

Proposal and Report: summary

of the Moving Forward / Symud Ymlaen Group

The Moving Forward Group was set up in October 2019 by the four constituent Area Meetings (North Wales, Mid Wales, South Wales and Southern Marches) of Meeting of Friends in Wales (MFW) to look at ways that Quaker structures could be simplified. Two representatives were appointed from each AM and MFW and included a Trustee from each body.

The Objectives of the Moving Forwards Group were described as:-

To consider what changes might be made to enable us to work better together in Wales, to promote relationships between Friends and to free up time and energy for spiritual life, outreach and witness in the world.

To explore possible options for more effective working and cooperation. These could include sharing responsibilities of Trusteeship such as property management, and policies for legal responsibilities.

Challenges facing Quakers in Wales and the Marches

- Finding Friends who are willing, able and competent to offer service especially as Trustees and Treasurers
- Management and upkeep of our extensive property portfolio
- Increased demand for compliance in many areas but particularly in financial recording and reporting for the Charity Commission and demands imposed by the Banks 'for security reasons'
- Requirement for stringent policies including Equality, Safeguarding, Risk, Health & Safety and Data Protection

There is a need to reduce the burden of administration.

Proposal

Our Proposal recommends a simplification of our structures in order that Area & Local Meetings can focus on spiritual nourishment and outreach.

Merger of the five existing charities

To achieve this we propose the amalgamation of the five existing charities into one new charity. The Trustees would be nominated by the Area Meetings. This has the appeal of simplicity in that it would reduce the number of charities to one whilst retaining the current structure of four Area Meetings (with their constituent Local Meetings) and would include

the responsibilities of Meeting of Friends in Wales. It would require Area Meetings to delegate to this new body, that element of their responsibilities relating to running a charity.

This would reduce the number of trustees required from approximately 30 to possibly as few as 12. In addition it would significantly simplify the financial recording and reporting with a consequential reduction in the work required of treasurers.

A Charity Commission Scheme would be required to enable the merger and transfer of ownership of assets from the current Area Meeting Charities to this new charity and would require the drafting of a scheme for the charity Commission with advice from Britain Yearly Meeting Stewardship Committee. Area Meetings would be retained, but would no longer be separate registered charities. This would reduce the number of charities from five to one and most importantly allow the Area Meetings to focus on their primary task of Spiritual Nourishment and Outreach.

We understand that the Charity Commission is keen to encourage such mergers. We should be under no illusion that this is going to be a quick fix and even if this way forward is agreed by Meeting of Friends in Wales and its four constituent Area Meetings this year it will take time to navigate the complexities involved.

We see that this is only the first step and recommend the appointment of a group to take forward this proposal.

An interim arrangement

We recognise that this is going to take time and suggest that for the next triennium each Area Meeting would appoint at least three Trustees from their own membership, one of whom would also be appointed as the Clerk to Area Meeting trustees. To this would be added a further three trustees, one from each of the other three Area Meetings, giving each Area Meeting a trustee body of at least six members plus a treasurer.

This does not mean that 24 trustees would be appointed but in fact a minimum of only 12 who would form a combined group which would work together on matters which concerned all four Area Meetings such as buildings, finance and other governance matters such as policies. This would enable trustees to work together during the next triennium, learning about the situation of meetings across the whole of Wales and the Marches. It is important that this is only an interim step for one triennium while the single amalgamated charity is set up.

Summary of Recommendations for the Way Ahead

1. We recommend the four Area Meetings and Meeting of Friends in Wales agree in principle to adopt the group's proposal that a new charity should be created and that the five existing charities should merge to form that charity.
2. We see that this is only the first step and recommend the appointment of a group to take forward this proposal.

3. In the interim we recommend that each Area Meeting appoints at least three Trustees from their own membership, one of whom would also be appointed as the Clerk to Area Meeting trustees. To this would be added a further three trustees, one from each of the other three Area Meetings, giving each Area Meeting a trustee body of at least six members plus a treasurer.

The Moving Forwards Group believe that our proposals will lead to a better balance between prayer, thought and application in the life together of Quakers in Wales and the Marches. The focus is on streamlining the operation of Area Meetings and Meeting of Friends in Wales and allows more easily for the evolution of groupings of Friends better to reflect a focus on spiritual hospitality and action both locally and regionally.