

Introduction

York Quakers meet the challenges of sustainability
A Report by the Sustainability Group

Over 18 months, Friends in York Area Meeting thought about sustainability and how their lives responded to the challenges of reducing our impact on the planet.

Aims A Sustainability Group was formed in 2018. We wanted to record how our lives have changed in the light of the environmental crisis. Over 18 months we:

- looked at what our meetings are doing. A summary of what we found out is available on the AM website (we need to find the link and put it in here).
- consulted Friends individually through questionnaires, phone calls and interviews on how our lives have changed in response to this challenge.

The project We have had so many responses and so many insights; it has been really heartwarming to see all the thought and effort over a good number of years (and in some cases decades) that Friends have engaged with this issue.

And we have learned that we share one key insight: however much we are doing, there is still more that can be done.
We can learn from each other.

We are now publishing our findings in the form of thematic summaries. Some of you will recognize your own stories and responses reflected in them; we hope many of you will do. They contain a wealth of ideas and information about what we can do. Sometimes small, personal action makes a big difference to our lives and a small difference to the planet but it matters, nonetheless.

Change But we have also recognized from so many of the responses that there is a balance between the individual, local small (and not so small) actions and the systemic change we need.

Given the focus of the project we have focused more on the personal level. But many Friends have been clear about their understanding of the broader, political and systemic changes we need.

Afterword We started the project long before Covid-19 struck; indeed, the very term had not been invented. But we come to the end of this project just as we are in the middle of a lockdown none of us could have even imagined.

What this has put into stark relief is this: in a crisis that is recognized and accepted as a crisis all of us – individually, locally, nationally and internationally – can take steps to respond to this and to protect people in ways that are drastic and challenging and that put into question our assumptions about how we live our lives.

The world has suddenly stopped travelling without thought; our reliance on an international supply line for our daily necessities has been called into question; but we also have become more adept at using technology to stay in touch and to keep the essential connections in our lives going.

This crisis, in other words, allows us to see the potential for radical change in response to the climate emergency that is – in so many ways – a much bigger crisis than Covid-19.

We hope that the different posts on the different themes will be thought provoking and lead to further discussion.

We encourage you all to engage in that conversation – both in your Meetings and online by posting comments and additional material. If you would like to share more of your own story in more detail, we would welcome that.

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