

Living up to our Sustainability commitment

1. Introduction

In October, Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) considered four proposals (paper MfS 2018 10 15) designed to ensure every part of BYM integrates environmental sustainability into its thinking and activity - and sees this as integral to our spiritual and practical witness.

The proposals were drawn up from a meeting of committee representatives, held in July, and at the request of Meeting for Sufferings. The paper explained:

We wish to see how each part may co-ordinate and integrate the work on sustainability. We hope Friends will trust each part of the Quaker family to play its part. We look forward to MfS receiving progress reports - with each body seeing this as a core part of its work.

Also in October, MfS received minutes from BYM Sustainability Group, Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee.

2. Building on the proposals

This section of the paper notes what the four proposals were; how MfS responded; and any subsequent developments.

a) Allocation of responsibilities

The paper set out a table showing which parts of BYM's structure take responsibility for areas of sustainability work, together with emerging and possible new work to fill current gaps. Most expanded or new work would require additional funding. BYM Trustees have made a commitment to consider what resources can be made available.

MfS was content with this. MfS noted 'we will need to consider how MfS is able to monitor this and compile an annual report to Yearly Meeting': this is addressed in section 3 below.

b) Similar joint meetings in future

The joint meeting proposed that similar meetings in future will ensure a joined-up approach and provide mutual encouragement – experimenting to see whether these might happen once or twice a year.

MfS welcomed this and minuted: 'MfS would need to hold an overview, identifying gaps and pursuing new ideas but we ask for these to be held regularly'. Again, the need to hold an overview is addressed in section 3 below.

c) Nurturing Friends' ministry

MfS agreed that Woodbrooke be approached to run national and regional face to face gatherings and events to nurture Friends' ministry in the testimony of

sustainability. The minute noted 'MfS may need to hold oversight of these gatherings'. Staff can report that Woodbrooke has welcomed this suggestion and discussions have begun about how it can be implemented.

As well as the 'face-to-face' Sustainability Gatherings, the discussions are exploring how Woodbrooke could work with Friends on the following:

- Exploration/development of our testimony to sustainability as one expression of our Quaker faith
- Strengthening and deepening our understanding of why, how and where we are led to act
- What it means to be a low-carbon sustainable community in practice – how meetings can/should change, including but definitely not limited to greening our meeting houses
- Ways to change our own lifestyles with joy, and encourage similar changes in others
- Envisioning being a net zero carbon community

We would hope to see a mixture of national events held on-site at Woodbrooke, regional events and online events, aiming to reach a wide range of Friends, well beyond those who already have a strong sense of this concern.

Woodbrooke would work in appropriate liaison with relevant Quaker bodies – QPSW, Quaker Life, etc. The need for oversight is addressed in section 3 below.

d) A clear vision

MfS considered the suggestion that the YM *might* commit itself to a bold target of becoming carbon neutral or 'net zero' in carbon. This was a new idea and felt daunting; but the meeting agreed: 'it may be invaluable for us all to reflect and consider what it means for us to be zero carbon: for our meetings and for centrally managed work and we ask for further guidance and advice'. It will take some time to develop proposals on this – so far discussions are at a very early, informal stage. We hope that Woodbrooke will play a part in helping us all to envision what being a 'net zero' meeting might be like and to motivate us to move in that direction. This would be valuable whether or not BYM formally adopts such a target.

3. MfS oversight

Bearing in mind the recommendations of the Review Group (received in April 2018), the report from the joint meeting held in July, and discernment of Meeting for Sufferings in October, the clerks now propose:

a) Currently, Arrangements Group asks committees in their annual report to let MfS know how they're working to take forward our YM commitments to becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community. In future, we should expect committees, and also BYM Trustees and Quaker Stewardship Committee, to report annually on how their work's helping Friends to take forward our sustainability commitment.

b) MfS will have a substantive agenda item about Sustainability every year. Sustainability can also be considered at other meetings during the year.

c) MfS should appoint a small Sustainability Monitoring Group. The group will comprise three members of MfS who will monitor progress. The group will ensure

that reports are sent to MfS, that agreed activities are undertaken, and that MfS pays attention to our sustainability commitment in its meetings.

d) MfS Arrangements Group will continue in its role of discerning the MfS agendas, and will work closely with the Sustainability Monitoring Group.

e) MfS will continue to report annually to Yearly Meeting.

f) The BYM Sustainability Group can be laid down.