



# Earth and Economy



Quaker Peace & Social Witness Sustainability & Peace and Economic Issues programmes

Autumn 2015

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## Challenging injustice and inequality

At Yearly Meeting Quakers throughout Britain were asked to take action to challenge inequality and social injustice. Suzanne Ismail reports on how the decision arose and what has happened since.



*“As a yearly meeting we are restless to take corporate action to change the unequal, unjust world in which we live... We ask Friends and meetings to engage with the evil of social and economic injustice which creates a world in which the wrong things are valued.”*

These words form part of minute 36 made at Britain Yearly Meeting in May 2015. The minute, or “call for equality” as some Friends are now calling it, is a powerful statement that highlights the systemic nature of social and economic inequality in Britain and across the globe. It suggests that our current political and economic systems encourage selfishness and greed. And it recognises that, like the harm caused by it, the benefits of the current system are not equally shared.

The minute asks for action across all parts of the yearly meeting and encourages us to find the “roots” of our social ills and to take action to uproot the powers that maintain them. It affirms that there is a need to challenge the UK government to adopt policies that tackle inequality and value everyone’s contribution to society.

That such a comprehensive minute was made by Yearly Meeting in session is a continuation

Friends at Yearly Meeting 2015 agreed a minute calling for equality. Photo: Mike Pinches for Britain Yearly Meeting

of the longstanding Quaker belief in the fundamental equality of each and every person. But it is also a recognition that while some forms of inequality, such as gender and marriage inequality, are improving, others, such as economic inequality, are becoming much worse. Quaker concerns about economic inequality have been growing over the last four or five years and have been demonstrated in a number of ways, including support for food banks, citizens advice bureaux, credit unions and the widespread participation in Quaker Equality Week, which took place in March 2015.

Since the call to equality was made a lot has been happening across the yearly meeting, both within local and area meetings and as part of the centrally managed work.

Some meetings have set aside time to reflect on the outcomes of Yearly Meeting, discuss the issues raised by the minute and what its call for action might mean for them. At a special gathering in September, for example, North West London Area Meeting spent time learning about a number of longstanding social justice initiatives that members of the area meeting were involved with. The day also included a session designed to generate practical ideas for engaging with their elected representatives on these issues.

Other events have brought Friends together from across the yearly meeting. In October, Central England Area Meeting hosted a successful conference attracting Friends from across the country. And at a gathering in Woodbrooke in September, Quaker Housing Trust brought together 18 Friends with expertise and experience of housing issues at an event that generated practical ideas about how Quakers could build on existing work and develop new work to address inequalities in housing.

Other Friends have sprung into action. As highlighted on page 12, Lancaster Friends, some of whom had already been campaigning to encourage local employers to pay the Living Wage, have prepared a campaign pack to support other Friends and meetings to campaign on this issue.

Manchester & Warrington Area Meeting's Social Justice Group felt the need to ensure that the voices of people who would be affected by the social security cuts proposed in the Welfare Reform and Work Bill (see page 11) were heard by MPs. The group decided to collect stories from Quakers and others who use or have previously used the social security system. The stories were collated, anonymised and sent as evidence to the committee of MPs appointed to scrutinise the legislation.

The signs are, then, that Friends are already taking lots of action to make the call to equality a reality in our meetings. Of course, this is just the start. Economic inequality is a massive problem that will require action on many fronts and take many years to address. But, as Quakers, we have a history of working on what at first seem to be intractable issues.

As the call to equality states, "We have a body of experience we can draw on and maintain. We are in this for the long haul."

### Get the next issue – free

Welcome to *Earth and Economy*, where you can explore issues of faith, money, economic justice and sustainability.

Every issue is free, so please email Ellie Roberts at [ellier@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ellier@quaker.org.uk) to sign up for a paper copy or email version. The newsletter is published by Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) but it's not just about what QPSW is doing centrally. It's also a chance for you to share news on how you've been taking action and helping Friends to learn from one another.

You can also add your own thoughts to the Quakernomics blog at [www.quakerweb.org.uk/](http://www.quakerweb.org.uk/) blog or follow us on Twitter @EandEquaker.

Contact Ellie Roberts, Economics, Sustainability & Peace Network Coordinator, at [ellier@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ellier@quaker.org.uk) or on 020 7663 1056.

*Earth and Economy* is printed with vegetable inks on 100% recycled, chlorine-free paper.

# Earth and Economy survey feedback

Thank you to everyone who filled in the survey that accompanied the last edition of *Earth and Economy*. We learnt a lot about how you use the newsletters and why they are useful to you. We also had feedback from people receiving our monthly email updates. Having looked at all the feedback we have made a few changes.

We will now be producing hard copy *Earth and Economy* newsletters, like this one, twice instead of three times a year. These printed newsletters will tend to have longer, more retrospective articles about Quaker work on economic and sustainability issues, as well as reflective and educational contributions to help Friends explore the issues in greater depth. We hope that local meetings will use them to get more informed about the issues and will display them in meetings for members, attenders and building users to look at.

If you are already on our mailing list to receive printed copies of the newsletter you will continue to do so. We're also happy to send additional copies for meeting houses to display or for events.

Our monthly email updates will be used to provide regular updates on the different campaigns we are working on, to share news of activity from across the yearly meeting and to let you know about upcoming events and opportunities. If you would like to be added to this email distribution list you can do this online at [www.quaker.org.uk/earth-and-economy](http://www.quaker.org.uk/earth-and-economy) or by emailing [ellier@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ellier@quaker.org.uk).

In addition to both of these we will continue to produce occasional briefings and other resources. We will share these with Friends on both the email and postal mailing lists.

# 'Be the change' – a new resource for young Quakers taking action

'Be the change' is a new resource to support young Quakers to take action, exploring why some of the issues Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) campaigns on are important. The resource features cards exploring the issues and links to [www.yqspace.org.uk](http://www.yqspace.org.uk), where there is more information and a toolkit of ideas for taking action.

The QPSW Economics, Sustainability & Peace team is supporting two of the campaigns: 'Climate justice' and 'Tackle inequality'. The third campaign is 'No nukes'. Please let young

Quakers at your meeting know about the resource. Order the cards from Cat Waitthaka at [catw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:catw@quaker.org.uk).



# Where next for the divestment movement?

The divestment movement is growing fast. Mark Letcher from Operation Noah shares news of what is happening.

Over the last few months, two of the biggest Churches in the UK have joined the global fossil fuel divestment movement. In March this year, the Church of England announced divestment of £12 million from coal and tar sands companies. Just a few months later, the Methodist Church's Annual Conference voted overwhelmingly in favour of a motion to divest from coal and tar sands by 2017.

These moves come as part of a review of the Churches' climate investment policies undertaken in response to pressure from campaigners. Supported by Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign, grassroots groups have raised more than ten regional church motions on divestment over the last two years. Christians have also led creative actions, including a 'Fossil Free Nativity' performed outside Methodist Central Hall and a 'Divestment Party' thrown on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral.

While the recent commitments from the Church of England and Methodist Church are only a first step, with both retaining significant holdings in oil and gas companies, they add two strong voices to the movement calling for a fossil free future.

## A global climate movement

Since Bright Now launched in 2013, dozens of institutions have joined a rapidly growing climate movement in the UK and around the world. Among Churches, the United Reformed Church (URC) of Scotland, Quakers in Britain, and several local churches and area meetings have now divested. Internationally, they join the Church of Sweden, World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, United Church of Canada, Uniting Church in Australia, and many more.

One of the most striking things about this movement has been its diversity. In the UK, divestment has united the Universities of Glasgow, Warwick and SOAS, the British Medical Association (BMA), Oxford and Bristol

City Councils, the Guardian Media Group, and the Sainsbury's Family Charitable Trust, in a common commitment to end their support for the fossil fuel industry.

We've also seen divestment enter mainstream financial analysis, with HSBC, Citi, MSCI, the World Bank, Bank of England and others warning of the long-term financial risk posed by fossil fuel investments.

## Why divestment?

The fossil fuel divestment movement was kick-started by research showing that up to 80 per cent of the world's existing fossil fuel reserves must remain underground if we are to have a relatively good chance of keeping a global temperature rise below 2°C, the level beyond which world governments and scientists have agreed climate change will become catastrophic or unmanageable.

In spite of this, fossil fuel companies continue to base their business strategies on an assumption that they will not only be able to exploit the full potential of their existing reserves, but also acquire and extract new reserves over the course of this century.

By encouraging institutions to publicly move their money away from coal, oil and gas companies, the divestment movement is challenging the fossil fuel industry's social licence to continue with business-as-usual plans, weakening its reputation and in turn its political power.

## What is divestment?

Divestment is simply the opposite of investment; it means getting rid of stocks, bonds or investment funds that are considered unethical or morally ambiguous. The global fossil fuel divestment movement encourages institutions such as Churches, universities, health organisations and local authorities to sell their investments in coal, oil and gas companies.

## Church of England disinvests from coal and tar sands

In March 2015, the Church of England announced disinvestment of £12 million from coal and tar sands, as well as committing to increase its investment in climate adaptation and sectors such as renewable energy.

The Church's new investment policy, however, also outlines a commitment to shareholder engagement with other fossil fuel companies. With

£79.7 million invested in Royal Dutch Shell and BP alone in 2014, the Church has come under pressure to disinvest from oil and gas, but has stated that it will continue to pursue an engagement strategy to convince such companies of the need for change.



Activists throw a 'divestment party' on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral. Photo: 350.org

### Where next?

Following hundreds of disinvestment wins around the world over the last three years, campaigners and institutions are increasingly thinking about where funds can be positively reinvested.

Disinvestment is not only about getting rid of investments that are no longer ethical, but also about imagining the future we want to support with our money.

It is central to disinvestment that the money removed from the fossil fuel industry is reinvested in building clean alternatives. As bigger institutions start disinvesting, with Norway disinvesting its \$900 billion sovereign wealth fund from coal earlier this year, there is a real opportunity to shift much-needed capital into sectors that will make a low-carbon economy possible, including renewable energies and energy efficiency technologies.

However, institutions choosing to disinvest also have an opportunity to articulate what kind of economy they want to see. This may not only be a fossil-free economy, but also one promoting more equal and sustainable societies.

Operation Noah's Bright Now campaign is encouraging churches to reinvest their funds in sectors that will help us to build a fairer economy, as well as the clean alternatives to fossil fuels. For example, in community renewables, social housing and public transport.

As disinvestment continues to spread from churches to local authorities, universities, health organisations and charitable trusts, we hope we will see an increasingly broad range of institutions using their money to challenge the current economic system and invest in a new kind of economy.

### How can you get involved?

If you want to know more about the church disinvestment campaign and find out how you can get involved, sign up to Operation Noah's newsletter by emailing [admin@operationnoah.org](mailto:admin@operationnoah.org).

If you are a local or area meeting interested in joining others who have disinvested from fossil fuels you can read our briefing ([www.quaker.org.uk/files/Divestment-briefing-July-2014-web.pdf](http://www.quaker.org.uk/files/Divestment-briefing-July-2014-web.pdf)) or contact Alison Prout at [alisonp@quaker.org.uk](mailto:alisonp@quaker.org.uk).

# Using investments for good

Simon Bond, Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Investment Committee, writes about making investment decisions that reflect Quaker values.

Modern slavery and ethical investment may seem like different concerns, but they are linked. When church investors started engaging with major hotel chains on human trafficking during preparations for the London Olympics, they were initially given the brush-off. One company did not seem to understand that such events give rise to an increase in sex services and trafficking or that major hotels are used for anonymous trafficking.

Perseverance by the Churches, including Quakers, led to effective engagement, with companies recognising that their staff could be trained to be alert for tell-tale signs and to liaise with the police. One member of the ethical research team at BYM's investment managers, Rathbone Greenbank, gave expert evidence to a Parliamentary Committee on the supply chain transparency clause of the Modern Slavery Bill.

Effective engagement is one of the four strands of ethical investing, along with avoiding some sectors, positively supporting others and taking a long-term view.

We work closely with Rathbone Greenbank to manage BYM's money in line with Quaker values. This is an ongoing conversation, and colleagues in QPSW also work with trustees to raise issues of concern and opportunities for positive investment. Rathbone Greenbank's approach means that it was relatively straightforward to disinvest from fossil fuel extraction after Meeting for Sufferings considered the issue. We still consider climate change a major risk as well as presenting opportunities for investment in sectors such as renewable energy generation.

We are also able to work with other groups such as the Church Investors Group (which other Quaker investor bodies could consider



QPSW and Rathbone Greenbank work with others to convince Parliamentarians of the need for strong legislation to ensure that large companies work to prevent slavery occurring in their supply chain.  
Photo: QPSW

joining) and investors concerned about the risks and opportunities of climate change. This enables us to contribute to initiatives that Quakers could not do on our own. These include the climate change resolutions put to the AGMs of BP and Shell, which were overwhelmingly passed.

Among other issues of concern is companies' tax and transparency. Some of us have been following the work of the Tax Justice Network for some time and we have been discussing the issue with the investment managers. Helping to build a broad coalition of investors on this subject is one way forward as it may enable us to have the greatest impact.

*This article should not be taken as an endorsement of Rathbone Greenbank, and anyone considering making an investment must take advice based on their individual circumstances.*

Britain Yearly Meeting Investment Committee is a subcommittee of Quaker Finance & Property Central Committee and takes particular responsibility for managing BYM's centrally held investments (circa £21 million). From 2016 Investment Committee will no longer be a stand-alone committee and Quaker Finance & Property will absorb responsibility for investments.

# Towards a Quaker vision of a new economy

QPSW has been working with Friends to explore the principles that would underpin an economic system in which Quaker testimony can flourish. Alison Prout, QPSW programme manager, gives an update on the process and highlights some of the ideas that have emerged.

Recent Yearly Meetings have clearly shown Quakers unifying around their dislike of our current economic system, but what has been less clear is what we would like to see in its place. The Economics, Sustainability & Peace Subcommittee has started to explore what we, as Quakers, think the new economy should look like and how we can work towards it.

The first step in this exploration has been to draft a set of principles we feel should underpin this new economy. The principles are intended to stimulate discussion rather than stand as a statement for the yearly meeting and they certainly succeeded in prompting discussion! A first draft was widely circulated in the spring of 2015 along with an invitation to comment. Hundreds of Friends engaged and gave feedback: some meetings discussed the principles together and provided a joint submission; other Friends gave their individual thoughts; and others took the opportunity to feed in thoughts and ideas at workshops. A lively debate was also hosted on our blog, Quakernomics ([www.quakerweb.org.uk/blog](http://www.quakerweb.org.uk/blog)). After Yearly Meeting, a small group of committee members took on the task of reading and considering the heartening volume of comments. A re-drafted version has been produced and is being shared across the yearly meeting this autumn. These are the key points:

- The purpose of the economy is the enhancement of all life, human and non-human.
- We do not over-consume the earth's resources.
- All (including future beings) have an equal right to access and make use of global commons.
- Everyone needs time and resources to participate in community life.
- The well-being of people and planet are not sacrificed to preserve profits.

- Since money plays such a key role in the economy, it is created under democratic control, for positive social benefit rather than private profit.
- A fundamental equality is recognised, not limited by race, gender or social origin.
- The tax system redistributes from richer to poorer, with richer people paying a greater proportion of their income.
- Businesses are structured and owned in a variety of ways, including private, community, co-operative and national ownership.
- A revitalised, participative and more truly representative democracy is key to our peaceful and prosperous co-existence.

You can read the full text of the principles online at [www.quaker.org.uk/new-economy](http://www.quaker.org.uk/new-economy).

Alongside the principles document QPSW is also looking to work with local Friends who have a concern, interest or existing activity on the new economy to create events and to explore these issues and stimulate activity. We will also be publishing a set of resources that will go into more detail on the technical points touched on in the principles. These will be suitable for individual and group study.

Find out more about the events and resources on our website.

## Get involved

Are you or your meeting particularly interested in a new and alternative economy? We'd love to hear from you if you or your meeting are already doing something to build a new economy or would like to in the future. You might like to discuss whether QPSW could support you in creating a local event around your issue of interest. Contact Alison Prout at [alisonp@quaker.org.uk](mailto:alisonp@quaker.org.uk) or visit [www.quaker.org.uk/new-economy](http://www.quaker.org.uk/new-economy).

# Acting for climate justice

Sunniva Taylor, Sustainability & Peace Programme Manager, shares what Friends have been doing ahead of the Paris Climate Conference.

This year Quakers have been acting for climate justice. Friends joined a climate lobby at Parliament in June, have been active in the fossil fuel disinvestment movement, have spoken out against fracking and fuel poverty, and have supported renewable energy projects. Recently the focus has been on speaking out about climate justice ahead of and beyond the international climate negotiations taking place in Paris in December (known as COP 21 – the 21st Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). The main aim of COP 21 is to adopt a new, legally binding climate change agreement, applicable to all countries.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness talks of climate justice because it draws attention to the injustice and inequality that perpetuates and is perpetuated by climate change. Injustice and

inequality is of spiritual concern to Quakers. Our belief that there is “that of God” in everyone leads us to recognise that every person’s life is sacred and of equal worth.

However, globally and nationally people have unequal access to energy: the impact of pollution falls on those who have done least to cause it, and the wealth created by fossil fuel production is unequally spread. Climate change also creates intergenerational injustice. The lives of all young people and future generations are dependent on the decisions we make today.

The word justice helps us to think about power. Who makes the decisions that affect climate change? Is this democratic? Some, both in the UK government and in international negotiation processes, are working hard for the adoption of a fair, transparent, ambitious, and legally binding agreement at the COP 21 as well as progressive UK energy and climate policies. There are many willing them on – from the inside and out. At the international climate change negotiations our colleagues at the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) have, since 2013, been working to help build communication and understanding between diverse groups of negotiators. QUNO is also supporting the inclusion of human rights language into the draft of a new climate change agreement.

But there are also powerful forces for whom restrictions on fossil fuel extraction and

## Climate Lobby

Almost a hundred Quakers from across Britain went to Westminster in June to take part in a climate lobby. It saw thousands of people talk to newly elected MPs, showing them that action on climate change matters to a large and diverse part of the electorate.

The day was coordinated by the Climate Coalition, of which Quaker Peace & Social Witness is a member. Quaker participants had particular messages for their MPs, with the focus on climate justice. They asked MPs about the international climate negotiations, but also about fracking, community energy projects, tackling fuel poverty and reforming the energy system. In doing so they have initiated relationships with their MPs that many aim to continue, with follow-up meetings in their constituencies planned. In the expanding ‘Stories of witness’ part of our website Marianne Tissandier, of Totnes Local Meeting, writes about her experience of lobbying her MP. See [www.quaker.org.uk/stories-witness-totnes-qm](http://www.quaker.org.uk/stories-witness-totnes-qm).



Quakers gather at the climate lobby. Photo: Britain Yearly Meeting



consumption is not good news. There is no big fossil fuel company showing any serious signs of reducing its extraction. Many are in fact extracting from increasingly polluting and risky sources, such as Canadian tar sands and Arctic oil. Big corporations – in sectors such as oil, coal, gas, mining, and banking – have been lobbying hard against a binding climate agreement. The fossil fuel industry is in turn financed in a multitude of ways: through government subsidies, export credits, pension funds, banks, and institutions like churches and universities.

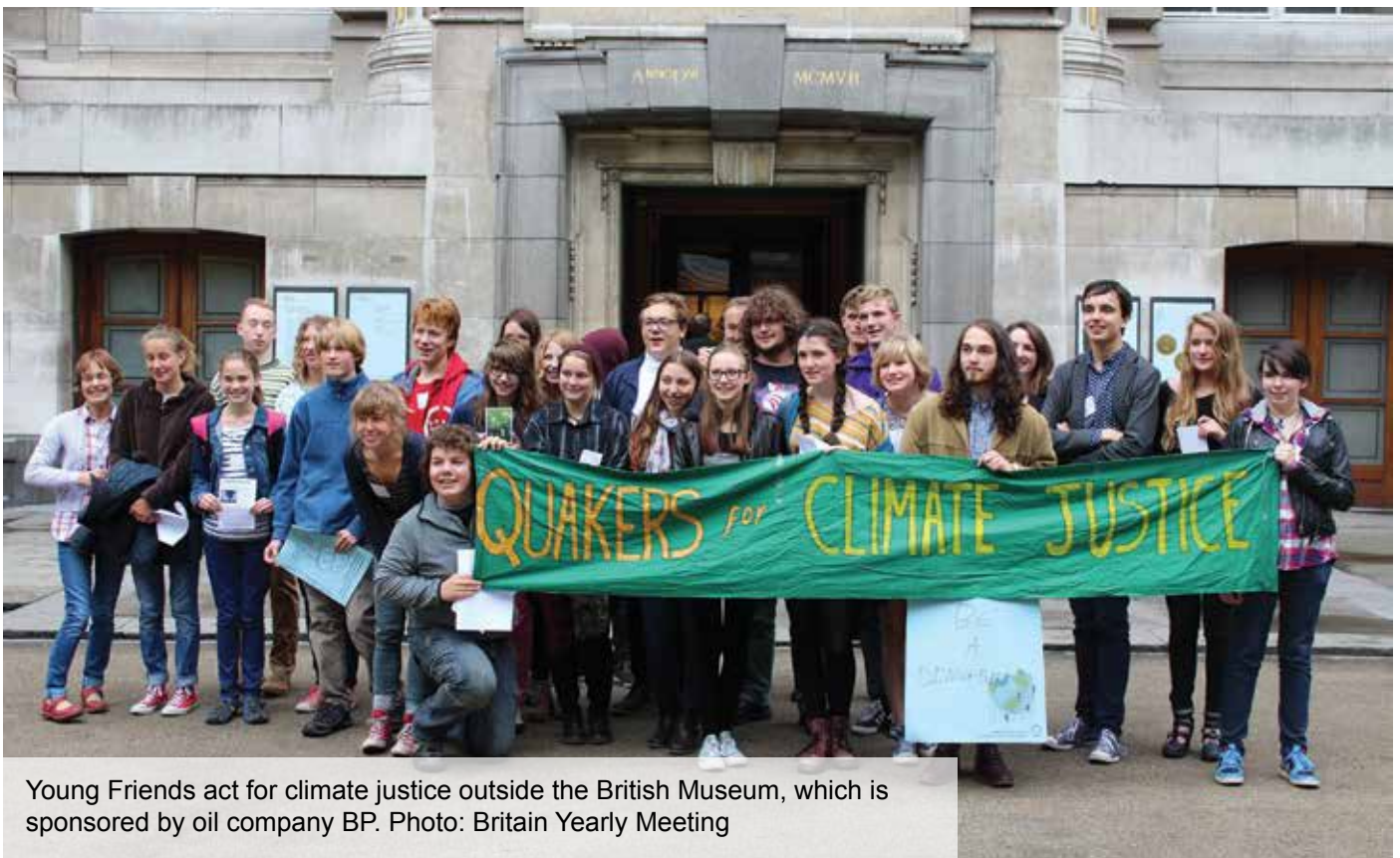
While the corporations have more power than seems just, many of the smaller and 'developing' countries at the negotiations have far too little. Low-income countries, often those most affected by climate change, commonly have only one or two delegates at the international negotiation sessions, and have to advocate their position in the face of huge delegations from the most polluting and powerful countries.

Therefore, although we should uphold the negotiators and will them on to support a fair and ambitious agreement, we cannot put all our eggs in one basket. As important as COP

21 is, we must look beyond it. Civil society will be using Paris as an opportunity to gather and mobilise, and to do so ready to continue after the negotiators have gone home. Friends and others must continue to witness to low-carbon living in their own communities, regardless of what the delegations decide. We can continue to challenge the power of the fossil fuel industry by, for example, calling for fossil fuel disinvestment and for the UK energy system to be transformed. And we can expand our work with others to build the transformed economic system that is needed, which has equality, justice and sustainability at its heart.

What can you do? QPSW is supporting Christian Aid's Big Shift campaign. Money for fossil fuels comes from pension funds, export credits, subsidies, private investments and policy and regulation. The Big Shift will equip you to take action on one or all of these.

Information about the Big Shift, plus additional resources and lots of opportunities to get involved with climate justice campaigning this autumn, can be found at [www.quaker.org.uk/climate-justice](http://www.quaker.org.uk/climate-justice). Here you will also find links to a series of papers by QUNO on the Paris Climate Change Conference.



Young Friends act for climate justice outside the British Museum, which is sponsored by oil company BP. Photo: Britain Yearly Meeting

# Overseeing progress on the Canterbury Commitment

The Britain Yearly Meeting Sustainability Group was set up nearly a year ago. Here clerk Lis Burch and secretary Laurie Michaelis share what the group has been doing and their future plans.

In October 2014 Meeting for Sufferings set up a new group “to oversee and encourage progress in relation to the commitment, made at YMG 2011, to become a low-carbon, sustainable community”. The BYM Sustainability Group is expected to play “a leadership role, similar to eldership and oversight, in relation to the commitment”. We have ten members, including staff members of QPSW, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and Living Witness.

As we approach our first birthday we have met four times. We are the successor group to the Minute 36 (Canterbury) Commitment Group, and several of us served on that group. Nevertheless, for our first two or three meetings we were still feeling our way. We are now beginning to develop a strong sense of direction and building relationships with the groups and organisations around BYM who are working hard towards becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community. We are also developing some projects of our own.

We are guided by the Recommendations for Action from the Canterbury Commitment Group, which were agreed by Yearly Meeting in 2014. They cover:

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

Given our eldership and oversight function, our own projects fall into the first of these areas, while in the others we are mostly keeping an overview, making connections and encouraging others.

Our Quaker witness on sustainability and climate change has been developing for many years; it is congruent with much that Friends already do in their lives, work and campaigning. But we feel there is still a journey for the Society of Friends, both in opening ourselves to the deep spiritual basis of Yearly Meeting’s commitment, and in developing our own mythology: the stories, songs, memories and examples that will give our commitment life and durability. In August we held a threshing meeting with a group of invited Friends as the first stage in a proposed series of gatherings. We hope these will explore the theme in more depth, supporting ministry from Friends ranging from theologians to musicians, from poets to activists.

One of our core tasks is to organise a national Quaker gathering, at least every two years, to build community around our commitment. The next one is from 18–20 March 2016 at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Its title is ‘Our Sustainability Commitment: Being a transformational community’. The gathering will have three threads: practical change including policy and systemic change; engaging with the spiritual and psychological dimensions of climate change, and; strengthening our communities as places of mutual support, collaboration, challenge, celebration and fun. There will be short talks, worship, workshops, fun and relaxation. And there will be time to ask where we are led now in our corporate commitment.

Find more details of the gathering and register at [www.quaker.org.uk/canterbury-commitment](http://www.quaker.org.uk/canterbury-commitment).



# Challenging social security cuts

Quakers from across Britain have been speaking out against proposals that would further weaken our social security system. Suzanne Ismail explains.

The Welfare Reform and Work Bill, which is currently making its way through the Westminster Parliament, is a key part of the government's plan to make a further £12 billion of cuts to our social security system. Coming on top of the £21 billion of cuts legislated for under the last Parliament, QPSW is concerned that the 'welfare' section will increase already unacceptably high levels of poverty and inequality in Britain. The bill included proposals to lower the household benefit cap from £26,000 per year to £20,000 (£23,000 in London), restrict child tax credits, and reduce the value of payments to people temporarily unable to work due to sickness or disability. The impact on children and large families is likely to be particularly significant.

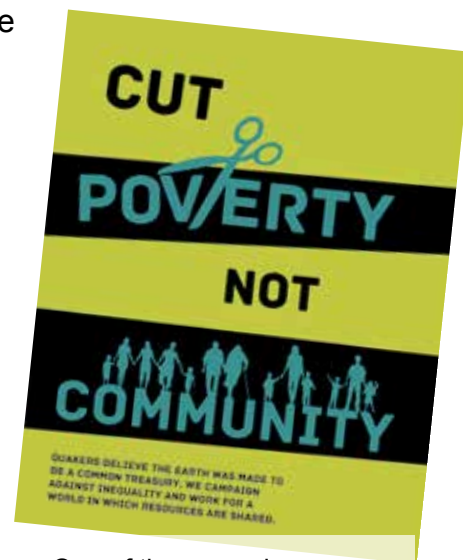
Since the bill was laid before Parliament in July, Quakers from around Britain have been working to raise awareness of its likely impact and campaigning against some of its most harmful elements. Despite very little time between the bill being published and its first major debate in the House of Commons, Friends contacted over 100 MPs to raise concerns about the proposals. Many Friends emphasised the need to ensure that the debate around the bill was not framed by narrow financial considerations and challenged the suggestion that the measures would increase social mobility and tackle the root causes of poverty.

Britain Yearly Meeting staff used Parliament's summer recess to support several Friends with relevant experience to share their own or others' stories with the Public Bill Committee, the committee of MPs charged with scrutinising the bill. On 11 September, the week MPs returned to Parliament, the *Daily Telegraph* printed an open letter signed by the Recording Clerk and representatives of 19 other faith and other groups, emphasising the need for an effective social safety net and highlighting the dangers of further cuts to the system. Autumn is also the season of political parties' annual conferences, which is another opportunity for BYM staff, alongside other church representatives, to

further highlight these concerns.

Many of the reforms proposed by the bill are being portrayed by politicians from several parties as being popular with the general public. Although the bill is, in some form, almost certain to become an act by early next year, it is vital that Quakers continue to speak out on the issue and push for changes where we can. For example, at the time

of writing there are hopes that some of the most controversial elements of the bill, such as the proposal to restrict eligibility for child tax credits to the first two children in a household and to scrap targets for the eradication of child poverty, might be amended. QPSW will be following the bill as it makes its way through the rest of the parliamentary process. We will be seeking to influence the bill where we can and informing Friends of further opportunities to take action.



One of the campaign posters QPSW produced in 2014 for Friends to use when campaigning for a fairer economy.

## What can I do?

For the latest information and opportunities for action see [www.quaker.org.uk/action-welfare-reform-work-bill](http://www.quaker.org.uk/action-welfare-reform-work-bill). Alternatively, contact Suzanne Ismail at [suzannei@quaker.org.uk](mailto:suzannei@quaker.org.uk).

Do you have experience that is relevant to the Welfare Reform and Work Bill? If so, and if you would be willing to share it with QPSW staff to help inform future work in this area, please contact Suzanne Ismail at [suzannei@quaker.org.uk](mailto:suzannei@quaker.org.uk).

# A Quaker Living Wage campaign

Lancaster Quakers have been running a local Living Wage campaign for nearly a year. They are now inviting other Quakers to join them. Ann Morgan, a member of Lancaster Quaker Living Wage Project Group, explains what has been happening and how you can get involved.

Since the July 2015 budget statement more people in the country have been aware that there is something called the Living Wage. George Osborne's 'national living wage' falls far short of what the Living Wage Foundation calculates to be a wage sufficient for people to make ends meet. The Living Wage Foundation's calculations are the product of research carried out annually by Loughborough University's Centre for Research in Social Policy, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The research looks at what households need for a minimum acceptable standard of living. Decisions about what to include are made by groups, including members of the public. It is therefore rooted in social consensus about what people need to make ends meet.



Friends talking to the public about their Living Wage campaign. Photo: Lancaster Quakers

The uprating of the Living Wage takes account of rises in living costs and general wage rise trends. In 2014/15 outside London the rise was 20 pence an hour to £7.85, the London Living Wage was £9.15. By August 2015, 1,600 accredited Living Wage employers were voluntarily paying this basic wage. These rates were paid to all over the age of 18, not just those over 25.

Lancaster Meeting has been engaged in raising awareness about the Living Wage since one of our members attended the Food Banks Are Not Enough Quaker Conference in November 2014. We have produced posters and leaflets and distributed these in our town prior to Christmas,

during Quaker Equality Week and before the general election. Being in town for an hour at a time, engaging with passers-by about those who do not pay the Living Wage and celebrating those who do, highlighted for us just how much support our campaign had. We were heartened and challenged in our encounters and encouraged by many who simply said "thank you".

In June 2015, at a meeting with the Manchester & Warrington Social Justice Group 'Quaker Equality Week – What Next?', we shared our experiences and were invited to lead a national Quaker campaign. We have produced a pack of materials to support meetings who join in, which is available on our webpage: [www.lancsquakers.org.uk/livingwagecampaign.php](http://www.lancsquakers.org.uk/livingwagecampaign.php).

Even as the deeper welfare cuts bite and the least well off in society are further burdened this will be just one thread in the tapestry of inequality we are highlighting.

## How can you get involved?

- Ask your area meeting trustees to work to become an accredited Living Wage Employer.
- Witness in your own town or city centre to the fact that retailers, hospitality/catering outlets and care businesses do not pay the Living Wage.
- Write to businesses like the Co-op and other mutual societies to which you belong, encouraging them to pay the Living Wage.
- Check if your local council pays the Living Wage and is seeking accreditation.
- Contact the Lancaster Quaker Living Wage Project Group by emailing [livingwage@lancsquakers.org.uk](mailto:livingwage@lancsquakers.org.uk).
- If you would like to request a Living Wage campaign pack, email Ellie Roberts at [ellier@quaker.org.uk](mailto:ellier@quaker.org.uk).