

York Quakers Website: yorkquakers.org.uk

Background Information

1. The Friargate website needed to be replaced with some urgency, mainly because of the need to include up-to-date information on the life of our meetings and the current Friargate Building Development Project.

2. Friargate LM set up a small website steering group to examine the issues and explore the possibilities for setting up and managing a new website. It looked at a number of Quaker websites over the country. Over a number of months it also carried out an extended consultation process within the meeting, involving all the LM committees and their expectations and requirements. It also considered questions of openness and confidentiality and areas of possible conflict.

3. The group reported back to LM with preliminary findings:

- Some groups and committees (such as elders) had their own arrangements for storing material online (in the form of a wiki). These were tailored to individual group needs and depended on the ability of individual members to manage the sites. There seemed to be no desire for general provision of confidential areas on the public website.
- The website should cover the needs of general enquirers about Quakerism locally; local members needing information and current updates; groups and individuals wanting to hire rooms in our meeting houses.
- The website should reflect something of local activities and go beyond a static source of information (ie. times of worship, addresses).
- Where possible we should err on the side of openness. Materials would not however be available online against the wishes of individuals, groups or meetings. If information is publicly available it could in general be placed on the website.
- The website should avoid using personal contact details such as addresses and emails. Contact details would be in the form of "At the home of George Fox and Margaret Fell" rather than "Swarthmoor Hall, Swarthmoor Hall Lane, LA12 0JQ, Tel. 01229 583204" (Although it was realised that newsletters etc often contain such details.)
- Although Friargate LM is the largest LM in the Area Meeting, and would be hosting the server, it was agreed to produce an Area Meeting website, with each meeting able to add information and pages according to their specific local needs.
- It was agreed that the website would be dynamic, reflecting experience and needs as we go. It could start as a relatively modest site, but subject to additions and modification.
- The website would need to be actively managed. To this end, York AM has appointed a website manager from its membership. The manager takes care of updating the site. Each LM has a local representative, who

is able to upload information to the events diary, suggest alterations to pages and inform the manager about information updates as needed. The manager maintains contact with these representatives, consulting about possible innovations where necessary.

4. yorkquakers.org.uk is therefore an expanding York Area Meeting website. It attempts to take account of other movements integrating areas of organisation and technology within the AM likely to be happening in future years. AM itself has now developed its own section of the website, to include details of meetings, agendas etc.

5. Historically three stage approach was taken to the launch of the website: immediate needs; development phase; expansion phase. Maintenance was be ongoing from the outset. Here are the initial phases from our planning:

Stage 1 (target date March)

Modest website, limited in scope, so as to be online at outset of the fundraising activities in 2013.

Roughly similar content as present site, but reorganised and with new design. Approx 14pp.

Aim: To provide a functioning, clear web presence with basic information for enquirers and potential room hirers. To separate Meeting Activities from Room Hire. Also to give outline information of Friargate building development. All areas in Stage 1 to be publicly accessible.

Probable Stage 1 structure:
Ca 17 Pages

Home page (with links to the five meetings + room Hire + Friargate Project + Quaker links)

AM page (with links to the five meetings)

LM pages (x5) (simple page for each meeting with short text, photo, address, directions)

Friargate pages (x2) (Home page; Meeting for Worship)

Room Hire

Intro

Friargate Pages (3)

LM specimen room hire page (Acomb?)

The Friargate Project (one page)

Other Quaker Links (one page)

Contact us (one page)

The Friargate Project (info, pics, Justgiving link, *Update*, *Prospectus*, *Leaflet* downloads)

Stage 2 (2013)

Expanded website, giving additional pages and information within the design and aims of the Basic website

Aim: To provide a functioning, clear web presence with more than basic information for enquirers and potential room hirers. To build up a consultation network with AM and LMs. To expand the information and pages for each LM and for AM.
All areas in Stage 2 to be publicly accessible.

Possible Structure:

15+ additional pages (information about Meeting activities, Room Hire information for each LM.

Stage 3 (after 2013)

It would be premature at this stage to define the final structure of the website, other than to note some areas for possible further expansion, along the lines of proposals discussed by the website steering group:

- Further expansion of information
- Development of the website for outreach (additional special pages, eg. Quaker Quest)
- Development of the Friargate website as a place of communication within the meeting
- Possibility of document storage and communication for committees and meeting groups?
- Information about LM business meetings

Aim:

Content and scope reflecting the needs of the users; to improve communications within the meeting.

Technical Information

Arrangements for Quaker websites will reflect local needs and possibilities (financial and personal). In setting up the York website, there seemed to be three alternatives for the design and management. The route taken by another meeting will need to take into account local circumstances.

- One possibility would be to commission a design from a **commercial firm**. They would need an ongoing role in the maintenance and updating of the web presence. This would still need the active participation of one or more members of the meeting. (Woodbrooke, for example, uses Fat Beehive, a specialist company for charities.) This is the most expensive option.
- A second possibility would be for one or more members of the meeting to be given the task of developing and maintaining the website using one of the various **HTML software** packages. (BYM uses drupal.) This would need the involvement of local members able to work with the software.
- A third possibility would be to use a **design package**. In the end, York decided to go down this route because it best suited our local conditions. The package chosen is called freeway pro. This is software designed to run on apple computers. In use it is very similar to a layout design programme used in publishing (eg QuarkXpress or adobe pagemaker). This was chosen because the manager of the website was both an apple user and experienced in the use of design programs for publishing.
- Friargate LM has its own server and uses the firm of ariotek as website host. This allows for setting up of contact email addresses and routing as well as various storage options for other purposes within the AM. This is managed via the cpanel interface.

For further information about our website and its management, interested Quaker meetings should contact us at

yorkquakerswebsite@gmail.com

There is also a link on the Contact Us page of the website.

