

BYM Sustainability Group - Annual Report to Meeting for Sufferings February 2017

BYM Sustainability Group is a working group of Meeting for Sufferings, set up in 2014 to provide “a leadership role, similar to eldership and oversight” in relation to the Yearly Meeting’s Canterbury Commitment to become a low carbon sustainable community. Our terms of reference require us to monitor progress in the *Recommendations for Action*, adopted by Meeting for Sufferings in June 2014, and to identify any need for changes to them, engaging actively with Central Committees, BYM Trustees and others responsible for particular areas of action.

In this report, we review progress in 2016 and priorities for 2017.

We ask Meeting for Sufferings and BYM Trustees to accept our revised *Recommendations for Action* (Annex A), in particular the new section, *Eldership: rooting the Commitment in our Quaker faith*. A survey of progress in addressing the recommendations is included in Annex B.

We believe that more priority should be given to the Commitment throughout BYM governance. All committee terms of reference should incorporate some reference to the Commitment and how their work relates to it. We would also like to see a greater readiness to work with us to find ways of addressing gaps in our corporate action in relation to the Commitment, and to make available the necessary staff and committee time and funding.

Review of progress in 2016

This is our second annual report to MfS. In our February 2016 report (paper MfS/2016/02/07, minute MfS/16/02/12) we identified three areas where work was needed:

- Strengthening our sense of community around the commitment
- Developing a shared story about the commitment and its basis in our Quaker faith
- Supporting Friends and Meetings to implement the commitment in their lives and practices

Much has happened since to take all three of these forward.

The BYM Sustainability Gathering in March was well attended. Participants arrived with a sense that sustainability efforts in local meetings had plateaued, but they were energised by a creative weekend, weaving the threads of spirituality, practical action and building community. Several Friends have been working on building links among local meetings following the Gathering.

Last year we reported on our proposal for a project *Nurturing our Sustainability Ministry*, enabling and encouraging Friends to give expression to our sustainability commitment in many different forms. This will be a collaboration among several Quaker bodies and we are still in the process of building a partnership. We hope that when the steering group meets in mid-2017 it will think of a better name for the project. In June 2016 we worked with Woodbrooke on a preliminary three day event entitled *Composting the Covenant* – talking about how our Quaker faith connects with sustainability. Quaker Life Representative Council in October also focused on the spiritual basis of our sustainability concern, and especially our relationship with the Earth.

We held a residential BYMSG meeting in June including a half day with George Marshall, founder of the charity *Climate Outreach* and author of the book *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*. George affirmed Quaker gifts, encouraging us to stick to our core principles and make use of resonant Quaker language in communicating about climate change.

Developing support for Friends and meetings is a slower process, partly because it requires sustained staff time and expertise. QPSW has been advising local meetings on fossil fuel divestment, and supporting Friends' local initiatives through the Economics, Sustainability and Peace Network and the *Earth and Economy* newsletter. The Recording Clerk's Office now has a project officer providing advice to local meetings on property matters, including sustainability. QPSW and Living Witness are working together on proposals for the *Green Light* series of materials, to be sent to meetings in 2017 and 2018, including resources on lifestyle change, Quaker conversations about sustainability, corporate discernment, and engagement with the wider community and politics.

Priorities for 2017

We feel that it is time for a revision of the *Recommendations for Action* agreed in 2014, in particular to incorporate a new section on rooting the Commitment in our Quaker faith. In **Annex A** to this paper the recommendations now fall in five sections.

1. Eldership: rooting the Commitment in our Quaker faith
2. Oversight: strengthening our community
3. Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles
4. Right ordering: Quaker core activities and property; and
5. Witness: working for systemic and policy change.

The Canterbury Commitment asked Meeting for Sufferings and BYM Trustees to report back to Yearly Meeting annually on the progress of the concern. We feel that it is important to monitor progress in local meetings as well as the centrally managed work, both so that we know what is happening and to encourage local engagement. We have tried several approaches, including very simple questionnaires, telephone interviews, and quantification of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. However, ongoing monitoring would require committed staff time, and we have yet to establish where the responsibility could lie within the BYM structure. We hope to find a solution and to be able to inform Meeting for Sufferings later in 2017.

Otherwise, in 2017 our main areas of focus are:

- Continuing to build connections and encourage initiatives across BYM. We have been invited to send representatives to the joint meeting of QPSW and Quaker Life Central Committees on 10-12 February, which will include a consideration of sustainability. We look forward to welcoming visitors from BYM Trustees, central committees and YFGM at our own meetings.
- Working on *Nurturing our Sustainability Ministry*, with an initial steering committee meeting in mid-2017.
- Encouraging regional groups of Friends and meetings engaging with sustainability
- Engaging with Friends at Yearly Meeting Gathering, and working with staff to support them in ensuring that YMG reflects our sustainability commitment.
- Beginning plans for a BYM Sustainability Gathering in 2018.

We continue to be concerned that insufficient funds and staff time are devoted to our sustainability commitment. We ask MfS and BYM Trustees to find ways of ensuring that sufficient priority is placed on the work that needs to be done, in particular:

- Ensuring that all committee terms of reference incorporate some reference to the Commitment and how their work relates to it, and
- Working with BYMSG to address gaps in corporate action in relation to the Commitment, making available the necessary staff and committee time and funding.

Annex A

Becoming a low-carbon, sustainable community: Revised Recommendations for Action

Introduction

Our overall aim is to encourage and support Friends and meetings in implementing the Canterbury Commitment. This paper offers recommendations in five key areas:

1. Eldership: rooting the Commitment in our Quaker faith
2. Oversight: strengthening our community
3. Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles
4. Right ordering: Quaker core activities and property; and
5. Witness: working for systemic and policy change.

Friends and meetings vary in their situations and hence in their priorities, suitable approaches and needs for support. Their needs change over time. We must therefore be responsive, with a wide and evolving range of resources in each of the five areas, and regular communication to bring those resources to Friends' and meetings' attention in a variety of ways. We also need strong networking among Friends and meetings so they can share ideas and good practice and learn from each other's experience.

The following sections identify aims and make broad recommendations in each of the five implementation areas. We have not specified which organisation should take the work forward except in a few cases where this has already been discerned.

1. Eldership: rooting the commitment in our Quaker faith

The aim

While Friends mostly feel ownership of our corporate sustainability commitment, many understand it in secular or practical terms and find it hard to say what is Quaker about it; others have a clear idea of its spiritual basis for themselves, but may not recognise the relevance of others' spiritual paths and experiences. Our spirituality may relate to sustainability in many ways. It may enable us, for example, to engage with loss and suffering, to celebrate beauty, to connect with others in the work for transformation, and to discern our way forward.

We need to make the commitment real and relevant to Quakers as an expression of our faith. That means:

1. Recognising and being able to articulate how our own spiritual experience and practice relates to sustainability
2. Recognising and being able to acknowledge other Friends' spiritual experiences and practices – both similar to and different from our own – and their relationship with sustainability
3. Recognising all of these as part of our corporate faith and practice
4. Being able to bring Quaker insights, values and practices to bear on sustainability issues in our lives and communities and the wider world.

Recommendations

This section of the *Recommendations for Action* is essentially about eldership – supporting Friends in their spiritual practice, worship, ministry, learning and discernment as these relate to our sustainability commitment. These need attention at all levels, from individual Friends and local meetings to the Yearly Meeting and other national and international Quaker bodies. In particular:

1. Local and area meetings should provide opportunities for worship-based explorations where Friends can share how sustainability is part of their faith, and how that shapes their lives, relationships and actions.
2. Quaker bodies including central committees, Quaker Recognised Bodies and other organisations, should make opportunities (including for their staff, members and networks) to explore how their work connects sustainability with Quaker faith.
3. Central departments and other Quaker bodies should work together to provide Friends and meetings with resources and support for learning and discernment related to sustainability and its basis in Quaker faith.
4. There is a particular need to support ministry in all its forms, from spoken contributions in meetings for worship to publications, art, drama and spirit-led action.

2. Oversight: strengthening our community

The aim

Community is fundamental to the Canterbury Commitment and underpins the whole of our recommended approach. In local meetings and in our Yearly Meeting we aim to strengthen our communities, grounded in love and worship. Such communities can be the settings where Friends and meetings engage more fully with the Commitment:

1. Listening to one another, relating constructively, working through pain and loss linked to living in a violent and unsustainable civilisation, as well as the tensions and conflict that arise out of our different responses, and supporting each other in opportunities for insight and growth
2. Strengthening our shared identity and developing a shared understanding of how Quaker faith and practice relates to becoming a low carbon, sustainable community
3. Discerning the way forward in our Commitment, rooted in the Light and following the leadings of the Spirit
4. Supporting one another in implementing the Commitment, sharing learning, insight and celebration
5. Becoming more resilient, able to cope with change and adversity.

Recommendations

The Canterbury Commitment should be owned and implemented by BYM as a whole including individual Friends, local meetings, central committees, Woodbrooke, listed informal groups and other Quaker organisations. We all have a responsibility for embedding the Commitment in every group and every decision we participate in. Our

witness should also be connected to the work of international Quaker organisations, other yearly meetings and non-Quaker organisations.

1. Regular and ongoing dialogue involving Friends House, local meetings and other Quaker organisations is needed to build community and share resources.
2. Face-to-face gatherings are also vital for maintaining and developing our community and our focus on becoming low-carbon and sustainable. We see a need for such events to take place regularly, ideally every year, but at least every two years.
3. Regional and national networks can be ways for Friends and meetings to build community and share resources without relying on paid staff at Friends House. Further networks will be needed.

3. Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles

The aim

We aim to support Friends in developing low-carbon, sustainable and spiritually enhancing ways of living.

Recommendations

Lifestyle change is about more than carbon reduction, it is about all of our priorities and choices including patterns of family and social life, consumption and work. We recommend ongoing and increased encouragement and support for local meetings to be adventurous in helping Friends to live sustainably – adopting, in doing this, approaches that are sensitive and loving, while also radically transformative. This means sharing the joys we find in a simple lifestyle freely chosen, while offering compassion and support to those who find change difficult.

A wide variety of resources are required to address Friends' different and changing needs. For some, personal climate impact calculators are a vital part of understanding and reducing their carbon emissions; for others it is more important to have opportunities to talk about feelings. Some want simple, practical guides to action; others like to do their own research.

1. Regular revisions are needed in resources for sustainable living such as those included in the QPSW/Living Witness Sustainability Toolkit (footprint guides, guides for practical action, study group session plans). New versions should be brought to Friends' attention in a variety of formats.
2. We hope that Living Witness, QPSW and Quaker Life will continue to work together to support Friends in deepening dialogue and making lifestyle changes, in particular through group activities. A variety of approaches are available.
3. We need to provide opportunities for Friends to connect with each other through talks, workshops, etc. Friends' experience of the practical, social and spiritual aspects of lifestyle change should continue to be shared regularly in a variety of ways, from face-to-face contact and networks to blogs, newsletters, talks and workshops.

4. Right ordering: Quaker core activity and property

The aim

Our aim is to support Quakers in Britain (including BYM departments and committees, area and local meetings, and other Quaker organisations) in making the Canterbury Commitment a core part of fulfilling their religious and other purposes, in making all of their activities and assets low- carbon and sustainable, and in being patterns and examples for the wider community.

Recommendations

Quaker meetings, organisations and committees may struggle with the complexity of addressing their core purposes in low-carbon, sustainable ways. They may need support to get beyond seeing these as conflicting goals, and they may need technical help with addressing buildings, land, travel, food, waste and use of money. Friends particularly face dilemmas about travelling to meetings and maintaining historic meeting houses, which are seen as vital for maintaining and developing community.

Local meetings, central committees and other Quaker organisations should be encouraged to organise themselves in low-carbon, sustainable ways. This includes looking at how they meet, where and how often.

1. Resources should be developed to support Quaker bodies in discernment that takes account of the Canterbury Commitment, including weighing up the effects of their decisions on a wide variety of issues, and considering creative alternatives.
2. A way needs to be agreed to monitor and review progress by local meetings in developing low carbon, sustainable core practices and premises. This might include collection of data such as annual energy use, and a regular questionnaire or survey of local meeting activities. Central committee and staff support would be required. The results should form part of the BYM Trustees' Annual Report.
3. Encouragement and support should be given to all parts of the Quaker community to follow the example of BYM Trustees in ensuring that our investments are consistent with being low- carbon and sustainable, and in particular to disinvest from fossil fuels.

5. Witness: taking political action and promoting systemic change

The aim

To create structures and policies – locally, nationally and globally – which enable people to live low-carbon, sustainable lives; and a transformed economy and society which is low-carbon and just.

Recommendations

We have heard that Friends want to take more political action and to be supported to call for and create systemic change in economics and society. In particular:

1. Friends and local meetings need ongoing support:
 - to use their experience of the joys and challenges of changing their lives and meetings as a foundation for engaging others in their local community, national businesses and politicians
 - to take radical action for change from the current system

- to be part of building the alternative
 - to speak out for systemic change and for climate justice.
2. This support comes from the centrally managed work (where the lead committee is the QPSW Economics, Sustainability and Peace subgroup) along with other Quaker organisations including Living Witness and Woodbrooke.
 3. Many parts of the centrally managed work are engaged, including Turning the Tide, Parliamentary Engagement, Peace Education, and the Peacemaker scheme. A continuing effort is needed to strengthen and connect up the Canterbury Commitment aspects of their activities.
 4. British Friends should continue to be supported to connect better with work on climate change and sustainability beyond BYM. There are opportunities to share our experience and contribute to work for change, in particular with international Quaker bodies, other churches and faith organisations, campaigning organisations and movements.

We recommend that Quaker bodies of all kinds continue to speak out publicly on systemic change and climate justice, making the links to traditional Quaker concerns for peace and justice. Advice and other resources are needed to help them to do this. Public statements can help to strengthen our Quaker community and identity, and affirm our shared values.

Annex B

Becoming a low carbon sustainable community: progress in addressing the recommendations for action

1. Eldership: rooting the commitment in our Quaker faith

This section of the *Recommendations for Action* is essentially about eldership – supporting Friends in their spiritual practice, worship, ministry, learning and discernment as these relate to our sustainability commitment. These need attention at all levels, from individual Friends and local meetings to the Yearly Meeting and other national and international Quaker bodies. In particular:

Recommendation	Current Activity	Gaps & Priorities
1. Local and area meetings should provide opportunities for worship-based explorations where Friends can share how sustainability is part of their faith, and how that shapes their lives, relationships and actions..	In 2013 Yorkshire Survey, 60% of meetings mentioned some kind of corporate exploration of sustainability. Proposed <i>Green Light</i> series (QPSW/LW) including resources for worship-sharing, study groups etc.	Regular surveys of local meeting activity.
2. Quaker bodies including central committees, Quaker Recognised Bodies and other organisations, should make opportunities (including for their staff, members and networks) to explore how their work connects sustainability with Quaker faith.	QL Rep Council meeting Oct 2016	Exploration of faith basis for sustainability witness, as well as practicalities
3. Central departments and other Quaker bodies should work together to provide Friends and meetings with resources and support for learning and discernment related to sustainability and its basis in Quaker faith.	<i>Sustainability Toolkit</i> (2011) Proposed <i>Green Light</i> series (2017/2018) Woodbrooke courses on green spirituality etc. Living Witness courses and workshops	More co-ordination of different offerings and publicity/signposting so Meetings know where to find support.
4. There is a particular need to support ministry in all its forms, from spoken contributions in meetings for worship to publications, art, drama and spirit-led action.	BYMSG Nurturing Our Sustainability Ministry project	Support Friends to create their own stories about sustainability and its basis in our faith.

Abbreviations: ESP=QPSW Economics, Sustainability & Peace Group.
LW=Living Witness. Wb=Woodbrooke.

2. Oversight: Strengthening Our Community

The Canterbury Commitment should be owned and implemented by BYM as a whole including individual Friends, local meetings, central committees, Woodbrooke, listed informal groups and other Quaker organisations. We all have a responsibility for embedding the Commitment in every group and every decision we participate in. Our witness should also be connected to the work of international Quaker organisations, other yearly meetings and non-Quaker organisations.

Recommendation	Current Activity	Gaps & Priorities
1. Regular and ongoing dialogue involving Friends House, local meetings and other Quaker organisations is needed to build community and share resources.	Regular newsletters: Earth & Economy earthQuaker Blogs: Quakernomics Living Witness 'Human Dimensions' Being Friends Together	
2. Face-to-face gatherings are also vital for maintaining and developing our community and our focus on becoming low-carbon and sustainable. We see a need for such events to take place regularly, ideally every year, but at least every two years.	Woodbrooke and Living Witness courses and retreats Quaker Life Rep Council Oct 2016 & follow-up Events at YMG 2017 BYM Sustainability Gatherings March 2016, late 2018	Support for/organisation of regional gatherings
3. Regional and national networks can be ways for Friends and meetings to build community and share resources without relying on paid staff at Friends House. Further networks will be needed.	QPSW ESP focus on sharing local meeting activity and supporting regional networks QL Property Network Cluster Vibrancy project Some regional groupings of meetings arising from BYM Sustainability Gathering 2016	Support for regional networks on sustainability

3. Living faithfully: Changing our lifestyles

Lifestyle change is about more than carbon reduction, it is about all of our priorities and choices including patterns of family and social life, consumption and work. We recommend ongoing and increased encouragement and support for local meetings to be adventurous in helping Friends to live sustainably – adopting, in doing this, approaches that are sensitive and loving, while also radically transformative. This means sharing the joys we find in a simple lifestyle freely chosen, while offering compassion and support to those who find change difficult.

A wide variety of resources are required to address Friends' different and changing needs. For some, personal climate impact calculators are a vital part of understanding and reducing their carbon emissions; for others it is more important to have opportunities to talk about feelings. Some want simple, practical guides to action; others like to do their own research.

Recommendation	Current Activity	Gaps & Priorities
1. Regular revisions are needed in resources for sustainable living such as those included in the QPSW/Living Witness Sustainability Toolkit (footprint guides, guides for practical action, study group session plans). New versions should be brought to Friends' attention in a variety of formats.	QPSW/LW proposed <i>Green Lights</i> series to include footprint guide, study group material, resources for Quaker conversations and for community dialogues	Limited staff or funding committed to this work.
2. We hope that Living Witness, QPSW and Quaker Life will continue to work together to support Friends in deepening dialogue and making lifestyle changes, in particular through group activities. A variety of approaches are available.	<i>Green Lights</i>	Limited staff or funding committed to this work. More co-ordination would be helpful.
3. We need to provide opportunities for Friends to connect with each other through talks, workshops, etc. Friends' experience of the practical, social and spiritual aspects of lifestyle change should continue to be shared regularly in a variety of ways, from face-to-face contact and networks to blogs, newsletters, talks and workshops.	Wb courses e.g. on co-housing, food. LW courses and retreats Bamford Quaker Community retreats LW occasional workshops for local meetings & talks at Quaker events.	Limited staff or funding committed to this work. More co-ordination would be helpful.

4. Right Ordering: Quaker Core Activities and Property

Quaker meetings, organisations and committees may struggle with the complexity of addressing their core purposes in low-carbon, sustainable ways. They may need support to get beyond seeing these as conflicting goals, and they may need technical help with addressing buildings, land, travel, food, waste and use of money. Friends particularly face dilemmas about travelling to meetings and maintaining historic meeting houses, which are seen as vital for maintaining and developing community.

Recommendation	Current Activity	Gaps & Priorities
<p>1. Resources should be developed to support Quaker bodies in discernment that takes account of the Canterbury Commitment, including weighing up the effects of their decisions on a wide variety of issues, and considering creative alternatives.</p>	<p>Reduced committee size & travel MfS travel/accom review. Could extend to other groups. Increasing use of teleconferencing BYM and Wb staff engagement on greening buildings and operations. BYM working with Carbon Smart on emissions associated with FH as a building. Possibly extending to other aspects e.g. food, travel. Resource for LMs on discernment in <i>Green Light</i> series.</p>	<p>Limited staff or funding committed to this work.</p>
<p>2. A way needs to be agreed to monitor and review progress by local meetings in developing low carbon, sustainable core practices and premises. This might include collection of data such as annual energy use, and a regular questionnaire or survey of local meeting activities. Central committee and staff support would be required. The results should form part of the BYM annual report.</p>	<p>BYMSG has trialled several different approaches</p>	<p>Need corporate clarity about the approach to be used, where responsibility should lie (committee oversight and staffing) and resourcing (time and funding).</p>
<p>3. Encouragement and support should be given to all parts of the Quaker community to follow the example of BYM trustees in ensuring that our investments are consistent with being low-carbon and sustainable, and in</p>	<p>Fossil fuel divestment by BYM and some local/area meetings Your Faith, Your Finance webpage and resources QPSW & Operation Noah delivering events in Autumn 2016 on investment for active transition. One for wealthy investors/decision makers, one</p>	<p>Need clear, simple information on ethical investment for AM trustees and treasurers.</p>

particular to disinvest from fossil fuels.	for church goers, Quakers etc.. QPSW researching how BYM can influence our pension provider to divest/reinvest	
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5. Witness: Taking Political Action and Promoting Systemic Change

We have heard that Friends want to take more political action and to be supported to call for and create systemic change in economics and society. We propose an increased emphasis on this area of action. In particular:

Recommendation	Current Activity	Gaps & Priorities
<p>1. Friends and local meetings need ongoing support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to use their experience of the joys and challenges of changing their lives and meetings as a foundation for engaging others in their local community, national businesses and politicians • to take radical action for change from the current system • to be part of building the alternative • to speak out for systemic change and for climate justice. <p>This support should continue to come from the centrally managed work (where the lead committee is the QPSW Economics, Sustainability and Peace subgroup) along with other Quaker organisations including Living Witness and Woodbrooke.</p>	<p>QPSW Sustainability Stories section on website; campaigns on energy justice and economic inequality; draft statement on economic principles; New Economy Project Quakers active, e.g. in Climate Mass Lobby, climate marches/days of action etc. with QPSW support. LW earthQuaker and Human Dimensions Network. Woodbrooke courses on political and practical engagement</p>	<p>Develop a clearer shared understanding of the faith basis of this work: 'witness' as ministry. Connect sustainability better with other areas of Quaker witness, including bridge-building in local communities. Support (advice, resources, guidelines) for local community engagement</p>
<p>2. Many parts of the centrally managed work are engaged, including Turning the Tide, Parliamentary Engagement, Peace Education, and the Peacemaker scheme. A continuing effort is needed to strengthen and connect up the Canterbury Commitment aspects of their activities.</p>	<p>Using Turning the Tide campaign support model with Friends developing campaigns</p>	<p>Strengthen the shared story of different areas of work as part of sustainability witness.</p>
<p>3. British Friends should continue to be supported to connect with work on climate change and sustainability beyond BYM. There are opportunities to share our experience and contribute to</p>	<p>QPSW ESP: Scoping work for Friends on 'first steps' towards activism. Delivering climate justice and divestment workshops to mtgs Info & opportunities for action on TTIP & sustainability</p>	<p>Developing a shared understanding of our Quaker contribution on sustainability</p>

<p>work for change, in particular with international Quaker bodies, other churches and faith organisations, campaigning organisations and movements.</p>	<p>Connecting UK Friends with QUNO work through talks incl. via skype connections at events, articles in The Friend.</p>	<p>so Friends can articulate it better to other faith & campaign groups</p>
<p>4. We recommend that Quaker bodies of all kinds continue to speak out publicly on systemic change and climate justice, making the links to traditional Quaker concerns for peace and justice. Advice and other resources are needed to help them to do this. Public statements can help to strengthen our Quaker community and identity, and affirm our shared values.</p>	<p>QPSW work on fossil fuel divestment Facing the challenge of climate change, global statement by Quaker bodies: http://www.quaker.org.uk/facing-challenge-climate-change QPSW liaising with meetings taking action on fracking. QPSW wrote to govt on closure of Dept. of Energy & Climate Change. Encouraging Quakers to do the same.</p>	<p>Developing a shared understanding of our Quaker contribution on sustainability so Friends can articulate it better</p>