

Covering letter



Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers) in Britain

2nd April 2020

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Dear Friends,

As you will all be very well aware, the decision was made last month to cancel our April 4th meeting in the light of the unfolding public health crisis. Since then every aspect of our lives has been turned upside down and all of us are having to adapt to a new reality.

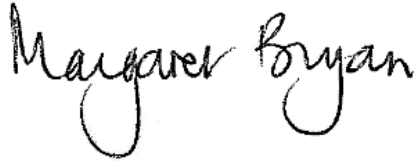
We cannot say when next we might meet in person, but I wanted to share with you some of the matters that would have been before us, for your information and consideration.

- In the MfSAG minutes you will note our decision to record all AM minutes received by MfSAG, with an indication of the action to be taken. We hope this will make our planning process clearer, and this record will be included next time. Also you will see that, in common with other Quaker committees looking to reduce their carbon footprint and simplify their working, we are proposing to reduce the number of meetings each year from 5 to 4.
- The BYM trustees report speaks for itself.
- Bristol AM's concern is of a more pressing nature, and their minute comes to you with supplementary information from QPSW.
- The group set up to review Quaker Stewardship Committee and the terms of reference of BYM trustees has produced an interim report, which has some questions for MfS reps.
- Please make any comments directly to qscbymtreview@gmail.com, if possible by 17th April
- Finally, QLCC shares with us the BYM/Woodbrooke Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities 2020-25, which it adopted in late January. This strategy will underpin the development of meeting-centred support that has been agreed.

Any comments on or queries about these papers are welcomed, via sufferings@quaker.org.uk

Meanwhile let us all uphold each other and our communities in whatever ways are given to us.

In peace and friendship,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Bryan". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Margaret Bryan
Clerk

Items enclosed with this mailing

1. MfS Arrangements Group February 2020 meeting minutes
2. Update from BYM Trustees
3. AM Minutes received
4. Review of Quaker Stewardship Committee – interim report
5. Integrated strategy



Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers) in Britain

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held from 11.00 – 15.00 on 21 February 2020

Bayard Rustin, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Minutes

Present: Margaret Bryan, Robert Card, Gill Greenfield, Karen Draycott, Sherry-Ann Mitchell, Juliet Prager, Neil Jarvis, Mark Lilley, Paul Parker, Cat Waithaka (minute 1)

1. Reflections on the last MfS

We have received comments from the Support Group, and have heard that staff have picked up on the practical matters arising from the report. We note the continuing issues surrounding the provision of catering.

We have reflected on the facilitation of groups and have noted that several Friends have commented that the questions given seemed to close off discussion rather than opening up the issues.

Reflections on Young People's Participation Day 2019

We have heard that the day was generally well received. Some comments have been heard which made clear the importance of advance preparation for young people attending and the value of developing the MfS agenda in synchrony with the YPP programme.

We have reflected together on how the day might be improved. In particular, we have considered whether it is worth not running the day every year but have not reached clarity on this. We affirm the importance of initiatives like this in the development of our young people's faith.

Gold minutes

We have reviewed the minutes of the last meeting and have not identified any needing to be recorded as Gold Minutes.

2. Arrangements Group

We have reminded ourselves of the terms of reference for the Arrangements Group. We have confirmed that decisions on the final content of the agenda are the responsibility of the clerks.

We have heard an oral report on the progress of the review of the MfS Arrangements Group and have asked for the report to be received by Arrangements Group by the end of this year. We would welcome periodic updates on progress.

3. Forward agenda

We have reviewed our forward agenda which informs our planning.

4. Agenda planning: April 2020

We have planned the agenda for our April meeting.

5. Meeting for Sufferings dates for next triennium

We have suggested meetings in March, late June/July, late September and early December with the second meeting of the triennium as a residential and a second residential towards the middle of the triennium.

We have considered whether to hold some non-residential meetings outside of London, possibly with an invitation to local Friends.

6. Record of minutes received and actions taken

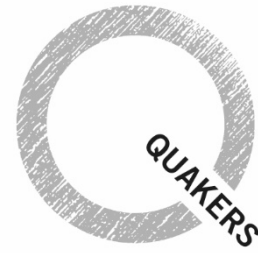
We agree to the keeping of a record of minutes received by Arrangements Group. We have seen a possible format for such a record and commented. We agree that this record will be incorporated into our minutes, which are included in the papers for Meeting for Sufferings.

7. MfS Special interest group at Yearly Meeting Gathering

We have heard details of the joint MfS/BYM Trustees special interest group at YMG to be held on Tuesday 4 August at 19.00

We close, planning to meet again on Thursday 16 April 2020 at Friends House.

Robert Card
Clerk



Yearly Meeting of the
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Update from the Clerk of BYM Trustees

Dear MfS Representatives,

I thought you might welcome a quick update from trustees in these extraordinary times as I am prevented from presenting to you at MfS on 4 April as we had planned.

We are grateful to Paul Parker and all our staff who have responded speedily and imaginatively to the ever changing nature of the crisis. Friends House and Swarthmore Hall had to be closed down very rapidly and as many staff as possible are now working from home and finding new ways to deliver. Many have been extremely busy managing all the changes. Unfortunately, most staff of the Hospitality Company cannot do their work from home so they have had to deal with a dramatic change to their routines.

I have been in close contact with Paul throughout and all trustees have provided advice and support.

Trustees will meet virtually on 3 April. At this time of year we always formally agree the annual report and accounts and, fortunately, new Charity Commission guidance means that we can do this at an on-line meeting without breaching any governance rules. Instead of spending the rest of the day meeting staff and completing Safeguarding training as we had originally planned, we will focus on the implications of Covid-19. We will agree a Covid-19 specific risk register and explore how staff can support Friends across the Yearly Meeting during the difficult months ahead. Management Meeting will bring us financial projections for various scenarios so that we can seek to discern the best way forward.

Our last meeting in February seems a long time ago as so much has happened since. However, we did have a useful meeting during which we were able to draw on the consideration at the last MfS around Safeguarding, communications and fundraising, and Local Development Workers. Our minutes are included in this paper. It was not a meeting where we needed to make many significant decisions, but we continued the process of discernment and had planned to continue the conversation with you in preparation for our June meeting. As with so much else at

the moment, we are going to have to rethink what decisions should be made when and what can be achieved.

More than anything, trustees look forward to spending time in worship together. And, as well as holding in the light all those who work for BYM, we will remember with gratitude and sadness, Sam Challis, one of our trustees, who died at the end of March.

Caroline Nursey
Clerk BYM Trustees

At a meeting of

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Held 15 February 2020 at Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ

Minutes

Present: Georgina Bailey, Linda Batten (Treasurer), Alison Breadon, Jenny Brierley, Sam Challis, Sarah Donaldson, Nick Eyre (except minutes BYMT-2020-02-11 to 16), Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding, Carolyn Hayman, Caroline Nursey (Clerk), Graham Torr (Assistant Clerk), Frances Voelcker, Danielle Walker Palmour (by Skype).

Prevented: Chris Willmore

In attendance: Paul Grey, Head of Operations, (except minutes BYMT-2020-02-15 to 16); Lisa Kiew, Head of Finance & Resources, (except minutes BYMT-2020-02-15 to 16); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, (except minute BYMT-2020-02-16); Juliet Prager, Deputy Recording Clerk, (except minutes BYMT-2020-02-15 to 16); Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship (except minutes BYMT-2020-02-15 to 16).

Visitors: Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager, (minute BYMT-2020-02-10); Alex Fulton, Impact & Projects Officer, (minute BYMT-2020-02-10); Suzanne Ismail, Head of Networking & Engagement (minute BYMT-2020-02-08); David Loxton, Head of Communications & Fundraising (minute BYMT-2020-02-10); Judith Miller, Sayer Vincent (external auditors), (minutes BYMT-2020-02-01 to 09).

BYMT-2020-02-01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check, minutes of last meeting

We welcome Judith Miller from our external auditors, Sayer Vincent, who will be with us for the morning.

Later in the meeting we will also be welcoming Suzanne Ismail, Head of Networking & Engagement; Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager; Alex Fulton, Impact & Project Officer; David Loxton, Head of Communications & Fundraising.

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2019 have been signed by the clerk.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda.

During our worship, we have heard paragraph 15.01 from Quaker faith & practice.

BYMT-2020-02-02 Minutes received

We have received the following minutes:

- Continued minutes (BYMT-2020-02-02a)

- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 15-17xi19 (BYMT-2020-02-02b)
- Quaker Life Central Committee 22-24xi19 and 24-26i20 (BYMT-2020-02-02c,d)
- Audit Committee 10xii19 (BYMT-2020-02-02e)
- Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations 24-26i20 (BYMT-2020-02f).

BYMT-2020-02-03 Items taken on draft minute

(a) Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group

We receive the minutes of the last meeting of the Vibrancy in Meetings Steering Group held 12 December 2019 (BYMT-2020-02-3a).

We thank the steering group for the commitment they have shown to the Vibrancy pilot project and are excited by the prospect of taking forward its successes and lessons as we introduce local development workers.

(b) Property Support Reference Group

We receive paper BYMT-2020-02-03b proposing that we formally end the legacy-funded project on property support and that we lay down the Property Support Reference Group.

We agree to this proposal and thank the reference group for their service. We note that property support will be taken forward as an aspect of meeting-centred support in future.

(c) Lettings policy

Further to minute BYMT-2019-11-12, we receive paper BYMT-2020-02-03c with the final version of the Friends House lettings policy. This was agreed by The Quiet Company Board by their minute H19/46 and by BYMT Clerks using the between meetings procedure so the policy could be adopted from the start of 2020.

(d) Insurance report

We receive a summary of principal general insurances as at 1 January 2020 (BYMT-2020-02-03d).

(e) Procurement report

We receive paper BYMT-2020-02-03e updating us on progress towards developing a strategic approach to procurement.

We are pleased to adopt the Procurement Strategy, Procurement Policy and Modern Slavery Statement.

(f) Whistleblowing annual report

We receive the Whistleblowing annual report (BYMT-2020-02-03f).

(g) 2019 Operational Plan year-end report

We receive the 2019 Operational Plan year-end report (BYMT-2020-02-03h). A copy of the full 2019 Operational Plan reporting on each activity has been placed on the Trustees' QGroup.

We look forward to seeing highlights from the report reflected in the 2019 Annual Review.

BYMT-2020-02-04 Recording Clerk's report

We receive the Recording Clerk's report (BYMT-2020-02-04) covering:

Introduction and overview

Strategic priorities – strands of work

- Thriving Quaker communities (Strategy, Local development roll-out, Diversity and inclusion, Gender diversity, Engaging Young Adult Quakers),
- Sustainable & peaceful world ('Climate crisis: spiritual nurture and learning' project, COP26, QPSWCC strategic review, Woodland),
- Simplifying structures & practices (Review of Yearly Meeting, Review of QSC and BYM trustees, Review of QCCIR and QWRC, Governance)

Strategic priorities – ways of working

- Distinctively Quaker (Book of discipline revision, YMG 2020, External relations, Marriage law),
- Integrated (Local development work and regional hub, International Quaker agencies, External relations),
- Well-governed (Impact and operational planning, Communications, Infrastructure and systems, People and culture, Health and safety, Trading, Facilities).

Appendices to the report are (1) Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities 2020-2025 and (2) the regular staff report.

We find the new format of the report helpful and ask for it to be continued.

We welcome the Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities adopted by QLCC.

Management Meeting minutes have been received for meetings held 10 December 2019, 22 January and 12 February 2020.

BYMT-2020-02-05 Trustees' news

We received a report of the activities of Trustees since our last meeting (BYMT-2020-02-05).

BYMT-2020-02-06 Finance & resources reports

(a) Finance & Property Committee minutes

We receive the minutes of the meeting of BYMT Finance & Property Committee held 23 January 2020 (BYMT-202-02-06a).

(b) Finance report – quarter 4

We receive the interim Quarterly Finance Report for the period to 31 December 2019 (BYMT-2020-02-06b).

(c) Employment Committee annual report

We receive the annual Employment Committee report 2019 (BYMT-2020-02-06c).

(d) Employment Committee minutes

We have received the minutes of the BYMT Employment Committee minutes held 14 November 2019 by videoconference (BYMT-2020-02-06d).

(e) Grants Group report

We have received a report from Grants Group (BYMt-2020-02-06e)

BYMT-2020-02-07 Safeguarding

(a) Quaker Appeals Group (Criminal Records)

We receive minute CNC-2019-09-10 from Central Nominations Committee (BYMT-2020-02-07ai) and paper BYMT-2020-02-07a recommending that the Quaker Appeals Group (Criminal Records) be laid down.

We agree to this recommendation including the proposal in the paper for the composition of an appeals group should one be needed. We ask Quaker Life Central

Committee to amend accordingly the procedures for the Quaker Life Approvals Panel.

We send this minute to Central Nominations Committee and Quaker Life Central Committee.

(b) Safeguarding update

We receive paper BYMT-2020-02-07b updating us on the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, the review of the archive, casework and improvement plan progress.

We are pleased to hear that MtM has decided to hire additional short-term support to help us complete the safeguarding improvement plan as quickly as possible.

BYMT-2020-02-08 Decentralisation: progress and next steps

We are joined by Suzanne Ismail, Head of Networking & Engagement for this item.

Further to minute BYMT-2019-06-11, we have received paper BYMT-2020-02-08 updating us on work on decentralisation.

We are encouraged that so many meetings have expressed interest in hosting a hub or local development worker and have shared feedback from our own LMs and AMs about decentralisation. We have found that there are some Friends who are not aware of all the reasons for the proposals and we know that we must keep talking to Friends in our meetings and to staff. We sense excitement for the new ways of working. We want to experiment and know that arrangements will not be uniform. We recognise that we will need clear understanding about how collaboration will work and we will review advice on the subject which is available from various bodies.

We agree with the proposed decision-making processes for deciding the location of the pilot hub and the second cohort of LDWs.

We ask our Nominations Committee to bring back later in the meeting the names of two trustees to form a reference group:

- to work with staff to oversee the next stage of the process
- make a final decision with MtM and Woodbrooke about the location of the pilot hub
- provide assurance to trustees that the relevant criteria have been applied and due diligence exercised.

BYMT-2020-02-09 Simplifying structures and practices

Further to minute BYMT-2018-06-16 we receive a paper giving first thoughts on simplification (BYMT-2020-02-09).

In small groups, we have discussed what a simple church and what a simple charity might look like.

We look forward to hearing more from the Simplification Group in June.

BYMT-2020-02-10 Communications, fundraising and impact

David Loxton, Head of Communications & Fundraising, Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager, Alex Fulton, Impact & Project Officer, join us for this item.

We receive paper BYMT-2020-02-10.

We have heard of the challenge for fundraising from the language we use as Quakers and the cultural reticence about talking about money.

We have reflected on the challenge of encouraging more Friends (members and attenders) to give at whatever level they are able without making anyone feel guilty. We know that the way it is handled locally is critical and hope that giving can be joyous.

Organisationally, staff and committees want to be better at articulating the purposes of their work while at the same time living adventurously and acknowledging unplanned consequences – both good and bad.

Quakers are doing a lot and want to communicate about it all. And the dispersed authority within the Society of Friends, and Quakers' tolerance of ambiguity, make it complex to plan clear communications.

Doing less and doing it better may help us achieve more. We can see that planning tools can help the spirit move and that multiple reporting of aspects of our work is not the best way to get things done.

We recognise the complexity of communication and fundraising within Quakers. The relationship between LMs/AMs and BYM may need to evolve. We need more digital communication – with more content from Friends as well as staff. And we need good communication between staff in their multiple sites, working in a variety of ways.

With MfS, we should return to the topic of how BYM should communicate directly with individual Friends rather than solely through role holders. We need to untangle communication from both ends.

BYMT-2020-02-11 Nominations and appointments

(a) Our Nominations Group brings forward the following names for appointment (paper BYMT-2020-02-11):

Link trustee to engage with the review of BYM Trustees' terms of reference and Quaker Stewardship Committee

- Graham Torr to serve for the lifetime of the review, joining Sarah Donaldson (and replacing David Olver whose term as a trustee ended in December 2019).

Lead trustee for safeguarding

- Sarah Donaldson to continue serving until December 2020

Engaging Young Adult Quakers Grants Group

- Ruth McCarthy to serve as member from the Grants Group
- Isaac Peat to serve as member from the EYAQ Steering Group

both for the two-year pilot stage of the scheme.

We agree to these appointments.

(b) Our Nominations Group also brings forward the following names for appointment

Decentralisation reference group

- Alison Breadon and Sam Challis

for as long as needed.

We agree to these appointments.

BYMT-2020-02-12 Preparing for Yearly Meeting

We have discussed our involvement with Yearly Meeting Gathering in Bath 1-7 August and made suggestions about what our Clerk should cover in her introduction.

BYMT-2020-02-13 Meeting for Sufferings preparation

We have discussed our involvement with Meeting for Sufferings on 4 April.

BYMT-2020-02-14 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT-2020-02-15 Time with the Recording Clerk

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

BYMT-2020-02-16 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

Caroline Nursey
Clerk



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Minutes received from Area Meetings

Minutes from Area Meetings will be held over to the next Meeting for Sufferings. One minute – from Bristol Area Meeting – was sent asking for urgent attention. Other Area Meetings may wish to follow Bristol Area Meeting's initiative to develop an interfaith letter of support in their area.

Two additional pieces of information are provided for representatives. First, Bristol Area Meeting has adopted a 'Declaration of Commitment to a response to Climate and Ecological Crisis' and, second, staff members of the Economics and Sustainability team at BYM have produced a note of their current work and plans.

Bristol AM Minute 20.26, Stop Ecocide Campaign (Redland Minute)

Hilary Saunders has written an article in the AMNL and we have received the following minute from Redland Local Meeting in support for her concern.

(Redland LM minute) 20/04 Quakers and the 'Stop Ecocide' campaign. We have heard from Hilary Saunders and Jo Flanagan about an international campaign to criminalise ecocide under international law. A definition of ecocide from the 'Stop Ecocide' campaign website was read to the Meeting. In response to an enquiry from our clerk, a supportive message has also been received from Olivia Hanks, Economics and Sustainability programme manager at Friends House.

We recognise our Friends' deep concern, and their hope that Quakers will support action towards changing international law through development of an interfaith letter of support.

We share these Friends' concern, recognising that faith groups have an important role to play in raising public awareness through lobbying governments and international organisations to include ecocide within the scope of international law. Friends have expressed their view that the ecocide campaign is valuable, representing one possible 'tool' in the Quaker toolbox of opposition to environmental destruction.

We feel that this concern should be further tested at Area Meeting and send forward this minute to Area Meeting for discernment of appropriate action.

We ask Julia Bush, Hilary Saunders, Jo Flanagan and Joseph Willoughby-Rainsford to work with other faith leaders locally to develop an interfaith letter of support for the Stop Ecocide campaign. We also ask Britain Yearly Meeting to do the same at a

national level and to ask Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) to take this up internationally.

We ask our clerk to forward this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Additional information

1) Bristol Area Quaker Meeting Declaration of Commitment to a response to Climate and Ecological Crisis

Bristol Area Quaker Meeting recognises the urgency of the climate and ecological crises facing the planet. These are not new or isolated concerns, they are entangled in wider issues of justice and equality. We are called to respond to uphold our spiritual testimonies.

We commit to working for a future in which we have transformed our relationship with the planet, its resources and each other. We see this as a continuing journey of transition towards a different and better future for the planet and its communities.

As a first step, we commit our Area Meeting to ensure every collective decision is done with due consideration of the impact we make on the environment. Bristol Area Meeting commits to aim for net zero by 2030, and to using its resources to help achieve a just transition. We ask our Trustees to consult widely and bring forward an action plan to achieve that commitment.

We commit to supporting individuals and Local Meetings to discern and take radical action. We ask all Friends to think carefully about their impacts and what they can do. We recognise that not all Friends will be led or able to take the same action, each will find different challenges and inspirations. We commit to love and support each other on what will be, at times, difficult and uncertain journeys.

We will collaborate with individuals, organisations and other Faith communities to work towards a sustainable future and strengthen our witness and action in the world; upholding and moving beyond 'Our Canterbury Commitment'. We celebrate the rich diversity of responses that are already visible and continue to emerge in the face of these crises.

We set off joyfully, following the leadings of the Spirit and working with others as we reimagine and work towards a better future. We aim to learn, to relish the challenges and create opportunities. We do not know how fast we can travel or the destination, but we are committed to act in hope and truth.

2) BYM Economics and Sustainability Team's note on the Stop Ecocide campaign

Our work

As reported to Meeting for Sufferings in October 2019, the QPSW Central Committee's Economics and Sustainability (ES) Subcommittee decided in June 2019 that the Economics and Sustainability programme should focus almost entirely on

climate justice for the time being. This was partly in recognition that our work has been spread too thinly across different issues in the past.

We see our role among Friends and the climate movement as leading and supporting activism and advocacy that highlights the need for systemic change to build a fundamentally more sustainable and just economic system. This builds on our New Economy project, which ran from 2015-2018, and is reflected in our programme strategy for 2020-2022.

Our focus for 2020 (albeit now disrupted by coronavirus) is supporting Friends to get involved in action for climate justice in the run-up to the COP26 climate talks in November, and conveying a clear message to government about the need for economic transformation and a globally just transition to zero carbon. This will include supporting Friends to build relationships with MPs and other decision-makers. We are increasingly involved in interfaith climate work, and have plans for interfaith advocacy and movement building support.

We hope that if Meeting for Sufferings asks us to take on new work, it will do so in the context of our strategy and existing work plan, in order to uphold the discernment of QPSW Central Committee and ES Subcommittee and the work of staff, and to enable us to make effective use of resources.

The 'Stop Ecocide' campaign

The 'Stop Ecocide' campaign calls for ecocide to be made a crime at the International Criminal Court (ICC), alongside genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of aggression.

The mechanism for proposing such a law is an amendment to the Rome Statute of the ICC. As the campaign website notes, such an amendment is most likely to gain support from small nations vulnerable to ecocide. However, other than providing legal expertise to nations interested in taking this forward, it is not clear to us how the campaign intends to bring about its aim. We also note that though this campaign is to a large extent focused on supporting the global south, it does not foreground global south voices or (as far as we are aware) link up with frontline environmental protectors around the world.

While it is unarguable that action is required to halt mass destruction of the living world, we have reservations about the specific method of creating a criminal offence and regulating this through the International Criminal Court. QPSW's approach to criminal justice acknowledges that criminalising actions rarely prevents harm and that those prosecuted under criminal laws are rarely those with the most power and resources, which raises questions about what impact an ecocide law would have.

There is also debate among Friends engaged in peace building around the world about whether the International Criminal Court is fit for purpose, particularly as countries like the US and China haven't ratified the Rome Statute and therefore don't have to cooperate with the court. Nine out of ten of its current investigations are into governments or groups in Africa, which has led many to question whether it only focuses on 'low hanging fruit' rather than very powerful states or corporations (although this is not to say that the cases being investigated aren't worthy of

attention). The QPSW Crime, Community and Justice programme offers a critique of the criminal justice system, and we would ask that Meeting for Sufferings also considers this context in its discernment process.

Scope for QPSW work

The Stop Ecocide campaign is clearly an issue of interest to Friends and with some alignment with QPSW's work. Staff met with members of the campaign around six years ago to learn more about their work and see if there were ways that we could support them. At the time, they were unable to articulate what it would mean in practical terms for us as an organisation to work with them, and there was no real sense that movement building was involved. We are keen to focus on initiatives where there is real scope for grassroots activism to bring about change, for example through community initiatives or talking to decision-makers. It is difficult to see how this could apply to this campaign.

It is important to note that – while climate breakdown and large-scale ecological destruction are of course interconnected – the campaign for an international ecocide law has no direct connection to COP26 and will not be formally discussed there.

The issue of ecological breakdown is strongly linked to our current work but would represent a change of emphasis. If Meeting for Sufferings discerns that QPSW Central Committee (in practice, through the ES programme) should place more emphasis on this concern, this would require significant research and network building in order to determine how we could support existing movements – which would inevitably mean laying down some of our current work. We suggest that it may not be prudent to commit to one particular campaign until it is clear that this is the best way of achieving the outcomes we seek.

With regard to the specific request that QPSW convene an interfaith letter, it is not clear to us that this would be effective outside the context of a larger piece of work. Where we seek to initiate interfaith work, it is generally where our existing work puts us in a position to show leadership; for example, we currently aim to support other faith groups to develop their analysis of the economic drivers of the climate crisis and use this analysis to inform their actions. Given that the calls for a law of ecocide have been backed by Pope Francis, we feel that this campaign is in a different category.

Whether or not Meeting for Sufferings discerns that the Stop Ecocide campaign should be adopted as a concern of the Yearly Meeting, ES staff will be happy to support individual Friends and meetings involved in the campaign, and to promote their work through our channels, as we routinely do with local activism.

Olivia Hanks, March 2020



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Interim report to Meeting for Sufferings from the Review Group for Quaker Stewardship Committee and the terms of reference of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

(a) Background to the review

Meeting for Sufferings asked the Group to review Quaker Stewardship Committee (QSC) and its terms of reference. A description of QSC and how it works with area meetings can be found in *Quaker faith & practice (Qf&p)* 14.36-42. Almost immediately after we were appointed, we were asked to include a review of the terms of reference of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees (BYMT) – a task for which Quaker Stewardship Committee had been asked to take responsibility. The work of BYMT is described in *Qf&p* 8.17. We met for the first time as a Group on 15 April 2019. We have found that the two tasks have been to a degree complementary, and some of the underlying issues have been the same. As our task is larger than originally envisaged, we are now expecting to report to Yearly Meeting in 2021, rather than 2020.

(b) How we have approached the review

We have sought and received responses, in writing and in conversation, from:

- Members of both QSC and BYMT;
- Key staff members;
- Friends in receipt of mailings from Meeting for Sufferings (MfS);
- Friends who responded to a letter in *The Friend* from our Convenor – some from individuals and some from area meeting trustees or other groups.

We are grateful for all the discernment. We have been testing our conclusions with those most closely involved, including members of the two groups being reviewed.

We are now consulting Meeting for Sufferings to bring you some of the underlying issues and to test some specific aspects of our conclusions. We hope to bring a final report to you in October.

(c) What does it mean to be ‘a simple church supported by a simple charity’?

MfS has enthusiastically embraced the idea of ‘a Simple Church supported by a Simple Charity’, but the governance structures of the Yearly Meeting are anything but simple! You only have to look at the diagram in chapter 8 of *Qf&p* (8.05) to see the tangle of reporting lines and lack of clarity in ‘who does what’. Committee and staff spend time ensuring that everyone is connected, but when there’s a tangle this takes longer than it should. That time could be better spent on other aspects of our witness and worship, helping to reinvigorate Quakerism. At several points in our deliberations we were urged to wait until the whole thing could be sorted out at once, especially since MfS has just initiated a review of Yearly Meeting and the way it works. But we have felt that we could usefully untangle one small corner now and point to issues which remain for others to address.

Some regions are actively engaged with the Simpler Meetings project, considering ways in which functions might be combined across area meetings. The amount of time given by Friends just to keep our processes going sucks energy that might better be spent on our spiritual lives and witness.

(d) Meeting-centred support

As we began our work, we heard about the success of the Vibrancy project. As a result, BYM and Woodbrooke have agreed an ‘integrated strategy for supporting Quaker communities’. As it is rolled out, this will profoundly affect the way in which support is offered and received by Friends, through Local Development Workers who can work alongside all role holders within meetings, including trustees and treasurers. When it was set up, QSC was designed to support just these latter roles, but it now feels unhelpful to separate them from complementary roles, such as clerks. Trustees realise the need for compliance across a wide range of issues such as property, employment, safeguarding etc, many of which are already the responsibility of Quaker Life.

We are likely to recommend that, in future, some functions of QSC are supported through Quaker Life, as part of the centrally managed work.

(e) Authority and accountability

Our consultation has brought to light ongoing differences of view about who exercises authority in Britain Yearly Meeting. Yearly Meeting in session is the ‘ultimate’ authority, but finds it hard to hold those reporting to it to account, given the size of the plenary sessions and time constraints. QSC’s reports to Yearly Meeting are often met with an embarrassed silence whereas, when QSC presents a report to Meeting for Sufferings, it is much more effective, and also enables QSC to engage in dialogue with area meeting representatives. The same is true in the relationship between Meeting for Sufferings and BYM Trustees. Trustees, who are responsible for the centrally managed work of BYM – ‘the charity’ – take responsibility for its direction as well as finance, property, employment and other aspects of good

governance. Matters can be brought to Sufferings by Trustees at various different points for guidance, enabling the trustees to make an informed decision. The review of Meeting for Sufferings and BYM Trustees which reported to Yearly Meeting in 2011 encouraged us to see Meeting for Sufferings as ‘the church’ operating between Yearly Meeting in session, responsible for:

- deep discernment of overall vision (currently articulated in *Our Faith in the Future*);
- threshing difficult issues such as diversity, and helping to establish policy positions such as boycott of settlement goods, or fossil fuel divestment;
- being a crucible for new ideas – which may come initially through concerns sent by Area Meetings (such as the development of the sanctuary project).

Does using the concepts of ‘the church’ and ‘the charity’ help us to see how the different parts of our governance complement one another?

(f) Better ways of working

Membership of the yearly meeting has reduced by a third since 1991. AM structures remain little changed although ways of working have become more complex. We also have an ageing membership. We welcome the call for ways of working that enable a greater diversity of Friends to contribute to our governance, including younger people. We also agree that a greater use of technology (IT) could usefully support our functions.

(g) Centralisation and regionalisation

Quakers in Britain are actually ‘one church but many charities’. Area meetings – each a charity – are subject to the authority of the church, but increasingly it is evident that in many matters – such as safeguarding – the national charity, BYM, carries the reputational risk for the whole church. For example, a failure in one local meeting runs the risk of reflecting poorly on the whole church.

Friends have traditionally resisted a top-down approach, but how do we hold our differences across the YM within a firm framework which respects diversity? What changes to our governance arrangements would help to ensure that we are all working in the same direction?

(h) Compliance, and openness and transparency

QSC was set up to ensure that ‘our house is in order’ and to support the registration of AMs with the Charity Commission. It also sees stewardship of Quaker assets as a spiritual obligation. It has achieved much since its inception and is planning for the registration of the remaining AMs. One of its functions is to certify that all parts of the YM are compliant with regard to annual accounting — but all trustees are aware that compliance is much more complex than ‘merely’ financial matters, and the regulatory environment is changing. If Meeting for Sufferings was generally accepted as ‘the church acting between Yearly Meetings’, the question of how transparency, openness and integrity are flourishing in our Quaker life together could be

considered by the meeting from time to time, which could provide a more dynamic sort of accountability.

When all AMs are registered and subject to legal compliance through the Charity Commission, could we see this aspect of QSC's role as complete?

How can the yearly meeting as a whole give due weight to Stewardship as a Spiritual imperative not just a legal requirement?

(i) Review of Terms of Reference of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees.

Since the review of the BYM Trustees Terms of Reference is under the aegis of QSC, we will be reporting to that body with our recommendations. Our consultations have led us to conclude that BYM Trustees are working well as a body; those serving understand their role, and enjoy serving. There was particular praise for the slimmed-down subcommittees, and appropriate involvement of all members of Management Meeting in meetings of trustees. Revised terms of reference are being drawn up in consultation with link trustees.

Members of the Review Group: Steven Burkeman, York AM, David Robson, Leeds AM, Deborah Rowlands, South Wales AM (convenor).

The review group welcomes feedback from Meeting for Sufferings representatives at the following email address. The group next meets in late April and so it would be helpful to receive any responses by 17 April if possible.

qscbymtreview@gmail.com



Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers) in Britain

Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities 2020-2025

Quaker Life Central Committee has adopted a new strategy which supports a 'meeting-centred' approach to supporting Quaker communities. This strategy, which covers work done by BYM and Woodbrooke, aims for all our work to be relevant and responsive to what meetings and other Quaker communities need to help them thrive.

QLCC will be thinking at future meetings how best to oversee and monitor implementation of this strategy. At present, we would like to know from Friends:

1. What most excites you about the strategy?
2. What would you hope will change in how you and your Quaker community relate to BYM and Woodbrooke as a result of this strategy?

Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities 2020-2025

Overview & Scope

- Quakers are called to be faithful to the promptings of love and truth in their hearts, following these as ways of manifesting a divine commonwealth on Earth. The work of Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke supports this as Quakers in Britain work towards the aspirations described in *Our Faith in the Future*.
- This strategy covers all the support offered by Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke to Quakers, individually and collectively. It aims to be spirit-led, supporting their leadings and discernment, to help them thrive and be the communities they are called to be. It does not cover all the activities of BYM and Woodbrooke; both will continue to do other work.
- It is guided by the strategic priorities which have been discerned by both trustee bodies and will connect with, influence and be influenced by

departmental and committee strategies and other high-level strategies in both organisations.

- It sets out, at a high level, the types of support available, how and where it is delivered and by whom. The detail of this will be contained in a number of operational plans.
- The strategy is under the care of Quaker Life Central Committee, with links to Woodbrooke's governance structures.
- A one-line description of community-centred support might be: Listen deeply, understand, discern and respond.

Principles and Values

Work developed to support Quaker communities should:

- **Be community-led and community-focused¹**, supporting Quaker communities in discerning their leadings, needs and priorities. Staff involved in both local and YM-wide service delivery will be involved in identifying needs, patterns and trends in order to develop tools and approaches so that our work responds effectively to what communities need and want.
- **Enable Quaker communities to reach beyond** those who are currently active and involved to people at, or beyond, the margins of existing Quaker communities.
- **Encourage innovation and experimentation**, adapting our organisation and structures in response to current needs while remaining true to Quaker discipline and practices.
- **Complement other work**, so we do not duplicate effort or have gaps in support provided to Quakers. Work will be developed and offered by those with the skills, expertise, leading and time to deliver it, including paid staff and those giving service.
- **Be collaborative between BYM and Woodbrooke**, with other groups and with individual Quakers and their communities.
- **Be underpinned by a commitment to equality and diversity**. We will look beyond those who currently access services and support; and will experiment with different ways of offering support.
- **Be undertaken in ways which support the Yearly Meeting's commitment to being a low-carbon, sustainable community**, especially in relation to travel, use of resources and the use of technology.

¹ Community-led means communities determine the services they need and want, community-focused means yearly meeting-wide activities and resources are offered in a way that suits the local context.

Why?

Quaker communities are best placed to know their own needs and how they are called to manifest the divine commonwealth, as expressed in the aspirations in *Our Faith in the Future*. BYM and Woodbrooke are best placed to support Quaker communities when we have helped them to identify their real, underlying needs and can offer support, possibilities and challenge. This is most effective when we meet Friends where they are, both spiritually and geographically. Integrating our work will make best use of our shared resources and expertise to help meetings thrive.

What?

Being responsive does not mean doing anything and everything that is asked of us. It involves helping meetings and other Quaker communities to discern their real, underlying needs that may be different from assumed or presenting needs. Sometimes we will work pro-actively when there is a clear need.

Our work to support Quaker communities will relate to one or more of the broad areas described below, which we believe are important for achieving thriving Quaker communities:

- Spiritual nurture.
- Loving, welcoming and inclusive Quaker communities
- Understanding, using and adapting Quaker practices
- Simplifying structures and practices
- Good discipline and governance
- Understanding and addressing privilege
- Stewardship of our resources, including property and finances
- Putting our faith into action²
- Speaking confidently about our faith, within and beyond our communities
- Working collaboratively with others

These areas are interrelated and any one project or piece of work might relate to more than one area.

How?

In developing and delivering support for Quaker communities we will use the following approaches. These are the ways in which individual Quakers and Quaker communities will access the support that they need:

- **Accompaniment** – this is about walking alongside Quakers, worshipping together, listening, encouraging, (gently) questioning, providing advice and guidance.

² As it relates to Quakers and Quaker communities. Systems change, advocacy and campaigning will be covered by other strategies.

- **Learning** – this is about providing opportunities to develop and deepen Quakers’ knowledge, understanding and skills to build capacity. This could be ‘foundational’ or about ‘extending’ or ‘flourishing’.
- **Networking** – this is about connecting people, gathering and growing communities of support and interest, putting them in touch with each other, communicating with them and enabling them to contribute to the aspirations described in *Our Faith in the Future* as they are led.
- **Resources** - this is about offering information, tools or materials to support accompaniment, learning or networking, or enabling Quakers to act themselves.

The approach used will depend on the needs of specific Quaker communities. An activity may have elements of several of these approaches and should, wherever appropriate, be developed collaboratively between staff delivering the different functions. For example, a resource on a particular topic should complement learning in that area, and a learning programme might encourage or feed into the development of a network for a particular group of Friends or particular part of the Yearly Meeting.

Where?

Support will be offered in the following ways:

- **Local level** – where support is adapted to the particular context and needs through building deeper and more active relationships with Quaker communities. This is not limited to local meetings and will include work with clusters of meetings, at area meeting level, regionally and nationally.
- **Joint Local/YM level** (services coordinated across the Yearly Meeting with local and some Yearly Meeting-wide delivery) – where there is benefit to be gained from YM wide sharing of expertise, good practice, ideas and innovations and/or where work might benefit from “eyes and ears” from outside the particular meeting/community.
- **Yearly Meeting-wide level** – where reasons of scale, specialised knowledge/experience, available resources or a need for uniformity because of a legal, compliance or church government issue mean Yearly Meeting-wide delivery is most appropriate.

We expect locally delivered services to become the primary way of supporting Quaker communities although we recognise the value of working across the Yearly Meeting. We will need to build the structures and processes to encourage and enable ongoing relationships with Quaker communities and support the work of staff and volunteers to become integrated with each other and with other parts of BYM and Woodbrooke.

What will change?

This strategy will mean changes to some of what we do, how we do it and where we do it. In particular:

- **Local Development Workers** will be placed within physical reach of every Quaker community within five years, each working with a limited number of communities to help them thrive.
- We will build deeper and more active relationships with Friends and Quaker communities so that **more work responds to the expressed, recognised and tested needs and demands** of Quaker communities.
- BYM and Woodbrooke will **work together in an integrated way** to identify and respond to needs and to review and develop the support offered.
- More activities will take place **closer to where Friends are**, across the Yearly Meeting.
- We will develop ways to **enable this work to be done effectively**, including how we plan and evaluate the work and how we use technology.

However, other things will not change. These include:

- BYM and Woodbrooke will still be separate organisations working on behalf of Quakers.
- BYM and Woodbrooke will each continue to do work unrelated to supporting Quaker communities. For example, BYM will continue to undertake witness on behalf of Quakers and Woodbrooke will continue to offer postgraduate teaching and research programmes.
- The structure of Local, Area and Yearly Meetings will not change (though we will support Quaker communities that fall outside that structure, like young adult worship groups, and support Quaker communities in examining and adapting existing structures).
- Friends House in London and Woodbrooke in Birmingham will remain as bases for Quaker work and the workplace for most staff, although more people will have the opportunity to be based elsewhere in the Yearly Meeting, including but not only the local development team.

Operational Plans

In order to deliver this strategy we will develop cross-organisational and cross-team plans to guide the work of staff. These plans should evidence a strategic approach and also be active plans which are adapted and changed as necessary. Some may be set initially, however we expect that others will emerge organically in response to changing and emerging needs. The collaboration between BYM and Woodbrooke will be underpinned by a memorandum of understanding.

QLCC 20.09 Integrated Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities

We have received paper QLCC 2020 01 08. We have discussed and reviewed the proposed strategy. We are satisfied with this document as appropriate, helpful and fit-for-purpose in guiding the work at this time. We like the balance of clarity of language underpinned by spiritual discernment.

We adopt this strategy. We will consider at a future meeting how we can be updated on its implementation, including any criteria we want to use to measure success.

We send this minute to BYM Trustees, Woodbrooke Trustees, Meeting for Sufferings, QPSW Central Committee and Management Meeting.
