

# Early general election briefing for Quakers



This is a briefing to help Quakers engage with politicians in the run-up to a possible general election in late 2019 or early 2020.

As Quakers, we try to live in truth, peace, simplicity, and equality, finding God in ourselves and those around us. General elections are a key chance for Quakers to influence future decision-makers in line with our values.

We are seizing this opportunity to call on all political parties to tackle the climate crisis, uphold the UK's international commitments, and reform the unjust economic structures that underlie climate breakdown.

Any new government must urgently address the deep inequality and division in communities across the four nations of the UK, and it must uphold international structures that support global peace and nuclear disarmament. Here we set out five priority areas for transformation.



## Stop climate breakdown

For Quakers, climate change represents a grave injustice. The drive to extract, consume and profit from fossil fuels is exposing communities around the world to the dangers of a warming planet.

Based on our testimony to equality, and our concern for the earth, we seek a world in which all life thrives within a safe and stable climate. A transition to a net-zero carbon economy must put the most marginalised first and help make the UK more equal.

The UK government has committed to net-zero emissions by 2050. That's a step in the right direction, but we need far more ambition and detail. The UK must use its hosting of the 2020 UN climate talks as an opportunity to show leadership.

### We call for:

- political parties to lay out cross-government strategies and policies, working with devolved nations to achieve a just transition to net-zero emissions well before 2045
- bold investment in sustainable energy, services, housing, land use, and jobs that put the UK's most marginalised communities first. Any government must commit to the recommendations made by the Committee on Climate Change in 2019, firstly by:
  - backing sustainable and warmer housing by investing an extra £1bn per year until 2035 in energy efficiency
  - investing in, and removing planning restrictions on, wind and solar power for affordable energy
  - ensuring public money for farming and land use backs low-emissions agriculture, helps protect carbon sinks like forests and peatland, and increases tree cover by 50–70,000 hectares per year
- ambitious and robust environmental governance if we are to leave the EU. We need bold targets to cut emissions and protect biodiversity, together with an Office for Environmental Protection that has the independence, powers and resources to hold public bodies to account.

A large print edition is also available; please contact [publications@quaker.org.uk](mailto:publications@quaker.org.uk) or call 020 7663 1162.

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## A culture of welcome

Rooted in our conviction that there is something of God within every person, Quakers have long worked to offer sanctuary to people forced to flee their homes.

Quakers are working in communities across Britain to improve the lives of people whose immigration status is called into question. We see up close how the promotion of a 'hostile environment' is embedding discrimination into state policy and practice.

### We call for:

- the Home Office to end the indefinite detention of migrants. If detention is deemed necessary as a last resort, there should be a time limit of 28 days
- the government to urgently review the 'right to rent' scheme, which is preventing many whose immigration status is called into question from renting accommodation
- the scrapping of current rules that stop British people earning less than £18,600 from living here with a partner from outside the EU. These rules keep thousands of families apart and restrict everyone's right to love
- people seeking asylum to be granted the right to work. This will enable them to integrate into their communities, live in dignity and fulfil their potential.

## Promoting peace

A commitment to peace lies at the heart of Quaker belief and practice. Over hundreds of years, Quakers have explored and shared nonviolent approaches to conflict and promoted diplomacy and alternatives to violence.

UK militarist policies, including military interventions and the arms trade, cause huge suffering and environmental devastation. They also undermine global security.

Quakers work with others to ban nuclear weapons, end militarism and build a peaceful, just and sustainable global society.

### We call on the UK government to:

- end the use of military force as an instrument of foreign policy and uphold international structures of dialogue and diplomacy instead. It should support and engage in a wide range of other approaches to nonviolent conflict resolution and transformation
- work to end the arms trade and engage in disarmament. It should support the transition towards civilian manufacturing, such as the production of renewable energy
- sign the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
- support and promote the development of a culture of peace, including by embedding peace into the education system.

## Transforming justice

Quakers consider the UK's over-reliance on policing, prosecution and punishment to be socially harmful and economically wasteful.

Inequality and injustice in our society allow crime to thrive. Our outdated criminal justice system prevents us from tackling the complex problems our society faces.

Quakers envisage a justice system that tackles social issues in a way that transforms individuals, communities and countries for the better. We recommend taking a public health approach to crime.

### This would include:

- setting up Violence Reduction Units in all major cities in line with the model used to successfully reduce knife crime in Glasgow
- preventing children from turning to crime by providing them with better education, children's centres and youth clubs
- enabling people experiencing mental health and housing problems to get help from properly resourced specialist services rather than from the police.

## Empowering civil society

Quakers have a proud tradition of political activism, but we can't bring about positive change unless we have the freedom to campaign.

Policies and legislation such as the Lobbying Act have restricted charities' ability to campaign. In addition, large corporations are using court injunctions to suppress the right to protest peacefully on issues such as fracking.

As a result, the UK has joined a list of 12 European countries in which civic space is now rated as 'narrowed' (Civicus Monitor, visit <https://monitor.civicus.org> to find out more).

### We call on:

- the government to repeal the Lobbying Act, or at the very least to reform it in line with the recommendations made by Robin Hodgson in his 2016 review
- departments of state to stop using 'gagging clauses' to prevent charities from campaigning when they are receiving government funding
- the government and courts to review the use of injunctions to ensure that our right to peaceful protest is upheld.

For more information about our work in each of these areas, visit [www.quaker.org.uk/ourwork](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ourwork).

For help engaging with politicians, or with any other issues related to politics, email [politics@quaker.org.uk](mailto:politics@quaker.org.uk).