



Quakers in Britain – 7 year plan summary

The Religious Society of Friends was founded as a radical Christian movement in seventeenth century England. Today, around 25,000 people known as Quakers, attend nearly 475 Quaker meetings in Britain.

Quakers share a way of life, not a set of beliefs. They seek to experience God directly, within themselves and in their relationships with others and the world around them. Quakers meet together in stillness for worship in local meetings which are inclusive and open to all.

Quakers are impelled by their faith to make their lives an active witness for peace and justice. Their historic commitment to equality, justice, peace, simplicity and truth challenges them to alleviate suffering and seek positive social change.

Sustainability is a core spiritual and strategic priority for Quakers in Britain.

“Sustainability is an urgent matter for our Quaker Witness. It is rooted in Quaker testimony and must be integral to all we do corporately and individually. Quakers have particular gifts to offer the world in living our values, in our approach to community and in our way of working, which encourages everyone’s voice to be heard.

We are called to be patterns and examples, taking responsibility for our individual and corporate environmental impacts, and engaging in local, national and international politics.

We ask all meetings and all members and attenders to work together, led by projects such as Living Witness, to live simpler lives that help to conserve our environment and enable all forms of life to flourish.”

‘A Framework for Action 2009-2014’ agreed by Meeting for Sufferings in September 2008.

The publication of a corporate statement ‘A Quaker response to the crisis of climate change’ in June 2009 further strengthened the British Quaker position on sustainability and climate change.

This statement was also been endorsed by Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative, Canadian Yearly Meeting, Canadian Young Friends Yearly Meeting and the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation.

A selection of planned Quaker action in the coming years:

Assets

-The historic Quaker owned conference centre, Swarthmoor Hall, in Cumbria plans to come 'off grid' in the next 2-3 years through on-site small-scale energy production. In addition Swarthmoor Hall is seriously investigating the possibility of using the surrounding farmland it owns for one or two commercial wind turbines, to be owned co-operatively by British Quakers.

-Friends House, which contains the central offices of Britain Yearly Meeting, a restaurant, café and meeting space for hire, will build on its recent 'Good Egg Award' for using only free range eggs by gradually implementing a strict food policy for its catering and restaurant services. This includes total food recycling by the end of 2009, a 35% increase in organic produce and to source 40% of food from within greater London by the end of 2012.

-Quakers in Britain are in the process of reaching an agreement with Rathbones Greenbank, their investment managers, to work with them to improve the environmental impact of companies with whom we have investment positions.

Education and young people

-A three year programme of courses 'Good Lives don't have to cost the Earth' was launched in 2009 by Woodbrooke Quaker study centre in Birmingham. This specialised series of day events and study weekends aim to bring together the head, heart and spirit to cover the social, scientific, political and economic aspects of climate change.

-In 2010 'Journeys in the Spirit' a seasonally published resource for Quakers engaging with children and young people, will scale up its suggested activities and resources on sustainability.

Lifestyles

-Quakers are already deeply engaged in personal change and widespread local activities and initiatives such as Transition Towns. Many Friends have already personally committed to the 10:10 initiative which will now also be encouraged through our central networks.

-We are exploring the possibility of launching a web based forum next year that will chart the progress of 4-5 Local Meetings as they grapple with practical changes to the Meeting House, their own lifestyle and their activities as a community.

-The Quaker 'Living Witness Project' plans to gradually expand its team of expert 'resource people' who already provide workshops and advice to Local Meetings considering their response, both practically and spiritually, to climate change.

-Friends House has recently completed a comprehensive environmental audit. An ambitious plan of change has been produced; including a commitment to 10:10 and at least a 20% reduction in carbon emissions by 2013.

Media and Advocacy

-The independent weekly Quaker magazine, The Friend, has appointed a dedicated environment editor to ensure appropriate and accurate coverage of sustainability issues.

-The British Quaker website has a dedicated area for environmental witness, resources, campaigns and project news. www.quaker.org.uk/environment.

-Quakers are encouraged and supported with technical information in raising environmental concerns with their MP/MEPs, particularly in the build up to Copenhagen and the general election in 2010.

Project work

-Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) plans to establish a 'Sustainability and Peace' programme exploring the links between conflict and climate change. This is in addition to current environmental work.

-QPSW is exploring a joint project with its Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva to facilitate and support with technical information an interfaith dialogue on climate induced migration.