



# Earth and Economy



Economic Issues, Sustainability & Peace programmes from Quaker Peace & Social Witness

Issue 11

Spring 2018

## **An “ongoing failure to confront the deep and unjust crisis of climate change”**

**Chris Walker on the government’s  
Clean Growth Strategy**



# Cut carbon fast: A Quaker response to the UK government's Clean Growth Strategy

Will the UK government live up to its commitment to tackle climate change? Chris Walker reviews the new strategy intended to shift us in the right direction.



Claire Perry MP, Minister of State for Climate Change and Industry, at the opening of Clayhill, a privately owned solar farm. Credit: Anesco

In October, the UK government published its Clean Growth Strategy. It looks at how to grow the economy while protecting the climate and reducing emissions.

At the Paris Climate Conference in 2015, the UK committed to cut emissions to keep global warming at less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. It also committed to 'efforts' to further limit this rise to 1.5°C. This is a target considered necessary to avoid some of the worst impacts of climate change.

Quakers in Britain support the ambitions of the Paris climate change agreement. Friends oppose projects (such as airport expansion or oil drilling) that threaten them. Together we have demanded that the government get serious about climate change. In recent years, though, policy on the issue has been weak.

The Clean Growth Strategy is a year late, but it does contain some positive commitments. Theresa May's foreword says "This government is determined to leave our natural environment in a better condition than we found it". As part of that, the government has upped its ambition to cut carbon. It commits to extensive investment in energy efficiency, low-carbon transport and offshore wind. This is all progress. In the end, though, the strategy demonstrates the government's ongoing failure to confront the

deep and unjust crisis of climate change. It also fails to commit to cut emissions in line with the 2°C limit, let alone the 1.5°C target made in 2015.

Client Earth, an environmental law organisation, has assessed the strategy. The organisation believes it means the UK will miss its 2023–2027 emissions targets. In fact, it says we will miss them by the amount the Philippines emits in a whole year. There is no mention of subsidies to the fossil fuel industry. Nor does it say how the UK will account for aviation and shipping emissions. The government also needs to be clear about Brexit's impact on low-carbon investment.

Quakers in Britain are demanding more from the government. We want ministers to commit to cutting emissions in line with a 1.5°C limit. We also need detail about how we can achieve this. Building a new economy is now both possible and necessary. It should use renewable, affordable energy, delivering jobs, services and economic opportunity. It needs to meet the needs of the many.

To find out how you and your meeting can get involved with the campaign, go to [www.quaker.org.uk/climatejustice](http://www.quaker.org.uk/climatejustice). Contact Chris Walker, Sustainability & Peace Programme Manager, at [chrisw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:chrisw@quaker.org.uk).



# Training for change: how can our resources help?

Gurpreet Bola explores Quaker traditions of communal learning, from 1652 to today.

Until recently, I had never been to Swarthmoor Hall. I knew it had been key to the Quaker movement since 1652, but the power of its history only became real to me when I visited. I now know it as a place of learning and action, and can see how our oldest training space is still relevant.

Margaret Fell and George Fox met at Swarthmoor Hall. As they worked together it became a hub for Quakers across the country. It was here that early Friends would travel in search of respite and reflection. Margaret Fell coordinated this growing network. She kept a record of every visitor along with accounts of their activities. She gave Friends a safe space to explore their ideas. It was here that they refined their messages before returning to their communities.

The Hall has always been an integral part of the Quaker movement's infrastructure. Its strong bonds to faith and community have allowed Quaker testimony to flourish.

And its example has encouraged us to ask ourselves a key question. How can we strengthen and celebrate the resources that enable Friends to take action?

Having so many good buildings is a blessing for Quakers in Britain. Woodbrooke, Friends House and hundreds of meeting houses help keep Friends connected. Staff at Britain Yearly Meeting try to do this too – it's a key task for us as an Economics and Sustainability team. We want Quakers who work on these issues to bring about radical change. To help with this we're rolling out some Quaker-specific training. The aim is to contribute well to the movement for equality, sustainability and peace.

The training builds on existing work, but we recently added some new coordinators to the team. This means we can spend more time helping Friends take action, on their own or with others. A good example is the New Economy series, which has been very popular with reading groups (see 'January', on page 5).



This reminds us of the power of working with other people. As our confidence with economic theory grows as a community, we'll tackle the problem in new ways. But we'll also collaborate wherever possible. Some people thrive on contemplation. Others enjoy organising with groups. Still more want to work more with decision makers. A vibrant movement for change has a place for every approach.

Training sessions are an opportunity for Friends to build relationships. These may be with expert facilitators as well as each other. Training rooms can also be a space in which people can experiment, try out new ideas and test them with peers. We'll aim to give Friends new expertise in some key areas:

- working in groups;
- designing a campaign plan;
- working with the media;
- having difficult conversations;
- becoming a welcoming community for others.

The Quaker faith emerged when people met together to visualise a more equal world. They all shared a need: a need to imagine an equal state of being that had never before existed. Inspired by the early church, they shared a conviction that the Earth is a common treasury for all. For all the progress that has happened since, the Earth is still exploited. As the theorist Mark Fisher reflected, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than an end to neoliberalism. We need physical spaces to grapple with this challenge. As a movement, we are lucky to have time, money, insight and buildings. Very few movements have such gifts. They are resources we should treasure and utilise. In the spirit of those early Quaker visionaries, we'll continue to meet and dream a better world. Better still, we'll start putting plans in place to make it happen.

# January

Many meetings started setting up, and running New Economy Reading Groups. These have helped hundreds of people to better understand the economic system. We want to find ways to work towards an economy that would reflect Quaker values and practices. To order them see [www.quaker.org.uk/neweconomy](http://www.quaker.org.uk/neweconomy).

# February

Meeting for Sufferings said this about fracking: "We have faith that we can tackle climate change and build a more sustainable future, but we know this is only possible if fossil fuels remain underground."

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, visited the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to talk about faith and climate change.

# March

The first of v... are now regu... monthly mee... for worships... held at the g... of Preston N... Road Fracking

# April

Kendal and Sedbergh Friends organised a 50 mile pilgrimage for the welfare system.



# May

During Glob... we celebrat... ings that hav... Meeting for v... in protest at... Nic Burton, v... workshops ic...

# June

Friends used our 'Difficult conversations' toolkit in the general election.

Leeds Friends held a sustainability day to engage with the Canterbury commitment.

Friends House hosted a family day during which children wrote to their newly elected MPs about climate change.

We co-signed an interfaith letter, deploring Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement.

# July

Quakers took part in the Speak Up week of action on climate change.

Gloucestershire Quakers became trained to run the Footpaths programme for supporting people to reduce their carbon footprint.

Sam, a Quaker from Hull, took part in a silent stage occupation against BP sponsorship of the Hull City of Culture.

# October

Friends from across the UK meet up at Friends House, London for the Quaker Activist Gathering!

Horsham Quakers set up a free monthly repair service for broken and worn out items.

Friends House won a Food Made good award  
The Scottish Government banned fracking.

# August

Notts & Derby became the latest AM to get Living wage accreditation. This year the living wage campaign, led by Friends in Lancaster, has helped more area meetings and employers get accredited. In total, 14 Quaker organisations are now Living Wage employers. You can find out more [www.livingwage.org.uk](http://www.livingwage.org.uk). If your meeting would like to sign up, contact [livingwage@lansquakers.org.uk](mailto:livingwage@lansquakers.org.uk).

# November

QPSW published our climate briefing.  
Ian Bray, Friend from Huddersfield, arrested as part of protests against air pollution.  
Suzanna Mattingly from FWCC joins Quakers from QUNO Geneva at the COP23 climate talks.  
Maya helped Brigflatts meeting plan their 2018 cycling pilgrimage for the welfare system.

# December

Meeting for worship at Kirby Misperton fracking site in North Yorkshire.  
QPSW grants were distributed  
Some London Quakers joined others in protesting BP sponsorship of the British Museum.  
Quakers wrote to MPs about the Clean Growth Strategy.

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al Divestment mobilisation week.  
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e divested from fossil fuels.

worship took place on Pendle Hill  
fracking.

who received a QPSW grant, ran  
looking at Responsible Business.

## September

Meeting for worship in  
solidarity with the Gren-  
fell tower community.

Meeting for worship at  
Broadford Bridge, Sussex,  
in protest at oil drilling.



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## A look back at Quaker action in 2017

Financial and environmental exploitation continues in Britain. But Quakers are contributing spiritual and nonviolent action to national movements for change. Maya Williams, Network Coordinator, shares highlights.

In recent years we've become accustomed to sweeping political changes. Surprises in the Labour Party leadership, Brexit, and elections in the USA have each had an impact. In 2017 we had a snap general election and another Conservative government. Brexit dominated the headlines while the government pushed ahead with the new 'Universal Credit' system. This left thousands of people struggling as benefit payments were delayed. The horror of the Grenfell Tower fire in June revealed the shocking impact that inequality and cuts to public services can have on people's lives.

These events and others have made the news hard going in 2017. But we have seen Quakers respond. A strong and active network of Friends in Wales, Scotland and England keep standing up for climate and economic justice. Here is a tiny snapshot of what those led by Quaker faith did in 2017.

## What can you do in 2018?

Take a moment to reflect on the actions you read about in these pages. Is there something here that you would like to join in with? Or is there something else you are led to do? I am here to support you in your witness. Your first action could be to send me an e-mail on [mayaw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:mayaw@quaker.org.uk) to find out how I can help!

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# Area meetings: how and why we divested from fossil fuels

Britain's 72 area meetings collectively manage millions of pounds of investments. Almost half of those area meetings no longer have money invested in the fossil fuel industry. Here, Friends tell Sunniva Taylor why and how they made this decision.



*Norfolk and Waveney Area Meeting  
Jonathan Bell, Treasurer  
Approximate value of investment: c£1,150,000*

## **Were there any issues with finding consensus? If so, how were they resolved?**

Some Friends raised interesting questions about the degree to which disinvestment is “gesture politics” or – to a degree – hypocritical (given that most of us use power generated from fossil fuels, and use all manner of plastics and so on which are products of fossil fuels, or might benefit from pensions which hold funds – at least partly – in firms engaged in fossil fuel extraction).

As usual, the Quaker business method allowed us to recognise the reality of the challenge whilst nevertheless discovering our unity around wanting to signal that we understand the pressing need to reduce human reliance on the extraction of fossil fuels.

## **Did you encounter any problems when it came to making practical arrangements to divest from fossil fuels?**

No. This was straightforward, thanks to help from our investment managers, Rathbone Greenbank Investments Ltd.

## **What advice would you give to the treasurers of other area meetings who might be starting the divestment process?**

Don't over-complicate it. Check with your investment manager first if it will be possible to enact any revised investment policy you adopt.



*Leicester Area Meeting  
Angela Walker, Treasurer  
Approximate value of investment: £100,000*

## **What sparked the initial concern for you?**

A number of different things: Quaker Peace & Social Witness's (QPSW) concern around divestment; items in the news; worries about the effects of fracking and tar sands extraction; reports from Friends who had attended Meeting for Sufferings and sustainability courses at Woodbrooke.

## **How did the area meeting reach a decision about what to do?**

We handed out copies of the QPSW leaflet on divestment, which helped Friends understand the issues. The decision at Area Meeting was less about ‘shall we divest’ than ‘shall we insist on total divestment, or allow small investments in British gas production?’ We chose the latter, as it allowed our investment managers to access funding platforms that otherwise invest in sustainable fuel.

It felt real to us in October when we completed our transfer to Rathbone Greenbank, who also manage Britain Yearly Meeting investments. We hope that the regular updates that they send will be useful for letting Friends know how they are investing our money.





*Bristol Area Meeting*  
*Michael Tuckwell, Treasurer*  
*Approximate value of investment: £814,000*

### **What sparked the initial concern for you?**

Interest. People here are acutely aware of what is happening in the world around.

### **How did the area meeting reach a decision about what to do?**

After some discussion, the trustees reached their decision easily. There was no real argument or resistance. It was something we had to do in terms of the environment and humanity.

### **What advice would you give to the treasurers of other area meetings who might be starting the divestment process?**

We did notice when the income dropped a bit – but we manage it. There is no reason from a Quaker point of view not to be divesting. Each meeting ought to look closely at where their money is and what effect it is having on populations around the world. Britain may be a rich nation but it is so because it has exploited other people's down the centuries, through slavery, sugar, tobacco, oil extraction, and alcohol and arms sales today.



*Ipswich and Diss Area Meeting*  
*Christina van Melzen, Clerk of trustees*  
*Approximate value of investment: £1,300,000*

### **How did the area meeting reach a decision about what to do?**

Initially we decided that there was something hypocritical considering that we all make use of fossil fuels so it was agreed that we invest a small proportion in the 'Best in Branch' account category. However voices within the Area Meeting began to question that decision. When BYM decided to divest from all fossil fuels in 2014, the trustees were asked to reconsider the matter. They did so, and in July 2016 the funds transferred to sustainable, renewable alternatives.



*Mid Thames Quakers*  
*Anne Wheldon, Co-treasurer*  
*Approximate value of investment: £600,000*

### **What sparked the initial concern for you?**

We saw ourselves as following in the footsteps of BYM's divestment.

### **How did the area meeting reach a decision about what to do?**

In the summer of 2013, trustees authorised its investment sub-committee to discuss divestment with our investment managers. They reported back and in the autumn trustees decided to authorise divestment. This was reported in the trustees' annual report.

### **Did you encounter any problems when it came to making practical arrangements to divest from fossil fuels?**

No.

### **What advice would you give to the treasurers of other area meetings who might be starting the divestment process?**

It all depends on how existing investments are held – we are fortunate in having good, responsive investment managers with whom we could discuss the issue.

# A big win for climate justice as Scotland bans fracking

In 2017 it became clear just how unpopular fracking is. Chris Walker shares some heartening news.



Inside the Scottish Parliament. Credit: Thomas Duesing

Last autumn, Quakers celebrated when the Scottish Government announced a ban on fracking. The government had run an official consultation on the technique, which is also known as hydraulic fracturing. Friends in Scotland were among 65,000 people to respond. The answer was clear: 99 per cent of respondents opposed fracking in Scotland.

Paul Wheelhouse, the Scottish energy minister, announced the news to the Scottish parliament. “We have a moral responsibility to tackle climate change, and an economic responsibility to prepare Scotland for new low carbon opportunities,” he said. The announcement follows a two-year moratorium on unconventional oil and gas. Let’s hope that public support for

the ban encourages the government to further reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

Meanwhile, fracking in England continues. Here, only 17 per cent of the public support fracking. People who are challenging energy companies and the UK government need our support. The UK’s official advisory body gives the energy sector targets on climate change. Fracking as is five times as carbon-intensive as the 2030 target recommends.

Do you live in Scotland? If you are taking action to protect the environment, or help build a clean economy, please contact: Maya Williams, ESP Network Coordinator: [mayaw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:mayaw@quaker.org.uk); 020 7663 1056.

## Contact the team



**Maya Williams  
Network Coordinator**

Contact Maya if you would like book a workshop about sustainability or the new

economy. This could include advice on navigating the different levels of Quaker process. She can offer event planning and promotion advice over the phone, and help you with funding and strategy queries. Email: [mayaw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:mayaw@quaker.org.uk)



**Suki Ferguson  
Communications Coordinator**

Contact Suki if you would like to update your contact details, receive email newsletters,

or share a story about what you or your meeting are doing. Email: [sukif@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sukif@quaker.org.uk)



**Sunniva Taylor &  
Chris Walker  
Sustainability &  
Peace Programme  
Managers**

Contact Sunniva and Chris if you want to know more about specific sustainability issues, such as divesting from fossil fuels. They can also tell you what Quakers are doing to lobby the UK government on climate policy. Email: [sunnivat@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sunnivat@quaker.org.uk); [chrisw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:chrisw@quaker.org.uk)



**Suzanne Ismail, Economic Issues  
Programme Manager**

Contact Suzanne if you would like to know more about Quaker work on the new economy, or

to order materials for your meeting. Email: [suzannei@quaker.org.uk](mailto:suzannei@quaker.org.uk)