.12 We have considered detailed aspects of the procedure for nomination and appointment by Meeting for Sufferings of members of an appeal panel, the processes followed by a panel, and the actions taken after a panel's decision on an appeal. Material on these detailed matters is being passed to the Recording Clerk, and does not need to be included in *Quaker faith & practice*.

(C) Appeals following disputes between area meetings

- 4.13 As regards section 4.26 of *Quaker faith & practice*, dealing with appeals following disputes between area meetings, we are not aware of any such disputes leading to an appeal to Meeting for Sufferings, and we doubt if such an appeal channel would be the best way of resolving any that might arise. We suggest that a more appropriate way forward would be to encourage an area meeting in dispute with another to seek advice from the Recording Clerk. We therefore recommend that the provisions in section 4.26 should be removed, and that in an appropriate place elsewhere in *Quaker faith & practice* provision should be made for an area meeting in dispute with another to seek advice from the Recording Clerk.

5 A wider piece of work

- 5.1 Calling on expertise and support in Quaker Life, and making use of standing conciliation groups where they exist, should be helpful to Meetings as they work to resolve difficulties. While this is important, we do not think it sufficient.
- 5.2 Developing our capacity within the Yearly Meeting as a whole for conflict transformation requires action on two main levels:

Corporately, by Meetings acknowledging that conflict can arise, and developing their processes for handling conflict within the Meeting community.

Individually, by each of us developing our awareness of the potential for conflict, and enhancing our personal skills for handling it.

We therefore recommend that the yearly meeting as a whole should address the challenges arising from conflicts in meetings, and should consider initiating some further work on ways of assisting conflict transformation – including the handling of difficulties affected by lack of familiarisation with Quaker processes and mental health issues - within meetings at all levels.

Val Ferguson (Oxford & Swindon AM)
Michael Hutchinson (West Scotland AM)
Beryl Milner, Convenor (Leeds AM)
Michael Phipps (Chilterns AM)
with Michael Booth, Secretary

Review of the BYM Sustainability Group

The BYM Sustainability Group is a working group of Meeting for Sufferings, set up by minute 10 of Meeting for Sufferings held 4 October 2014. Its purpose is to oversee and encourage progress in relation to the commitment, made at Yearly Meeting in 2011, to become a low-carbon, sustainable community. The Terms of Reference made provision for Meeting for Sufferings to review the Group after three years, to ensure this continues to be the right approach to taking forward our Commitment.

A Review Group was set up in 2017, and its report follows; Jane Stephenson will speak to the report at Meeting for Sufferings.

Report of BYM Sustainability Group Review Group

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- 1. Overview**
- 2. The Review Process**
- 3. The Findings**
 - 3.1 Activities of the BYM Sustainability Group (BYMSG)**
 - 3.2 Activities of other Quaker committees**
 - 3.3 What has gone well and the achievements of the BYMSG**
 - 3.4 What has been difficult and not gone well**
- 4. Recommendations**

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Background to the BYMSG and this review**
- Appendix 2 Activities of the BYMSG**
- Appendix 3 Survey results**

Executive Summary

In April 2017, four Friends were appointed by Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) to review the terms of reference of the Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group (BYMSG) and consider whether the BYMSG is the most effective way to oversee and encourage progress towards our shared commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community. On 3 February 2018 Meeting for Sufferings received the third annual report of the BYMSG's work, which recorded the year's achievements and frustrations, and also heard that the effects of climate change are being felt across the globe now: there is an urgent need for all Friends to fully engage with the commitment we have made. After much discernment, the review group feel that it is now time that responsibility for this important and difficult work should be taken in a more coherent way. We therefore recommend that the BYMSG is laid down, key tasks are taken on by appropriate central and standing committees and that MfS takes responsibility for reviewing progress in committees and area meetings, sharing success and indicating where additional support is required.

In conducting the review, 15 interviews have been undertaken with members of the BYMSG itself, staff and members of central and standing committees, and a survey has been completed by 166 Friends. Results have been collated to identify key activities and achievements of the BYMSG, difficulties faced in their work, and how progress on promoting sustainability within BYM is being carried out. Key achievements of the BYMSG have been the sustainability gatherings, and the commitment by Trustees to write sustainability into the Terms of Reference of all central and standing committees. Key difficulties we have heard have been regarding communication between BYMSG and such committees and a lack of clarity over the group's authority for recommendations to be adopted. We recognise that a critical difficulty has been that the BYMSG has been located outside the existing BYM structure, but feel that to locate such a group within any one part of the structure risks losing a holistic view. We therefore have four major recommendations:

1. we recommend that there should no longer be a single group tasked with leading action on the commitment and the current group should be laid down;
2. we have seen that over the past 3 years, central and standing committees have taken increasing responsibility for their role in facilitating the movement of BYM to becoming a low carbon, sustainable community and we see this approach of shared ownership to be important in encouraging progress throughout BYM. To ensure collaboration, effective communication, and that co-ordinated responsibility is taken for all required tasks, we recommend a specially convened meeting be held, to be attended by the clerks of BYMSG, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC), QPSW Economics, Sustainability & Peace Sub-Committee (ESP), Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC), Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC), Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (BYMT), the Board of Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited, Meeting for Sufferings, and all members of Management Meeting, to determine jointly exactly how this work is to be taken forward ;
3. we recommend that MfS maintain oversight, continuing to report back to Yearly Meeting each year on the progress of this concern, and do this by receiving annual reports from central and standing committees and AMs, sharing successes and identifying where further support is required;
4. we recommend that this new approach is reviewed in a further 3 years to ensure that it is achieving progress towards BYM becoming a low carbon, sustainable community.

1. Overview

We have reviewed the work of the BYM Sustainability Group's work in assisting the Society of Friends move towards meeting the Canterbury Commitment (CC) to become a low carbon, sustainable society, agreed at BYM 2011.

We have been enormously grateful to the Group's members, BYM staff and representatives of MfS, BYM Trustees, QLCC, QPSWCC, ESP sub-committee and

QSC for their time in helping us to consider the work of the BYMSG and the BYM as a whole in progressing this important commitment.

We have found that the work of the BYMSG has been frustrated at times by a lack of clarity in relation to its authority, and constrained by factors of time and resources to effectively work with existing work programmes and committees to make as much progress as it would have liked, especially in the area of supporting individual Friends and local Meetings to explore the Canterbury Commitment in relation to Quaker core spiritual values.

Despite this, the BYMSG can be commended for its perseverance, and some significant progress across BYM has been achieved since 2011.

However, we believe that the challenges facing all of us are significant, and the effects of climate change are already being felt by many countries across the globe. If we are truly to become a low carbon, sustainable society and contribute to the reduction in carbon emissions and consumption of finite resources we need to step up our actions – both individually and corporately.

Our recommendations reflect our findings and suggest a way forward whereby BYM can refresh its commitment made in 2011. Friends are also recognising new opportunities which have been arising since 2011, including the link to economic justice as reflected in BYM 2016 Minute 36, the Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice at the Sixth World Conference Friends in 2012 and the Pisac Sustainability Minute which came out of the World Plenary Meeting in Peru in 2016, and putting Quaker work on sustainability into the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Review Process

The members of the Sustainability Group Review Group (SGRG) have been Jane Stephenson (Clerk), Rici Marshall Cross, Gordon Benson and Teresa Belton; Michael Booth has acted as Secretary. The SGRG was tasked with considering whether clarifications, improvements or simplifications could be made to the terms of reference of the BYMSG and whether this group is the most effective way to oversee and encourage progress towards the shared commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community; and if so, the most appropriate location for such a group in BYM's structures. Background to the BYMSG and this review can be found in Appendix 1.

In order to undertake these considerations the SGRG has had sight of a number of documents and has interviewed in person, by telephone or by email a number of people, individually, or in groups, using a common schedule of questions. Those whose perspectives have been sought have been:

Lis Burch	Clerk to BYM Sustainability Group	Committee member
Douglas Butterfield	Co-clerk to Quaker Life Central Committee	Committee member
BYMSG as a whole	Committee Members	

Helen Drewery	Management Meeting, now with strategic responsibility for sustainability strategy	BYM Staff
Martin Ford	Quaker Stewardship Committee	Committee member
Paul Grey	Management Meeting, Friends House Hospitality Company	BYM Staff
Lesley Hennigan,	Property Support Legacy Funding Project	Former BYM Staff
Caroline Kibblewhite and Charlotte Seymour-Smith	Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee	Committee members
Laurie Michaelis	Secretary to BYM Sustainability Group and ex-officio rep of Living Witness	Paid as Secretary but not BYM Staff
Paul Parker	Management Meeting: Recording Clerk	BYM Staff
Juliet Prager	Management Meeting: Deputy Recording Clerk and Secretary to Meeting for Sufferings	BYM Staff
Sunniva Taylor & Chris Walker	Quaker Peace & Social Witness	BYM Staff
Sue Tyldesley	Clerk to Economy, Sustainability and Peace Sub-Committee	Committee member
Anne Ullathorne	Clerk to Meeting for Sufferings	Committee member
Maya Williams	Economics, Sustainability & Peace Network Coordinator	BYM Staff
Chris Wilmore & Nick Francis	Trustees	Committee members

We have also conducted an online survey of Friends in 46 local meetings within 13 area meetings to gain some indication of the impact of the work of the BYMSG on local Friends and meetings.

What follows is taken from documents and feedback provided by those individuals and groups whose perspectives have been sought by the SGRG.

3. Findings

3.1 Activities of the BYMSG

The Group's work has focused on developing 'Recommendations for Action', a strategy document which considers how BYM can take significant steps forward to meeting the CC. It is arranged under the following headings:

- Eldership: rooting the commitment in our Quaker faith;
- Oversight: Strengthening Our Community;
- Living faithfully: Changing our lifestyles;
- Right Ordering: Quaker Core Activities and Property; and

- Witness: Taking Political Action and Promoting Systemic Change.

Under each heading the group has considered what actions can be taken by different parts of BYM including those where it has been able to take a lead. Progress against meeting the recommendations has been reported to MfS and BYM annually. Some considerable progress has been made across BYM and our review has focused on how best to take things forward from this point. The Group's latest report was presented to MfS on 3 February 2018.

Some of the activities which the BYMSG have instigated and developed are:

- a special interest meeting at BYM 2015 on What's Quaker about the Canterbury Commitment;
- a threshing meeting co-hosted by Woodbrooke with twelve invited Friends to develop ideas that would later be developed into a project proposal for Nurturing our Sustainability Ministry;
- a weekend Sustainability Gathering for Friends in Swanwick, Derbyshire;
- and a meeting with the QL Rep Council on the spiritual basis of the sustainability commitment. Further details of BYMSG's activities from December 2014 to November 2017 can be found in Appendix 2.

One of the issues covered in Minute 36 relates to monitoring and evaluation of BYM's progress to become a low carbon society. In their 2017 report to MfS, the BYMSG highlighted the importance of monitoring progress in LMs. In past years, several approaches have been tried: Meeting check-ups in the sustainability toolkit, carbon calculators for individuals and Meetings, the Yorkshire Survey (one-to-one phone call with a Friend from each LM in Yorkshire), the Yearly Energy Statement (collection of a meter reading from LMs each year to be normalized for weather and meeting house usage and compared over a number of years), and sustainability stories collected and posted on the BYM website. The choice of approach depends on the purpose for monitoring progress. Several purposes have been identified, including: the Minute 36 reference; to enable us to learn from experience and improve action we are taking; and to inspire other Meetings with success stories. The BYMSG have been clear that they believe the key purpose for collecting the information should be to focus attention and measure progress but not to compare Meetings with each other. It has been felt that different approaches will work better for some Meetings than others and may depend on whether Meetings have enthusiasm for monitoring progress or would feel this to be an imposition. Ongoing monitoring would require staff time, resourcing and clarity on where in the structure it would lie.

3.2 Activities of other Quaker Committees

There have been some significant achievements made across BYM through its central and standing committees and centrally managed work, independent of the work of the BYMSG. Some of the highlights are:

- The Hospitality Board has made significant progress in reducing the carbon emissions of Friends House;
- Trustees have adopted a Sustainability Strategy, and reviewed the spend on sustainability work across BYM;
- Fracking – Meeting for Sufferings has an agreed statement against fracking;

- BYM have funded a new position based at QUNO to support Yearly Meetings' work on sustainability and tackling climate change; and
- Sustainable Living Commitment – BYM have supported this new initiative launched at Paris COP 23 engaging world faiths in sustainability and climate change work.

3.3 What has gone well and the achievements of the BYM Sustainability Group

3.3.1 Sustainability Gatherings

There is widespread agreement that the Sustainability Gatherings held in Swanwick, Derbyshire, in 2012 and 2014, the first run by the original Minute 36 Group and the second by the BYMSG, in collaboration with Woodbrooke and BYM staff, were very worthwhile and inspiring events, particularly the second gathering. The evaluation of this event showed that half the attendees were not already committed to environmental sustainability when they came. The biennial gatherings have also been found to be very supportive for 'lone' advocates of sustainability. QPSW staff noted that a significant number of Friends have subsequently mentioned that it was this Gathering that got them active or connected to others who are active in sustainability.

3.3.2 Quaker Life

Both the BYMSG and Quaker Life (QL) believe that a very positive engagement between them has begun to develop. There has been a significant shift in the willingness of QLCC and QL staff to engage with the Group and their role in taking forward the Canterbury Commitment. QLCC have had numerous interactions with the BYMSG, and have valued them. The BYMSG worked with a whole meeting of Quaker Life Representative Council in October 2016 which was devoted to living out the testimony to Sustainability, and it was found to be a vital and much appreciated meeting of the Rep Council. The group has also prompted the inclusion of material about sustainability in the online learning resource Being Friends Together which has been developed jointly by staff of Quaker Life and Woodbrooke. The SGRG were told that QL has found that the BYMSG is continually keen to liaise with QLCC, and interactions have been appreciated. The BYMSG have provided QL with all their developmental papers, so that QL are more aware of the depth and breadth of the thinking that the Group has put into living out the development of the testimony. The BYMSG have promoted partnership working between Quaker Life, Woodbrooke and Living Witness, and have provided material for individual local and area meetings and individual Friends when requested, including speakers, study materials and talks, enabling broader consideration of the Canterbury Commitment.

3.3.3 Quaker Stewardship Committee

Having identified their key role in monitoring progress on the CC in area meetings, the QSC requested and received advice from the BYMSG on what questions to include in the Area Meetings' Annual Report Checklist in relation to sustainability. The QSC will use these to encourage AMs to report their sustainability actions in a systematic way in future.

3.3.4 BYM Trustees

BYM Trustees are aware that central and standing committees are now taking on more sustainability issues, and have taken on board the need to ensure that the new staff role to support area meetings regarding property matters includes sustainability issues. The BYMSG have secured a commitment from BYM Trustees to write sustainability into the terms of reference (ToR) for all BYM Committees. All Committees' ToR have been reviewed with the exception of BYM Trustees themselves and QSC. These are due to be reviewed after BYM in 2018. This whole process therefore will be complete during 2019. BYM Trustees have now approved a sustainability strategy (November 2017) and reviewed funding committed to sustainability across BYM.

3.3.5 Meeting for Sufferings

The BYMSG have provided an annual report for Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) and contributed to MfS reports to BYM. Staff have monitored the environmental impact of MfS, eg transport/travel, so that MfS Arrangements Committee can review its environmental impact from time to time.

3.3.6 Facilitating difficult conversations

A session organised in mid-2016 about communications by and for the BYMSG with George Marshall, author of "Don't Even Think about It: why our brains are wired to ignore climate change" was helpful in assisting their thinking about how to have difficult conversations, and the whole issue of giving people tools and techniques to effect change. The BYMSG ran sessions at BYM 2017 on 'Having Difficult Conversations'.

3.3.7 Nurturing our Sustainability Ministry Proposal

A proposal for a legacy funded project has been drawn up to help Friends think about the spiritual underpinnings of the requirement to pursue sustainability, and to support them in developing their own ministry, whether that be through writing, painting, taking action, or other means. This proposal is being developed by staff with a view to preparing a proposal for a legacy funding bid to Trustees.

3.4 What has been difficult and not gone well

3.4.1 Summary of difficulties identified in interviews

- A. The BYM Sustainability Group has sat outside the core committee structure of BYM. A key difficulty has been lack of clarity over the level of its authority and ability to instigate action within the Society. Good intentions have therefore not resulted in much effective collaboration or integration.
- B. The terms of reference of BYMSG set up by Meeting for Sufferings have not been sufficiently precise nor made a proper distinction between the role of the BYMSG and that of other committees.
- C. The BYMSG have found difficulty in being a group which bridges all aspects of sustainability, from staffed work programmes to individuals in meetings; there is not much precedent for this type of group. With the benefit of hindsight, it seems an unrealistic demand that a voluntary committee should be able to get to grips with such an enormous task.

- D. The Society of Friends' working processes are inflexible, and timescales slow in relation to the urgency of the issue of sustainability.
- E. There is the perception that sustainability work has been under-resourced in relation to the task of moving the whole of BYM to being a low carbon society. Although a recent report supplied by the Management Team for Trustees in May 2017 shows that significant resources have been spent on the Canterbury Commitment, this has not been widely shared at the time at which we are writing this report.

3.4.2 Details of difficulties as identified in interviews with BYMSG and other Committees/Staff

There is general agreement on the good will and hard work of all concerned, and appreciation of the enthusiasm and commitment of the BYMSG. However, the work of the Group appears to have been beset by confusion, frustration and poor communication on all sides.

Our conversations with the BYMSG group itself and other committees have identified a number of issues which are outlined below.

- A. QPSWCC has top level responsibility relating to Friends and sustainability. This Central Committee and its sub-committee, Economics, Sustainability and Peace (ESP), agree the work programme for the staff members who work directly on sustainability and therefore have a lead role in taking forward the Canterbury Commitment. A review of the Management Meeting took place in 2016 and a new position of Head of Witness and Worship was created as a result. This post acts as Secretary to QPSWCC and QLCC, line managing QPSW staff members and also responsibility within the Management Meeting for the Sustainability Strategy. The role of BYMSG alongside this structure, which has changed during the life of the group, has caused structural confusion and personal tensions.
- B. Communication issues have been compounded by the fact that the secretary to the BYMSG, though paid for this role, is not a member of staff. This is unusual within Committees/Groups within BYM and has made it difficult from all sides to ensure that communication channels are effective.
- C. Furthermore, where staff do attend the BYMSG meetings they often don't stay for the whole meeting. This has limited staffs' full engagement in the work of the Group itself and the Group's knowledge and appreciation of all the centrally managed work on sustainability issues.
- D. Consequently, the BYMSG has found it difficult to work out how to engage with the centrally managed work. They have met 3-4 times a year, and they have struggled with how they can relate to other committees' workloads and cycles. There is a common view that the group has found it difficult to get support to ensure its recommendations are taken forward in a coordinated and coherent way as it sits outside the Quaker structure.

- E. There has been no regular reporting or communication framework between the BYMSG and other committees, and ESP have been very surprised that they have had almost no contact with them.
- F. The BYMSG have shared their minutes with other committees since 2016, but their only formal reporting required is to Meeting for Sufferings and BYM. The BYMSG produced annual reports for MfS but, from the MfS perspective there has not been much interaction in between reports, and more liaising might have opened up discussions and the BYMSG could perhaps have got more support. However MfS has a lot of competing demands and needs to react to new issues, eg, refugees and decriminalisation of drug use. From the perspective of the BYMSG, they feel that they have taken things to MfS but MfS has not necessarily been interested – it is dependent on where an item sits on the agenda. More interaction with the agenda- setting process might have been useful in order for MfS to have played a more active role.
- G. There has been no formal requirement for other committees to report to the BYMSG on their sustainability work.
- H. The BYMSG were asked to take over from the Minute 36 Group responsibility for the benchmarking of progress in becoming a low carbon community, yet the BYMSG's terms of reference relate to eldership and oversight, not technical support. From outside the group one view is that: "The BYMSG seems bogged down in the Minute 36 requirement for benchmarking, monitoring and reporting of progress, and it feels as if this is limited to carbon use rather than wider aspects of sustainable community. It does not reflect the diverse activities being undertaken on the ground, which lend themselves to telling stories rather than making measurements". On the other hand, Trustees expressed huge goodwill towards sustainability work, and would have welcomed more concrete, implementable ideas from the BYMSG. In contrast, from within the group we heard, "The BYMSG's job is not about practical action - its terms of reference are about eldership and oversight".
- I. There have not been clear expectations among all concerned as to who initiates communication with whom, and as to level of 'authority' of the BYMSG in relation to other committees and staff roles. This means that a lot of time has been spent navigating politics and structures.
- J. There has been no communication between the BYMSG and the Hospitality Board or Quaker recognised bodies.
- K. Progress on the proposal for a legacy-funded Nurturing Ministry on Sustainability Project has been very slow; it is now clear that any proposal for legacy funding has to come through Management Meeting, and this has led to frustrations between the BYMSG and staff. It is unclear where the proposal would sit within Quaker structures, should legacy funding be forthcoming.
- L. One view the SGRG heard from within the BYMSG is that there has been a problem for the group in marrying up a concern adopted by Yearly Meeting with the BYM work plan: work is discerned by committees and staff, also by MfS, and

funded by Trustees. The work plan is set some years ahead, the budgeting is tightly nailed down, the staffing is planned, so it is difficult to know how concerns adopted by BYM can be implemented alongside existing work programmes in the short term.

- M. The BYMSG has six members, nominated by Central Nominations Committee and appointed by Meeting for Sufferings. The clerk and secretary of the BYMSG have consistently said that the group needs members who are spiritually well-grounded, good networkers, understand Quaker structures, are experienced in eldership and oversight, and who want to support Yearly Meeting in difficult transitions; a position which has been shared by trustees. Yet Nominations have consistently focused on Friends' gifts for enthusiasm for 'sustainability' rather than their experience of roles grounded in Quaker practices of eldership and oversight, attributes that are so key to the remit of the Group.
- N. Within the BYMSG it is felt that six years' hard work and commitment have been lost, with barriers constantly put in their way, while a view from outside the group is that the BYMSG has been a "brake on change".
- O. Many local Friends are not engaging with sustainability. The problem is that the issue is very personal for people and many feel challenged by it. Also, people who do feel committed to sustainability feel frustrated with those who don't, which creates communication problems. The Canterbury Commitment is not explicit about why we as Quakers should act on climate change, and there isn't yet a shared understanding of the implications of Quaker faith for lifestyles. MfS could play an important role in this arena through AM representatives; however it is very dependent on how representatives relay messages back to AMs and LMs and how these are received at a local level.
- P. The BYMSG feel that there has been lack of a coherent review of resources (staffing and funding) allocated to the Canterbury Commitment and that this has meant that it has been difficult to assess the value for money achieved and subsequently difficult to prioritise where resource allocation is best applied. In undertaking this review we have been made aware of the paper prepared for Trustees on resources devoted to sustainability.
- Q. One view shared with us was that the BYMSG "has not been greater than the sum of its parts", with time taken up by attending meetings and continual frustrations over lack of empowerment sapping Group members' energy. Members of the Group have a huge amount of enthusiasm and commitment for sustainability and it may be that this could be put to better use by taking forward the Canterbury Commitment within BYM in other ways.

3.5 Survey findings

In order to understand the experience of Friends at a local level, a survey was undertaken using Survey Monkey which was sent to 46 local meetings within 13 area meetings through personal communication by the members of the review group. The survey asked thirteen questions, which were mainly multiple choice though three were open ended. 164 people responded to the survey though not every participant answered every question. The aim of the survey was to ascertain how well the BYM

Sustainability Group is known at local level and what interactions Friends have had. We also wanted to understand whether actions taken to reduce environmental impact at a personal level or by LM or AMs had been influenced by the BYMSG.

In drawing conclusions from this survey, a large majority of those surveyed said they had at least some interest in environmental issues, most had heard of the 2011 Canterbury Commitment, and over 70% were aware of the existence of the BYM Sustainability Group. Not many Friends were directly aware of having had interaction with the BYMSG although those who had, felt the engagement had sustained their actions or led to more actions to reduce their own or their Meeting's environmental impact. A large majority of Friends have taken small or major steps to reduce their environmental impact, though most stated that the main source of engagement or resources was outside of their Quaker community. Similarly, two thirds said they were aware of action at LM or AM level, though these were not generally understood to be clearly led by engagement or resources from Quaker sources. The most frequently stated source of Quaker encouragement was the 2011 commitment itself, and this appears to have had more impact at a Meeting level than a personal level. The biggest impact that the SG has had appears to have been through the sustainability gatherings.

A breakdown of the results of the survey are in Appendix 3.

4. Recommendations

The BYMSG Review Group have carefully considered their findings and offer the following recommendations as a means of ensuring that BYM moves forward in a more co-ordinated way to develop and meet its commitment to become a low carbon, sustainable community.

4.1 The BYM Sustainability Group

The Review Group fully recognize and wish to acknowledge the tremendous energy, knowledge and perseverance contributed by the BYM Sustainability Group, and the immensely valuable thinking and activities in furtherance of the Canterbury Commitment to becoming a low carbon, sustainable society that have been the fruits of its work for BYM during its three-year term. However, due to the difficulties encountered in taking the commitment forward in this way, as set out above, we recommend that the existing BYM Sustainability Group should be laid down to pave the way for a new approach which builds on the work that has been done and ensures that future work is given the priority demanded by the Canterbury Commitment and the urgency to address the threats associated with climate change. We hope, in addition, that by laying down the BYMSG, its members will feel released to use their passionate concern for the environment in ways that they find less frustrating.

However, it is recognised that the BYMSG is currently working on a programme of work, perhaps most significantly the next Sustainability Gathering to be held in Swanwick in October 2018. We recommend that MfS Arrangements Group work with the Clerk of the BYMSG to agree how best this work can be supported, which may include resourcing the existing small planning group to continue work on the 2018 Sustainability Gathering.

Timing of the laying down of the BYMSG will be dependent on the outcome of the implementation of 4.3 below relating to how the responsibilities for the Canterbury Commitment are taken forward.

4.2 Future Sustainability work

The recommendations below are drawn from our review of the work of the BYMSG and interviews with them and other Committees and staff members. They relate to work that the BYMSG has been developing and which would need to find a new 'home' once the group has been laid down.

- i) Ensuring that local Friends have opportunities to gather together, ideally annually, to consider the CC in relation to their own lives and the life of their LMs and AMs: to share stories, learn new approaches to engage with people and be inspired to become a low carbon society. The BYMSG has instigated a series of successful Sustainability Gatherings in conjunction with QPSW and Woodbrooke. A commitment to continue these specialist meetings beyond 2018 might be the best way forward, and there may also be other ways, for example by focusing existing opportunities, such as the Activists weekends, on sustainability.
- ii) Developing skills centrally and locally around having difficult conversations and giving people motivation, tools and techniques to effect change, drawing on examples from elsewhere, eg, using the advice provided by George Marshall.
- iii) Encouraging individual Friends, LMs and AMs to seek collaborations with other bodies working on sustainability issues, for example Eco Churches, Transition Towns and community-based sustainability groups.
- iv) Progressing the Nurturing Ministry on Sustainability Project.
- v) Additions to *Quaker faith & practice/Advices & queries* to strengthen the faith underpinnings of sustainability as part of the Qf&p review process. There is already a Green Advices and Queries (produced by Living Witness) which could be more widely promoted.
- vi) Reviewing the systems for monitoring and describing changes made, including new AM reports on sustainability, centrally managed work, Hospitality Board, Quaker committees, and incorporating these into the Trustees Annual Reports.
- vii) Looking beyond carbon reduction to consider how sustainability relates to wider social, economic and peace issues and linking these to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- viii) Encouraging Quaker Recognised Bodies who wish to engage with the sustainability issues.

The above list is not exhaustive, and we would expect and encourage BYM, AMs, LMs and individual Friends to be creative in developing new approaches to tackling climate change and wider sustainability issues of resource depletion and pollution.

4.3 Responsibility for sustainability going forward

Going forward, there needs to be a common agreement on how BYM's commitment to becoming a low carbon and sustainable community can be supported in a coherent and co-ordinated way. This needs to take into account the existing BYM structures.

Rather than suggesting a particular location in BYM's structures for a separate group with responsibility for sustainability, the SGRG recommends that all Quaker central and standing committees and the Management Meeting need to take responsibility for sustainability issues, relevant to their own spheres of work, in a comprehensive and integrated way. To this end, we recommend that a specially convened meeting/meetings of the clerks of BYMSG, QPSWCC, ESP sub-committee, QLCC, QSC, BYM Trustees, the Board of Friends House Hospitality, MfS and all members of Management Meeting, should be held in June or July to:

- clarify and agree which aspects of sustainability come under the remit of each committee;
- review the progress made in revising Committees' Terms of Reference for Committees regarding sustainability and agreed by Trustees and how these are being implemented to avoid duplication and confusion;
- revisit the Recommendations for Action made by the BYMSG and this report in 4.2 above, to achieve clarity as to who has responsibility for taking them forward and, where gaps exist, how they might be filled in future;
- how best to develop and implement a co-ordinated approach to embedding sustainability in the physical, spiritual and practical witness of Friends, corporately and individually;
- how best to review the progress towards becoming a sustainable community and where responsibility for the review process lies;
- whether or not additional resources need to be found to take this work forward; and
- whether such meetings should happen annually to continue the collaborative approach.

We suggest that this meeting/s could be externally facilitated to allow all participants to engage fully in the process.

This meeting should produce a short report to be presented to MfS stating clearly the roles, going forward, of each committee and Management Meeting, and how potential duplication is to be avoided and collaboration co-ordinated. The report should include consideration of any need for further resourcing of the work, and of how progress will be reported to MfS on a regular basis. We suggest that progress reports are organized under the headings provided by the BYMSG's Recommendations for Action, in 3.1 above.

4.4 Resourcing Sustainability work

A consideration of the funding basis for sustainability work needs to be undertaken by Trustees as part of the budget-setting process following 4.3 above.

4.5 Meeting for Sufferings' role in reviewing BYM's sustainability work

MfS should receive annual reporting on sustainability by central and standing committees and AMs. It is hoped that this will enable a celebration and sharing of success stories and an annual appraisal of where additional support is required, particularly for AMs who are unengaged.

It is recommended that a review of progress happens after 3 years to assess whether the agreed approach is proving to be the best way.

4.6 Timing for proposed changes

The table below provides details of the timing of the presentation of this report to MfS and confirmation of the resourcing for the Sustainability Gathering 2018.

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Present report to MfS															
Meeting to agree responsibilities for the Canterbury Commitment - report															
Lay down BYMSG <i>tbc</i>															
Trustee review of resourcing															
Face-to-face gathering 2018															
MfS review of sustainability work (then annually)															
MfS report to YM (annually)															

BYMSG Review Group:

Teresa Belton – Norfolk & Waverley AM

Jane Stephenson – West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM

Gordon Benson – Pendle Hill AM

Rici Marshall Cross - Leeds AM

Appendices

Appendix 1: Background to the BYM Sustainability Group and this review

What is meant by “sustainability”

The term sustainability is now commonly used in a variety of contexts, and also misused. In the present context “sustainability” refers to environmental sustainability. Given that human affairs are never static but always developing in some sense, it is perhaps useful to be reminded of that the term “sustainable development” was coined in the paper Our Common Future, released by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, which defined it as “the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

The Canterbury commitment agreed at BYM in 2011 concerned itself specifically with Quakers in Britain working to become a low carbon community. Since 2011 the UN has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals which cover a wide range of topic areas covering a range of social, economic and environmental issues.

The Canterbury Commitment

In 2009 Yearly Meeting endorsed the Copenhagen summit on climate change and in 2011 sustainability became a key theme, following input from some individual Friends, a number of threshing meetings, and Pam Lunn’s Swarthmore Lecture “Costing Not Less than Everything”. The result was Minute 36, known as the Canterbury Commitment, committing BYM to becoming a low carbon, sustainable community. It was felt to be a new phase in a long history of concern around sustainability.

Minute 36 Group

In 2012 Meeting for Sufferings set up the Minute 36 Group to support Friends and Meetings in the implementation of the commitment by

- strengthening the sense of a national Quaker community and a shared sense of values and purpose
- ensuring that Friends and Meetings have access to a wide range of resources for changing lifestyles
- enabling information to be gathered and shared to monitor progress and provide benchmarks, good practice guidance and inspiration, in order to make core Quaker activities and property low carbon; and
- working for systemic and policy change

However, there were difficulties with the Minute 36 Group from the beginning. Membership of the group was made up of representatives of existing committees but was not successful as a practical way of engaging with committees; the secretary of the group was over-stretched in having to take on this role in addition to their existing work; the spiritual aspect of the commitment was not given enough consideration; too much time was devoted to discussing what the group should do; ideas were rushed into; and the group ran into questions about its authority.

Outline of the BYM Sustainability Group

In 2014 the Minute 36 Group was laid down and the BYM Sustainability Group (BYMSG) was set up by Meeting for Sufferings for three years to continue to oversee and encourage progress in relation to BYM becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community, and the work in establishing “a baseline of current witness and a framework in which individual Friends and local meetings can share their successes”. Its six members were nominated by Central Nominations Committee. The group was intended to have “a leadership role, similar to eldership and oversight, in relation to the commitment”. Its aim was “to provide encouragement, support, guidance and inspiration to all parts of our Quaker community”. In 2016 the BYM management structure changed and the Head of Witness and Worship now has responsibility for BYM’s sustainability strategy.

Group members:

Lis Burch, Oxford & Swindon AM
Claudia Fry, Surrey & Hampshire Border AM
Ethel Livermore, South London AM
Martin Mansell, West Scotland AM
Christopher Martin, Central England AM
Stevie Kraye, Southern Marches AM
Anne Ullathorne, Central England AM
Martina Weitsch, North West London AM
Gillian Westcott, Devon AM

Appendix 2: Activities of the BYMSG

BYMSG Activities December 2014 to November 2017.

Date	Event	Themes/major agenda items	Communication, proposals, committee links etc.
12/12/14	BYMSG meeting, Friends House	Review <i>Recommendations for Action</i> from Minute 36 Commitment Group. Consider how to work as a new group.	Small groups set up to work on "Property" (relating to the recommendations on Quaker core practices and property including the Yearly Energy Survey (YES) proposal) and the 2016 Face to Face Gathering (F2F) .
10/2/15	BYMSG meeting, Friends House	Vision and time-line for our work and for sustainability in BYM	Lis Burch to meet QL co-clerks. Martina Weitsch to provide workshop at Annual Conference of Treasurers. Follow up – paper on potential QLCC involvement in sustainability commitment. Lis & Martina met QL co-clerks 3/4/15(?).
1-4/5/15	BYM special interest meeting	What's Quaker about the Canterbury Commitment? (organised as a workshop, asking Friends this question)	
1-3/6/15	BYMSG meeting, Woodbrooke	In-depth review of progress in relation to the <i>Recommendations</i> , exploration of our "leadership role, similar to eldership & oversight", creative/in-depth discussion of various focus areas including support for local meetings, international work, and the faith basis of the commitment.	Next steps included: work on the 2016 F2F, developing the project that became " Nurturing Our Sustainability Ministry (NOSM) "; developing ideas for a QL Rep Council focused on sustainability (this had been invited by QL General Sec); reviewing the support requested by and provided to LMs
18/8/15	Threshing meeting, Woodbrooke	Exploring "What is Quaker about our sustainability commitment". This was co-hosted by Woodbrooke.	12 invited Friends developed ideas that became NOSM. Several wrote background papers which were compiled and used as background for later events including the 2016 F2F.
27/8/15	BYMSG meeting, Friends House	Review of workshops provided to LMs by QPSW, LW, Woodbrooke. Review of resources for lifestyle change. Review of threshing meeting. Preparation for 2016 Sustainability Gathering etc	Development of NOSM consultation paper. Encouragement to LW and QPSW to update lifestyle resources. Clerk to communicate with YMAC on BYMSG's work and possible themes for YM 2016/17.

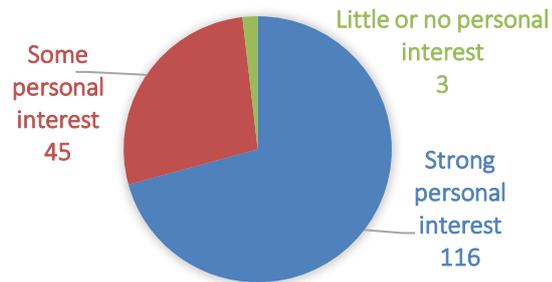
13/11/15	BYMSG meeting, Friends House	Monitoring progress in LMs. NOSM.	Newsheet for MfS. Approaches to QSC and BYMTs clerks regarding YES. Consultation with QPSWCC, QLCC, Woodbrooke and YFGM on NOSM. Lis to write annual report to MfS.
6/2/16	MfS	BYMSG annual report to MfS	Minute encouraging attendance at F2F
11/2/16	BYMSG meeting, Friends House	Connecting with other committees. Planning for F2F. Paper on policy & system change	Clerk & secretary to make contact with various committees, suggesting intervisitation and inviting them to send reps to F2F. Small group to plan YM special interest meeting.
18-20/3/16	BYM Sustainability Gathering (F2F), Swanwick	Our Sustainability Commitment: Being a Transformational Community	Attended by several committee reps (BYMTs, QPSWCC, QLRC). This led to QLRC in October focused on sustainability. A number of Friends decided to work in regional groupings.
27-30/5/16	BYM special interest meeting	Being a Transformational Community	Focused on NOSM – workshop inviting Friends to explore what their sustainability ministry might be, and what support they needed to develop it.
7-9/6/16	BYMSG meeting, Woodbrooke	Links with QWRC, follow up on Pisac, evaluation of F2F, session with George Marshall of <i>Climate Outreach</i> on communication within and beyond BYM	Suggestions to MfS, BYMTs and ESP on BYM actions on sustainability responding to Pisac minute. Minute sent to QLCC on issues arising from sustainability commitment in discernment, discipleship etc. Minute sent to QPSWCC upholding them in their work and offering any support that might be useful. Suggestion to CCs that we join with them for their joint meeting in Feb 2017. Set up small group to plan next F2F. Suggestions to YMAC for consideration of sustainability at YMG in 2017. Set up small group to meet with staff and discuss greening YMG. Follow-up with F2F participants to find out whether regional groupings have prospered. Next steps on NOSM, Laurie Michaelis to work with Juliet Prager to develop proposal for legacy funding.
21-24/6/16	Composing the Covenant, Woodbrooke	Intended as first event in NOSM. 16 Friends bringing contributions on Quaker “eco-theology” or “talking about our faith”	Produced a summary which was used at later meetings and events. Frances Voelcker participated. Laurie Michaelis co-led with Stuart Masters. Other participants have since been appointed to BYMSG.

6/9/16	BYMSG meeting, Skype	Further reflection on session with George Marshall and our approach to communication. Consideration of sustainability at YMG 2017, ESP/Living Witness proposal for update of <i>Sustainability Toolkit</i>	Draft paper for YMAC with suggestions for YMG
22/9/16	BYMSG meeting, Skype	Planning activities at YMG, planning 2018 F2F, draft legacy funding proposal for NOSM	Small group to work on YMG activities. Appointed planning group for F2F Gathering. Standing invitation to QPSWCC, QLCC to send someone to our meetings.
14-16/10/16	Quaker Life Rep Council	Spiritual basis of sustainability commitment	Martin Mansell and Laurie Michaelis attended.
10/11/16	BYMSG meeting, Friends House	Annual report to MfS. Revision of <i>Recommendations for Action</i> . Property support. Preparation for QPSW, QL joint CCs meeting. Preparation for YMG.	Attended by Lesley Hennigan (property support officer) Revised <i>Recommendations</i> including sections on eldership, oversight, living faithfully, right ordering and witness and replacing recommendation on YES with a more general point on benchmarking and monitoring progress in local meetings. Set up small group to consider survey of local and area meetings
4/2/17	MfS	BYMSG annual report given by Lis Burch. Including revised <i>Recommendations</i> and mention of new projects – NOSM, Green Light	Supportive minute
10-12/2/17	QPSW/QLCCs	Focus on Vibrancy and Sustainability. Lis Burch, Stevie Krayer and Laurie Michaelis attended for BYMSG.	Minute on committees working together on sustainability, NOSM an opportunity for CCs to work together.
18/2/17	BYMTs	Lis Burch and Laurie Michaelis attended for item focusing on sustainability work	BYMSG to report to BYMTs as well as MfS. Support for NOSM.
22/2/17	BYMSG meeting, Friends House	Review of meetings with other committees. Next steps on NOSM. Possibility of regional gatherings since next F2F can't be until late 2018. Preparation for YMG. Paper on options for benchmarking and monitoring progress in local meetings.	Minute forwarded to MtM on possible need for coordinating and linking sustainability-related legacy-funded projects. Ask Lis Burch and Laurie Michaelis to liaise with MtM on taking work forward, in particular NOSM, Benchmarking and Monitoring. Set up planning group for YMG activities.
7/3/17	MtM	Lis Burch and Laurie Michaelis attended to explore ways of taking forward sustainability work	NOSM a priority. Sarah Griffith to work with Laurie on legacy funding proposal. Less clarity about benchmarking and monitoring.

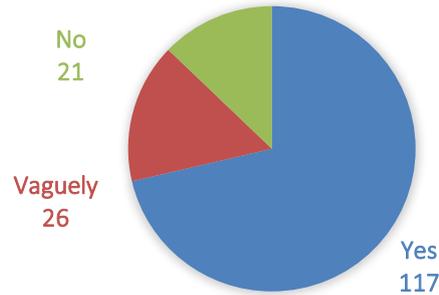
10/4/17	Consultation on NOSM at Friends House	Meeting with reps from QPSWCC, QLCC, YFGM, Woodbrooke (prevented) to develop shared understanding of NOSM project.	Restatement of vision and aims. Led to revised legacy funding proposal.
10-12/5/17	BYMSG meeting, Woodbrooke	Vibrancy project, NOSM, YMG preparation, F2F and regional gatherings, progress in <i>Recommendations</i> , review of BYMSG,	Claudia Fry started attending as YFGM rep. Rachel Matthews joined by Skype for item on Vibrancy. Rici Marshall Cross joined for sessions on F2F and review of BYMSG. Small group to work on revised suggestions for benchmarking and monitoring.
29/7 – 5/8/17	YMG	Lis Burch spoke as part of MfS report to YM. Three BYMSG special interest meetings: Stevie Krayer and Frances Voelker – creative session with art materials, Martin Mansell and Laurie Michaelis – having difficult conversations about climate change, Laurie Michaelis – working with others (as part of movement building).	
19/9/17	BYMSG meeting, Friends House	Reflections on YMG. Planning for FF2F. Benchmarking and Monitoring. Links with QPSW/ESP work. Preparation for YM 2018.	Anne Wilkinson attended for items on YMG and Face to Face Gathering. Recommendations on inclusion of sustainability in Area Meeting annual reports – sent to QSC sub group working on this. Maya Williams attended for item on ESP links. Paper for YMAC suggesting consideration of sustainability at YM 2018. Sustainability Gathering Planning Group to resume its work.
21/11/17	BYMSG meeting, Friends House	FWCC work and reflections on Quaker presence at climate negotiations in Bonn. Recommendations from Sustainability Gathering Planning Group. BYMSG Review.	Jane Stephenson attended. Susanna Mattingly attended for items on FWCC. Lis Burch to prepare report to MfS.

Appendix 3: Survey results: Experience of Friends in local meetings

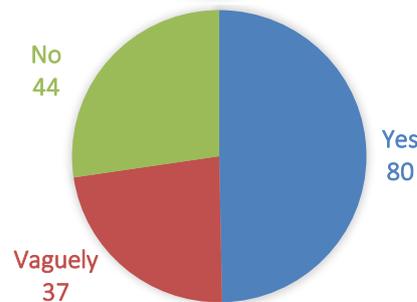
Q1 Would you say that you have a particular personal interest in environmental issues?



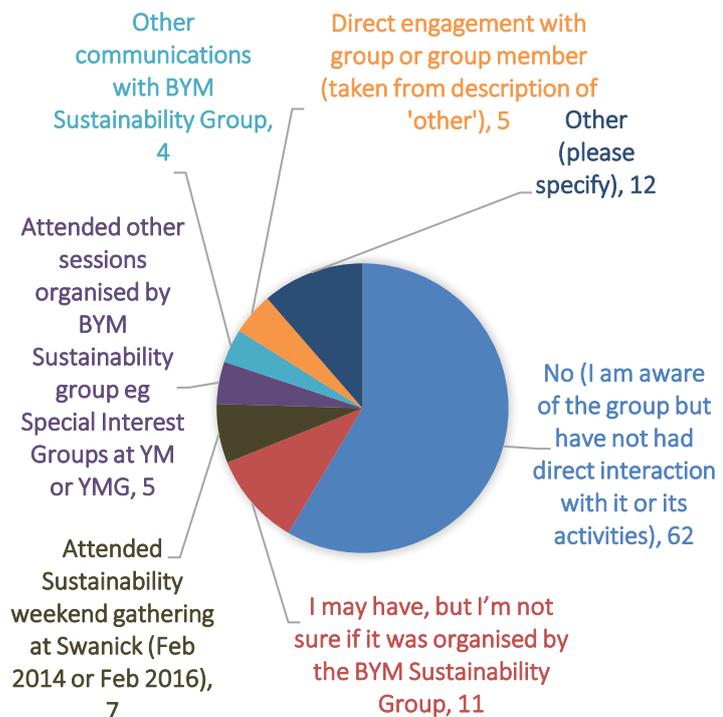
Q2 Have you heard of British Quakers' Canterbury Commitment to becoming a low carbon, sustainable community?



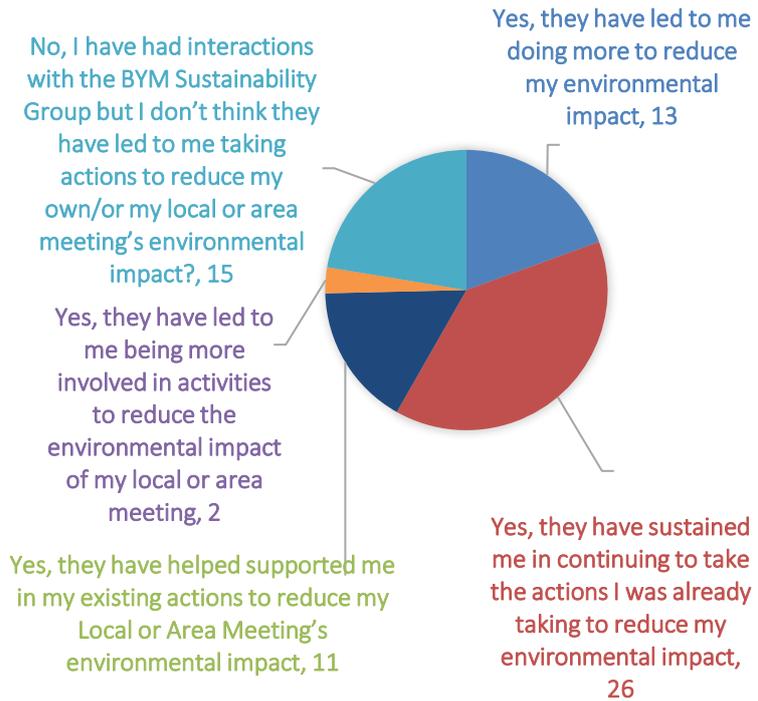
Q3 Are you aware of the Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group?



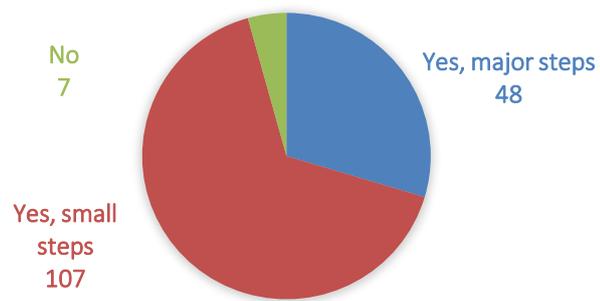
Q4 If you answered 'yes' or 'vaguely' to question 3, have you had any interaction with the BYM Sustainability Group yourself?



Q5 Do you think these interactions have led to actions to reduce your/or your LM's or AM's environmental impact?



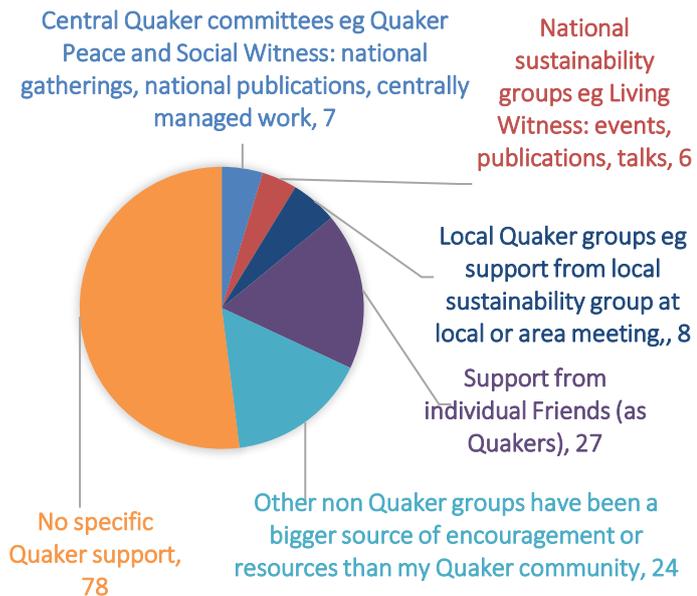
Q6 Have you taken any steps in your everyday life to reduce your environmental impact?



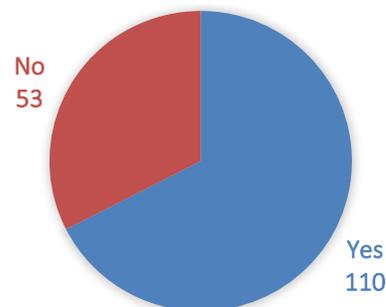
Q7 If you answered yes to question 6, what type of changes have you taken? Please give us up to three examples of the changes you have taken

key themes were increased recycling, more use of public transport and decreasing energy usage including the installation of solar panels. The move to vegetarianism and veganism in the society for some was based on environmental concerns

Q8 If you answered yes to question 6, have any of these measures been taken as a direct result of encouragement or resources provided by Quakers. If so which ones?



Q9 Are you aware of any measures that your Local or Area Meeting has taken to reduce its corporate environmental impact?



These include energy consumption reduction including improving insulation, change of energy supplier, and the fitting of solar panels. There was also an increase in recycling and selecting environmentally friendly cleaning products. A few had developed comprehensive green policies or undertaken green audits of their meeting and some had worked with the Churches Together Eco Churches initiative.

Q10 If you answered yes to question 9, are you aware of any of these measures having been taken as a direct result of encouragement or resources provided by a central Quaker Committee. If so which ones?

A majority answered “no” or were not sure. Of the positive answers, 9 stated encouragement or inspiration from the 2011 Canterbury Commitment itself. 4 respondents mentioned QPSW including obtaining grants and property advice. 3 referred to the BYM SG, particularly through Friends being inspired by the gatherings, leading to the setting up of an AM group to help LMs or making use of online conferencing calls to avoid travel for Business Meetings (2 made reference to members of the SG being in their meeting and leading activities on a personal level). 1 respondent mentioned a Woodbrooke course. Ecumenical groups were mentioned by 1 respondent, with reference to the EcoChurch scheme and local non-Quaker groups were mentioned by 4 respondents.

Meeting for Sufferings 2018 04 07 – AM minutes received

Southern Marches AM Minute AM 18/06 of the AM held on 13 January 2018 headed 'Post-truth world - what can we do?'

Introduction

Arrangements Group feel it is right for Meeting for Sufferings to consider this matter. They have asked Helen Drewery, Head of Witness and Worship, to prepare a paper explaining about previous work in this area, how it came to be laid down, and about recent discernment locally and centrally. Her paper follows the AM minute.

After this initial consideration it may be useful for the matter to be sent to Area Meetings for further discernment locally. If Meeting for Sufferings is minded to accept this approach, we could return to it later in the year.

Southern Marches AM from the AM held on 13 January 2018

Minute AM18/06 'Post-truth world' - What can we do?

Further to Minute AM17/85 of 9 July 2017, we have returned to the question of restoring truth and integrity in the public sphere. Since that meeting, minutes have been received from three local meetings: Ross-on-Wye, Clun Valley and Hereford. All LM minutes received to date on this matter are set out in the attached document.

We have considered what we are led to do as individuals, as local meetings and as an area meeting.

We need to begin with ourselves before we point the finger at others. As individuals we should be more open to listening to those we do not agree with (including via social media), and not just talk to those who share our views. We should also consider reading newspapers promoting different views from our own, and writing letters to them.

The intense scrutiny of pronouncements by those in the public eye makes them cautious about speaking honestly. On the other hand, the social media tend to polarise views. It is important to listen sympathetically and be moderate in our response, so that we can build bridges. Different spheres of life need different responses in holding people to account. People often have good reasons for holding particular ideas. We should support those - especially politicians - who have the grace to change their minds. We need to beware of allowing the strength of our convictions to betray us into 'making statements or allegations that are untrue or unfair' (Advice 17).

Challenging those who have different views is distinct from challenging those who consciously mislead the public, with the intention of dissuading people from taking action on matters of concern.

At Area Meeting level, we would like to hold a workshop on truth and integrity. We ask Elders and Overseers to look into making arrangements for such an event.

We feel that the situation has changed radically. The lack of honesty in public affairs is impacting on all our testimonies, and the challenge to living out our Quaker values is greater than ever. We see this issue as integral to the aspiration expressed in Our Faith in the Future for Quaker values to be active in the world. We wish the matter to be taken up at national level. We hope that our Yearly Meeting might be a public champion of truth.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to test this concern, and in particular to consider reviving the programme on Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs, which was laid down some years ago. We know that this concern is shared with others beyond the Quaker world, and we would wish Friends to work with others, as described in Our Faith in the Future.

However, we acknowledge that if we take this concern seriously, we will have to commit ourselves to constant vigilance and repeated action to counter false information. We have asked ourselves whether we have the right to call on others to act if we do not show that level of commitment ourselves.

Stevie Krayner, clerk

Truth and integrity in public affairs

This paper gives some background to consideration of the minute sent by Southern Marches Area Quaker Meeting/ Cyfarfod Y Crynwyr Rhanbarth Y Gororau Deheuol – “Post-truth world' - What can we do?”

A number of other individual Friends and meetings have expressed their concerns about truth and integrity in the last year or two. General Meeting for Scotland wrestled with it, but concluded in 2017 that they could not see a way forward for any specific Quaker work to address the lack of integrity in society and particularly government. Pendle Hill Area Meeting has considered aspects of it too, thrown up by their concern on fracking. They were troubled by national and local government decision making processes. The two related issues went to Meeting for Sufferings in February 2017, and Sufferings sent a minute to QPSWCC, who asked staff to keep a watching brief. It is possible that this is a re-emerging concern for local meetings or for the Society as a whole, but if so, it has not yet found a focus.

There are multiple strands in this concern, including: integrity in the media, personal integrity of those in power, and integrity in our political systems. Jessica Metheringham, BYM's Parliamentary Engagement Officer, unpacks some of this in the three sections below. The appendix to this paper gives a brief history of the 'Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs' work done in 1990 – 2004 (it was a paper for Meeting for Sufferings in February 2017).

Integrity in the media

One of the issues which is much discussed in the wider community is fake news. Different news outlets often accuse each other of misrepresenting the facts, or of participating in “clickbait churnalism” where journalistic standards are seen as less important than audience figures.

At the simplest level, our testimony to truth and integrity means that we do not support lies being told or misleading information being spread. A deeper reading of integrity means that we are also concerned about the black-and-white nature of some of the rebuttals. Reality is full of nuances and subtle details, and in some areas fact-checking is not the most appropriate response. Many issues are less to do with the facts than with subjective opinions or perspectives.

It is important to remember that “the people” speak with multiple voices. One common assumption is that the only reason for disagreement is lack of knowledge. Another assumption is that to disagree with someone is to dismiss their experience entirely – we maintain that it is possible to agree with the symptoms while disagreeing with their diagnosis.

Personal integrity of those in power

Through much of our work we aim to both challenge those who make decisions and to support them in their work. While corruption in politics undoubtedly exists, the majority of people who enter politics do so in order to serve. We aim to support them, rather than questioning their motives every time they make a decision with which we disagree.

The systems of power can produce a bubble, and it is our responsibility to help decision-makers hear from people outside of that bubble. Our work is also to help voters understand what power their representatives do or do not have, and to recognise that public opinion is often divided.

Integrity of our political systems

If we are concerned about the truthfulness of our information and the integrity of people in politics, then we should also be concerned about the system within which it all operates. Currently, voters in Britain use a combination of proportional representation, mixed, and non-proportional representation systems. While Friends often have different opinions, those supporting a particular electoral system can be upheld and supported.

Then there is how the general public participate in politics. We wish to see more opportunities for civil engagement, whether through consultations, campaigns or conversations with elected representatives. It is notable that it is often considerably easier to engage with the Scottish Parliament or Welsh Assembly than with the UK Parliament.

Next steps

Our concern for truth and integrity in public life is not new, but changes in politics and the media may mean that it is becoming more important to us.

It may be useful to consider:

- whether we feel that there is already a specific BYM position on any of the strands of this concern, and if not, whether there should be one
- whether we feel there is a 'Quaker-shaped gap' in the responses of other organisations
- Where, if anywhere, we are being led to act at this time.

Helen Drewery
Head of Witness and Worship

APPENDIX – paper received by Meeting for Sufferings in February 2017

The Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs (TIPA) concern – 1990 to 2004

Robin Robison, a young Friend who had been working in the Cabinet Office, was troubled by the secrecy of the Joint Intelligence Committee and the lack of accountability of the secret services. His concern was supported by his Monthly Meeting and came to MfS and, unusually, to Yearly Meeting in 1990. Yearly Meeting united with the concern. Part of their minute forms 23.91 of *Qf&p*:

We are deeply uneasy about the increasing secrecy which permeates our process of government. We see this in the 1989 Official Secrets Act, which no longer allows the defence of the right of disclosure in the public interest. We have been led to the conviction that, despite a culture of state secrecy, we must strive to bring about openness in our country. Secrecy bolsters power and leads to deceit and the abuse of power. At times a sensitive reticence is required but, in working in the spirit of love and trust rather than fear, we seek to discern the boundary between that reticence and secrecy.

Individual Friends elsewhere in the YM were also under a sense of personal concern and doing work themselves, including Friends in Warwickshire Monthly Meeting. Some of them became part of an ad hoc group set up by Meeting for Sufferings to explore how the concern should be put into action. The Quaker Committee on Truth and Integrity in Public Affairs (TIPA) started work in early 1991. Robin Robison was employed to take the work forward with and under the guidance of the committee.

Their focus in the early days was on moral values in political life, excessive secrecy, executive power being exercised without accountability and use of the royal prerogative. In practice, they worked on a possible private member's bill on the accountability of the intelligence and security services, and when the government published a bill on this subject, they responded, asking for it to be strengthened.

They had a series of meetings with MI5 – this was at a time when MI5 had only recently been acknowledged to exist. At one point they had doubts about whether such meetings were worth continuing, and took the question to the Central Committee of Quaker Social Responsibility & Education (a predecessor body to QPSW) who advised that they needed to be well focussed if they were to meet with MI5 again. The committee at that time felt they were not ready, though did have further meetings later.

Robin Robison was seen as a controversial whistleblower and had a high public profile. He was repeatedly approached by the media. After taking part in TV programme 'World in Action' there were even accusations in the press that he was a traitor.

TIPA wrote a booklet called 'Witness to Truth', ran a seminar on moral values in public life and produced a study pack on National Security. They built connections in Europe and with other churches. They ran a series of conferences for Friends and produced newsletters and briefings. They invited Friends to help them to do research on their local governments and to write to MPs.

In 1993 the Meeting for Sufferings TIPA committee was laid down and the work was brought under the care of QSRE. At that time, the outgoing committee wrote:

'The heart of the concern ...is our experience that in our national life there is an increasing disintegration with many people unable to participate. We have a vision of an open society. It is at the heart of Quaker experience that respect between individuals can provide the true basis of community.'

In 1995 the new committee wrote: 'Our experience and research over the last 5 years convinces us that morality is not simple, in this we recognise that we ourselves and perhaps Friends generally need to determine just how much covert activity is acceptable within a civilised and democratic country. We are within and part of the world, and all its problems of good and evil. If we are part of the problem, we need to be part of the solution. ... We would wish to see information used in such a way that nobody in society is disadvantaged or disempowered ... It may be that we can contribute ... by focusing on the use and abuses of information; power lies in the control of information.'

In 1996 they issued a public statement on the Scott Report, the judicial inquiry into arms sales to Iraq.

From about that time onwards, there was a shift in emphasis of the work, towards 'ways in which economic interests compromise truth and integrity'.

In 2001, under the newly-formed Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, the work was brought under the care of a new Public Affairs Committee. By then TIPA had much less staff time allocated to it. The energy, the sense of urgent leading in the concern seems to have abated by then. It was formally laid down in 2004, by the following minute:

QPSWCC 04/43 THE FUTURE OF TRUTH AND INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS (TIPA) PROGRAMME

We have received a paper prepared by Robin Robison, Programme Manager, TIPA, and Helen Drewery, which gives background to the TIPA work, the minute of a consultation held on 29th November 2003, and minute 9 from Public Affairs Group meeting 11th February 2004, and we note minute 04/12 of Testimonies Committee held 27-29th February 2004.

We feel that the time is right to lay down this particular programme of work. We ask for revised terms of reference for the Public Affairs Group to be brought to our next meeting.

We recognise however, as the minute of the consultation day concludes that: "...truth and integrity (is) a basic Quaker Testimony and so the work is not solely for a department or an individual – it needs to be something all Friends hold to in the way they live their whole lives and it should underpin all Quaker work....."

Although the issues have not gone away, there does not seem to be useful work currently that QPSW can do.

Our work will continue to challenge secrecy and strive for accountability where we encounter it, for example through the Economic Issues work, the Parliamentary Liaison work, and in QUNO.

We remain open to the possibility, as with all our work, of new opportunities emerging for an appropriate piece of centrally managed work in this area that reflects the thinking of Friends in their local meetings. We suggest that a conference for Friends who face dilemmas relating to truth and integrity in their working lives could be helpful. We ask staff to identify when and where this might be held and how it might be overseen.

We thank all who have contributed to and worked for this programme over the years.

We send this minute to Public Affairs Group and to Testimonies Committee.

Helen Drewery, January 2017

Draft Letter of Greeting from Britain Yearly Meeting to Ireland Yearly Meeting 2018

Introduction

Each year, representatives of Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) attend Yearly Meetings in other parts of Europe. BYM also sends a letter of greetings, signed by the clerk of Meeting for Sufferings. Recently, recognising that BYM and Ireland Yearly Meeting (IYM) have a particular relationship, Sufferings has approved the letter to IYM.

The clerk is grateful to Quaker World Relations Committee for drafting these letters.

This year, IYM will be held at Limerick Institute of Technology on 18–22 July 2018. The Ireland Yearly Meeting website is at: <https://quakers-in-ireland.ie>

Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) has a website gives information about Quakers in other parts of Europe - <http://fwccemes.org>

Dear Friends,

We send our loving greetings to Friends in Ireland as you come together for your Yearly Meeting. We are keenly aware that the UK vote to leave the EU will have a major impact on us all. We are inspired by the deep connection that we have witnessed going on in Ireland Yearly Meeting between the Republic of Ireland on the one hand and Northern Ireland on the other.

We recognise that Europe has become a place of refuge for people fleeing war, persecution and destitution in Africa and the Middle East. We are inspired by Jesus' very last public speech before his arrest, in which he invites every one of us to welcome the stranger, but we have seen up close that our government's creation of a 'hostile environment' is increasingly embedding policies of discrimination, backed up by violence, into the practices of the British state. Quakers in Britain are committed to working with others to change this, creating a culture of sanctuary that answers that of God in every person. To this end we have adopted a Sanctuary Everywhere Manifesto. Universal human rights should be the foundation on which any national policy or international agreement on migration is founded. Our belief in every human being's equality leads us to oppose deportations and removals, whether to the EU or to the wider world.

At our Yearly Meeting Gathering last year in Warwick, we considered how we work with others to make a difference and build a better world. This was the third year in which we have explored our theme of Living out our faith in the world. Quakers living near Swarthmoor Hall are developing a network of people throughout the country who want to be involved in their concern around recent changes to the welfare state that are deeply wounding to the very fabric of our community. Inspired by Margaret Fell's journey to London from Swarthmoor Hall, they are planning a ride for equality and the common good. Margaret Fell carried a declaration for Charles II informing 'the governors of this nation, high and low, that we are a people that desire the good of all people, and their peace.' Now, 358 years later, we want to harness enthusiasm for the

cause of maintaining a welfare state and a safety net for the impoverished throughout the country.

Isolation of our individual members is a recurring topic. We have been deeply moved to hear the stories of Friends' loneliness at particular times in their lives and how they came to an acceptance of being alone. We are encouraged to be sensitive to the situation of Friends and to listen. The words of our Lord from Isaiah 41:10 "Be not afraid, I am with you" brought – and continue to bring – comfort to Friends. Awareness of this problem is increasing among us, and we seek means to remedy it.

Our meetings encourage Friends to live sustainably. This means sharing the joys we find in a simple lifestyle freely chosen, while offering compassion and support to those of us who find change difficult. Your epistle last year gave us a timely reminder of Mahatma Gandhi's exhortation to us all: 'Live simply, so that others may simply live', and our representatives to IYM 2017 told us how much had already been achieved in getting every meeting to prepare a sustainability plan.

Britain Yearly Meeting as a whole has divested from fossil fuels and is encouraging all Area and Local Meetings to do the same. Learning from European Friends, we are also increasing our use of teleconferencing to reduce travel to central and standing committee meetings and we are looking at reducing the size of some committees for the same reason.

We hold those in power in the Light as we seek to find creative and nonviolent ways to get our message across. At a time when the very existence of our planet is at stake, we must be prepared to take risks. And sometimes we find ourselves struggling to find the way forward. And yet we are called to live in the place where our 'deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet'.

Our Quaker World Relations Committee (QWRC) has a particular responsibility for linking with Friends across EMES (and in the wider world family). In that spirit, we warmly look forward to hearing from our Friend (first name of this year's BYM rep) about their experiences visiting with you. We know they will come back enriched by the experience.

We will be delighted to welcome your representative(s) at Friends House, London from 4-7 May.

Peace be with you.

In Friendship,

Anne Ullathorne
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Quaker Recognised Bodies request for recognition

Introduction

In 2015, following a review of the Listed Informal Groups arrangement, Meeting for Sufferings agreed a new way for BYM to relate to other Quaker bodies (minute MfS 2015/12/17).

- The full paper, setting out the reason for the change and how it will work, is available in the papers for the December 2015 Meeting for Sufferings papers www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes; or please ask for the paper by emailing sufferings@quaker.org.uk).
- The guidelines for groups that would like to be a QRB are also on the BYM Website www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-groups

A Quaker Recognised Body (QRB) is an independent group of concerned Friends who explore a common interest, seek affirmation, or carry out witness; and which wishes to be recognised as a Quaker organisation because its Quaker roots are an important part of its identity.

The QRB approach helps us clarify benefits and responsibilities for QRBs and Britain Yearly Meeting - and also to strengthen links between centrally-managed work and the wide range of exciting Quaker work being done by other bodies. In turn, this helps build a vibrant Society of Friends.

So far, Meeting for Sufferings has registered 36 'Quaker Recognised Bodies'.

Quaker Link Bolivia, which appeared as a listed informal group in the 2016 Book of Meetings, has applied to become a Quaker recognised body.

Quaker Link Bolivia

Staff have looked at the documentation provided by this organisation and consider that the criteria for listing it as a Quaker recognised body has been met.

The notes below give more details to support the application.

Quaker Bolivia Link

Constitution: Governed by a "Declaration of Trust" dated 9 September 1995, which established the charity. Quaker Bolivia Link is a registered charity no. 1055192.

Governance: 5 trustees. Combined trustee and committee meetings are held 4 or 5 times a year, usually at Westminster Friends Meeting House.

Type of Group: External

Foundation: 1995

Aims: The purpose of Quaker Bolivia Link (QBL) is to fund and oversee the implementation of small community-initiated projects. These are aimed at improving the quality of life of impoverished indigenous people in Bolivia through community empowerment and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods. The current geographical focus is on marginalised rural Aymara communities in the Altiplano and Western

Cordillera of the Andes, within the Department of La Paz; current projects are related to the supply of clean water and to food security. These projects are delivered by Fundación Quaker Bolivia Link, a Bolivian charity managed by local Friends. There is a sister fundraising charity in the United States of America. A formal cooperation agreement establishes the roles and relationship of the 3 parts of QBL.

Publications and activities: Fundraising for projects through appeals, talks and grant applications; selection and oversight of projects to support; giving talks to meetings and supporting groups. A special interest meeting was held at Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2017, along with a presence at the Groups Fair. Typically, 2-3 projects are funded each year, along with a share of the running costs of the Bolivian organisation. An annual newsletter is published, along with a leaflet for fundraising.

Membership: 7 committee members; mailing list of approximately 275 individuals and many Quaker meetings in the UK and other parts of Europe.

Finance: Funding comes from individuals (mainly Friends), local Quaker meetings and grants (about 1/3 for each category). Accounts are examined in accordance with their constitution.

Winding up: The Trust Deed reads: “In the event of the dissolution of the Trust any assets remaining after the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall not be paid to or distributed among the trustees but shall be given to Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (the Society).”

Archives: Held at the University of Leeds.

Current contact details:

Richard Bloomfield (Clerk)

c/o Quaker Bolivia Link, 45 Wroxham Road, Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8TN

Tel: 07771 668 381

Email: uk@qbl.org

Website: www.qbl.org (shared with Quaker Bolivia Link US); Quaker Bolivia Link also has a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/qbolivialink/?ref=hl>.

Staff link: Lianne Fridsma, Secretary Quaker World Relations Committee

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Friday 16 to Saturday 17 February 2018 at Friends House

Minutes

Present: Alison Breadon, Sarah Donaldson, James Eddington, Nick Eyre, Ingrid Greenhow (Clerk), Roy Love, Caroline Nursey (Assistant Clerk), David Olver, Steve Pullan, Alastair Reid, Hazel Shellens, Graham Torr, Peter Ullathorne (Treasurer), Frances Voelcker, Chris Willmore

In attendance: Emily Desvisevic, Recording Clerk's Office Intern (minute **BYMT-2018-02-10**); Helen Drewery, Head of Witness & Worship (except minute **BYMT-2018-02-22**); Paul Grey, Head of Operations (except minute **BYMT-2018-02-22**); Neil Jarvis, Governance Manger (minutes **BYMT-2018-02-11**); Lisa Kiew, Head of Finance & Resources (except minute **BYMT-2018-02-22**); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk (except minute **BYMT-2018-02-22**); Ann Pfeiffer, Secretary of Quaker Peace & Social Witness Grants Group (**BYMT-2018-02-07**); Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, (except minute **BYMT-2018-02-22**),

Visitors: Peter Olawaye and Thomas Lawson, Leap Confronting Conflict (minute **BYMT-2018-02-14**), Members of Engaging Young Adult Quakers Steering Group: Matt Alton, Ellie McCarthy, Children & Young People Intern, Haifa Rashed (Clerk), Kellie Turner, Chris Venables (Project Officer), Maddy Ward and Elsie Whittington (Minute **BYMT-2018-02-18**)

BYMT-2018-02-01 Welcome, agenda check, conflicts of interest check, minutes of last meeting

We welcome our new trustees, Alison Breadon, Caroline Nursey (assistant clerk) Graham Torr and Frances Voelcker.

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2017 have been signed by the Clerk and placed in the minute book.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

During our opening worship, we have heard read Advices and Queries 18 and part of the introduction to Advices and Queries.

We were pleased to talk with members of the Operational Management Team before our meeting.

BYMT-2018-02-02 Consent agenda

(a) Minutes and report

We receive and note the following:

- BYMT Employment Committee minutes 19 July and 20 November 2017 (**BYMT-2018-02-02a&b**)
- BYMT Annual Employment Committee report 2017 (**BYMT-2018-02-02c**)
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee minutes 17-19

- November 2017 (**BYMT-2018-02-02d**)
- HS2 Monitoring Group minutes 28 November 2017 (**BYMT-2018-02-02e**)
- BYMT Audit Committee minutes 12 December 2017 (**BYMT-2018-02-02f**)
- Meeting for Sufferings separated minute MfS/17/12/09 “Investments profiting from the occupation of the West Bank” together with Devon Area Meetings minute to Meeting for Sufferings (**BYMT-2018-02-02g**)
- Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd minutes 22-23 November 2017 (**BYMT-2018-02-02h**)
- Quaker Life Central Committee 24-26 November 2017 (**BYMT-2018-02-02i**)

(b) Bake the difference

We note Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd minute **H17/42** “Bake the difference report and draft concept note” on a proposal to bid for legacy funding to run a three-year pilot project offering an in-house bakery service, working in partnership with London Pathways Partnership (LPP) that will engage and inspire men with personality difficulties who are linked to offending and are at risk (in paper **BYMT-2018-02-02h**)

We note also Management Meeting minute **MtM-2017-12-06(b)** in which some further work is asked for. We look forward to hearing more in due course.

(c) Hospitality Board governance

We note Friends House Hospitality Ltd minute **H17/44** “Hospitality and Facilities Agreement” on the review of the agreement between the company and BYM Trustees with several changes recommended (in paper **BYMT-2018-02-02h**). A revised draft agreement will go to the Board in March so that it can be recommended to BYM Trustees at the time of its annual report in June 2018.

We note the request that we appoint an additional board member and will consider this at the same time.

(d) Quaker Life Strategy 2018-2022

We note Quaker Life Central Committee minute **QLCC 17.84** and **86** “Our strategy” and **QLCC 17.87** “Our strategic priorities” (in paper **BYMT-2018-02-02i** with strategy attached). An update of progress will be in Quaker life Central Committee’s annual review to BYM Trustees at our June meeting.

There was a detailed discussion at Meeting for Sufferings on 3 February 2018.

(e) Continued minutes

We receive the continued minutes (**BYMT-2018-02-02k**).

(f) Procurement report

We receive a paper on Britain Yearly Meeting procurement (**BYMT-201-02-02i**) which provides an update on BYM’s progress towards developing a strategic approach to procurement.

(g) Nominations

We receive **BYMT-2018-02-02m** which lists current BYM Trustee appointments. We also note that some of the terms of service of appointments made at the September 2017 BYMT meeting were omitted or incorrect. They are as follows:

Employment Committee

Hazel Shellens - 01.01.2018-31.12.2019

Michael Langford (Cambridgeshire AM) - 01.01.2018-31.12.2020

Chris Love (York AM) - 01.01.2018-31.12.2020

Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited

Nick Eyre - 01.01.2018-31.12.2019

HS2 Monitoring Group

Graham Torr - 01.01.2018-31.12.2018

BYMT Nominations group

We note that the terms of service for two of the members of the Nominations Group were incorrectly minuted as three years but the Terms of Reference limit them to two years. To enable rotation, we appoint the Nominations group as follows:

Sarah Donaldson - 01.01.2018-31.12.2019

David Olver - 01.01.2018-31.12.2018

We note there is no BYMT minute appointing Val Brittin to the Employment Committee. She is the Hospitality Company representative but still ought to be approved by BYMT, which we now do. Her term of service is 01.01.2017-31.12.2018.

The Governance Manager has now assumed responsibility for (a) the Gold Documents and (b) submitting the Annual Return to the Charity Commission. Trustees are no longer needed to oversee these roles so they can be formally laid down.

Between-meeting appointment to the Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group

Lizzie Rosewood (York AM) has been appointed to the Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group by the Clerks of BYM and Woodbrooke Trustees in accordance with the Group's terms of reference, as a between-meeting appointment. The appointment is as follows: Lizzie Rosewood (York AM): to 31.12.2019

Lizz Roe (South Wales AM) has requested to be released from the Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group.

We agree to these changes and appointments.

BYMT-2018-02-03 Recording Clerk's report

We receive the Recording Clerk's report (**BYMT-2018-02-03**) covering:

- Recording Clerk: Sustaining church and faith (Yearly Meeting/Book of discipline revision, Diversity and young adult Quakers); Governance (General Meeting for Scotland and Meeting of Friends in Wales, Improving Governance, Safeguarding); External Relations (Lobbying Act, Churches Together, Schools under Quaker Governance), Staff matters (Being a Quaker workplace, All-staff survey)
- Deputy Recording Clerk: Management (Effective Management plan); Impact; Communications (E-newsletter, blog, Scottish advocacy); Risk
- Witness and Worship: Support for Meetings; Spiritual nurture; Outreach; All-age community; Advocacy, campaigning and movement-building; Peacebuilding

- Operations: Trading (Creaturekind); Bookshop; Health & Safety (Fire Risk Assessment Action Plan; Staff Health & Safety training eLearning); Facilities (Building Engineering Services Term Contract, Homeless persons sleeping on Friends House site, Swarthmoor fire alarm, Environmental goals)
- Finance and resources: Data safety and management; IT; Employment
- Appendices to the report were **A** Headcount report, **B** Strategic-level risks summary, (the full risk report is in the extra papers section of the Group Area of QGroups) and **C** Effective Management at Britain Yearly Meeting: strategy and plan 2018-2021.

We have received minutes of Management Meeting held on 21 and 28 November, 12 December, 9 and 23 January and 13 February.

BYMT-2018-02-04 Trustee news

We receive paper **BYMT-2018-02-04** giving news of the activities of trustees since our last meetings, including a report on the New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) “Introduction to Theory of Change training day” attended by Alison Breadon and Frances Voelcker.

The annex to the paper, “Diversity in governance – the what, why and how”, was written by Haifa Rashed, Clerk to the Engaging Young Adult Quakers Project Steering Group.

BYMT-2018-02-05 Reflective meetings

Ingrid Greenhow has reported on the reflective meetings with trustees at the end of their first year of service, and trustees who have completed their terms of service.

BYMT-2018-02-06 Finance matters

(a) BYMT Finance & Property Committee minutes

We receive the minutes of BYMT Finance & Property Committee 25 January 2018 (**BYMT-2018-02-06**).

(b) Disposal of property “The Mains”

BYMT Finance & Property Committee minute **FP18/07a** recommends that The Mains, Deanscale, Cockermouth, Cumbria, is sold as the life rent tenant has surrendered the tenancy and moved out.

Staff have confirmed that trustees have the power to dispose of the property and that we have complied with all Charity Commission guidance.

We agree to this.

(c) Fundraising

We receive paper **BYMT-2018-02-06b** on developments in 2017 and further plans for fundraising.

We see this as fertile ground and hope to move fast on areas such as online donations. We recognise that articulating a clear “case for support” is vital, and that trustees have a role in that.

We look forward to developing a fundraising strategy looking at how we work with Friends and more widely. We note that we will receive a proposal to spend more on future fundraising activity later in the year.

BYMT-2017-02-07 Quaker Peace & Social Witness Grant Giving report

We receive the report from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Grants Group (**BYMT-2018-02-07**) comprising a minute from Grants Group, the QPSW Grants Group Report 2017 and “Grant Giving: a review of the work of QPSW Grants Group over 7 years”.

Ann Pfeiffer, Secretary to the Grants Group, has introduced the report. Our grants programme is a Quaker way of grant making – dynamic, exciting, forward-looking, and responsive to concerns from local Friends.

We share the group’s hope that it can attract applications for a more diverse range of adult education courses at various levels, and that funding can be used overall to meet the greatest need while complying with Charity Commission guidance.

We thank Anne for the report and the Group for its work.

BYMT-2017-02-08 Data Safety Group annual report 2017

We receive the annual report from the Data Safety Group (**BYMT-2018-02-08**) covering many aspects of their work but particularly the work on the General Data Protection Regulation due to come into force on 25 May 2018.

We note also minute **MtM-2018-02A-04** which refers. We note that Management Meeting expects to agree new arrangements for who holds data protection responsibilities and who will be accountable to trustees via the Recording Clerk for our responsibilities in this area.

We will receive a report from Management Meeting that addresses the other points raised by the audit committee at our next meeting.

We remind central and standing committees that they must confirm that they understand their data protection obligations. We ask the Recording Clerk to communicate this to relevant committees.

BYMT-2018-02-9 Trustees away day 6 April

Our theme for the away day will be Governance, Organisational Strategy, and Fundraising Strategy. In preparation for the meeting, the facilitator, David Saint from Action Planning, would like to conduct telephone interviews with the clerk, assistant clerk and treasurer, and five trustees. We agree to this and ask our clerk to identify the five trustees.

BYMT-2018-02-10 Diversity and BYMT: responding to three questions from Meeting for Sufferings

We have welcomed Emily Desvisevic, Recording Clerk’s Office Intern.

We have worked in small groups to discuss the following three questions from Meeting for Sufferings: In what ways is your committee diverse? In what ways could it be more

diverse? What would help it become more diverse? – what are the barriers and opportunities?

We are diverse in gender and geographical spread, do not know on sexuality, and are not diverse on ethnicity. In terms of age, we are better than many Quaker committees and half of us are in paid employment, but we do need younger Friends. We recognise that time constraints can be a problem for younger Friends who have less flexibility in their work schedules and often have family commitments.

We need to be radical as BYM trustees and experiment. Young Friends will bring themselves and bright thinking to being a trustee and learn in the process.

We can and will adjust our meeting schedules to accommodate individual trustees. Sub-committees – and perhaps more routine meetings – could be done virtually.

We need to make arrangements for childcare and identify the blockages for individuals that we can perhaps remove.

We know that this means that we ourselves must make space and be willing to work in ways that may not be ideal for all of us.

We support Central Nominations Committee in seeking a more diverse range of Friends to serve as BYM trustees, being honest about the commitment. We would welcome a discussion with Central Nominations Committee about how we can work together on this.

We recognise that sometimes younger Friends will not be able to serve a full term and we will be grateful for the service they can bring.

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

BYMT-2018-02-11 Governance strategy

We receive paper **MtM-2018-02-10** which sets out a broad plan for a governance strategy and how it could be developed and delivered.

We have welcome Neil Jarvis, Governance Manager.

We recognise that the distinction between governance of the charity and church government is complex and that the unresolved question of where we are on the continuum of movement/organisation affects our governance priorities.

We have considered the suggested areas of improvements set out in the table and ask that these are cross checked with the governance code. We add to this list a continuous review of our subcommittees and will add to it as needed later.

We recognise that this is part of a continuing change process and this is putting pressure on staff. This a considerable body of work and we will need to prioritise and be more specific at a later stage.

We agree with the course of action proposed in the paper.

We encourage trustees who are interested in supporting this work to speak to Neil.

BYMT-2018-02-12 Vibrancy in meetings

We receive paper **BYMT-2018-02-11** "Vibrancy in Meetings: what next?" setting out the initial thinking by senior staff of BYM and Woodbrooke about the decisions and process ahead.

We are content with the process and approximate timeline for assessing impact and making decisions set out in the Appendix to the paper.

We think that the key questions have been identified and would like finance and funding to be added. We need to know that this is work is what various Friends want.

We sense that things are moving in the Society with the Vibrancy project, simple meetings, regionalisation and talk of hubs and different ways of doing things. We want to think adventurously.

We send this minute to Woodbrooke Trustees.

BYMT-2018-02-13 Lobbying Act update

Further to minute **BYMT-2017-11-11**, we receive paper **BYMT-2018-02-12** giving the current position on the Transparency of Lobbying Act 2014 following the decision to consider a legal challenge alongside other dialogue with government and regulatory bodies.

We are encouraged that we are playing a leading role in the sector and working closely with others and we understand the risks in doing so. We look forward to hearing whether seeking a judicial review or making an approach via the Equality & Human Rights Commission emerges as the best way forward.

The paper reports on regulatory action by the Electoral Commission following the 2017 General Election after an administrative oversight and late receipt of an invoice for leaflet printing meant we paid a bill outside the time period permitted following an election. This has been reported to the Charity Commission as a serious incident. Staff are confident that such a breach will not recur. This incident adds weight to our argument that the regulation is disproportionate, difficult to comply with, and a potential deterrent to campaigning.

BYMT-2018-02-14 Diversity in trusteeship: how can Quakers learn from other organisations and take the first steps?

Peter Olawaye and Thomas Lawson from *Leap Confronting Conflict*, a charity founded by Quakers, joined us on Friday evening to explore diversity issues. They have told us about the benefits and challenges of having greater diversity on their board and what it means to them personally. This has helped us in our consideration of diversity in trusteeship.

BYMT-2018-02-15 Book of discipline: preparation for Yearly Meeting decision

We have received paper **BYMT-2018-02-14** considering possible scenarios leading from Yearly Meeting: to revise our book of discipline by commissioning Meeting for Sufferings to establish a Revision Committee (as per the recommendation before Yearly Meeting), to decide against revising at this time, or something in-between.

We agree that the cost should not be a significant factor in deciding whether to revise the book of discipline, and that the probable costs would be affordable.

We will, of course, need to return to this matter after Yearly Meeting 2018, probably at our September meeting.

BYMT-2018-02-16 Legacy funded projects procedure: review

Further to minute **BYMT-2017-02-18**, we receive the review of the legacy-funded projects procedure. Legacy-funded projects, whereby time-limited projects are funded by additional legacy income, were first approved by BYMT in 2014. A total of 20 projects have taken place in the ensuing three years, of which five have been completed, twelve are active and three are yet to start. The total value of these projects is £2,905,526. These include the Quaker United Nations Office Human Impacts of Climate Change (£533,500) and Vibrancy in Meetings (£675,492).

The Legacy Funded Project (LFP) procedure is greatly appreciated and has delivered significant positive impact. The development of a bidding process, an original objective, is gaining traction within the staff of BYM, which is another positive. We recognise that the process is still evolving. We hope that legacy funding can be used to support increased innovation, more adventurous and potentially riskier work relating to the tenets of *Our faith in the future*. As yet, there is a lack of partnership working (e.g. with Area Meetings) and joint funding.

At present, the different roles and responsibilities of BYM Trustees, Finance & Property Committee, and Management Meeting, are not always clear. In particular, the role of Finance & Property Committee regarding both authorisation and scrutiny of projects is confused; it may be better to limit this committee's role to financial scrutiny, and for narrative reports to be considered more robustly by Management Meeting. We hope that addressing this will also clarify and improve reporting processes.

We ask Management Meeting to work on a more consistent approach to legacy-funded project proposals, to include exit strategies and follow-on funding needs. We further ask Management Meeting to ensure brief one-off reviews of all current projects and to report back to Finance & Property Committee and BYMT later this year with a response to the recommendations in this paper.

We thank James Eddington, Nick Eyre and Hazel Shellens for their work on this review, and lay the group down.

BYMT-2018-02-17 Management Meeting: review of new arrangements **(a) Review of new Management Meeting arrangements**

Further to minute **BYMT-2017-09-10**, we receive the report on the review of management meeting following the restructuring of management meeting to enable it, amongst other things, to become more strategic and to encourage more flexible approaches. The new management meeting comprising five members of staff (Recording Clerk, deputy Recording Clerk, Head of Witness & Worship, Head of Operations and Head of Finance & Resources) as opposed to the original seven, has been operational since January 2017. We acknowledge that the new arrangements are still bedding in across the staff at BYM.

The review involved meetings with members of Management Meeting collectively and individually, and confidential comments from clerks who interact with members of

Management Meeting and from Operational Managers, all of the latter having a line manager who is a member of Management Meeting.

At Management Meeting level it is clear that the new arrangements have largely been successful and that progress has been made in moving towards a more integrated organisation which is functioning well strategically. We are reminded that it may take longer to change the culture of an organisation used to doing things in a particular way which may not necessarily be the best way of responding to the changing needs of Quakers in Britain today.

At Operational Manager level it is clear that there is still a lack of clarity amongst some members of staff about who in Management Meeting is responsible for what, and issues concerning communication. These issues are recognised and are being addressed by Management Meeting.

We acknowledge that there is a lack of an overall strategic framework below the very high level *Our Faith in the Future* and above the operational plan, which makes prioritising difficult and which we now need to address. As trustees, we have a legal responsibility to ensure that the resources (human, financial, property) are being used to fulfil our charitable objectives. It is the responsibility of trustees to ensure that managers have a clear plan of how their work streams will satisfy the aspirations in *Our Faith in the Future*, and the strategic plans of the central and other standing committees.

We agree that trustees, with the support of Management Meeting, should prepare a multi-year strategic plan. This should be done in careful consultation with committees and Meeting for Sufferings.

We ask the clerks and members of management meeting to find ways to devote agenda time to working on a strategic plan, in consultation with committees and Meeting for Sufferings.

We also ask the clerks and Management Meeting to work with committee clerks to develop a shared understanding of the decision-making process and how each committee takes its place in the governance of BYM.

(b) Management Meeting post titles

Further to Minute **BYMT 2017-09-10**, the review group was also asked to look at post titles. We are reminded that post titles are only labels which communicate the role of the post holder. It is the spirit in which the work is done which Quakers have always recognised as important. We therefore agree to retain the current post titles, bearing in mind that none of the post titles within BYM are set in stone and can be changed in the future if appropriate.

We send part (b) of this minute to Devon Area Meeting.

We thank Sarah Donaldson and David Olver for their work on this review.

BYMT-2018-02-18 Engaging Young Adult Quakers Project Steering Group: briefing session

We welcome Matt Alton, Ellie McCarthy (Children & Young People Intern), Haifa Rashed (Clerk), Kellie Turner, Chris Venables (Project Officer), Maddy Ward and Elsie

Whittington of Engaging Young Adult Quakers Project Steering Group and Ellie McCarthy (CYP intern).

We are encouraged to hear of the work and aspirations of this group. The project has been running for 8 months and aims to nurture young adult Quaker communities and thus the whole Quaker community.

We can only thrive as a Quaker community with the engagement of young adult Quakers. We recognise the need to give opportunities for service across the Religious Society of Friends and the need to break down barriers and provide appropriate support and scaffolding to enable full representation on our committees. At present only 15 of the 400 places in the BYM committee structure are occupied by under-S. We encourage the Group to be bold in its work to make the Society, particularly in its governance, more diverse, more inclusive and more accessible.

Following our session yesterday evening and what we have heard from the Engaging Young Adult Quakers Steering Group, we will be bold and commit to making this happen. We will actively seek opportunities to achieve this.

We ask our Nominations Group to find trustees to bring recommendations.

BYMT-2018-02-19 Meeting for Sufferings preparation and preparation for Yearly Meeting 2018

We have discussed our participation at Meeting for Sufferings on 7 April and at Yearly Meeting.

BYMT-2018-02-20 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT-2018-02-21 Time with the Recording Clerk

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

We record our thanks to operational managers for the time they spent with us yesterday.

BYMT-2018-02-22 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

Ingrid Greenhow
Clerk

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

Review of financial activities for 2017



Introduction

We would like to thank Friends for their financial support of Quaker work in 2017. It has enabled us to:

- provide advice, resources, training and events to strengthen and empower Quaker meetings
- uphold the structures and discipline that keep our church and our work spirit-led
- operate a range of programmes in Britain and overseas that translates our faith into action
- carry out outreach, media and advocacy work that builds public awareness of who we are and of the things that matter to us.

Meeting for Sufferings, our national representative council, has defined the current broad priorities through its document 'Our Faith in the Future' (www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/our-faith-in-the-future) and the central committees and trustees supervise this being translated into practice. Quaker work is your work, and you are a vital part of it. Without your generous gifts – whether they be of time, money or prayerful support – none of it would be possible.

Apart from contributions from individuals and Quaker meetings our income derives from five other principal sources: legacies, grants, the surplus from our trading subsidiary, investment income, and revenue from our charitable activities. Our revenue from all these sources in 2017 was £13.0 million (2016 £10.9 million).

Over the past few years legacies have varied from less than £1 million to over £5 million; in 2017 the amount totalled £3.5 million (2016 £2.3 million). Trustees continue to allocate legacy income in excess of the amount needed to support our regular work to time limited projects. Since 2014 a total of £4.7 million has been designated for this purpose, and projects totalling some £2.8 million have been approved, many of which have already been completed. The balance on the legacy fund at 31 December 2017 was £2.3 million of which £0.4 million has been allocated to specific projects leaving £1.9 million to be committed to new projects.

The largest proportion of contributions reach us in the last three months of the year. Contributions were just over £2.2 million, slightly exceeding 2016 total by £126,000. However, 58 per cent of this increase in contributions came from £73,900 in interest-free loans being converted to outright gifts.

Friends House (London) Hospitality Limited celebrated ten years of operation during 2017. It continues to raise income from conferences, meetings and catering provision at Friends House. The company also manages Swarthmoor Hall at Ulverston in Cumbria, and the Quaker Bookshop. The company's trading income funds the bulk of the buildings' running costs, and after paying these and its operating costs, a surplus of £965,307 was available as a contribution towards our charitable work, the highest figure achieved in the company's history.

The market value of our investment portfolio at the end of 2017 was £25.4 million. The portfolio continues to perform well with a net gain of £2.9 million. Where the surpluses on investments relate to long-term designated and restricted funds, amounts are allocated to these funds as appropriate to maintain their purchasing power. The investment policy, together with a full listing of our investments as at 31 December 2017, is published on our website at www.quaker.org.uk. We continue to work with QPSW staff and others to engage with the issue of tax justice in relation to the companies in which we hold shares. A review of the investment policy will be carried out in 2018.

The overall surplus for the year of £21.6 million arose mainly from the unrealised gains on revaluation of our investment (Drayton House) and functional properties (Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall estate). While we see Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall as places of worship, witness, work and outreach, we are required to recognise these properties as assets in our accounts, and therefore, given our good stewardship and the excellent facilities we have, a commercial valuation attributes a large value to them. By incorporating the valuations in our accounts, we show an increase in reserves of some £22 million – reserves we cannot spend without destroying the wonderful resource we have built up.

Reserves

Reserves held by BYM comprise four categories, the nature and policies of which are described below.

Endowments

Endowments are monies received by BYM with the requirement that the capital should be held permanently, and the income used for various aspects of the charitable purposes. Trustees are reviewing each of these endowments to see whether the objectives might be achieved better by seeking Charity Commission permission to spend the capital in the light of the increased demands in some areas of work and the levels of returns available. Some endowments have been reclassified as restricted funds this year following such permission.

Restricted funds

Restricted funds are monies received by BYM with a specified area of expenditure, within the general objectives but with limited application. Some are intended to be held for the long term to finance the named purposes and beneficiaries, in which case capital gains and income are attributed to these funds annually. Others are held for immediate expenditure over a shorter time horizon (normally no more than five years), in which case no addition is made for income or gains arising.

Designated funds

Designated funds are monies set aside by trustees to be spent or held to cover specific expenditure or projects. Some designated funds represent the main functional and investment properties held for the long term by BYM. These include Swarthmoor Hall, Friends House, and Drayton House. The legacy-funded short-term projects fund represents monies set aside for immediate expenditure within the next five years on approved projects. Others are monies allocated to areas of expenditure that cover more than one year. Trustees will be reviewing these designated funds during 2018 to ensure that the set purposes remain valid, and if not to ascertain if some can be released for more pressing needs.

General reserves

The general reserve represents monies accumulated after each year's financial accounts are completed and all necessary provisions and attributions to designated funds are implemented. These monies are available

for the immediate use of BYM, subject to retaining such amounts as are prudent for the smooth running of the charity's activities. In the normal course of our activities we aim to balance income and expenditure over the medium term. Accordingly, general reserves are used to provide working capital cash needs, and to finance short-term deficits where necessary.

Our reserves policy focuses on the level of BYM's general reserves. Our general reserves as at 31 December 2017 amount to around £10 million. The target for general reserves is six months operating costs (£6,053,000), plus planned capital expenditure for the next twelve months (£739,000). We currently hold additional general reserves representing three months operating costs to enable BYM to mitigate the financial impact of major events such as the HS2 developments near Friends House and impact of Brexit on the economy that could lead to a significant shortfall in income or unplanned expenditure. We also need to be able to take advantage of future strategic development opportunities that may arise, for example partnership working with Quaker and other bodies in areas of common concern.

While general reserves are above the minimum necessary at present, plans are being developed to invest in the future of the Society over the next few years. To meet the objectives of 'Our Faith in Future', BYM recognises that a significant investment will need to be made to support Quakers in Britain to be a bold, vibrant, diverse, all-age and growing community. New areas of work being planned will need reliable funding if we are to commit to them in the long term; these include a youth workers pilot scheme, engagement with young adult Quakers, working with families and the Vibrancy in meetings project. In addition, we need to improve the support we currently provide to meetings on a whole range of issues, from the practical (e.g. property support) to the spiritual (nurture). We also need to ensure that Quakers are well-known and widely understood and to provide the resources to support meetings to reach out to the wider population. We are planning upgrades of our IT infrastructure and contract management system in next 1-3 years to enable us to keep abreast of changes in communication and technology and to work more efficiently and effectively.

	2017	2016
	(£000)	(£000)
Total funds as per group balance sheet	80,252	58,643
Exclude:		
Endowment funds	5,581	5,590
Restricted funds	6,258	6,257
Designated funds tied up in fixed and heritage assets	49,580	26,888
Designated funds	9,025	9,047
General reserves	9,808	10,861

Financial position

The overall position as at 31 December 2017 remains stable, despite the difficulties in the wider economy.

Our net current assets (short-term bank deposits, monies owed to us, less monies owed by us and payable within one year) stood at £3.5 million. These should provide a satisfactory level of cash resources for our planned activities and enable us to meet the cost of capital projects throughout the year.

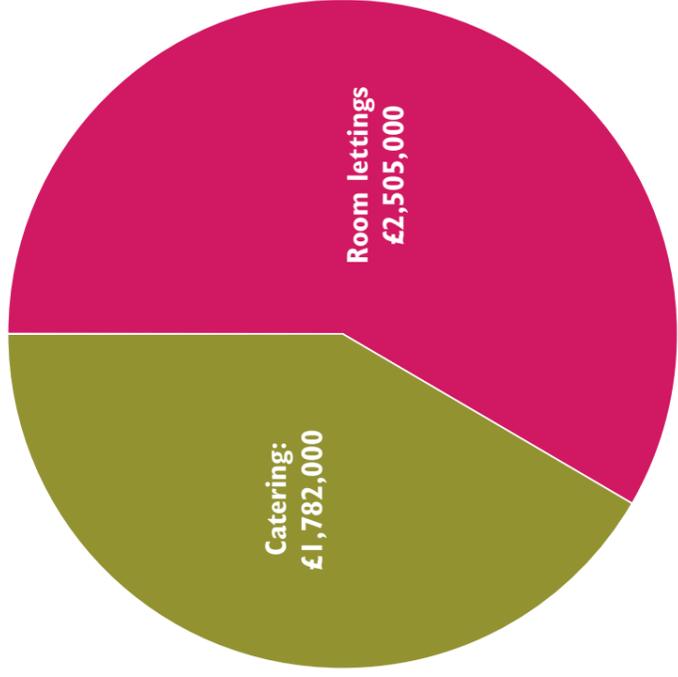
Looking forward

Our financial position at the year-end was sufficient to accommodate fluctuations which may be caused by shortfalls in income or unexpected expenditure. Although the income derived from any single source varies from year to year, the spread of income is sufficiently broad that we can plan our programmes of continuing work with confidence. In addition, our legacy projects are fully funded. As ever, we continue to monitor carefully both income and expenditure, and cash requirements.

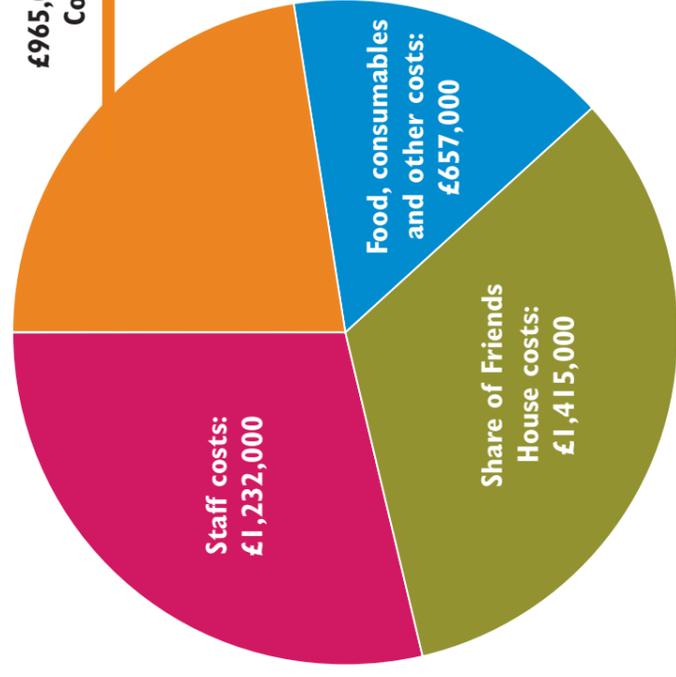
We look forward to investing in the future of the Society over the next few years. However, we must not be complacent about what current levels of annual giving by Friends and meetings can achieve in making the world a fairer, better place for everyone. Many Friends would like to see more work done in their name, and for Quakers in Britain to be a bold, vibrant, diverse, all-age and growing community, giving adventurously and living generously.

2017 financials at a glance

Friends House Hospitality Company income: £4,287,000

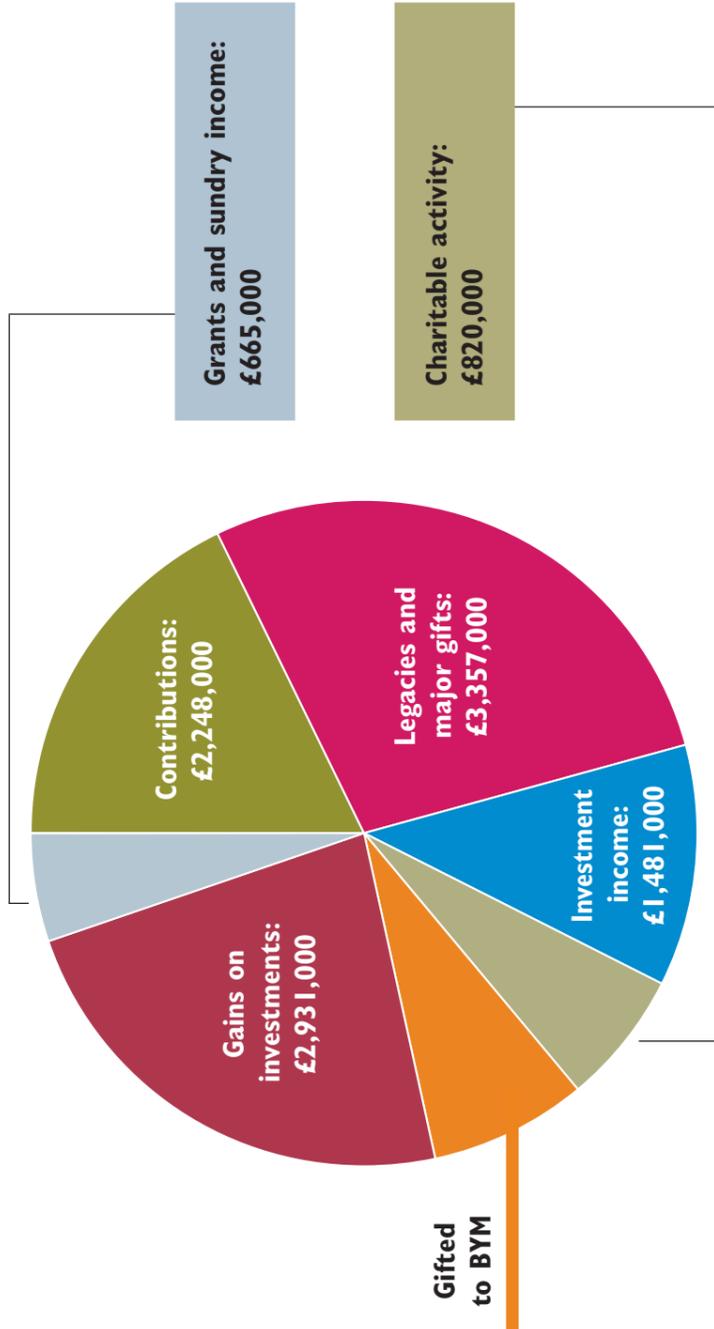


Friends House Hospitality Company expenditure: £4,287,000



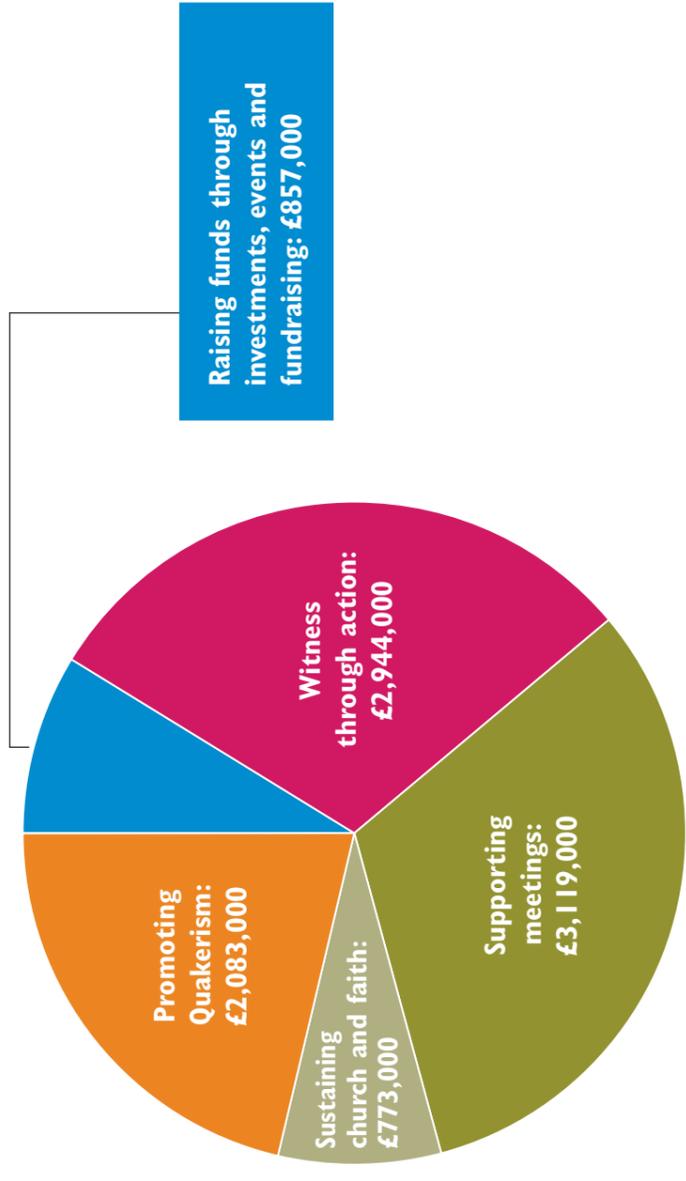
£965,000 FH Hospitality Company surplus

Britain Yearly Meeting income: £12,647,000*



Gifted to BYM

Britain Yearly Meeting expenditure: £9,776,000



Raising funds through investments, events and fundraising: £857,000

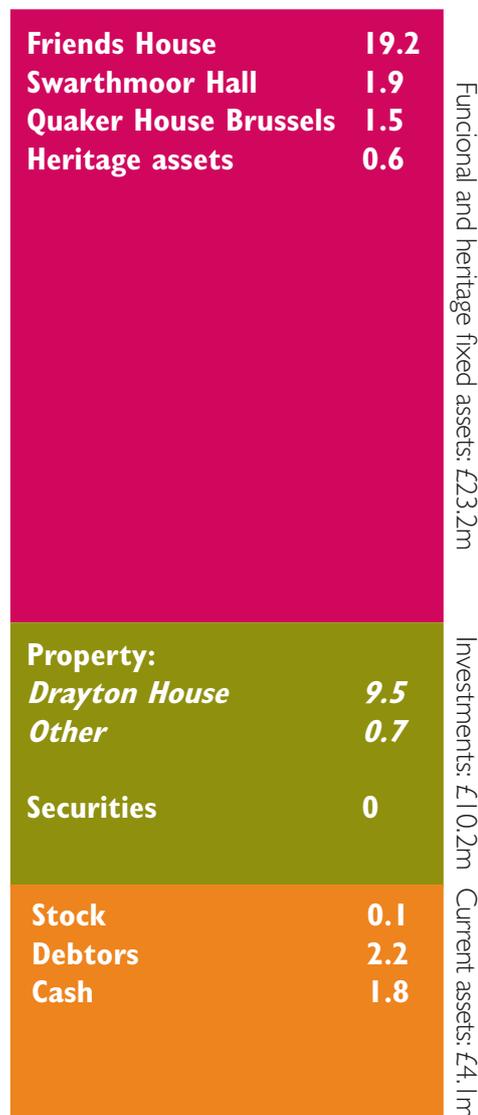
*Excluding property revaluation

Group assets and liabilities

2017 total assets: £80.3m



2016 total assets: £58.7m



Note: charts not to scale