

**Cymdeithas Grefyddol y  
Cyfeillion (Crynwyr)  
yng Nghymru a'r Gororau**

**C**

**Cymar**

**The Religious Society  
Friends (Quakers) in Wa  
and the Marches**

**Q**

**CIO (Charitable Incorporated  
Organisation)  
Registered charity number: 1207878**

## **Environment And Sustainability Policy**

Date approved by Trustees: 2024.10.10

Received by AGM:

Date reviewed:

## Environmental and Sustainability Policy

### Background

Advices and Queries 42: *“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 that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God’s continuing creation.”*

As Quakers we are committed to being sustainable; we recognise there is a climate emergency and seek to minimise our impact on the environment<sup>1</sup>

Quaker concern for the Earth and the well-being of all who live in it is not new and is deeply rooted in our faith. Early Quakers knew damaging the earth for human 'outward greatness' would be an injustice on future generations.

Today’s environmental crisis is enmeshed with global economic injustice and we must face our responsibility as one of the nations which unfairly benefited at others’ expense, to redress inequalities which, in William Penn’s words, are ‘wretched and blasphemous.’(Quaker faith & practice 25.13).

Our environmental and sustainability policy centres on how Quakers live as a faith community and how we demonstrate our reverence for the earth. In 1772 John Woolman wrote:

*“The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age”.*

These words continue to be relevant today. Notably, such teaching is also found in the spiritual texts of other faiths. Quakers believe climate change is not just a technical problem to be fixed, but a symptom of the greater challenge we are facing, along with countless others of how to live sustainably and justly on this Earth.

The Quaker commitment to become a low carbon community was made at Canterbury during Britain Yearly Meeting<sup>2</sup> in 2011 and asks Area Meetings to consider “how truth prospers” with regard to sustainability. It draws on all our testimonies – peace, truth, simplicity, equality and care for the environment. Local and Area Meetings are encouraged to practice speaking truth to power at local and national level, establishing relationships with all sections of local communities, including politicians, businesses and schools, to encourage positive attitudes to sustainability. The Canterbury Commitment issues a clear call to action to individual Friends, asking them to consider the effect of their lives on the world’s limited resources and CO2 emissions. It reminds Friends that our actions must flow entirely and only from love.

We are also mindful further of the Recommendations for Action, adopted by Meeting

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/minute-36-leaflet-2011>

for Sufferings in February 2017, minuted as MfS/SMG/2019 11 03a. (Appendix 2)

**Policy:**

The environmental and sustainability policy for The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Wales and the Marches - Cymdeithas Grefyddol y Cyfeillion (Crynwyr) yng Nghymru a'r Gororau CIO (known as Cymar) is set in a framework covering not only buildings and land, but also worship and teaching, community and global engagement and lifestyles.

Our environmental policy will ensure that: -

- a) Through caring for our properties, we will promote biodiversity and encourage the wellbeing of the natural world.
- b) We use all our buildings as exemplars of good practice, in terms of sustainability and public education, reflecting the range of our properties and their different uses.
- c) We will employ systems and procedures specifically designed to minimize the use of hazardous materials, energy and other natural resources, to minimize the generation of waste and to enable recycling and reuse of materials.
- d) We will continually seek to improve our environmental performance in, but not limited to, our usage of energy, water, paper and fuel consumption and vehicle miles travelled.
- e) We will promote participation and communication of our commitment and will encourage input from all Friends and others in meeting our environmental goals.
- f) We ask Friends and Local and Area Meetings to make links between our low carbon commitment and our Quaker testimonies in our Meetings and in our personal spiritual practices.
- g) We will support individual Friends on their journeys towards reducing the impact of their lives on the world's limited resources and in considering what we can give back to the earth.
- h) In recording and sharing their experiences and challenges Area and Local Meetings will give encouragement and support to others.
- i) As Quakers we will work actively with other groups, including churches and faith groups, on sustainability and environmental matters, sharing our insights and learning from others.
- j) To manage our investments ethically without fossil fuel involvement and to choose financial institutions who follow ethical practices, sharing with others our learning and our struggles with the dilemmas involved.

Our policy provides a framework for action, identifying those areas where we can exert an influence and the key priorities we must address around energy, responsible procurement, communication and engagement. The final priority is key - to deliver

true sustainability means effectively engaging with all our stakeholders, such as Friends, volunteers, staff and suppliers. Through collaboration with others we will better communicate our successes, the impact of our actions and enable more sustainable choices.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Our Aims and Ambitions**

#### **Buildings & Land**

Our aim is to reduce consumption and our carbon footprint year on year and promote biodiversity at our buildings by:-

- a) having a 100% renewable electricity supply across all our properties and install local renewable solutions when opportunity arises.
- b) Green our roofs to improve insulation and to provide a biodiverse environment for wildlife.
- c) generate own produce.
- d) Harvesting and reusing of grey and rainwater
- e) Self-generation

#### **Equipment and Resources**

- a) Work towards being paper-free to support zero deforestation.
- b) Use and procure efficient equipment.
- c) Use goods and locally sourced services.
- d) buy products manufactured in a sustainable way.
- e) increase rates of reuse and recycling by embracing the principles of a circular economy by sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible.
- f) Wherever possible use end of life donation
- g) Aim for zero waste to landfill.

#### **Travel**

- a) eliminate unnecessary travel.
- b) Promote sustainable alternatives, public transport, car sharing, cycle to work.

#### **Communication & Engagement**

Use signage and other information materials to inform and encourage sustainable behaviour.

## Appendix 2

### **Recommendations for Action (Meeting for Sufferings, February 2017)**

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:

- A. Eldership: rooting the Commitment in our Quaker faith
- B. Oversight: strengthening our community
- C. Living faithfully: changing our lifestyles
- D. Right ordering: Quaker core activities and property; and
- E. 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.

#### **A. 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.

## **B. 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 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.

### **C. 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 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.

#### **D. 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.

## **E. 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.

**Useful links:**

[Sustainability Advices & Queries for Quakers – Bristol Quakers](#)

[Eco Church - An A Rocha UK Project](#)

<https://padlet.com/helenoldridge/quakers-in-wales-sustainability-scrapbook-llyfr-lloffion-cyn-bl6fedkrydkqzpe8>