

York Area Meeting

Sustainability

Documents of Record:

1. Results of Area Meeting Questionnaire 2019
2. Report to Area Meeting July 2019
3. Agreed Minute at Area Meeting July 2019

Report on Sustainability Audit

At Area Meeting in November 2018, we agreed that we would undertake an audit of actions taken by the Area Meeting, Local Meetings and individuals in relation to climate change and sustainability. James McCarthy and Martina Weitsch were asked to come up with a questionnaire to do this.

Much has happened since then. City of York Council declared a Climate Emergency; Extinction Rebellion has taken action in York and elsewhere and is calling all of us to act more urgently than before. On 21 April 2019, an Extinction Rebellion Meeting for Worship took place at Marble Arch and issued a statement (attached).

Britain YM focused in part on sustainability (as did the Swarthmore Lecture).

The Swarthmore Lecturer came to York and participated in a discussion on where the climate emergency is leading us (and where we get our leadings and inspiration for action from).

What can we take from the responses?

We have all done some work on sustainability in relation to our Meeting Houses and how we use them.

There are still more things we can do.

We can learn from each other's experience.

Friends are broadly happy to take this further with a survey of individuals and their households.

Some Friends have given us ideas of stories they would be able to share. We could find a way of compiling them to inspire others and ourselves.

Area Meeting needs to decide how to take this further.

Does the realisation of the climate emergency – brought into sharp focus over the last few months by Extinction Rebellion, school strikes, and the declaration of a Climate Emergency by City of York Council require more or different actions and engagement from us?

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire looked at the actions Meetings have taken or are taking with regard to Energy, Transport, Food and Recycling. It also asked for positive stories to share and tried to establish whether Friends would be willing to answer a similar questionnaire for themselves or the households. The responses are summarised below.

Energy

1) **Has your Meeting House had solar panels installed?**

Yes: Friargate in 2011 – estimated generation of 2600 kWh per annum; no information about the proportion of the energy consumed comes from the panels.

No: Acomb, Harrogate, New Earswick, Thirsk

Thirsk and New Earswick have given consideration to installing solar PV.

Thirsk: old listed building, fragile roof, high building (i.e. scaffolding would be expensive)

New Earswick: The existing roof arrangement is not suitable for either photovoltaic or solar thermal panels

Acomb has not considered it.

2) **Have you installed any other energy generation equipment**

None of our meetings have done this.

New Earswick has considered installing an air source heat pump but decided against it as it would have had to be mounted externally to the building and we were concerned over noise from the pump disturbing Meetings for Worship and other users.

3) **Have you taken any energy savings measures in your Meeting House**

All our Meetings have taken some measures. These were:

- Energy saving light bulbs: Thirsk, Friargate, and New Earswick
- Lighting control: New Earswick – incrementally switched lights to adjust to requirements; Harrogate – sensors on lights frequently left on (WCs and kitchen); Acomb - signage to remind people to turn out the lights
- Secondary or primary double glazing: Thirsk, New Earswick, Friargate (this is my assumption as the building is new build and to a high insulation standard as per response to questionnaire).
- Insulation: Thirsk – underfloor; Friargate – throughout; New Earswick – throughout.
- Heating: Friargate – computer controlled by staff to ensure heating in each space responds efficiently to demand; New Earswick – heating periods

adjusted to suit bookings; Acomb - signage to remind people to turn down thermostats.

4) For all of the questions above, what have been the obstacles to making progress? *(The responses in this section are verbatim from the questionnaires except the text in italics in () for Harrogate which I have inserted from a separate list of points received which overlap with the verbatim text)*

Thirsk: Obstacles to progress have been our old, listed and inconvenient building on a sloping site with difficult access.

Friargate: The age of parts of the building – for example we have single glazed windows in the older parts of the building, replacement of which would be high cost and difficult to justify while they are still in good condition

New Earswick: costs of implementation of expensive plant and equipment; the technical difficulties and disruption of installing such measures; the unsuitability of the existing roofs for fitting solar panels.

Harrogate: We are consulting with Zero Carbon Harrogate in the near future about our energy use and will share this information with you. Our heating system is out-dated and inefficient. We would love to replace it with something efficient, however costs are always the limiting factor *(A quote for efficient electric heaters has been obtained)*. **AM premises committee make money available not on the basis of a desire to decrease energy costs or usage or sustainability, but on a needs basis.**¹ We are a flat roofed building and solar panels would be great. The committee have not thought about this before. I confess to not knowing where to begin; therefore the obstacle is our own knowledge.

(We changed supplier to Ecotricity and no longer use British Gas for servicing as they invest in Fracking.)

Acomb: Financial cost, lack of knowledge about the options available and what can be done

THE TAKE HOME MESSAGE:

All of our meetings have done something to reduce energy consumption.

All of our meetings face obstacles that relate to the nature of the building, its listed status in some cases, finance, and knowledge. Some of these obstacles can be overcome.

There are areas where we can learn from each other.

We can assess whether our priorities in relation to what work is done on Meeting Houses are in line with our priorities relating to being a low carbon community (Canterbury YM 2011, Minute 36)

¹ Emphasis added by Martina Weitsch

Transport

1) Mode of Transport to Meeting

Meeting	Drivers	Drivers offering lifts	Cyclists/ walkers
Acomb	25%	5 out of 12	75%
Friargate	Not known	Not known	Not known
New Earswick	33%	5 +	15%
Harrogate	26 – 31 cars	33 % of cars	30 people
Thirsk	80%	50%	20%

Harrogate: additional comment on Transport: *'I have put a cycle parking sticker on the window to show people they can lock their bikes up in that place.'*

2) How close is the nearest public transport point (bus stop, railway station)?

Thirsk: Railway station over a mile; bus stop 300 m

Friargate: Bus stops for most routes within 500 yards (some closer). Railway Station at 10-15 minutes walk. (Four Friends said they got the bus then walked to meeting)

New Earswick: nearest bus stop is roughly 100 m from the Meeting House

Harrogate: The bus station and the railway station are a 10-minute walk away. The bus stop to Knaresborough is about a 5-minute walk away

Acomb: roughly 100m.

3) How convenient is public transport for access to your Meeting House (number of lines, areas covered)?

Friargate, New Earswick and Acomb are well served with bus services though they are less frequent on Sundays than on other days of the week.

Thirsk has no buses on Sunday

Harrogate has a good bus service in Harrogate and it is possible to get to Meeting in time from within Harrogate and from Knaresborough and Ripon. Friends who live further away or in outlying villages could not come by bus.

4) Have you considered changing the timing of your Meetings to fit in with public transport schedules?

None of the Meetings have considered changing the time of Meeting and all responded that this would not make a difference in terms of accessibility by public transport.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

The only Meeting that has no public transport on Sundays enabling Friends to come by that mode of transport is Thirsk. All the other Meetings have some form of public transport.

There may be scope for more car sharing but this questionnaire did not ask questions that would enable us to identify how this might work.

Food

1) When you have shared meals, are they

All Meetings reported that shared meals are a mixture of vegan, vegetarian and meat/fish options. It is left to individuals to decide what they bring. There seems to be a tendency for more vegetarian/vegan option than meat/fish options.

2) Have you considered having a vegetarian or vegan only policy for shared meals?

Only 3 meetings responded to this question and stated that they had either not discussed/considered it or that they had but that the response had not been favourable.

3) Have you considered the question of food miles embedded in staples you buy for the Meeting?

Three Meetings reported that they had not considered this. Two Meetings reported that they always use Fair Trade products. One Meeting reported that they had changed their coffee supplier to a local roaster to reduce food miles.

4) Have you considered the question of food miles embedded in food brought to shared meals (e.g. through asking Friends to label what they bring with an indication of origin/food miles)?

None of the Meetings had considered this.

Harrogate reported that there was a lot of waste milk from user groups.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Food contributes significantly to our carbon/greenhouse gas emissions.

We could address this issue by considering new responses to the questions above and maybe try new approaches.

Recycling

Material	A	F	NE	H	T
Paper	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Plastic	Yes	Yes	Yes (limited)	Yes	Yes
Food Waste	No	Compost in MH Garden		Yes – fed to chickens or donated	Composted
Food Packaging				Yes	
Glass	Yes		Yes		
Cans	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Wrappers from The Friend			Yes		
Other			Yes (to charity shop)		
Recycling basket				Yes, but not much used	

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Do we feel that there is more that can be done?

Much of this relates to the way in which recyclable materials are collected by the local authority (or not). In our area, the fact that the local authorities have set up a major incineration plant has an impact on that.

Would you be willing to answer a similar questionnaire for you and your household?

Thirsk, Friargate and Harrogate responded to this question and were broadly positive about this.

Should we decide to design a questionnaire for individuals/households? Who will take this forward?

Are there any stories in the way you embrace sustainability where you have had success, overcome obstacles, and identified experience that can be shared, joyfully, with others?

The response to this question came from two Meetings only but reflect a very broad range of experiences and stories that we could collect to affirm the positive side of living in better balance with the planet.

The examples given (by way of bullet points) were:

Energy related

- Switching to 100% green energy supplier
- Has a wind generator and is working towards using no fossil fuel based energy.

Transport related

- Living life without a car
- Not owned a car for 5 years
- Considers careful car use by including several reasons for making each journey.
- Electric car

Food related

- Eating organic fruit and veg
- Buying food with low food miles
- Buying in bulk
- Having their milk delivered in glass bottles
- chickens eat food waste

Recycling related

- Using Terracycle
- Reusing, lending, upcycling and borrowing things
- Saving the bathwater for the wc
- Giving things away
- Recycling box.
- Clothes exchange for school uniform.
- Has held a clothes swap event.

Community related

- Joining others in these ventures
- Celebrating experiences not material accumulation
- Volunteers in environmental groups

Other actions

- Avoiding plastics and avoiding waste
- Consumes as few resources as possible
- Started litter picking
- Composting more
- Shredding more and using this on the garden
- Using solid soap instead of plastic dispensers.
- Lives in a shared house with her daughter.
- Making Eco bricks

Minute from XR Meeting for Worship held at Marble Arch on Sunday 21 April (initiated at the MfW on 19th April):

Please share and consider with your local Friends and others what actions you and they might take next.

Statement from the Quaker Meeting for Worship held at the Extinction Rebellion camp at Marble Arch, Easter Sunday, 21st April 2019.

We are called here in a spirit of Peace, Love and Truth to bear witness to the pain of our planet. We must take heed of the warning of science, which is clear. Those children being born into the world today face a world of catastrophe, social collapse and mass extinction. This is a Truth we can discern ourselves: we see floods and wildfires, we see famines and wars and the displacement of peoples, we see the loss of glaciers and ice caps. We grieve at the loss of so many species and habitats. We uphold the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, who are at the forefront of the struggle for Climate Justice. All over the world, the poorest are bearing the brunt, but all of us will suffer. The next generation may be the last.

This is not our world to burn. "Where were you when I laid the Foundations of the Earth?" (Job 38:4). Where shall we be if we render it uninhabitable through greed and recklessness? This heedless destruction of the natural world must be halted. "We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life." (Advices & Queries 42).

As Quakers we remember and hold true to our traditions of non-violent resistance. From the start our testimony has been one of peace, of freedom of worship, and opposition to oppression and injustice.

People have come together, in grief and in anguish, because the time to change is running out. We pay tribute to the commitment and bravery of Extinction Rebellion and the School Strikes for Climate. We are with you and part of you. To all those arrested, we hold you in the Light.

To governments and businesses, we urge you to act with urgency and vigour.

Acknowledge the truth: this is an emergency. Act at once to reduce carbon emissions to net zero. Establish Citizens' Assemblies to guide your actions.

To Quakers across the world, and to all churches and all faiths, we share this call for action and prayer. We all live under one sun. In the face of imminent global cataclysmic events, the time to act as one is now. As Ghandi said, "Be the change that you wish to see in the world."

York Area Meeting

Sustainability

Minute from Area Meeting July 2019

7 Sustainability

Further to minutes 6 Nov 18 and 6 Jan 19, we have heard some highlights and all the 'take home' points from the survey on sustainability carried out by Martina Weitsch with James McCarthy. The full report can be read on the Area Meeting website.

Through the survey's findings we can see action already taken or in process in our local meetings, specifically the installation of solar panels and steps to reduce energy consumption. There remain some problems in the buildings themselves which a medium-term spending programme might eliminate or reduce; It is good to hear tonight that the Property Committee's remit includes looking for ways to improve energy efficiency, starting with research into Harrogate's heating system. We have also learned that Harrogate attendee Prof. Andy Gouldson is an international expert on environmental matters; we hope his expertise can be shared more widely across Area Meeting.

We have considered two other ideas for further progress which are suggested from the report. While the first, a household survey, would speak to the converted, the meeting judges that it might well draw little response from the less committed and would instead lead to negative feeling and unproductive anxiety. By contrast we warm strongly to the second, i.e. the proposal to find ways to share experience, stories and positive examples which inspire us, drawing us together as a community. This is how we learn and is a way to enlarge our belief in what is both possible and enjoyable.

A separate section of the report asked if any of our young people have been or are involved in climate protest activity, In response from the meeting we heard that 1] Two Harrogate young people and some children/young people from Friargate have been involved in climate protest activity and 2] the Head of Bootham wrote to parents saying that pupils could participate in climate protest, with their parents' written permission. About 40 pupils took up this offer.

We thank Martina & James for their work to date and ask them to offer us ideas for a simple scheme to engage as many individuals as possible in a stories project. We ask that an introductory article in York Area Quakevine be used to publicise this activity and to bring in people who may otherwise know little of these plans and we ask each Local Meeting to seek and name a keen individual who would join Martina & James to act as a ginger group across Area Meeting.