

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Saturday 8 February 2025, by video conference

Minutes

Present: Catherine Brown, Lis Burch, Kit Fotheringham, Ursula Fuller, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King (Assistant Clerk), Liz Law, John Lewis, Silas Price, Danielle Walker Palmour (minutes BYMT 25/02/01 to 17), Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

Prevented: Jo Hills, Elizabeth Redfern

In attendance: Sarah Donaldson, Senior Change Leader: Quaker Governance; Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk; Vipran Narang, Finance Director; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship; Lisa San Martín, CEO Quiet Company

Visitors: John Ashcroft, Clerk of Internal Audit and Risk Committee (minute BYMT/25/02/12 to 13); Margaret Bryan, Convener of Group to Review Central Structures (minute BYMT/25/02/10); Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager (BYMT/25/02/11); Tina Leonard, Internal Audit and Risk Committee (minute BYMT/25/02/12); David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising (BYMT/25/02/11); Janet Slade, Internal Audit & Risk Committee (minute BYMT/25/02/12); Rachael Swancott, Co-Clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee (minutes BYMT/25/02/12 to 13); Martin Wall, Co-Clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee (minutes BYMT/25/02/12 to 13)

BYMT/25/02/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest. We considered our agenda.

During our opening worship, we heard read an extract from Simon C Lamb's keynote address to the 2000 Friends World Committee for Consultation Triennial held in Geneva Point, New Hampshire, USA:

“There is a quiet place, at the very heart of our being, in the depths of our soul. It is the place where God and humanity meet. As we seek to understand and to know God, it is in that place that we search for reason in the face of starvation and poverty across the globe. It is to there that we escape for comfort in our own moments of personal grief and need, and it is to there that we go when we are struggling with the challenge of the reality of a personal experience of the living, inward Christ. For it is in this quiet place that we will find that still, small voice.”

Simon, a member of Ireland YM, was clerk of the Central Executive Committee of FWCC since 2017. He died suddenly and unexpectedly at the beginning of the year. A world-wide memorial Meeting organised by FWCC is being held online today. We hold in the Light the family of Friends mourning his loss.

BYMT/25/02/02 Continuing business

We receive a list of continuing minutes, including the minute BYMT/24/11/15 on the work of the Group to Review Central Structures following our meeting in November. We return to this matter at this meeting.

BYMT/25/02/03 Minutes received

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Life Central Committee 14 November 24
- Reparations Working Group 21 November 24
- Employment Committee 27 November 2024
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 30 November 24
- Audit Committee 10 December 2024
- Quiet Company Board 28 January 2025

BYMT/25/02/04 Whistleblowing annual report

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 04 from the Recording Clerk on promoting the whistleblowing policy and procedure within the organisation. We note there were no whistleblowing cases in 2024.

BYMT/25/02/05 Safeguarding Policy review

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 05 from Mark Mitchell, which outlines the changes to the BYM Safeguarding Policy suggested by a review carried out by Mark and thirtyone:eight, an independent safeguarding advisory service.

We accept the changes outlined in the paper and approve the revised policy.

BYMT/25/02/06 EDI annual report

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 06 from BYM's Equities Cluster, which outlines BYM's progress with our commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion. It includes a description of the Cluster, a SWOT analysis, and the Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) report from the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI). Siobhán Haire spoke to the paper and answered questions from Friends.

In response to questions, we were reassured to hear that work is underway to take a more proactive approach to communications concerning the Yearly Meeting's position on welcoming and affirming trans and non-binary people as mandated by minute 31 of Yearly Meeting 2021.

BYMT/25/02/07 Insurance

We note paper BYMT 2025 02 07a setting out a summary of BYM's main insurance policies.

BYMT/25/02/08 Yearly Meeting and finances

a) Yearly Meeting financial considerations

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 07b from Paul Parker and Sarah Donaldson regarding financial support for attendance at Yearly Meeting and note minutes FIPC 25/03 to 25/05.

We accept the following recommendations made in paper BYMT 2025 02 07b:

- Refer to ‘help with the costs of attending Yearly Meeting’, or a simpler term, rather than “bursaries”;
- Make a small change to the operation of the current scheme by placing the responsibility for checking for local funding on pastoral Friends, not the applicant;
- Ask Management Meeting to include an appropriate sum for help with the costs of attending Yearly Meeting in the next budget;
- Work hard on communicating the availability of financial support for anyone who needs it;
- Ask that a suitable policy for the payment of expenses to role holders at Yearly Meeting be drafted;
- Agree that BYM should reimburse the expenses of Yearly Meeting representatives from area meetings, Young Friends General Meeting, Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales and General Meeting for Scotland (unless the meeting prefers to deal with it themselves);
- Ensure that the expenses policy to be used by representatives is clear and appropriate;
- Communicate with meetings to ask them to contribute to the running costs of Yearly Meeting.

We agree to inform Meeting for Sufferings of our discernment on this matter as required by minute 37 of Yearly Meeting 2024.

b) Minutes of Finance, IT & Property Committee

We receive minutes from Finance, IT and Property Committee’s meetings on 12 November (paper BYMT 2024 02 07c) and 13 January (paper BYMT 2025 02 07d),

Trustees expect to receive a set of the most recent management accounts at each meeting going forward.

BYMT/25/02/09 Recording Clerk’s report

We receive a report covering December 2024 to January 2025 from the Recording Clerk and Management Meeting. The Recording Clerk’s report sets out new and positive developments as well as areas of concern that have come up between each meeting of BYMT, as identified by members of Management Meeting. We also receive the reporting dashboard dated January 2025 with indicators of key information on compliance, communications, and organisational health.

We have heard about plans to release guidance to meetings about countering antisemitism, and discussed the support being provided to area meetings and other groupings exploring structural changes to their governance.

BYMT/25/02/10 Simple, inclusive and sustainable structures

a) Group to Review Central Structures – final report

We welcome Margaret Bryan, convener to Group to Review Central Structures to our meeting.

At our last meeting, GRCS presented their final report to us and at this meeting we receive a final update from the Group (BYMT 2025 02 09a). This update includes a copy of the Group’s minutes from its final meeting on 13 January 2025. The Group

challenges us to work towards simpler structures, improve communications, planning and understanding, and to ensure participation.

We lay down the Group to Review Central Structures and give our thanks to the significant contributions of several trustees on this group, the convenors, other Friends representing other committees, and all the staff who have supported this work.

b) Prioritisation and resource allocation

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 09b on priorities and resources – the challenges of making decisions on these issues through our current structures and processes, and a suggested way forward to help address these challenges.

BYM trustees want to explore the formation of a mechanism to help it meet its existing responsibilities in respect of evaluation of programmes and resource allocation and respond to minutes 21 and 52 of Yearly Meeting 2023. The intention is to broaden the participation of Friends from Central Committees in fulfilling these important responsibilities so that decisions are made in a more collaborative and connected way.

We ask staff to prepare a paper to send to the Central Committees to help them discern how they would like to engage with this exploration, and we offer to take part in their meetings considering this if they wish.

We also ask that staff provide draft terms of reference for discussion at a later meeting. We ask that it is included in these draft terms of reference that the clerk of any such subcommittee shall not be a member of BYMT. This draft will be shared with BYMT, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, and Quaker Life Central Committee at the appropriate time.

BYMT/25/02/11 Communications and fundraising

We are joined by David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising, and Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager.

a) Annual Communications report

We receive an annual communications report (paper BYMT 2025 02 11) summarising achievements in 2024 against the communications strategy. This report includes updates on digital communications, legacy promotional materials, a communications guide, the George Fox 400 celebrations, general election advocacy and revised policies adopted in the year. The paper also notes the key activities planned for 2025.

b) Fundraising strategy report

We receive a first-year report on the three-year fundraising strategy introduced last year (paper BYMT 2025 02 12). We are pleased to note the work on each of the strategy's six objectives.

Friends need to be more explicit and robust in considering the practice of giving money as well as service for the building up of the community. The spiritual roots of this go deep – *“And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person’s need is met.”* (Acts, 2:44-45, from *The Message*)

Wealth is a relative term – depending on how we choose to look at it, we have much, or little, or just enough. Part of our spiritual deepening is to recognise what we have. Wealth confers privilege: making choices, taking control, exercising power. These things are good in themselves, but our over-reliance on them will blunt our ability to reach beyond our own small world, grow in the Spirit, and continue to build the *Commonwealth of Heaven on Earth*.

With privilege comes greater responsibility for the welfare of the community. There is joy and freedom that comes from divesting ourselves of too much power and influence, and in seeing the fruits of our gifts, or trust in what may come of them after we have gone.

Donating is not only a matter for the individual – our corporate bodies also have a duty of sharing their wealth with sister Quaker structures that may have less, and a duty to encourage a culture of generosity and giving among their members and attenders.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to consider whether this encouragement of giving at all levels of our Society should be laid upon area meetings as a duty. We send this minute to the Book of Discipline Revision Committee to be considered for inclusion in whole or in part and suggest that they also explore the writing on donating of Friends in other parts of the world that may be useful to include for the edification of our own yearly meeting.

BYMT/25/02/12 Review of integrated strategy

Our Internal Audit and Risk Committee brings us its final report on reviewing the introduction of the integrated strategy to support Quaker communities.

We are joined by the members of our Internal Audit and Risk Committee (IARC) John Ashcroft, its clerk, Tina Leonard and Janet Slade, members of the committee, and Rachael Swancott and Martin Wall, co-clerks of Quaker Life Central Committee.

We endorse the following recommendations from IARC, with some amendments:

- Consideration be given to how LDW feedback can be analysed in a more structured manner and how IT can be tightly specified to facilitate such analysis;
- A watching brief is maintained on Quaker Life's specialist capacity to ensure that this suffices going forward;
- The performance measures for Quaker Life and Woodbrooke developed for their grant funders form the basis for an integrated reporting structure on the delivery of the whole strategy;
- Consideration be given to a deeper dive in the form of qualitative research commissioned by Quaker Life Central Committee into what is happening in local communities, to inform the revision of the strategy and identify which interventions add most value, and in particular the success of local capacity building;
- Consideration be given to using evidence from all types of monitoring and evaluation to determine how interventions can become more strongly focused and directive on desired outcomes, in particular helping meetings locally to build the necessary capacity.

We see a need for Quaker Life to develop a more proactive response to the red risk of too many area meetings having insufficient Friends willing and able to serve as charity trustees. This request would build on the active support that Quaker Life has so far provided, and experience gained, thus enabling Quaker Life to respond in a timely fashion and drive forward area meeting charity mergers. The resource implications increase the importance of tightening of focus within the strategy. However, this needs to be kept in balance with the need to develop new and different types of communities so that we are not putting all our resources into managing the decline of existing structures.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee.

BYMT/25/02/13 Supporting area meetings facing viability issues

We receive a paper setting out the indicators of struggling area meetings, how the burden of governance and compliance might be resolved through a smaller number of larger charities, and the challenge of making changes (paper BYMT 2025 02 15). This consideration is timely because of the plan for Woodbrooke and Quaker Life to review their strategy for supporting Quaker communities.

We ask staff to find ways to build up a pool of names who could act as trustees where area meetings are unable to appoint Friends to this role. However, this is not the whole solution. There are more issues than simply a lack of trustees, therefore there is a need for continued support to meetings which need expert help with issues including property, finance, or employment. The directors of Friends Trusts Limited are the legal custodian trustees for many meetings. We support the suggestion that there may be additional support that could be provided via this route.

We feel that there is a need for a tool that meetings can use to gauge where they are in terms of viability, to aid decision making.

A pilot programme with area meetings of differing size, financial position, and viability feels beneficial and we hope that frank assessment of a few area meetings may take us in a clearer direction. We would also like to hear from Local Development Workers what progress has been made with groups of Friends in undertaking outreach activities and/or simplifying structures.

The situation of each area meeting is different, and therefore there will be a case-by-case choice to be made in consultation with individual area meetings as to the approach to be taken.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee and Friends Trusts Limited.

BYMT/25/02/14 Outreach

Oliver Robertson has introduced his paper on developing our outreach strategy (BYMT 2025 02 14). We are grateful for the careful thought which has gone into this paper and endorse the analysis set out. We hope that there will be ways to share this thinking with Friends as discernment of the way forward continues both here and at Quaker Life Central Committee.

We are open to the possibility of providing additional funding for outreach activity, however we would like more detail about how the funds might be spent and what the impact would be before committing to a figure. We recognise that any funding

decision will need to be taken alongside our review of other priorities over the course of this year.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee.

BYMT/25/02/15 Proposal for reviewing our strategic priorities

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 16 from the Recording Clerk with a proposal and timeline for reviewing BYM's strategic priorities. We hope that, in consultation with the Central Committees, we will take a light touch approach to review our existing priorities, what has happened since those were put in place, and see what needs updating from those existing priorities, rather than undertaking a more extensive review at this time. It is important that our priorities become more refined to enable simpler decision making.

We agree to assign two trustees to this task, to work together with staff. We ask our Nominations Committee to find two names.

BYMT/25/02/16 Operational plan for 2024

We receive a report from the Operational Managers' team on the delivery of the operational plan for last year. We note that, although much has been achieved, as in previous years not all targets have been met, for a variety of intervening and unforeseen reasons.

Hybrid and home working has opened up new possibilities for recruiting beyond London and frees up space in Friends House for lettings thus increasing income while decreasing staff support costs. It is important to maintain cohesion, so bringing staff together from time to time remains good practice.

We encourage Management Meeting to continue to strive to set more realistic objectives for each year's work, in the hope that delivery will exceed aspiration!

BYMT/25/02/17 Nominations and appointments

We receive the following nominations from our Nominations Group:

Buddies to support new trustees in their first year of service:

- Paul Whitehouse for John Lewis
- Kit Fotheringham for Lis Burch
- Catherine Brown for Liz Law

Employment Committee

- John Lewis to serve 8 February to 31 December 2025

Quiet Company Board

- Lis Burch to serve 8 February to 31 December 2025

Anti-oppression champion

- Liz Law to serve 8 February to 31 December 2025

We agree to these appointments and thank Nominations Group for bringing us this report.

Treasurer (renomination)

- Paul Whitehouse to serve 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

We send this nomination to Yearly Meeting.

BYMT/25/02/18 BYM Trustee committees

a) Internal Audit and Risk Committee and Finance, IT and Property Committee

We receive draft revised terms of reference for our Internal Audit and Risk Committee (IARC) and Finance, IT and Property Committee (FIPC) (paper BYMT 2025 02 18a). The main changes clarify responsibilities for the relationship with the external auditor and implementing their recommendations rest with FIPC.

We agree to the draft terms of reference in paper BYMT 2025 02 18a, with the amendment noted.

b) Continuing Yearly Meeting transition project board

We have been asked to consider forming a project board to provide governance oversight of the changes needed to transition to the holding of continuing Yearly Meeting sessions. We agree to this and the terms of reference in paper BYMT 2025 02 18b. We ask Nominations Committee to consider suitable names, and we agree to these names being approved by clerks between meetings.

BYMT/25/02/19 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings on 1 March 2025.

BYMT/25/02/20 Time with Recording Clerk

We spent time with the Recording Clerk.

BYMT/25/02/21 Time without staff, communicating our work and reviewing the meeting

We have spent time without staff and reviewed our meeting.

Marisa Johnson
Clerk

Kit King
Assistant Clerk