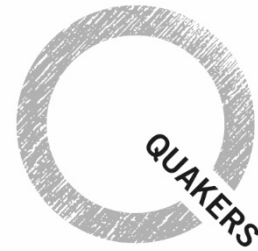


Calling letter



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

14 February 2025

To members of Meeting for Sufferings

Dear Friends,

I look forward to seeing Friends at our first meeting this year at Friends House and online.

We will be receiving some reports this time. Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations reports to us each year on their important work in co-operation with other churches and faiths. We also receive a triennial report from Quaker Housing Trust and will hear at our meeting from its clerk. Finally, the clerk of BYM Trustees will give us a report on their work – minutes from the trustees' meeting in February form part of your papers.

Meeting for Sufferings has been asked by Yearly Meeting to help with the transition towards a 'continuing Yearly Meeting' so that it is fully functioning when Meeting for Sufferings is laid down in spring next year. We receive two papers at this meeting – one on representation and one on financial support for attending Yearly Meeting sessions.

Our Yearly Meeting Clerk will join us to introduce the agenda for Yearly Meeting that takes place in May this year.

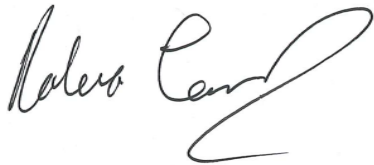
At our last meeting in December we received minutes from three area meetings expressing concern about new police powers and the implication they are having on peaceful protest. We asked to return to this and at this meeting we receive a paper summarising the changes in law and the variety of ways this is affecting Quaker witness for our ongoing discernment.

Finally, Friends have for decades voiced concerns about sustainability and taken action in the face of the ever-increasing climate emergency and for climate justice. Meeting for Sufferings has responded to this concern by giving it time on our

agenda, as we will in March, to reflect on what we – as individuals, as meetings and as a yearly meeting – are, and should be, doing.

Ahead of the meeting, we will hold a Preparation Session on Wednesday 26 February, which will focus on two topics: an extended time to discuss the item on 'Quakers and Protest' and a minute from North Wales Area Meeting (circulated separately) on the use of religious language in our Society.

In Truth,



Robert Card
Clerk, Meeting for Sufferings

Papers enclosed with this mailing

Agenda

Minutes from MfS Arrangements Group

MfS 2025 03 05 Appointments

MfS 2025 03 06 Prison and Court Register

MfS 2025 03 07 Annual report from Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations

MfS 2025 03 09 Triennial report from Quaker Housing Trust

MfS 2025 03 10 Report from BYM Trustees

MfS 2025 03 11a Representation at Yearly Meeting session

MfS 2025 03 11b Financial support for attending Yearly Meeting sessions

MfS 2025 03 11c Dates of Yearly Meeting sessions

MfS 2025 03 12 Sustainability report

MfS 2025 03 13 Quakers and Protest

A reminder of how you can prepare for the meeting

- Read the agenda and papers in good time
- Contact the other representative/alternate from your area meeting or body
- Send any comments or questions to the clerks (sufferings@quaker.org.uk), before the meeting to be received by morning of **27 February**.



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

Agenda

Meeting for Sufferings – 1 March 2025

At Friends House and by video conference,
open for arrivals from 9.30am for 10am start

	Item	Paper
10am	Session 1	
1	Opening worship	
2	Welcome and introductions	
3	Agenda Adoption and acceptance of the agenda	
4–6	Items to be taken on draft minute: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership (to follow) (04) • Appointments (05) • Prison and Court Register (06) 	MfS 2025 03 04 –06
7	Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) To receive an annual report on QCCIR's work	MfS 2025 03 07 For information
8	Yearly Meeting 2025 The Clerk of Yearly Meeting introduces the agenda for Yearly Meeting in May 2025	Oral report For information
	Shuffle break	
9	Quaker Housing Trust To receive a triennial report from the trustees of QHT	MfS 2025 03 09 For consideration
10	BYM Trustees Report from the Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees on their work	MfS 2025 03 10 For information
12.30pm	End of Session 1	

12:30pm to 1.45pm Lunch break

	Item	Paper
1.45pm	Session 2	
11	<p>Preparing for our new continuing Yearly Meeting sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider representation at continuing Yearly Meeting sessions (11a) • Financial support for those attending continuing Yearly Meeting (11b) • To receive the proposed Yearly Meeting session dates from 2026 and YMAC minute YMAC 2024-12-14 continuing Yearly Meeting dates 2026–2028 (11c) 	<p>MfS 2025 03 11 For consideration and For decision</p>
12	<p>Sustainability A report on some of the yearly meeting’s work on the climate emergency and climate justice</p>	<p>MfS 2025 03 12 For information</p>
	Shuffle break	
13	<p>Quakers and protest Challenging new police powers and supporting Friends suffering for their witness</p>	<p>MfS 2025 03 13 For consideration</p>
4pm	End of Meeting	



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online 18 December 2024

Minutes

Present: Elizabeth Allen (Clerk), Robert Card, Charles Phillips, Mary Savage

Prevented: Lex Ryder

In attendance: Neil Jarvis

We began our meeting with a short period of worship.

1. Review of Meeting for Sufferings in December

We have reviewed the minutes from Meeting for Sufferings in December.

We note that minutes 5 and 8 require further work.

Minute 5 asks Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group (MfSAG) to add the impact of new policing powers on the right to protest to our forward plan. We ask staff to consult with colleagues in QPSW and bring us proposals at our first meeting in 2025 on how we might bring this concern to Meeting for Sufferings.

Robert Card has received an email from a MfS representative asking about the process for preparing a paper to inform MfS discernment on the increased police powers that are affecting the right to protest, and offering help to prepare the paper, along with others. We ask staff to consult with this Friend and come back with some options about how to bring this matter to a future MfS.

Minute 8 asks MfSAG to bring 4 or 5 nominations for a group to review the process of Quaker Recognised Bodies registration and re-registration. We agree to ask staff to approach some of the Friends who served on the MfS advisory group on this matter. The review group should include one member who has served in a governance role in a QRB, and who is not a member of MfS. We have discussed a possible name, and what skills and experience members of the group might need. We ask staff closely connected to QRBs to bring names to our meeting in January.

We have heard a brief report on the work of the Support Group this time. We note that Dorothy Ball is willing to serve on the Support Group and we put her name forward to MfS.

2. Meeting dates in 2025

We receive proposed dates for preparation meetings for Meeting for Sufferings and for MfSAG meetings in 2025. We agree to these with one amendment, and ask staff to add the following dates of the preparation meetings to the Meeting for Sufferings page of the website.

Dates of MfS Preparation Sessions 2025, online from 7 pm to 8.30 pm:

Wednesday, 26 February

Monday, 30 June

Wednesday, 24 September

Monday, 1 December

3. Any other matters

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 29 January 2025 to plan Meeting for Sufferings on 1 March.

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Elizabeth Allen
Clerk



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

At a meeting of

Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Held online 29 January 2025

Minutes

Present: Elizabeth Allen, Robert Card, Charles Philips. Lex Ryder, Mary Savage

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Neil Jarvis, Sarah Donaldson

We began our meeting with a short period of worship.

1. Meetings attended and work completed by the Clerks and others

Our Clerk has prepared and submitted a report on Meeting for Suffering's work in 2024 to Yearly Meeting for inclusion in pre-meeting papers. A copy has been shared with us (paper MfSAG 2025 01 01).

2. Forward plan

We have reviewed and updated our Forward Plan.

- Theology and community aspects of meeting online
At Yearly Meeting in 2024 there was a call for Meeting for Sufferings to consider this during 2025, and tonight we have heard Woodbrooke's advice on how MfS might do this. We agree to hold this session in October or December and we will invite Woodbrooke staff to contribute.
- Sustainability
As the Sustainability Monitoring Group does not currently exist, we asked staff to advise us on how and when an item on sustainability and climate justice might be brought to Meeting for Sufferings. We agree to take this item at our March meeting.
- Quaker Concern Over Population (QCOP)
We have received an interim response from QCOP to Meeting for Sufferings minute MfS/24/06/07 asking the Quaker Recognised Body to consider its name, its management and how it is addressing concerns over potential racism (paper MfS 2025 01 03c). We have considered how to take this

forward and agree to share the interim response with MfS for information, continue dialogue with QCOP, and before making any decision, let the review group looking at the process for re/registration of QRBs complete its work in 2025, to see if resulting changes help with this specific matter.

- Quakers and protest

Following Meeting for Sufferings in December and concerns raised by several Area Meetings on the impact of new policing powers on peaceful protest, we receive a paper (MfS 2025 01 03d) from the Head of Witness and Worship summarising the current situation for us. Staff have asked us for guidance on what MfS would like to consider. We expect that this will be an on-going issue. In March, we would like to focus on how Quakers might continue to challenge this new legislation, and how we might support those suffering from the consequences of it.

- Handover of business to the new continuing Yearly Meeting

Sarah Donaldson has joined us tonight to tell us what is required of MfS to assist the transition to a continuing Yearly Meeting. She is now working with Management Meeting to help implement changes to create the new structure. An important role for MfS will be to reflect and give feedback on proposals for new ways of doing things.

We ask that the items marked in grey in our forward plan be recorded as being for the new continuing Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, and removed from the plan.

- Commemoration of MfS

We agree that it would be appropriate to mark the end of Meeting for Sufferings at the final meeting on 7th March 2026, and that we should keep the afternoon free for a commemorative event, the nature of which we will consider at a future meeting.

We add Church and State to our forward plan for October 2025.

We ask our secretary to update the plan accordingly.

3. Meeting for Sufferings in March

We have considered potential business for Meeting for Sufferings in March.

In addition to required business, we expect to receive reports from BYM Trustees, Quaker Housing Trust and QCCIR. There will be business concerning preparation for moving to a continuous Yearly Meeting, and the Yearly Meeting Clerk will introduce the agenda for Yearly Meeting 2025.

We will ask staff to report on our efforts to be faithful to our commitment to sustainability, and we will consider the impact of policing powers on the right to peaceful protest.

We have received the following minutes:

- A. Concern about Genocide in Palestine from Hardshaw & Mann AM
- B. Concern for Palestine - actions taken through an online initiative focusing on a ceasefire in the region from West Wilts & East Somerset AM

We agree to circulate both of these minutes to MfS for information

- C. Concern to preserve the breadth and inclusiveness of our current use of language in the Religious Society of Friends from North Wales AM /Cyfarfod Rhanbarth Gogledd Cymru

We agree to circulate this minute to MfS and to send it to the Book of Discipline Revision Committee.

We ask the clerks to finalise the agenda in consultation with staff.

Online Preparation Session, 26th February

We agree to focus the Preparation Session on:

- the minute from North Wales AM expressing concern to preserve the breadth and inclusiveness of our current use of language in the Religious Society of Friends
- the item on the effect of the new policing powers on peaceful protest

4. Correspondence

We have received two emails from Friends regarding the transition to a continuing Yearly Meeting and the possible on-going use of the name 'Meeting for Sufferings'. As Yearly Meeting has given primary responsibility for these matters to the new continuing Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, we ask staff to forward this correspondence, as appropriate.

5. Any other matters

There being no further business to conduct, we part planning to meet again on 12 March to review Meeting for Sufferings in March.

Signed in and on behalf of the meeting,

Elizabeth Allen, Clerk

Record of minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

This is a record of all minutes received by Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group since the last Meeting for Sufferings with information about any decisions that have been taken. It also includes minutes received in the past where there are updates. If representatives wish to see a copy of a minute, or wish to contact the Clerks, please email sufferings@quaker.org.uk.

Minutes received since last Meeting for Sufferings

Body sending minute	Minute	Initial steps and decisions	Subsequent steps (if any)	Status
Hardshaw and Mann AM	60/2024 Genocide in Palestine	1/12/24 Minute received 29/1/25 Tabled at MfSAG Agreed to circulate for information		Circulated to MfS for information
West Wilts and East Somerset AM	24/69 Minute re concern for Palestine	9/12/24 Minute received 29/1/25 Tabled at MfSAG Agreed to circulate for information		Circulated to MfS for information
North Wales AM/ Cyfarfod Rhanbarth Gogledd Cymru	Minute 25/13 [Religious language]	19/1/25 Minute received 29/1/25 Tabled at MfSAG Agreed to circulate for information and to devote part of the preparation session to this topic		Circulated to MfS for information. At preparation session 26/2/25

Appointments

a) Central Nominations Committee

Brings forward the following names for service or release as indicated:

Book of Discipline Revision Committee

To serve until the work of the committee is complete, renominate:

Judith Thompson, Devon AM

Anya Nanning Ramamurthy, North London AM

Friends Trusts Limited

To serve from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2028, nominate:

Martin Ford, Leeds AM

Alastair Jackson, Leicester AM

Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR)

To serve from 1 May 2025 to 30 April 2028 as the representative for General Meeting for Scotland, renominate:

Nigel Dower, North Scotland AM

Quaker Housing Trust

To serve from Annual Retirement Meeting (ARM) 2025 to ARM 2028, renominate:

Beverley Goddard, West Wiltshire & East Somerset AM

Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee

To serve with immediate effect until 31 December 2028, nominate:

Nyeri Otero-Flanagan, Mid Wales AM

Clerk to Yearly Meeting Agenda Planning Group

To serve with immediate effect until 31 December 2027, nominate:

Ingrid Greenhow, Chilterns AM

b) Yearly Meeting Nominating Group

Brings forward the following name for release as indicated:

Central Nominations Committee

Release with immediate effect:

Matt Rosen, Oxford & Swindon AM

c) Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group

Brings forward the following names for service or release as indicated:

Meeting for Sufferings Support Group

Release with immediate effect:

Les Hereward – Cornwall AM

Appoint with immediate effect until Yearly Meeting 2026:
Dorothy Ball, Cambridgeshire AM

Group to review the process for Quaker Recognised Bodies

Appoint with immediate effect for the lifetime of the review:

Anthony Bird, Cornwall AM

Ivan Hutnik, Surrey & Hampshire Border AM

Magnus Ramage, Northamptonshire AM

Prison and Court Register

Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) was established in 1676, to consider the sufferings experienced by Quakers for their faith. Gradually the practice of recording Friends' names in the 'Great book of Sufferings' lapsed; but in 1997 MfS decided to maintain a register of Friends before the courts or imprisoned for matters of conscience.

This enables us to record events, as well as to uphold the Friends concerned and to share information about their witness.

The purposes of recording an entry in the register are:

1. To enter the details of the matter into the permanent records of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), acknowledging Friends' witness and their willingness to face its consequences;
2. To remind ourselves that being a Quaker does not come without cost;
3. To record the Society's prayerful upholding of Friends who are suffering for their faith;
4. To serve as a record of the actions of the State in restricting our freedom to worship and witness.

Normally, area meetings are responsible for establishing the facts, and that Friends are or were acting under concern and wish the matter to be recorded in publicly-available documents. Including information in the register doesn't imply that MfS itself has tested the Friend's concern and necessarily agrees with or condones their action.

Under consideration this time

Margaret Biddle, North Wales Area Meeting, appeared in court several times (first in January 2024 several times during 2024 and finally in January 2025) following witness at the Defence and Security Equipment International (DESI) arms fair in London in September 2023. Margaret was one of six Friends charged under Section 14(5) and (9) of the Public Order Act 1986 for failing to move when asked from sitting in the road.

Four Friends were found guilty, given conditional discharges and fined £300 towards prosecution costs and £26 to the victim support fund.

Margaret was one of two Friends found not guilty as they went to sit in the road after the other four had been removed and the court was unsure they had heard police warnings before their arrest. All Friends involved will need to pay their own legal costs. Margaret is thankful to Friends for the support, and for being upheld, noting it made a huge difference to her.

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to consider adding a summary of these details to the Prison and Court Register.

The Meeting for Sufferings Arrangements Group hopes area meetings for the other five Friends involved will forward details for including in the Register in due course.

Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) Annual Report to Meeting for Sufferings 2024

QCCIR is responsible for keeping Britain Yearly Meeting informed of relevant issues and movements which emerge from the faith life in our three nations and of opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between churches and faiths.

2023-4 has been the first year of working to our new structures and we have in mind to review how it has worked, the opportunities as well as the difficulties, in 2025.

Our invitation to interfaith guests to attend our YM in 2024 extended to our online contributors (see below) and to Abbot Christopher Jamison (Benedictine), Shahin Bekhradinia (Zoroastrian), and Olivia Amartey (Churches Together in England Forum Deputy Moderator/Christian Pentecostal).

We held our biennial Joint Woodbrooke Conference in March 2024 under the title “Working Together in Faith”. This event was held for the first time at High Leigh Conference Centre in Hertfordshire, which worked well for us. The theme of the event was how to build relationships across faith differences, and we heard from Rachel Muers on her involvement with the World Council of Churches, Faith and Order Commission. The other speakers were Elaine Green, Clerk of QCCIR, and Maureen Sier, a Bahá’i who works as Director of Interfaith Scotland.

Because we held the blended residential event jointly with Woodbrooke this year, there was no regionally-based QCCIR meeting in June. Instead, we met in person in Friends House on a Saturday. It was a joy to see each other’s faces and to share an evening meal together.

In October 2024, we held our first face to face meeting with our co-optees who serve on the external bodies as QCCIR representatives. They reported on the work they have been carrying out for QCCIR and they fed into the revisions of our future workplans. We hope that this will help to knit the work of the Committee together better and to allow for better delivery of our work on behalf of BYM.

Our three working groups have reported to the core QCCIR on their progress, and we draw the attention of Meeting for Sufferings to specific activities over this first period of operation:

Inter-church

We appointed Friend Ann Morgan to represent QCCIR on the BYM reparations group and Claire Bowman to attend the Annual General Meeting of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland (CTBI) in October 2024. We nominated Friend Mark Lilley to be Trustee on the Board of the CTBI and he was subsequently appointed.

We are currently seeking to appoint a friend to replace Judy Mason as our QCCIR representative on the national World Day of Prayer Committee, a role which she has laid down this year.

Our Clerk has attended as BYM representative the Enabling Group of Churches Together in England (CTE), in October 2023, March and October 2024. Our Committee Secretary and BYM National Ecumenical & Interfaith Officer, Judith Baker, has throughout this year, attended the CTE 4th Presidency group meetings as well as the services to welcome the 4th Group Presidents on their appointment. Judith has also attended all meetings of the denominational national ecumenical officers on our behalf.

QCCIR's involvement in the standing national ecumenical racial justice groups has been hampered for the last two years since we have been unable to find a representative to attend the CTE Racial Justice Working Group. The BYM Equity and Diversity Lead, Edwina Peart continues to represent BYM on the CTBI Racial Justice Advocacy Forum (RJAF).

Following the involvement of BYM in the symposium on 'Receptive Ecumenism' and church synodality held at Durham University last year, QCCIR has taken forward the theme of learning from other denominations on aspects of faith and order which resulted in an online special interest event at Yearly Meeting this year. Our speakers at that event were Lyndsay Brown (United Reform Church) and Greg Ryan (Centre for Catholic Studies, University of Durham). Receptive Ecumenism remains a theme within our workplan that is under current review.

Interfaith Work

As our Interfaith Officer, Judith Baker attended the last national meetings of the Inter Faith Network and its Communities Forum before its forced closure in March this year when government funding was finally withdrawn. We have no access to any other national interfaith body, although QCCIR is represented at the CTBI Christian Forum for Inter Religious Relations (CFFIR) and the CTE Inter Faith Theological Advisory Group (IFTAG).

During this last year the Clerk and Secretary have attended meetings with representatives of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) and at the 2024 Yearly Meeting QCCIR organised an online special interest meeting on antisemitism at which the Co-Chair of the CCJ spoke alongside Anna Kraus of the German Lutheran Church.

The Clerk has also participated in discussions around the support for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) programme of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) and the development of further advice on responding to antisemitism.

Our webinar on fasting in different faith traditions, with Eleanor Nesbitt and Janet Scott as speakers was well attended and well received

Spirituality/Theology Commissioning

This new work area developed very quickly with a project commissioned by the BYM Reparations Working Group on the Quaker theology around enslavement. QCCIR has worked closely with the RWG to draw up a research brief for this subject to be investigated.

QCCIR has also contributed this year to the questions raised around the Quaker declarations for the solemnisation of marriage, as invited by Meeting for Sufferings and has this year also been asked to support BYM Trustees in the development of Quaker guidance on greater gender inclusivity.

Elaine Green, Clerk

QCCIR Membership list to date:

Claire Bowman

Penelope Cummins

Nigel Dower

Elaine Green

Will Haire

Derek McLean

Judith Mason

Joyce Robertson

Janet Scott

Evelyn Shire

Roy Stephenson

QCCIR Co-options to date:

Catherine Brewer, co-clerk Book of Discipline Revision Committee

Michael Eccles, secretary, Europe & Middle East section of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC-EMES)



TRIENNIAL REPORT (plus): March 2020 – December 2024

Introduction

Quaker Housing Trust (QHT) is an independent housing charity set up by Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain in 1967 as a channel for Quakers to respond to the housing crisis. QHT trustees are appointed by Meeting for Sufferings [Quaker faith & practice 8.15]. QHT is a separately registered charity [no. 254704] and a company limited by guarantee registered in England [no. 00924311]. It operates throughout the Britain Yearly Meeting area of England, Scotland, Wales, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. The work of QHT is serviced on a part-time basis by a member of Britain Yearly Meeting staff based in Quaker Peace & Social Witness, who acts as our Charity Secretary and Grants Manager. The cost of this is paid by Britain Yearly Meeting as a reflection of the Yearly Meeting's concern for housing issues in its corporate work. There is more information about QHT on its website www.qht.org.uk

QHT generally reports to BYM via Meeting for Sufferings every three years. The previous triennial report was produced just before the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. This report covers a period of 3 years and 9 months since the last report. Many changes have happened since the last report including the resignations of two Secretaries and a significant drop in donations. Furthermore, following a review of our strategic priorities in 2021, we have introduced a new strand of funding, the Quaker Asset feasibility fund.

Mark Bitel, QHT Clerk, will be speaking to this report.

Practical witness

A Quaker body giving Quaker money, on behalf of Quakers, to local housing projects we believe Friends would want to support. Quakers have been actively engaged in promoting social housing for over a hundred years. Friends were early supporters of the new 'garden cities', and are long-term advocates of good quality and affordable

housing for all. QHT was created by Yearly Meeting as a channel through which “*every Friend who feels able may give or lend as much as can be spared to those who are particularly vulnerable in their efforts to secure housing*”. It turns Friends’ money and activity into practical help for social housing projects which can transform lives by creating a safe place to live – **homes** – for people in housing need. We make **grants** and **interest-free loans** to charitable organisations meeting a real housing need. We support good quality, appropriate accommodation at a rent which low income occupants can genuinely afford. This is a very practical expression of Friends’ longstanding and continuing concern about the needs of badly housed, homeless and vulnerable people in Britain – a concern most recently tested again during Yearly Meeting 2015.

Context

External changes – financial, government policy and social attitudes – are pushing and keeping more people further to the margins of society by shrinking their housing choices and even denying access to housing at all. This affects all our lives, in our towns, cities, villages and rural areas.

Across the country, there is an increasing risk of homelessness during a cost of living crisis and a difficult funding landscape. According to the National Housing Federation (NHF) there are now 4.2 million people in need of social housing in England alone, including homeless people and those in overcrowded, unaffordable and unsuitable homes. The problem continues to worsen as NHF research shows that for every new social home built in England last year (2022/23), six households were accepted as homeless by their local council (<https://www.housing.org.uk/our-work/homelessness>).

A record number of children and those seeking asylum are homeless, forced to live in inadequate temporary accommodation.

The housing crisis is not confined to urban areas. Alongside problems of the availability of social housing, rural areas can experience additional challenges in their housing markets: shortages in affordable homes and appropriate tenure options; high prevalence of second and holiday homes; and decline in local authority-owned housing stock. In response to this we have seen an increase in applications from rural areas, particularly in Scotland and Cornwall.

It can be easy to view the problem of housing in terms of numbers, but Quakers focus on the people behind these numbers: Quakers have long been clear about the importance of a home to the personal and spiritual development of individuals and thus the health of wider community. In the context of the Quaker housing concern QHT itself continues to advocate for and witness to Friends’ linked concerns about equality, social justice, right use of resources, care for the environment and care for one another.

Affordable housing for all is critical for healthy lives, thriving families, participation in the economy and society, strong local communities. But what difference can QHT make in a housing market where eye-watering capital costs are the norm?

As QHT's experience demonstrates, modest grants and/or loans to housing projects can have a truly valuable impact exploring the feasibility of an innovative housing model, or completing the funding needed to offer people in transition a safe and stable home. When Quakers have the opportunity to make donations, be that from inheritance, or when unlocking unearned property wealth at the point of downsizing, QHT can use that wealth to benefit our fellow citizens who lack access to affordable homes.

Our work

When creating QHT, Yearly Meeting saw a particular need to assist housing projects which were focused on meeting the needs of "the most vulnerable groups in our population" not being met by the government. Today we are still helping these kinds of projects that support people who are vulnerable at points of transition in their lives. These projects are often meeting either a local or a very specific personal need, and finding it difficult to attract funding from other sources at a time when there are significantly increased demands on resources in the public and charitable sectors.

Over this triennial period, these have included projects supporting people who are or who have recently been homeless; people who been victims of human trafficking; people seeking asylum from persecution and war; older people; people living in rural areas, particularly key workers; young people, many of whom have experience of care; people from Black and minoritised communities, and people in recovery from addictions.

We support small charities, those with an annual turnover of no more than £1 million. These projects can be more innovative in seeking solutions and, like Quakers, are often making a positive difference disproportionate to their size. We aim always to be open to new ideas, looking to the future as well as today. Specialising in helping small projects allows us, as a small charity, to use our very limited resources where they can make a genuine and positive difference. Generally this is through helping a project to create new homes that are affordable, sufficiently spacious, and well-insulated (to reduce heating costs and noise). QHT also funds a range of best-practice or feasibility studies for projects that wish to explore new solutions to creating housing or investigate the feasibility of a particular scheme.

Our grants and loans have been used to buy or lease properties, convert and renovate existing buildings, refurbish and furnish rooms and communal spaces to create quality homes. Funds have been used to improve energy efficiency of buildings and to make accommodation more accessible to those with physical health needs.

When lockdowns began in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, QHT pivoted to on-line meetings and home working for our Secretary, Simon Phillips. Simon left us to pursue other work interests in July 2021. At this time Britain Yearly Meeting had a moratorium on new appointments and due to on-going staff team reviews, leaving us with a period without a Secretary for an extended period. Our newly appointed Clerk, Mark Bitel, maintained a level of cover that enabled the essential functions of QHT to continue until Jennfier Allott joined as Secretary in February 2022.

Due to a significant drop in donations to QHT, Trustees took the very difficult decision to close the fund to new applications for a seven-month period to allow funds to grow from new donations and loan repayments before we re-opened the fund in March 2022.

Jenny brought a fresh approach to our work at QHT, led by a deeper analysis of our grant-making and modernising our approaches to make better use of technological innovations. Jenny was based at home and the BYM Leeds office, the first time that a QHT staff member had worked outside of London.

In April 2022, subject to further consultation with BYM Local Development Workers, Trustees agreed to open a new strand of funding, The Quaker Asset Fund, to help Local and Area Meetings that are considering the future use of their buildings, to investigate if their properties might be converted in full or in part to provide social housing. At the same meeting, Trustees also agreed to set priorities for funding over a 3-year period focusing on particular geographical areas which had been under-represented in our funding and for particular client-groups in need. Discernment led to the following priorities being set to April 2025: Wales and Eastern England; refugees & asylum seekers, people from minoritised communities, and women & children fleeing domestic violence and control. Setting these priorities does not mean that we stop funding other areas or client groups, just that we considered the priority applications ahead of the other applications.

Prior to completing the innovations that Jenny had started, she had to leave QHT at short notice in November 2023 due to a serious family illness that required Jenny to completely rethink her work life. Once again, it fell to our Clerk to hold the fort maintaining essential tasks while we worked with the team at BYM to recruit a new Secretary.

In March 2024, Grace Burgess joined QHT as our new Secretary and Grants Manager, 'hitting the ground running' bringing creativity, innovation, enthusiasm much needed fundraising skills to our work.

Disbursing and gathering the funds

Independent of the Britain Yearly Meeting central funds, our funding work relies on donations and legacies from individual Friends and meetings. In addition, our programme of interest-free loans allows funds to be recycled over periods of ten or more years. 'Over this period we disbursed funds of £281,806.

One of the most interesting features of QHT is that because of its interest-free loans that it makes to some applicants (either a stand-alone loan or a combination of grant and loan funding), a donation to QHT can have revolving benefit. Interest-free loans can be life-changing for housing charities with ambitious capital plan not just for the first borrower, but subsequent borrowers as loans are repaid to QHT and re-lent, benefiting individuals and communities many times over. Through QHT's loan model, donations are used to benefit society not just once, but with **revolving benefit** in future years. This circular model of freely given Quaker money being invested by QHT in housing projects and recycled many times is QHT's take on the circular economy.

It is part of QHT's ethos that we seek to disburse whatever funds are currently available to us at our Council meetings, and there is a considerable degree of flexibility and imagination in how we can respond to applicant projects. Every application is dealt with individually and on its own merits, which lets us respond appropriately to the project's needs, whilst enabling us to make what we feel is best use of our funds. As Trustees we welcome this ability to combine living adventurously with good stewardship.

In the period from March 2020 to December 2024, Quaker Housing Trust supported 16 projects, including the first Quaker Asset grant to the West of Scotland Area Meeting to determine if some of the space at Glasgow Meeting House could be converted into social housing.

Grants were made across widespread locations both rural and urban areas. The full list is included from page six in this report. In this period, QHT funded 16 organisations, with grants totalling £195,977; and loans totalling £120,829.

QHT receives many more applications than we can fund. As such in 2025 we will be limiting our grant making to twice a year so that we can focus on supporting the most worthy projects and will be shifting our balance of grant-making and loan-giving towards more loans. We hope this will help to make the workload of our Secretary and Grants Manager and our Trustees more manageable and our stewardship of funds more sustainable.

Relationship with projects

Our personal contact with the projects we fund has long been important to us, not least because it generates good relationships and trust, helping to keep our processes simple and open. We achieve this by appointing one of ourselves as 'Visiting Trustee'

for some projects. This can be done as part of the application process when a conversation is mutually helpful to our decision-making, or after a loan or large grant has been given.

Housing is not always the sole element of an applicant organisation's work: sometimes it is only one element in a wide range of activities meeting the needs of individuals and communities. What we learn from our Visiting Trustee visits (either virtually or on-site) helps to broaden our own personal experience, and to root our collective work as QHT trustees in the context of Friends' wider concerns.

Looking to the future

We are clear that QHT's work is rooted not only in the long-standing spiritual concern for housing but also in wider Quaker concerns, most notably about the environment.

We recognise the consequences of climate change will have an impact on housing, and those in housing need are likely to be more affected. Our application process requires applicants to aim for higher standards in insulation of properties, improvements in ventilation, and reduced reliance on fossil fuels for heating and hot water. In new builds we are expecting projects to meet higher standards than are set through building regulations. Furthermore, the standards we encourage directly benefit the people being housed through lower running costs.

In Yearly Meeting and in the future revision of the Book of Discipline we would like to see reference to the desire expressed at Yearly Meeting 2015 by Friends to be more active and creative in challenging today's attitude towards housing as a financial asset rather than a home; and in using our own, personal and collective, Quaker resources – including and beyond land, building, money, homes – to change these attitudes.

It is interesting to note that despite the growing pressure on finances that the charitable sector faces, QHT has only ever had one project default on a loan. This was a charity that went bankrupt in the north-west in 2022 (as a result of inflation and high energy costs) defaulting on just over £5K of a residual loan. This is a testament to the robust practices used when awarding grants and loans and our financial oversight of funded projects.

The main challenge for the future of QHT is our dwindling funding. Our funding programmes are oversubscribed and **we need an injection of capital**. There are brilliant charities out there creating housing and we would like to support more of them. In recent years, there has been a significant fall in donations made by Meetings and Friends in recent years which severely limits our ability to make awards. Regular donations would increase the number of projects we can fund. Most of us that are fortunate enough to own our own home will have seen the value of our home greatly increase over and above inflation over the past few decades. In effect many of us have

earned money just from sleeping in our houses. **Might Friends be encouraged to consider passing some of this financial gain onto QHT when you downsize or move to a cheaper property?** Also leaving a **legacy** to QHT would allow Friends to ensure their fortunate housing position can be used to house people who are less fortunate.

Furthermore, some Quaker communities are considering rationalising their property ownership. **Might some of the properties in Friends' ownership be suitable for social housing? Might some of the funds from the sale of some properties be gifted to QHT to provide more loans and grants?**

In offering this Triennial Report to Meeting for Sufferings, our governing body within the structure of the Yearly Meeting, we ask for your continued prayerful and practical support for the work we do as trustees of the Yearly Meeting's own housing charity.

Grants and loans made and offered: March 2020 to December 2024

2020: Grants from March 2020 = nil; loans from March 2020 = nil

2021: Grants = £17,004; interest-free loans £21,000

1. Ella's Home – a grant of £8,000 to fund fire safety improvements to two safe homes and to expand accommodation capacity for women exiting trafficking and exploitation.
2. Pathways for all People – a grant of £9,004
3. StopGap Supported Housing – loan of £21,000 to help with the cost of furnishing and equipping accommodation for single homeless adults.

2022: Grants £17,975; interest-free loans nil

4. St Anne's Hostel – a feasibility grant of £5,100
5. BoAZ Trust – a further grant of £12,875 for essential maintenance and renovation work to seven of the properties leased by The Boaz Trust in order to give safe accommodation to destitute asylum seekers and refugees

2023: Grants £70,999; interest-free loans £79,829

6. Common Ground against Homelessness - a grant of £25,000, and a loan of £24,829
7. Waltham Forest Night Shelter – a grant of £19,999
8. Open Door (North East) - a grant of £20,000, and a loan of £30,000
9. Berkswell Charities – a feasibility grant of £6,000 to conduct a feasibility study for a proposed Almshouse project.

10. Staffin Community Trust - loan of £25,000 to help pay for the cost of the timber frames, roofs and windows of two properties, which will provide affordable accommodation to families.

2024: Grants: £89,999; interest-free loans £20,000

11. Arisaig Community Trust – a grant of £15,000 to contribute towards infrastructure, and construction costs of six new houses for affordable rent to local families and individuals in need.
Ella’s – a further grant of £19,000 to purchase a safe home for women who have been trafficked.
12. West of Scotland Area Meeting – a Quaker asset grant of £6,000 to conduct a feasibility study to explore the viability of creating affordable, rented residential accommodation, which will prioritise those with particular housing needs, by refurbishing the meeting house
13. East Kent Area Meeting for Canterbury Refugee House – a grant of £19,999 to purchase a property to provide housing for people with refugee status
14. Consolidated Almshouse Charity of Swanscombe – a grant of £15,000 from the Audrey Deacon Legacy Fund.
15. Bonny Downs Urban Abbey – a grant of £7,000 and a loan of £10,000
16. Raasay Development Trust – a grant of £8,000 and a loan of £10,000

We are working with a further 10 organisations who have been offered grants and loans totalling £158,199 but which have not yet been finalised or paid.

The 16 projects we have supported this triennial in alphabetical order:

1. **Arisaig Community Trust** – a grant of £15,000 to contribute towards infrastructure, and construction costs of six new houses for affordable rent to local families and individuals in need.
2. **Berkswell Charities** – a feasibility grant of £6,000 to conduct a feasibility study for a proposed Almshouse project.
3. **BoAZ Trust** – a further grant of £12,875 for essential maintenance and renovation work to seven of the properties leased by The Boaz Trust in order to give safe accommodation to destitute asylum seekers and refugees
4. **Bonny Downs Urban Abbey** – a grant of £7,000 and a loan of £10,000 towards the creation of single occupancy flats with additional shared communal space for single formerly homeless men.
5. **Common Ground against Homelessness** - a grant of £25,000, and a loan of £24,829
6. **Consolidated Almshouse Charity of Swanscombe** – a grant of £15,000 from the Audrey Deacon Legacy Fund.
7. **East Kent Area Meeting for Canterbury Refugee House** – a grant of £19,999 to purchase a property to provide housing for people with refugee status

8. **Ella's** – a grant of £8,000 to fund fire safety improvements to two safe homes and to expand accommodation capacity for women exiting trafficking and exploitation, and a separate grant of £19,000 to purchase a safe home for women who have been trafficked.
9. **Open Door (North East)** - a grant of £20,000, and a loan of £30,000
10. **Pathways for all People** – a grant of £9,004
11. **Raasay Development Trust** – a grant of £8,000 and a loan of £10,000 towards the cost of a new-build family home.
12. **St Anne's Hostel** – a feasibility grant of £5,100
13. **Staffin Community Trust** - loan of £25,000 to help pay for the cost of the timber frames, roofs and windows of two properties, which will provide affordable accommodation to families.
14. **StopGap Supported Housing** – loan of £21,000 to help with the cost of furnishing and equipping accommodation for single homeless adults.
15. **Waltham Forest Night Shelter** – a grant of £19,999
16. **West of Scotland Area Meeting** – a Quaker asset grant of £6,000 to conduct a feasibility study to explore the viability of creating affordable, rented residential accommodation, which will prioritise those with particular housing needs, by refurbishing the meeting house

Report from BYM Trustees

Trustees met on 8th February in a blended meeting run from Friends House. This report highlights some key topics which we hope you may be particularly interested in, and the full minutes are in your papers.

We welcomed our three new trustees, Lis Burch, Liz Law and John Lewis. We hope we shall be back to full strength by the end of this meeting, as we understand a nomination is being brought to you.

In our opening worship we remembered Simon C Lamb, member of Ireland Yearly Meeting and clerk of the Central Executive Committee of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) since 2017. He died suddenly and unexpectedly at the beginning of the year. Simon was a colleague and a friend to many Quakers across the world, including members of BYM Trustees, Management Meeting, and Meeting for Sufferings. His memorial meeting was held on the same day we were meeting, and we held in the Light the family of Friends mourning his loss.

Sarah Donaldson, who has just joined Management Meeting as Senior Change Leader in Quaker Governance, and Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, presented a paper regarding the financial implications for the holding of continuing Yearly Meeting sessions. We considered how we will support financially people wanting to attend Yearly Meeting as well as representatives from Area and General Meetings. In BYMT/25/02/08, we ask staff, supported by some trustees, to look into ways in which we can improve our current “bursary” scheme (to be renamed) so that we can reduce barriers to attending Yearly Meeting. We also ask for a Yearly Meeting expenses policy to be drafted, and agreed that representatives of Area Meetings, Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM), General Meeting for Scotland, and Crynwyr Cymru Quakers in Wales should have their expenses reimbursed from BYM once we move to the new structure, unless they want to do this themselves.

We welcomed Margaret Bryan, convener of the Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS) who shared reflections from the last meeting of the group and learnings from all the work that had been done on this issue. We laid the committee down, and started to address how we may engage Central Committees in the challenging task of evaluating the programmes run by BYM, discerning priorities, and allocating resources – see minute BYMT/25/02/10.

We received the annual communications report, which set out the work that has been done under its current strategy. The annual fundraising report noted how little there is in our current book of discipline on the topic of donations and financial contributions. Staff would like to see more resources spelling out the spiritual roots of giving. We sent minute BYMT/25/02/11 to the Book of Discipline Revision Committee for possible inclusion in the revised text, and to you (Meeting for Sufferings) asking

you to consider whether encouraging people to give money should be a duty laid upon area meetings.

In light of recent reports that some area meetings are struggling in some way, including financially and finding people to hold roles to remain viable, we asked staff to consider in what ways we may be able to support area meetings who may be in danger of becoming unviable. There were a number of tools and methods to support area meetings in crisis in their paper and in minute BYMT/25/02/13 we supported these suggestions and gave approval to staff to begin work on a pilot programme with some area meetings.

In minute BYMT/25/02/14, we received a paper from Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship, about a new outreach strategy which is being developed. We were very excited by what Oliver and the team have planned and look forward to seeing how this project develops as staff work with each other, Central Committees, external bodies like Discovering Quakers, and individual meetings to grow our Religious Society. This remains a big priority area for trustees.

We were glad to spend time with Management Meeting hearing about the different areas of work they are each responsible for and spent some time as a committee reviewing our meeting.

We are planning to meet again from 6th to 8th June 2025 at the BYM Yorkshire Centre in Leeds.

As ever, questions and comments are welcome.

Marisa Johnson, Clerk and Kit King, Assistant Clerk

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Saturday 8 February 2025, by video conference

Minutes

Present: Catherine Brown, Lis Burch, Kit Fotheringham, Ursula Fuller, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King (Assistant Clerk), Liz Law, John Lewis, Silas Price, Danielle Walker Palmour (minutes BYMT 25/02/01 to 17), Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

Prevented: Jo Hills, Elizabeth Redfern

In attendance: Sarah Donaldson, Senior Change Leader: Quaker Governance; Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk; Vipran Narang, Finance Director; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship; Lisa San Martín, CEO Quiet Company

Visitors: John Ashcroft, Clerk of Internal Audit and Risk Committee (minute BYMT/25/02/12 to 13); Margaret Bryan, Convener of Group to Review Central Structures (minute BYMT/25/02/10); Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager (BYMT/25/02/11); Tina Leonard, Internal Audit and Risk Committee (minute BYMT/25/02/12); David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising (BYMT/25/02/11); Janet Slade, Internal Audit & Risk Committee (minute BYMT/25/02/12); Rachael Swancott, Co-Clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee (minutes BYMT/25/02/12 to 13); Martin Wall, Co-Clerk of Quaker Life Central Committee (minutes BYMT/25/02/12 to 13)

BYMT/25/02/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest. We considered our agenda.

During our opening worship, we heard read an extract from Simon C Lamb's keynote address to the 2000 Friends World Committee for Consultation Triennial held in Geneva Point, New Hampshire, USA:

“There is a quiet place, at the very heart of our being, in the depths of our soul. It is the place where God and humanity meet. As we seek to understand and to know God, it is in that place that we search for reason in the face of starvation and poverty across the globe. It is to there that we escape for comfort in our own moments of personal grief and need, and it is to there that we go when we are struggling with the challenge of the reality of a personal experience of the living, inward Christ. For it is in this quiet place that we will find that still, small voice.”

Simon, a member of Ireland YM, was clerk of the Central Executive Committee of FWCC since 2017. He died suddenly and unexpectedly at the beginning of the year. A world-wide memorial Meeting organised by FWCC is being held online today. We hold in the Light the family of Friends mourning his loss.

BYMT/25/02/02 Continuing business

We receive a list of continuing minutes, including the minute BYMT/24/11/15 on the work of the Group to Review Central Structures following our meeting in November. We return to this matter at this meeting.

BYMT/25/02/03 Minutes received

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Life Central Committee 14 November 24
- Reparations Working Group 21 November 24
- Employment Committee 27 November 2024
- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee 30 November 24
- Audit Committee 10 December 2024
- Quiet Company Board 28 January 2025

BYMT/25/02/04 Whistleblowing annual report

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 04 from the Recording Clerk on promoting the whistleblowing policy and procedure within the organisation. We note there were no whistleblowing cases in 2024.

BYMT/25/02/05 Safeguarding Policy review

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 05 from Mark Mitchell, which outlines the changes to the BYM Safeguarding Policy suggested by a review carried out by Mark and thirtyone:eight, an independent safeguarding advisory service.

We accept the changes outlined in the paper and approve the revised policy.

BYMT/25/02/06 EDI annual report

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 06 from BYM's Equities Cluster, which outlines BYM's progress with our commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion. It includes a description of the Cluster, a SWOT analysis, and the Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) report from the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI). Siobhán Haire spoke to the paper and answered questions from Friends.

In response to questions, we were reassured to hear that work is underway to take a more proactive approach to communications concerning the Yearly Meeting's position on welcoming and affirming trans and non-binary people as mandated by minute 31 of Yearly Meeting 2021.

BYMT/25/02/07 Insurance

We note paper BYMT 2025 02 07a setting out a summary of BYM's main insurance policies.

BYMT/25/02/08 Yearly Meeting and finances

a) Yearly Meeting financial considerations

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 07b from Paul Parker and Sarah Donaldson regarding financial support for attendance at Yearly Meeting and note minutes FIPC 25/03 to 25/05.

We accept the following recommendations made in paper BYMT 2025 02 07b:

- Refer to 'help with the costs of attending Yearly Meeting', or a simpler term, rather than "bursaries";
- Make a small change to the operation of the current scheme by placing the responsibility for checking for local funding on pastoral Friends, not the applicant;
- Ask Management Meeting to include an appropriate sum for help with the costs of attending Yearly Meeting in the next budget;
- Work hard on communicating the availability of financial support for anyone who needs it;
- Ask that a suitable policy for the payment of expenses to role holders at Yearly Meeting be drafted;
- Agree that BYM should reimburse the expenses of Yearly Meeting representatives from area meetings, Young Friends General Meeting, Crynwyr Cymru–Quakers in Wales and General Meeting for Scotland (unless the meeting prefers to deal with it themselves);
- Ensure that the expenses policy to be used by representatives is clear and appropriate;
- Communicate with meetings to ask them to contribute to the running costs of Yearly Meeting.

We agree to inform Meeting for Sufferings of our discernment on this matter as required by minute 37 of Yearly Meeting 2024.

b) Minutes of Finance, IT & Property Committee

We receive minutes from Finance, IT and Property Committee's meetings on 12 November (paper BYMT 2024 02 07c) and 13 January (paper BYMT 2025 02 07d),

Trustees expect to receive a set of the most recent management accounts at each meeting going forward.

BYMT/25/02/09 Recording Clerk's report

We receive a report covering December 2024 to January 2025 from the Recording Clerk and Management Meeting. The Recording Clerk's report sets out new and positive developments as well as areas of concern that have come up between each meeting of BYMT, as identified by members of Management Meeting. We also receive the reporting dashboard dated January 2025 with indicators of key information on compliance, communications, and organisational health.

We have heard about plans to release guidance to meetings about countering antisemitism, and discussed the support being provided to area meetings and other groupings exploring structural changes to their governance.

BYMT/25/02/10 Simple, inclusive and sustainable structures

a) Group to Review Central Structures – final report

We welcome Margaret Bryan, convener to Group to Review Central Structures to our meeting.

At our last meeting, GRCS presented their final report to us and at this meeting we receive a final update from the Group (BYMT 2025 02 09a). This update includes a copy of the Group's minutes from its final meeting on 13 January 2025. The Group challenges us to work towards simpler structures, improve communications, planning and understanding, and to ensure participation.

We lay down the Group to Review Central Structures and give our thanks to the significant contributions of several trustees on this group, the convenors, other Friends representing other committees, and all the staff who have supported this work.

b) Prioritisation and resource allocation

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 09b on priorities and resources – the challenges of making decisions on these issues through our current structures and processes, and a suggested way forward to help address these challenges.

BYM trustees want to explore the formation of a mechanism to help it meet its existing responsibilities in respect of evaluation of programmes and resource allocation and respond to minutes 21 and 52 of Yearly Meeting 2023. The intention is to broaden the participation of Friends from Central Committees in fulfilling these important responsibilities so that decisions are made in a more collaborative and connected way.

We ask staff to prepare a paper to send to the Central Committees to help them discern how they would like to engage with this exploration, and we offer to take part in their meetings considering this if they wish.

We also ask that staff provide draft terms of reference for discussion at a later meeting. We ask that it is included in these draft terms of reference that the clerk of any such subcommittee shall not be a member of BYMT. This draft will be shared with BYMT, Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee, and Quaker Life Central Committee at the appropriate time.

BYMT/25/02/11 Communications and fundraising

We are joined by David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising, and Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager.

a) Annual Communications report

We receive an annual communications report (paper BYMT 2025 02 11) summarising achievements in 2024 against the communications strategy. This report includes updates on digital communications, legacy promotional materials, a communications guide, the George Fox 400 celebrations, general election advocacy and revised policies adopted in the year. The paper also notes the key activities planned for 2025.

b) Fundraising strategy report

We receive a first-year report on the three-year fundraising strategy introduced last year (paper BYMT 2025 02 12). We are pleased to note the work on each of the strategy's six objectives.

Friends need to be more explicit and robust in considering the practice of giving money as well as service for the building up of the community. The spiritual roots of this go deep – “*And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person’s need is met.*” (Acts, 2:44-45, from *The Message*)

Wealth is a relative term – depending on how we choose to look at it, we have much, or little, or just enough. Part of our spiritual deepening is to recognise what we have. Wealth confers privilege: making choices, taking control, exercising power. These things are good in themselves, but our over-reliance on them will blunt our ability to reach beyond our own small world, grow in the Spirit, and continue to build the *Commonwealth of Heaven on Earth*.

With privilege comes greater responsibility for the welfare of the community. There is joy and freedom that comes from divesting ourselves of too much power and influence, and in seeing the fruits of our gifts, or trust in what may come of them after we have gone.

Donating is not only a matter for the individual – our corporate bodies also have a duty of sharing their wealth with sister Quaker structures that may have less, and a duty to encourage a culture of generosity and giving among their members and attenders.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings to consider whether this encouragement of giving at all levels of our Society should be laid upon area meetings as a duty. We send this minute to the Book of Discipline Revision Committee to be considered for inclusion in whole or in part and suggest that they also explore the writing on donating of Friends in other parts of the world that may be useful to include for the edification of our own yearly meeting.

BYMT/25/02/12 Review of integrated strategy

Our Internal Audit and Risk Committee brings us its final report on reviewing the introduction of the integrated strategy to support Quaker communities.

We are joined by the members of our Internal Audit and Risk Committee (IARC) John Ashcroft, its clerk, Tina Leonard and Janet Slade, members of the committee, and Rachael Swancott and Martin Wall, co-clerks of Quaker Life Central Committee.

We endorse the following recommendations from IARC, with some amendments:

- Consideration be given to how LDW feedback can be analysed in a more structured manner and how IT can be tightly specified to facilitate such analysis;
- A watching brief is maintained on Quaker Life’s specialist capacity to ensure that this suffices going forward;
- The performance measures for Quaker Life and Woodbrooke developed for their grant funders form the basis for an integrated reporting structure on the delivery of the whole strategy;
- Consideration be given to a deeper dive in the form of qualitative research commissioned by Quaker Life Central Committee into what is happening in

local communities, to inform the revision of the strategy and identify which interventions add most value, and in particular the success of local capacity building;

- Consideration be given to using evidence from all types of monitoring and evaluation to determine how interventions can become more strongly focused and directive on desired outcomes, in particular helping meetings locally to build the necessary capacity.

We see a need for Quaker Life to develop a more proactive response to the red risk of too many area meetings having insufficient Friends willing and able to serve as charity trustees. This request would build on the active support that Quaker Life has so far provided, and experience gained, thus enabling Quaker Life to respond in a timely fashion and drive forward area meeting charity mergers. The resource implications increase the importance of tightening of focus within the strategy. However, this needs to be kept in balance with the need to develop new and different types of communities so that we are not putting all our resources into managing the decline of existing structures.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee.

BYMT/25/02/13 Supporting area meetings facing viability issues

We receive a paper setting out the indicators of struggling area meetings, how the burden of governance and compliance might be resolved through a smaller number of larger charities, and the challenge of making changes (paper BYMT 2025 02 15). This consideration is timely because of the plan for Woodbrooke and Quaker Life to review their strategy for supporting Quaker communities.

We ask staff to find ways to build up a pool of names who could act as trustees where area meetings are unable to appoint Friends to this role. However, this is not the whole solution. There are more issues than simply a lack of trustees, therefore there is a need for continued support to meetings which need expert help with issues including property, finance, or employment. The directors of Friends Trusts Limited are the legal custodian trustees for many meetings. We support the suggestion that there may be additional support that could be provided via this route.

We feel that there is a need for a tool that meetings can use to gauge where they are in terms of viability, to aid decision making.

A pilot programme with area meetings of differing size, financial position, and viability feels beneficial and we hope that frank assessment of a few area meetings may take us in a clearer direction. We would also like to hear from Local Development Workers what progress has been made with groups of Friends in undertaking outreach activities and/or simplifying structures.

The situation of each area meeting is different, and therefore there will be a case-by-case choice to be made in consultation with individual area meetings as to the approach to be taken.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee and Friends Trusts Limited.

BYMT/25/02/14 Outreach

Oliver Robertson has introduced his paper on developing our outreach strategy (BYMT 2025 02 14). We are grateful for the careful thought which has gone into this paper and endorse the analysis set out. We hope that there will be ways to share this thinking with Friends as discernment of the way forward continues both here and at Quaker Life Central Committee.

We are open to the possibility of providing additional funding for outreach activity, however we would like more detail about how the funds might be spent and what the impact would be before committing to a figure. We recognise that any funding decision will need to be taken alongside our review of other priorities over the course of this year.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee.

BYMT/25/02/15 Proposal for reviewing our strategic priorities

We receive paper BYMT 2025 02 16 from the Recording Clerk with a proposal and timeline for reviewing BYM's strategic priorities. We hope that, in consultation with the Central Committees, we will take a light touch approach to review our existing priorities, what has happened since those were put in place, and see what needs updating from those existing priorities, rather than undertaking a more extensive review at this time. It is important that our priorities become more refined to enable simpler decision making.

We agree to assign two trustees to this task, to work together with staff. We ask our Nominations Committee to find two names.

BYMT/25/02/16 Operational plan for 2024

We receive a report from the Operational Managers' team on the delivery of the operational plan for last year. We note that, although much has been achieved, as in previous years not all targets have been met, for a variety of intervening and unforeseen reasons.

Hybrid and home working has opened up new possibilities for recruiting beyond London and frees up space in Friends House for lettings thus increasing income while decreasing staff support costs. It is important to maintain cohesion, so bringing staff together from time to time remains good practice.

We encourage Management Meeting to continue to strive to set more realistic objectives for each year's work, in the hope that delivery will exceed aspiration!

BYMT/25/02/17 Nominations and appointments

We receive the following nominations from our Nominations Group:

Buddies to support new trustees in their first year of service:

- Paul Whitehouse for John Lewis
- Kit Fotheringham for Lis Burch
- Catherine Brown for Liz Law

Employment Committee

- John Lewis to serve 8 February to 31 December 2025

Quiet Company Board

- Lis Burch to serve 8 February to 31 December 2025

Anti-oppression champion

- Liz Law to serve 8 February to 31 December 2025

We agree to these appointments and thank Nominations Group for bringing us this report.

Treasurer (renomination)

- Paul Whitehouse to serve 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

We send this nomination to Yearly Meeting.

BYMT/25/02/18 BYM Trustee committees

a) Internal Audit and Risk Committee and Finance, IT and Property Committee

We receive draft revised terms of reference for our Internal Audit and Risk Committee (IARC) and Finance, IT and Property Committee (FIPC) (paper BYMT 2025 02 18a). The main changes clarify responsibilities for the relationship with the external auditor and implementing their recommendations rest with FIPC.

We agree to the draft terms of reference in paper BYMT 2025 02 18a, with the amendment noted.

b) Continuing Yearly Meeting transition project board

We have been asked to consider forming a project board to provide governance oversight of the changes needed to transition to the holding of continuing Yearly Meeting sessions. We agree to this and the terms of reference in paper BYMT 2025 02 18b. We ask Nominations Committee to consider suitable names, and we agree to these names being approved by clerks between meetings.

BYMT/25/02/19 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings on 1 March 2025.

BYMT/25/02/20 Time with Recording Clerk

We spent time with the Recording Clerk.

BYMT/25/02/21 Time without staff, communicating our work and reviewing the meeting

We have spent time without staff and reviewed our meeting.

Marisa Johnson
Clerk

Kit King
Assistant Clerk

Representation at continuing Yearly Meeting Sessions

Minute 37 of Yearly Meeting 2024 asked for work on two issues relating to representation at continuing Yearly Meeting (YM) sessions:

- (1) Meeting for Sufferings, through its Church Government Advisory Group, was asked to look at defining more clearly how representation from area meetings and other bodies, including groupings not currently represented at Meeting for Sufferings, will work, and the role of the representatives so appointed.
- (2) BYM Trustees were asked to propose a system for supporting area meetings and other bodies with the financial costs of representatives' attendance at YM and to report on this to Meeting for Sufferings in March 2025.

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to consider the following paper and to give any guidance on the matters covered in it. These matters will be considered further at Yearly Meeting 2025.

What principles might help guide our understanding of representation at Yearly Meeting?

Church Government Advisory Group (CGAG) has spent time considering this question and offers the following suggestions to Meeting for Sufferings.

Key purposes of appointed representatives to Yearly Meeting (YM):

- To help promote well-informed deliberation and discernment at YM sessions, building on accumulated knowledge and understanding and a variety of Quaker experience, life and witness.
- To ensure good attendance at YM sessions.
- To ensure continuity of attendance from session to session.
- To help maintain connection between Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) and its constituent bodies, for the benefit of all.
- To encourage area meetings and other Quaker communities to consider YM business at their own business meetings.

Ways to help achieve those purposes:

- Quaker communities ensure their representatives attend each time so that there is a reasonable minimum attendance at YM business sessions.
- Representatives attend the majority of sessions during their term of service, creating continuity by ensuring there are Friends present who have a sense of the history of a business item.
- Representatives come from all nations and regions so that perspectives from different parts of BYM can be heard.
- Representatives spread knowledge of and interest in YM business within their own Quaker communities, creating the sense that the whole community is involved in the same issues.

- Representatives encourage other Friends from their Quaker community to come to or uphold YM sessions, helping to ensure the presence of a wide variety of personal characteristics, life experiences and spiritual experiences throughout the year.

Representatives are not delegates of the meeting that appoints them. They may usefully bring an understanding of discernment that has taken place elsewhere or may share relevant experiences from their own meeting. This is true of all Friends, but representatives may take on a special responsibility for informing themselves about discernment locally.

In accordance with our understanding of the Quaker business method, representatives will not have any special status within YM business sessions.

Numbers of representatives

CGAG offers the following suggestions to Meeting for Sufferings.

Area meeting representatives

- Every area meeting in BYM should be represented at YM sessions.
- Area meeting representatives will have their expenses met (see below).
- Given the importance of representatives for the creating and fostering of connections, area meetings with a high number of local meetings may need additional representatives, e.g. because it is difficult for one person to get around all the local meetings.
- The average number of local meetings per area meeting is currently 6. It is therefore suggested that area meetings with 6 or fewer local meetings should appoint one representative. Area meetings with 7-12 local meetings could appoint two representatives. Area meetings with 13-18 local meetings could appoint three representatives (etc.).
- If one or more area meetings merge, all existing representatives could serve out the term for which they were appointed. After this the number of representatives for the new area meeting could be in accordance with the above formula.
- If mergers or other circumstances result in significant changes in the average number of local meetings per area meeting then YM could review the point at which area meetings become entitled to a second or third representative.
- Some area meetings with more than 6 local meetings may find it difficult to appoint a second representative or may not feel it is necessary. The appointment of a second representative could therefore be optional.
- If a second representative who is able to attend consistently cannot be found, the area meeting should appoint only one representative.
- Area meetings will no longer be asked to appoint alternates. Where a representative is not able to attend a YM session then the area meeting should ask someone to attend in place of the representative. That Friend will be entitled to payment of their expenses as if they were the representative.

At present *Quaker faith & practice* paragraph 6.12 asks each area meeting to ensure that “a sufficient number of Friends will undertake to be present”. All area meetings should be encouraged to continue this practice, regardless of how many representatives they appoint.

Representatives of other Quaker communities

All Quaker communities could be asked to consider how they can ensure that their members know about YM and encourage them to attend. CGAG suggests that the following should be asked to appoint representatives as follows:

- **Young Friends General Meeting (YFGM)**: three representatives.
- **Crynwyr Cymru – Quakers in Wales (CCQW)**: one representative.
- **General Meeting for Scotland (GMfS)**: one representative.

BYM trustees and the central and standing committees

The Agenda Planning Committee for YM may invite any YM committee to send a member to a YM session when it feels that their attendance would be of assistance to the YM as a whole. Where committees are invited by the Agenda Planning Committee then the representative’s expenses can be claimed from the YM budget.

The clerk of BYM trustees and the YM treasurer should generally be present at YM sessions. At least one of the clerks of CNC should generally be present whenever nominations are requested or brought forward. Where committees feel that some of their members should be present then they should remember the option of online attendance.

Quaker Recognised Bodies (QRBs)

In order to foster closer connections between different parts of the Quaker community it is envisaged that QRBs will be given the right to send minutes to the Agenda Planning Committee for YM. Any such minutes will be considered by the Agenda Planning Committee alongside other minutes received.

CGAG suggests that Quaker Recognised Bodies and other Quaker groups may choose to name members who will attend YM. This would be an internal decision for the group and there would be no expectation that they should do this. The group itself would be responsible for paying the expenses of its representative(s).

If the Agenda Planning Committee felt that the presence of a Friend from a particular QRB would help the discernment on a particular item of business then it might invite someone to attend, in which case BYM would pay their expenses.

BYM staff

CGAG suggests that the Recording Clerk should develop guidelines for BYM staff who attend YM. Meetings and other Quaker communities should not appoint BYM staff members as their representatives to YM.

Eligibility for appointment as a representative

Meeting for Sufferings has authorised the nomination of attenders to all roles it appoints (with the exception of BYM Trustees), recognising that the meeting seeks the right person to serve. Meeting for Sufferings has further recommended to YM that amendments to our discipline should be made to permit attenders to be appointed to area and local meeting roles.

On that basis, CGAG suggests that attenders could be appointed to serve as representatives to YM. However, YM will continue to reserve to itself the right to close any part of YM to non-members. Meetings should therefore be aware that a non-member representative could potentially be excluded from parts of a YM session.

Mechanism for appointment

CGAG suggests that:

- Area meetings and others should nominate and appoint their own representatives (YM does not need to appoint them).
- Appointments should be made for full calendar years and for a term that is appropriate for the appointing body (normally between one and three years).
- The standard maximum continuous term should be 6 years. It is important that the role of representative is shared among different Friends over time.

Funding the attendance of representatives to Yearly Meeting

BYM Trustees have considered how best to support area meetings and other bodies with the financial costs of representatives' attendance at YM. Based on the recommendations of Church Government Advisory Group, there are likely to be around 75-100 representatives covering area meetings, YFGM, CCQW and GMfS.

BYM Trustees have discerned that the system needs to:

- Provide adequate support to meetings who are not well resourced in general and/or that will usually have a higher level of expenses.
- Encourage well-resourced meetings to contribute appropriately to the costs of holding YM.
- Place only the appropriate level of burden on BYM finances.
- Ensure that Friends who agree to serve as representatives get their expenses paid quickly and without too much difficulty.
- Be simple to administer (both at the meeting and the BYM level).
- Avoid creating or reinforcing any inequities in the appointment process.

Having considered the options, BYM Trustees recommend that: **representatives should be able claim their expenses from BYM funds** (as happens at present for Meeting for Sufferings).

The costs of funding representatives to YM will be higher than the costs of funding representatives to Meeting for Sufferings: there will probably be more

representatives, and there will be a longer meeting every year rather than only once a triennium.

It is therefore essential that **area meetings are encouraged to contribute to BYM funds to help cover the costs of holding YM.**

If any area meeting prefers to handle its representatives' expenses for itself (rather than claiming them from BYM) then that is of course possible.

Action for Meeting for Sufferings

Members of Meeting for Sufferings are asked to:

- Consider the paper and offer any thoughts on issues that need further work before Yearly Meeting 2025.
- Share the proposals with the body they represent.
- Ensure that their area meetings are aware of the need to make financial contributions to help pay the costs of holding YM sessions.

Financial support for attending continuing Yearly Meeting sessions

Summary

Minute 37 of Yearly Meeting 2024 asked BYM Trustees to ensure that the current bursary scheme for individuals attending Yearly Meeting (YM) is reviewed and ideally simplified.

While working on this issue, BYM Trustees concluded that the expenses policy for YM role holders should be reconsidered.

BYM Trustees made some decisions at their meeting on 8 February 2025. This paper is for information.

Changes to the bursary scheme for individuals attending YM

Overview

The scheme works well overall. Its name should be changed and certain tweaks should be made to improve it. Future funding of bursaries through the YM budget should be secured. The availability of financial help should be publicised.

Name

The name 'bursary scheme' is old-fashioned and may have connotations of elitism and/or education. Talking about 'Help with the costs of attending Yearly Meeting' (or similar) is clearer.

Operation of the scheme

Changes to the application process that were agreed in 2020 were aimed at removing barriers to access. These have worked well.

The scheme is still *perceived* as complex by Friends – more and better communications about it might help.

Suggested change to the scheme

At present, potential applicants are asked to request financial support from their worshipping group first, before asking for funding from BYM. This may be an unnecessary barrier. In future we will ask the pastoral Friend who counter-signs the application form to be responsible for checking on local sources of support. The pastoral Friend will then either direct the applicant to appropriate local support or sign the form to request help from BYM.

Securing funding

At present, the money to support Friends in attending Yearly Meeting is paid from donations given by Friends for that specific purpose (when booking for residential gatherings). BYM Trustees and staff are therefore not in control of how much money is available to spend. From 2026, BYM trustees will include financial support for Friends attending Yearly Meeting as part of the general budget for Yearly Meeting.

Communications & publicity

We want to encourage conversations locally about the importance of attending YM and about the financial support that is available to enable this. Every BYM communication about Yearly Meeting should mention the availability of financial support and link to more detailed information.

The current guidance is here: <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/grant-making/yearly-meeting-bursary> (this page will be updated to reflect the changes set out in this paper).

Where we know of particular groups who we want to encourage (e.g. younger adults) then we need to try to ensure that our communications will reach those groups.

Role holder expenses

Historically, those serving in roles at YM have not been able to claim expenses to cover their costs of travel etc. The idea behind this has been that role holders would have been coming to YM anyway. However, role holders might be coming to YM specifically because they have been asked to serve in a role and/or serving in the role might increase their expenses (e.g. if they have to arrive earlier than they would otherwise have done).

In 2024 some role holders did request support with their expenses. They were generally advised to apply for bursaries, which caused some confusion and uncertainty.

We do not want Friends to feel excluded from service by financial costs and we do not want to make service less attractive to Friends. We do not want Friends to be put off from making a commitment to serve because they are unsure of their future financial means.

BYM Trustees, through their Finance, IT and Property subcommittee, will work on an appropriate expenses policy for use by YM role holders.

The distinction between nominated roles and YM volunteers will remain. Anyone who registers for YM without requesting a bursary and then volunteers their time (e.g. to help with pastoral support, as a doorkeeper etc.) would not fall within the scope of a new roleholder expenses policy.

Action for Meeting for Sufferings

It would be helpful if members of Meeting for Sufferings could:

- Encourage Friends in your own Quaker communities to attend YM sessions – whether in the venue or online.
- Find out about any local sources of financial help with the costs of attending YM and encourage your treasurer and/or pastoral Friends to publicise their availability.

- Ensure that Friends in your own Quaker communities know that there is financial support available from BYM for attendance at YM and how to access it.
- Encourage local conversations about attending YM and about the existence of financial support for attendance.
- Share any ideas for supporting attendance at YM by emailing sufferings@quaker.org.uk

Yearly Meeting sessions 2026 to 2028

Yearly Meeting will be held 23–26 May 2025 and 1–4 May 2026.

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee has considered dates for Yearly Meeting sessions after May 2026 and has made recommendations to Meeting for Sufferings (minute YMAC 2024-12-14 – below). Dates for a summer residential in 2027 are still being considered. Dates for meetings based outside London are not yet confirmed as final venues have not been booked.

Meeting for Sufferings is asked to agree the following dates, noting that dates for July 2026, summer 2027 and July 2028 will need to be finalised in due course:

2026

- 18 July 2026 (outside London – date TBC)
- 21 November 2026 (Friends House, London)

2027

- 20 February 2027 (Friends House, London)
- 1 May 2027 (Friends House, London)
- End July/Early August 2027 (outside London, residential – date not yet agreed)
- 20 November 2027 (Friends House, London)

2028

- 19 February 2028 (Friends House, London)
- 28 April-1 May 2028 (Friends House, London)
- 22 July 2028 (outside London – date TBC)
- 18 November 2028 (Friends House, London)

Appendix: YMAC minute 2024-12-14 Principles for continuing Yearly Meeting dates 2026–2028

We receive paper YMAC 2024 12 14 and have heard from Suzy Lidbury (Head of Governance & Events).

We welcome the inclusion in these plans of locations outside London and recognise the need to keep these plans open at this stage while suitable venues are identified.

We accept the plans as presented and recommend these proposed dates to Meeting for Sufferings.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings.

Sustainability Reporting Paper

Introduction

There are currently no members of Meeting for Sufferings serving on the Sustainability Monitoring Group. MfS Arrangements Group agrees that as Meeting for Sufferings will only meet in its current form for the next 14 months, it would be a better use of time to work with the new Agenda Planning Committee for Yearly Meeting to work through how this important information and discernment could be brought to Yearly Meeting in its continuing sessions from May 2026 onwards.

In the interim, staff have prepared a truncated report on three areas relating to sustainability. These differ from the traditional five-way split of activities into: Eldership, Oversight, Living Faithfully, Right Ordering and Witness, partly because the division below reflects the work of different staff teams, and partly to see if this is a helpful way of presenting information in the future.

1. Sustainability within the operations of BYM

Our 2023 carbon reporting now comes from a new provider, Greengage. This report used different methodologies from the previous provider, and wasn't able to compare accurately with previous years. Overall BYM emissions were estimated at 348.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e), a 50% increase on 2022 report (though this includes things like IT hardware and employee commute to work, which weren't previously included and together contributed 50 tonnes).

Business travel (not employee commute) increased from 12.4 kgCO₂e to 66.6 kgCO₂e, perhaps reflecting a return to more in-person committees, events, and networking, and the environmental impact of in-person events should certainly be considered when planning key activities.

Greengage also recommended an energy efficiency audit of our buildings, as historic buildings tend to be less energy efficient, and this will be actioned.

Some organisations, such as Church of England, are focusing on Scope 1 (direct emissions from consuming fossil fuels e.g. for heat) and 2 (indirect emissions from consumption of electricity) emissions only, aiming to get those to net zero by 2030, and then moving onto Scope 3 (indirect emissions related to what is bought, used and sold) from 2030. Currently we are trying to monitor all three areas.

Outside of the carbon report, other activity continues. 200 trees were replanted at Jordans after they did not fare well on the original land they were planted on. The café at Friends House is still plant-based, and the plant-based menu for conferencing has a take up of 4% (double the previous year). Even the standard conference catering offer has a menu that is two-thirds vegetarian/vegan to one-third meat. We are using smart monitoring systems to reduce energy use throughout

Friends House. Small initiatives, such as installing bike racks at the Yorkshire Centre, also encourage greener travel.

We are now midway through the Quiet Company's ten-year sustainability strategy, and so a full review is underway. Sustainability has also been identified as one of the four key themes for Quiet Company's next five-year strategy, which will launch in 2026.

2. Local and AM info on sustainability from annual reports (using ecochurch reporting model)

This year, Area Meetings were asked about their work on sustainability as part of the annual governance return. Following feedback that questions in previous years were not helpful, we adjusted the questions we asked this year, and connected the questions with the Ecochurch scheme ([Eco Church – An A Rocha UK Project](#)).

Findings:

5 meetings are signed up for the Ecochurch scheme, with two of them graded at Silver level.

Meetings reported the following stories of action and engagement:

- **Worship**
 - Attending Climate Vigils.
 - Creating a 'bank' of earth-based spiritual practice.
- **Buildings**
 - Trustees funding 'Local Meeting sustainability surveys'.
 - Installing: Solar, new windows, heat pumps.
 - Using smaller spaces in colder months to reduce energy use.
- **Land**
 - Converting a patch of agricultural land to a nature reserve.
 - Meeting House gardens and owned land managed to encourage biodiversity.
- **Community & Global Engagement**
 - Encouraged other Faiths to join climate vigils.
 - Holding a regular 'climate café'
 - Participating in public witness for climate justice.
- **Lifestyle**
 - Meetings and Quaker business held online.
 - Walking to worship or transport sharing.
 - Surveyed members on personal engagement.

Challenges in this area of reporting:

Lack of quantitative data: this has been an issue in previous years of reporting, and remains so. There is no consistent way for meetings to measure energy usage across activities. We hope that by aligning to the reporting framework for EcoChurch, we will enable more meetings to report.

Resource Constraints: Quaker charities are doing what they can, but many are limited by their assets. This could be a focus for a future initiative.

Focus on buildings: While energy efficiency improvements in meeting houses are commendable, there may be opportunities to expand sustainability efforts beyond buildings to address other aspects such as transportation, waste reduction, and community outreach.

3. Climate witness and climate justice

Our witness work for climate currently has two main campaigning strands of work:

- Increasing Loss and Damage finance, to compensate people for unavoidable climate impacts.
- Withdrawing financial incentives and services which support fossil fuel extraction, specifically stopping insurance companies from insuring fossil fuel projects (without which they are unlikely to go ahead).

We are part of coalitions of organisations (both faith-based and secular) working on these issues, finding that our voice is amplified when working with others. The insurance work in particular has had some attention from mainstream press (The Times), beyond what we expected. We are yet to see major change on the core campaign asks.

Through Quaker Peace & Social Witness's Faith in Action Team, we support Quakers taking action themselves for climate action. This includes those involved in nonviolent direct action, and those involved in the 'Defend Our Juries' movement, which has particularly impacted climate activists. We are supporting Living Witness to organise an Earthcare Gathering at the Hayes Centre on 24-27 October 2025. We also support young Friends exploring what our sustainability testimony means to them and how to build communities to hold us through current and future challenges.

We are in the final year of a multi-year grant to Woodbrooke to work on aspects of the climate crisis, in particular the spiritual basis of our concern and supporting practical action and networking around greening buildings and lifestyles.

Police Powers and Protest

Introduction

Both the legal framework and the practical consequences for witness through public protest have changed to be harsher and more restrictive in recent years. This has affected Quakers, and others, in various ways.

1. What changes to legislation are we talking about?

In recent years, there have been several pieces of UK legislation that have restricted protest rights. The main laws are the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023. Changes are very wide-ranging, but include:

- criminalising specific actions (such as carrying equipment that can be used for 'locking on') and
- having greater restrictions on protests (such as banning them partway through if the 'cumulative impact' has reached a certain disruptiveness threshold).

Some changes apply across Britain, some only apply in England & Wales.

2. What impact have these changes had on our right to peaceful protest?

These have had two main impacts. One is that there have been individuals charged under the laws and protests affected by them. The other is the chilling effect of the laws, with groups (including us) 'self-policing' to avoid falling foul of them. For example, at the DSEI arms fair protests in 2023, we did a lot more risk work than previously, and our actions were more cautious.

As the Court and Prison Register shows, there have been a steady stream of Quakers being charged and/or imprisoned for nonviolent protest. The majority of these are climate protesters, associated with XR/Insulate Britain/Just Stop Oil, though we have also had a recent case of a Quaker imprisoned for actions at an arms factory connected to Israel's war in Gaza.

Even a non-custodial sentence, or being associated with a controversial action but not being charged, can have other impacts. We have at least one case of a Quaker facing a professional disciplinary process and the possibility of loss of their licence to practise, due to their protest actions in their personal time.

The impact of changes in the legislation is exacerbated by changes in judicial process: The 'Defend Our Juries' movement has involved several Quakers, and the Faith in Action Team in Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) have been supporting them. The movement arose from attempts to criminalise people holding up signs outside court reminding jurors of their absolute right to acquit according to conscience, a right established in the trial of two Quakers, William Penn and William

Mead, in 1670. The Defend Our Juries actions took off after court rules changed so that defendants in climate protest cases could no longer use certain defences for why their actions are lawful (e.g. they were acting to prevent a greater harm).

3. Political Context

The 2024 Labour Party Manifesto mentioned ‘protest’ just once, in a reference to how the party has changed from a ‘party of protest’ to one that puts ‘country first’. We currently have no indication that the government are planning to repeal some, or all, of the 2022 and 2023 acts. Furthermore, the current Home Secretary has supported the government’s defence of the laws in a High Court case lodged under the previous government by Liberty. Labour currently feel most political and electoral pressure from Reform, who are unequivocal in their condemnation of climate change protesters.

More positively, the Lib Dem and Green Party 2024 manifestos committed to scrapping the anti-protest laws. We would also expect the independent MPs to be supportive of any legislative changes to defend the right to protest. We surmise that there are plenty of backbench Labour MPs who feel uncomfortable with these restrictive laws but are currently unwilling to speak out on the issue. If the issue was elevated up the political agenda, they may feel compelled to take a stand.

4. Current Quaker activity related to the political context

- As co-convenors of the Civil Society Voice coalition, Quakers in Britain are working with over 600 other organisations to protect the ability of charities and other civil society groups to engage in campaigning. As well as defending the right to protest, the coalition works on a range of other restrictive practices and legislation (such as the Lobbying Act, which places significant additional burden on campaigning in the run up to a general election). At our next meeting in February, we will receive a briefing from Liberty about their court case and campaign plans. We will then lead a discussion on how we can strengthen our collective advocacy around the right to protest.
- Along with others we actively spoke out against anti-protest measures, when the relevant Bills were going through Parliament – often presenting this as a ‘freedom of religion’ issue for Quakers. Although unsuccessful in preventing the adoption of legislation, we were able to secure some media interest.
- Our [MP engagement materials](#) encourage Friends to speak to their MPs about civil liberties and the right to protest. Our MP briefing on Democracy explicitly calls for the repeal of these laws.
- We continue to look for and act on opportunities to speak out in this area for example, raising our concerns and calling for the repeal of legislation with parliamentarians, inquiries and/or official consultations.
- The UK government has signalled that it wants a ‘reset’ of relationships with civil society and that it will be establishing a Civil Society Covenant based around the positive principles of recognition, partnership, participation,

transparency. In our submission to the consultation, we stressed the importance of the government demonstrating their commitments to our full participation in public life by restoring the right to protest. Staff will be monitoring developments closely.

- Where there is a clear Quaker connection, we have also sometimes publicly commented on harsh sentencing decisions and/or appeals. For example, we recently highlighted a case where a Quaker climate protester was recalled to prison because of a failure to find a suitable electronic monitoring tag. As well as helping to keep things in the public eye, this kind of tactic can help to humanise an issue which is often unhelpfully polarised by some politicians and parts of the media.
- Although not 'challenging' the legislation per se, over the last few years the Faith in Action team's work have supported Friends to understand their rights (and the potential risks) in relation to major protests. Although BYM staff do not have the legal expertise to advise, we signpost to other trusted specialist organisations such as Green and Black Cross who provide training. Woodbrooke and some Quaker bodies (Quaker Roots, who campaign against arms fairs, and Young Friends General Meeting) have provided training too. We also have accompanied Friends in their discernment.

5. How might we support those suffering the consequences of protest?

Alongside Local Meeting/Area Meeting support, we also have Quaker prison chaplains who can offer support to Quakers jailed in the prisons they serve. For climate protesters, the Quaker Support for Climate Action (QS4CA) group provides some support for those facing imprisonment.

There may well be more Friends can do, individually and collectively. Reflection and discernment on this, during Meeting for Sufferings or at other times, is welcome.