



Sustainability workshop for Friends

A guide for workshop leaders

Introduction

In 2011, Quakers in Britain committed to taking action on the sustainability crisis. This crisis is complex and poses many challenges to our Quaker testimony. These workshop exercises aim to help Friends understand the sustainability crisis and their ability to take action on it.

This guide is designed so that a Friend can use it to lead the workshop. The workshop sessions can be run in, and adapted for, a sustainability group session, a mixed-age group, or with an informal group. Friends leading or participating in the workshop do not need to be an 'expert' on sustainability. Friends will be sharing their own perspective, opinions and understanding with the group in order to learn from each other.

Depending on the time available, both or either exercises can be completed. However, it is best to run exercise 1 before running session 2 with the same group.

The complete workshop takes about **1 hr 15 mins**. The workshop works best with around **5-15 participants**.

You may wish to open the workshop with some silence and by reading a passage from **Quaker Faith & Practice**. Passages from chapter 25 all relate to sustainability and may be useful for this purpose. If the participants don't know each other, lead a short 'ice-breaker' before you start. For example, ask participants to go round and say their name and one small thing they've done recently to make their life more sustainable.

Workshop exercise 1: What is the sustainability crisis?

This workshop session aims to help Friends to share and develop their understanding of our unsustainable relationship with the earth. It will use the metaphor of a tree to help participants think about what the crisis consists of, why it is happening, and how it challenges us as Quakers.

There is an example of a completed 'un-sustainability tree' on page 3.

Preparing the session

Equipment needed:

- Flip chart with large piece of paper
- Marker pens
- This guide

Room layout: Chairs set out in a circle with the flip chart in a place where everyone can see it.

Time needed: About 20 minutes.

How to lead the session

You will be guiding the group through three stages of the exercise, and writing their contributions on the flip chart. Encourage the participants to share their thoughts, however little or much they know about sustainability. Tell the group that there are no right answers; it's about how we see the problem. However, you may find it useful at times to add to what someone is saying or prompt further ideas with a relevant '**sustainability crisis fact**' (see page 4).

1. Introduction: Explain that: *'The aim of this exercise will be to form a picture of our understanding of the sustainability crises- what do we think it is, why it is happening, and how it affects us. To do this we will be creating a 'sustainability crisis tree'.*
2. Draw a picture of a tree trunk in the middle of the flip chart paper. Explain: *'This tree trunk represents what we think of when we say 'the sustainability crisis.' What do you think of, or picture in your head, when I say 'unsustainable'? Can you think of examples that show our unsustainable relationship to the earth? Say whatever you think of, big things or small things.'*
Write people's answers on the flip chart around the tree trunk. Remember to leave space above and below the trunk for the next parts of the exercise.

Take about 5-10 minutes on this section.

To get the conversation going, you could suggest some of the following:

Deforestation, too many cars, over-fishing, plastic bags, destroying habitats, carbon emissions, building more airports, land fill, resource depletion, oil drilling, food packaging.

Remember, you can you read out some relevant 'sustainability crises facts' (on page 4) to add to what people are saying or encourage conversation.

3. Now draw some roots coming out the bottom of the trunk. Explain that: *'The roots represent the causes of the sustainability crisis. What do think the causes are? How has the crisis happened?'*
Write people's answers on the flip chart around the roots. You might get some of the same answers that are on the trunk. Write them on the roots anyway.

Take about 5-10 minutes on this section.

To get the conversation going, you could suggest some of the following:

Capitalism, greed, consumerism, corporate power, government policy, denial, lack of respect.

4. Now draw 4 branches from the top of the trunk. Label the branches 'Peace', 'Simplicity', 'Truth' and 'Equality'. Explain that: *'These branches represent our Quaker testimonies. How does the sustainability crisis challenge these testimonies? How does it challenge us as Quakers?'*
These questions open to interpretation, so this stage of the exercise is more difficult. You may wish to read out passages from Quaker Faith & Practice related to sustainability, and suggest a few minutes silence for reflection before you start. Some suggested passages are provided on page 9. Once you start the discussion, write people's answers on the flip chart by the appropriate 'branch'.

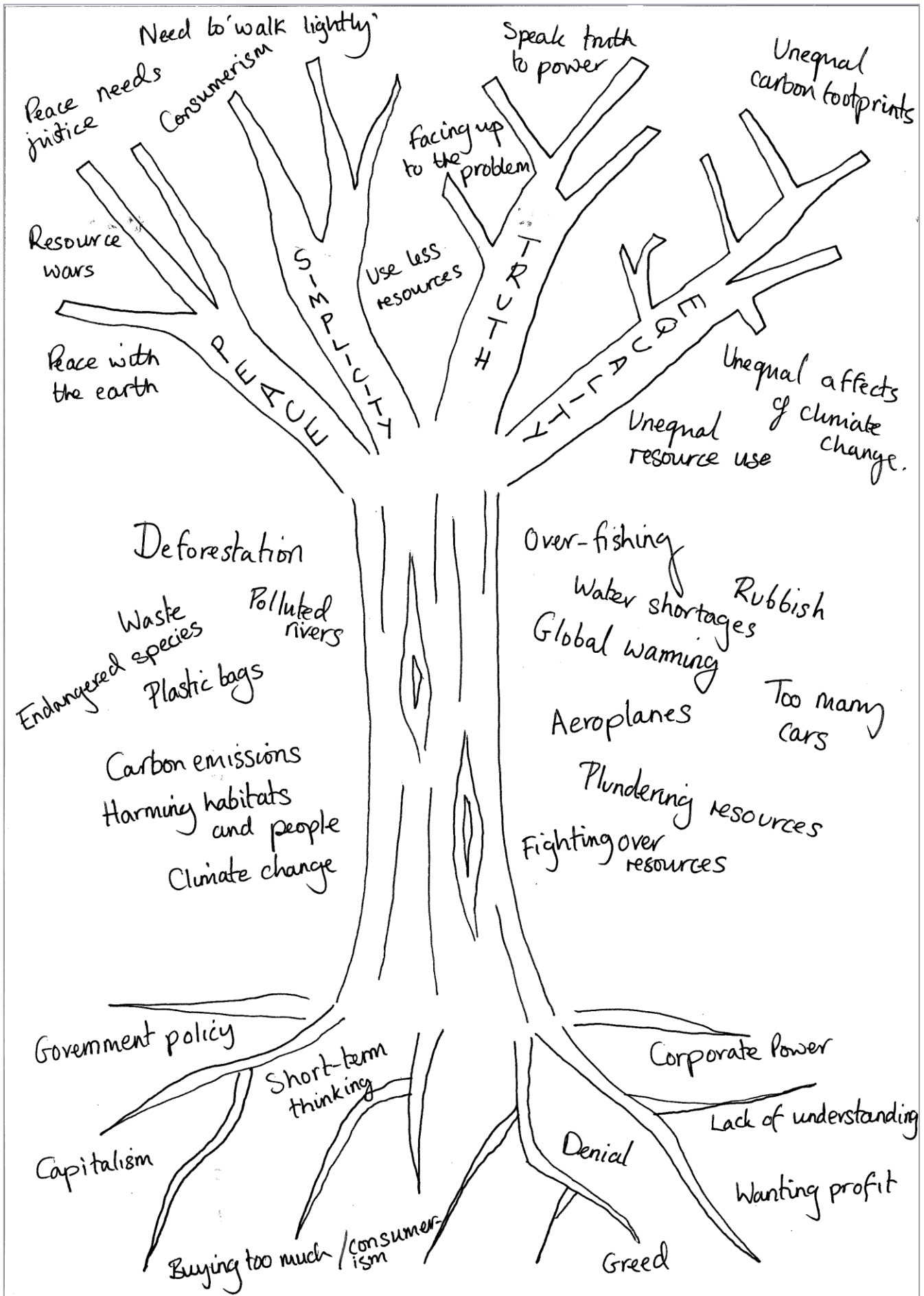
Take about 10-15 minutes on this section.

Here are some examples to get the conversation going if you need them:

- *'Conflicts over resources challenge our testimony to peace. We need to use our resources wisely.'* So write 'resource conflicts' next to the 'Peace' branch.
- *'The affects of climate change hit developing countries the hardest.'* So write 'effects of climate change' next to the 'Equality' branch.
- *'We need the government to act on sustainability. We need to speak truth to power.'* So write 'speak truth to power' next to the 'Truth' branch.
- *'We buy and throw away too much.'* So write 'consumerism' next to the 'Simplicity' branch.
- *'Peace is about our relationship to the earth and other species, as well as people.'* So write 'Peace with earth' next to the 'Peace' branch.
- *'We must accept the scale of the problem.'* So write 'accept the problem' next to the 'Truth' branch.

5. Bring the exercise to a close. Explain that: *'Together, the group now has a picture of our joint understanding of the sustainability crisis. We can refer to this in the next exercise.'*

Example of a completed 'sustainability crisis tree' exercise



Sustainability crisis facts (for use in Workshop exercise 1).

Economic growth

The global economy has grown more than fivefold since the mid 20th century. Almost all economic activity and therefore economic growth is dependent on our natural environment

Happiness and wealth

Since 1970, the UK's GDP has doubled, but people's satisfaction with life has hardly changed.

Biodiversity

Nearly a quarter of all mammals and a third of all amphibians are threatened with extinction.

Deforestation

Deforestation contributes to between 15 and 20% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions.

Climate change and refugees

Climate change could cause 200 million people to become refugees by 2050.

Greenhouse gas emissions

The current UK average carbon emissions is 13.7 tonnes per person. The target for UK average carbon emissions is 3 tonnes by 2050.

In 2010 UK greenhouse gas emissions rose by 3.1%.

Advertising and consumerism

Evidence suggests that advertising increases overall consumption, normalises a whole host of behaviours, attitudes and values, many of which are socially and environmentally damaging; and that it manipulates individuals on a subconscious level, including children.

Fossil fuels

Over 90% of UK energy is from fossil fuels.

Government policy and fossil fuels

Globally, governments subsidise fossil fuel production and consumption by \$1.4 billion per day.

Global warming

Average global temperature has increased by 0.75% since the beginning of the 20th Century.

UK Lifestyles

If everyone in the world lived a UK lifestyle we would need 3.1 planets.

The UK has the longest average working hours of all the major economies in Europe.

Workshop exercise 2: Finding our power and taking action

This workshop session aims to help Friends explore what power they have to tackle the sustainability crisis as a meeting. The exercise uses a 'power map' to help participants think about what groups they belong to, what resources they have, and what paths to creating change are open to them.

For this session, participants will need to get into groups of 4-5.

There is an example of a completed 'power map' on page 7.

Preparing the session

Equipment needed:

- A large piece paper (preferably A1) for each small group
- 2 or 3 marker pens for each small group
- A set of prompt cards for each group (photocopied and cut out from page 8 of this guide)
- This guide
- The group's 'sustainability crisis tree' from exercise 1 if they have done one, placed somewhere visible

Room layout: You will need space for the participants to work in small groups. This may be done in small circles of chairs, or on the floor, depending on the participants' mobility. Some participants may need a table to work on. Participants with hearing difficulties may wish to work with a group in another room or a quieter space.

Time needed: About 35-45 minutes.

How to lead the session

You will need to explain the aim of the exercise (see point 2 below) and give the participants instructions before they start. During the exercise you may want to move between the groups to see how they are doing.

1. Ask the group to get into groups of 4-5. Make sure each group has a piece of paper, a set of pens and a set of 'prompt cards' facing down.
2. Introduction: Explain that: *'The aim of this exercise is to think about what power we have as a meeting to tackle the sustainability crisis and build a sustainable future. We all have some form of positive power and influence within the communities we belong to. We have power together and power separately. We all have some choices in the way we live our lives. We are also all able to have a positive influence on the lives and choices of friends, family, neighbours, classmates, colleagues, our MP, our local community, the local council or local business owners. This gives us many forms of positive power.'*
3. Explain that: 'We are going to draw 'maps' of our power to tackle the crisis.' Then give the following instructions:
 - In the middle of your paper, draw a meeting house or group of people to represent the meeting.
 - From the meeting house, draw your 'paths to power' outwards. These paths could be 'our meeting house', 'pressuring politicians', 'our consumer choices', 'our community' or any other 'path to power' you can think of.
 - Then from each of these paths write 2 or 3 actions that you could take, however big or small, to tackle the crisis. For example:
 - From the 'our meeting house' path, you could write 'grow vegetables in the garden' or 'hold a public meeting on climate change'.

- From the 'pressuring politicians' path, you could write 'ask our MP to speak out against fossil fuel use' or 'Ask the council to build better bike lanes.'

Explain that: 'If the group gets stuck thinking of ideas for paths to power, pick up a 'prompt card'. Hopefully this will help you think of ideas.'

4. While the group is working on their maps, go round and see how they are doing. If they are finding it difficult, you could make some suggestions. There is a list of suggestions at the bottom of this page.
5. After about 20 minutes of 'mapping', ask the group to listen to some last instructions: *'Now you have made a map of the power we have as a meeting, we have some ideas of actions we can take. Amongst your small groups, pick two actions, big or small, that each of you could take, or ask the meeting as a whole to take. Circle the three things on the map that you pick.'*

Give the groups about 10 minutes to do this.

6. To finish, go round and ask someone from each small group to report back to the group as a whole on what actions they picked. Can the group commit to try to take some of these actions? Can the group ask the rest of the meeting to take an action as a whole? Allow a short discussion about this (about 10 minutes). You don't need to have firm ideas by the end of the session. Hope fully, participants will be inspired to go away and think more about this.

The following are ideas for 'paths to power' and action that other Friends have come up with when they have done the exercise:

Our meeting house:

- Grow food in the garden
- Hold a public green event
- Lend the space to a local sustainability action group
- Make our meeting house energy efficient
- Change to a renewable energy provider

Pressuring politicians:

- Write to our MP and MEP and ask them to act on or speak out a an particular issue
- Ask local council for better cycling facilities
- Go on a climate demo
- Invite an MP for tea and ask for climate action

Our money:

- Change our investments to a sustainable fund
- Make a collection for a sustainability campaign
- Lobby our meeting's bank CEO to divest from oil

Home and family:

- Involve children in sustainability actions
- Use the car less
- Reduce household waste by 50%
- Buy local/ British food
- Holiday in the UK

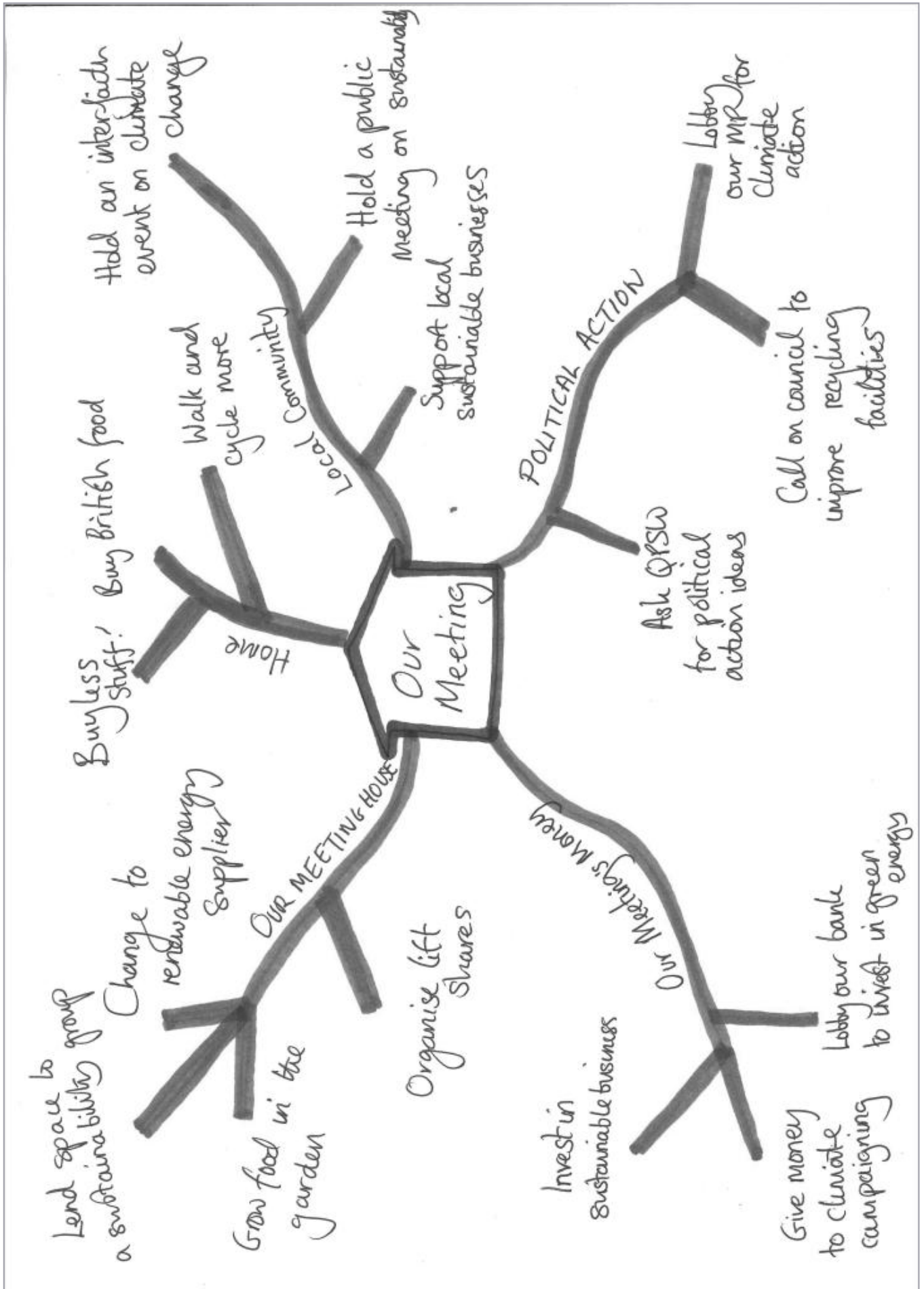
Local community:

- Hold an interfaith sustainability event
- Invite others to join our sustainability commitment
- Join local sustainability campaigns and actions.
- Help promote local food growing project

Britain Yearly Meeting:

- Invite a QPSW speaker on sustainability
- Work with our area meeting to commit to actions
- Ask QPSW for action ideas
- Take a sustainability concern to Area Meeting and Sufferings

Example of a completed 'power map' exercise. Each group's map will be different.



Prompt cards for Workshop exercise 2 – photocopy and cut out one set for each group.

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| <p>Where is our meeting's money invested?</p> | <p>Are there any local groups tackling the sustainability crisis? How could we support them?</p> | <p>Who are our elected representatives? What are they doing to tackle the sustainability crisis?</p> |
| <p>Are our homes as sustainable as they could be? Do we use energy and resources well?</p> | <p>How much waste do we produce?</p> | <p>Who supplies our energy? Is there a greener alternative?</p> |
| <p>Do we use transport sustainably?</p> | <p>Are there local sustainable businesses that we can support?</p> | <p>What other faith groups are in the area? How are they acting on sustainability?</p> |
| <p>How can we help Friends of all ages in our meeting learn about and act on sustainability?</p> | <p>What skills do we have to live more sustainable lives? How can we share them with each other?</p> | <p>How can we 'speak truth to power' on sustainability?</p> |
| <p>How can we speak out in our local community?</p> | <p>How can we join with other Quakers to act on sustainability?</p> | <p>How can we make sure we're up to date with opportunities for political action?</p> |

1.02 Advices and Queries

41. Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment?

42. We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures, and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation.

25. Unity with Creation

25.04 All species and the Earth itself have interdependent roles within Creation. Humankind is not the species, to whom all others are subservient, but one among many. All parts, all issues, are inextricably intertwined. Indeed the web of creation could be described as of three-ply thread: wherever we touch it we affect justice and peace and the health of all everywhere. So all our testimonies, all our Quaker work, all our Quaker lives are part of one process, of striving towards a flourishing, just and peaceful Creation - the Kingdom of God.

Audrey Urry, 1994

25.09 I want to list ten controlling principles for the outward expression of simplicity. They should not be viewed as laws but as one attempt to flesh out the meaning of simplicity into twentieth-century life. First, buy things for their usefulness rather than their status. Second, reject anything that is producing an addiction in you. Third, develop a habit of giving things away. De-accumulate. Fourth, refuse to be propagandised by the custodians of modern gadgetry. Fifth, learn to enjoy things without owning them. Sixth, develop a deeper appreciation for the creation. Seventh, look with a healthy scepticism at all 'buy now, pay later' schemes. Eighth, obey Jesus' injunction about plain, honest speech. Ninth, reject anything that will breed the oppression of others. Tenth, shun whatever would distract you from your main goal.

Richard J Foster, 1979

25.11 As consumers, producers and investors, or as travellers, readers and campaigners we can be active in support of the Two Thirds World. Our use of energy connects us directly to the greenhouse effect and to world food supplies. Our bank interest rates link us to the debt burdens which are forcing many countries to destroy their environment to produce cash crops and foreign currency. Our ability to acquire knowledge gives us the chance to act as a mouthpiece on behalf of the environment and the poor who are suffering most from its destruction. Indeed we have the responsibility to use that knowledge wisely.

Ruth Tod, 1990

Extract from 25.12 We live in a part of the world where the dominant motivation is material self-interest, justified by the concept of personal freedom. In these circumstances, the rich get richer and the poor, for the most part, become comparatively poorer. This offends our moral sensibility and, at the practical level, the process of material growth cannot in any event go on indefinitely (....)

London Yearly Meeting, 1975

25.13 That the sweat and tedious labour of the farmer, early and late, cold and hot, wet and dry, should be converted into the pleasure of a small number of men - that continued severity should be laid on nineteen parts of the land to feed the inordinate lusts and delicate appetites of the twentieth, is so far from the will of the great Governor of the world, ... [it] is wretched and blasphemous.

William Penn, 1669

Other useful passages can be found in Chapter 25 (Unity with Creation) in Quaker Faith & Social Witness

Contacts and further resources

This workshop guide was produced by the Sustainability & Peace Programme at Quaker Peace & Social Witness. For enquiries relating to the programme's work please contact:

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Website

Find out more about the Sustainability & Peace Programme and find ideas for action at:

www.quaker.org.uk/sustainability

Quakernomics Blog

Join with Friends for discussion on sustainability and economic justice on the *Quakernomics* blog at:

www.quaker.org.uk/quakernomics-blog

Facebook

Keep up to date with the programme and other Friends' sustainability news on our *Sustainable Quakers*

Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/SustainableQuakers

Sustainability Toolkit

QPSW and Living Witness's Sustainability Toolkit assists meetings in becoming a low-carbon sustainable community. Each local meeting will have a copy. An electronic copy can be downloaded at:

www.quaker.org.uk/sustainability-toolkit

Further hard copies can be bought from the Quaker Bookshop website for £5.00 each at:

www.quaker.org.uk/shop/sustainability-toolkit

Climate impact calculators

QPSW and Living Witness's Climate impact calculators help Friends calculate the climate impact of their meetings and their own lives. An online version of both calculators for individuals, and for meetings, along with documents to print paper versions, can be found at:

www.quaker.org.uk/climate-impact-calculators

Earth and Economy newsletter

Earth and Economy is the joint newsletter of QPSW's Economic Issues and Sustainability & Peace Programmes. To receive email or postal versions of the newsletter, and e-updates on our work, go to:

www.quaker.org.uk/earth-economy-signup

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