

Frequently Asked Questions FAQs

What are the options you have been considering?

- As described in the report we looked at the options which required structural change suggested in the report of the first Options for Scotland group, presented at General Meeting in March 2022, alongside not changing and keeping the status quo
- a. **Single Charity and 4 AMs plus GM** - All Quaker charities that form part of the church structure within Scotland to merge to form a single charitable body, whilst retaining Area Meetings (AMs) and General Meeting (GM). AMs and GM continue with all their other current responsibilities and a new single charitable unit fulfils all the trusteeship requirements.
- b. **Reconfiguration of responsibilities** - transferring to GM all roles and responsibilities that are best done Scotland wide – AMs focus on supporting Local Meetings (LM).
- c. **One AM, one charity** – All AMs and GM merger to form a new, single body Quakers in Scotland.

Why are you recommending Option C – one single body?

- Simplest organisation – just LMs and one body Quakers in Scotland
- Everyone is part of one organisation – a simple affiliation with their Local Meeting/ Worshipping Group and the family of Quakers in Scotland
- Minimum layers of administration
- Removes duplication of tasks and responsibilities
- The new charity would be a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SCIO to provide greater protection to the Friends serving as trustees and to reduce the workload around employment contracts and property ownership.
- This option creates more space for new ways of gathering and witnessing together

Would we still have General Meeting?

- There wouldn't be a need to have a separate General Meeting.
- All the GM responsibilities could be included in the new unified body.
- Having a separate GM would add another layer of administration and communication.

Won't it be too big an organisation to manage?

- It will be big compared to our current AMs and geographically.
- Numbers wise it will be largest AM within the Society (unless London combines it's AMs as it is planning to do).
- Nevertheless, we feel that it will be manageable as it will not have the assets and complications that many of the current larger AMs in Britain have to contend with, and so will be able to focus on worship, witness and community building.
- Friends in Scotland are experienced in building strong connections and community across vast geographical distance, we have the experience in Scotland to support this work.
- It will be simpler to manage as working for the whole of Scotland

How does Scotland compare to larger AMs in Britain?

- Currently the largest AM is Central England with 718 members and attenders followed by York with 600 members and attenders.
- The smallest are Wensleydale & Swaledale with 57, and Swarthmoor with 82
- Quakers in Scotland would become the largest AM with around 1,345 members and attenders, but if London goes ahead with forming one AM it will become the largest with around 1,873 members and attenders.

Can we actually get through all the business of the current four AMs and GM in four meetings a year, even allowing for the time saved by lack of duplication?

- A lot of these details still need working through but as a start we would envisage a schedule of meetings and agreement on agendas.
- And we would need to look afresh at what comes to a Quakers in Scotland Meeting and what could be handled another way.
- We could imagine 4 meetings for business and possibly 1 residential/extended meeting.
- We would need to see what needs to be done and work out how to do it – Live adventurously.

This just feels like centralisation and nothing to do with Friends attending for worship in small meetings and worshipping groups. How will these Friends feel connected to such a large organisation?

- Any possible future single AM for Scotland will need to be, and be seen to be visible around Scotland, and not hold all its meetings in the central belt.
- The encouragement for self-creating and self-sustaining communities and small groups would be part of the 'supporting structure' in future
- Without a supporting structure small worshipping groups and local meetings do not have the back up and support to keep going.
- The reason the Religious Society of Friends survived in the 17th Century was because it had structure to support and connect it. Whilst many groups like the Ranters and the Seekers disappeared.
- The identity and support of the wider Society enables small groups to continue under the name of Quakers rather than just be a few friends who get together occasionally.
- Friends in remote parts of Scotland can give us a steer here. They have experience of building community across vast areas. We know it can work because Friends in Scotland have been making it work for years.
 - Friends in Skye do not meet physically at present. Their only Meeting for Worship is online. Friends like this need to be supported well but their geography is already startling.
 - Friends in Shetland cannot physically reach AM and back in a day with heart & mind (and body) prepared. A single AM for Scotland would have the same challenge to be accessible as the present NSAM.
 - Friends in parts of mainland Scotland already face lengthy journeys to their LM as well as their AM (north coast, west coast and some places you might not expect).
- Only a small proportion of Friends attend AM and GM now, and for all other Friends a single AM for Scotland would be no less remote than their present AM.

Why do we need to change anything? Are things really as difficult as you suggest?

- Many Friends, especially in NS and ES have been telling us for years that things can't go on like we are – they feel they have not been heard.
- Friends are already choosing to find other ways to worship and be Quakers; and this is not reflected within the structure of LM:AM:GM and we want to find a way for them to feel part of Quakers in Scotland and to be able to contribute.
- Friends holding significant roles cannot continue and others are not coming forward to take their place.
- it's even reached the stage where one AM has to recognise the possibility that it cannot function this time next year.

Will this not transfer the pressures on to those Friends in the single charity/AM? How do we know there will be Friends willing to take on these roles?

- We must work to avoid transferring current pressures onto new role holders.
- There is no easy answer to finding Friends to take on responsibilities, but we hope that wider use of professional support might enable more Friends to consider serving.
- We hope that the process of change, and the simpler structure with fewer layers will be easier for Friends to relate to and feel part of, and thereby have a greater sense of ownership and a willingness to offer to take on practical ministry.
- We hope the changes will release energy and make serving on committees/teams more community focused and more enjoyable.

So, is all we have to do is to change the number of AMs/Charities?

- No, though it is not surprising that this will attract a lot of the attention. This will only work if it is part of a wider reinvigorating of Quakers in Scotland
- We have said that the life of Quakers is about being together, witnessing together and worshipping together.
- There will need to be ownership of the process and new structure by all Friends. There is not a separate body of Friends who are 'Area Meeting' doing things for us.
- We need to do more to enable Friends at the local level to understand why we have an area meeting, what they get from it and what they will need to give to it.

How would we go about this change and how long will it take?

- This will not be a quick fix, there is a lot to work through though we will be able to learn from the process that Friends elsewhere have been following (eg Wales, London etc)
- There are several stages to get through so it could at least 2 years for everything to be transferred and the old area meetings laid down.
- A new Area Meeting would need to be set up and registered with Office of Scottish Charity Regulators OSCR before the old area meetings could lay themselves down and transfer everything to the new Area Meeting.
- We will have to ask Meeting for Sufferings to endorse the change
- OSCR consent will be required for the current Area Meetings to merge into the new body.
- Each Area Meeting will need to sort out their affairs and make the transfers.

When would it start?

- Area Meeting Clerks have been asked to save space for the report to be considered at their April and May Area Meetings
- General Meeting is expecting to receive the report and responses from Area Meetings in June
- If everyone agrees a Steering Group will need to be appointed to take the work forward

Currently each Area Meeting has its own way of doing things, eg contributions. How would it be done if only one area meeting?

- None of these things are decided yet. There are plenty of details to work out if we go ahead.
- AM and GM treasurers are already meeting on a regular basis and sharing knowledge and experience and learning from one another.
- We would need to come together as one community to agree a shared way of doing things.
- Some area meetings have already developed models which could be shared.

But what about our current communities many of which are strong and active? How would a single body support the community activities we already have and the good work we already do?

- The LM communities that you currently have will remain the same, your neighbouring meetings will still be the same.
- Current AM activities could continue just without being identified as AM.
- They would continue as community activities set up to the LMs within that community to organise as they currently do
- A Scottish wide body also creates the flexibility for Friends to gather without needing to consider AM boundaries.
- As already happens in some area meetings activities are organised by groups of Friends from different LMs working together.
 - Some of these things will be reliant on LMs taking the initiative and inviting neighbouring meetings to join them.
 - Some things might be AM wider initiatives and organised by the Elders or Pastoral Care Team
 - Area meeting might ask a working group or LM to lead on somethings.
 - We already have communities and events that are not AM organised - West Coast Friends Gathering or Southwest Scotland Cluster

This all seems a lot of work and trouble. What if we delay or do nothing?

- Delaying or doing nothing risks our charities of not being quorate and this is placing a huge strain on the Friends who are carrying the responsibilities as trustees.
- It could lead to us failing to meet statutory obligations, which again places undue strain on trustees who carry the legal responsibility.
- It could result in more AMs needing to employ staff at quite high grade as local business managers - leading to more duplication by AMs
- A single organisation could be a more cost-effective arrangement and more reliable awareness of risk any potential gaps.

How will the various roles like elders work across such a huge organisation?

- This is the sort of detail that we still need to work on and agreed jointly
- However, there are meetings (North Scotland AM) who work with a “shared pool” of elders and pastoral care Friends who serve meetings across wide geographic distances. So, we already have models to look at and develop.

How will the new structure engage and support young people?

- We hope having membership as a Scottish wide body, Quakers in Scotland, will make it more attractive to young, more mobile Friends, those who worship online and in special interest groups who do not feel connected to just one geographical Local Meeting.

It is our worship, witness and communities that holds us together. How does restructuring help support this and our work of advocacy and outreach?

- We hope that being clear and visible as one organisation Quakers in Scotland will help all Quakers in Scotland identify and unite with all our work.
- Friends in smaller meetings can be more directly involved and be better supported by the rest of us.
- Friends will have more flexibility and wider community options as be members of a Scottish wide body and not feel limited or excluded by simple geographical location
- Friends might feel more able to contribute service to a clearer, simpler structure. Sharing in the responsibility of upholding our community, our worship and our witness

How will Quaker discernment work?

- All meetings will still be following the Quaker business method of discernment.
- Any concerns raised by an LM or other community group can be shared with other communities throughout Scotland or could be brought to a Meeting for Worship for Church Affairs of Quakers in Scotland.
- We are encouraged to live adventurously and be willing to follow the spirit's guidance as we work through some of the detail of how the structure might be challenged and how we might respond and grow.
- We can explore how concerns can be tested within the wider community of Quakers in Scotland

Would more Friends be available to serve if attenders were able to take on more roles?

- Attenders already contribute valuably in a range of roles to the life and work of our meetings, we hope that this will continue.
- Whilst Quaker Faith & Practice states which roles should be undertaken by those in membership, many meetings do not stick closely to this guidance.
- Attenders often serve within these roles, except in the case of Trustees, where membership is necessary by law.
- Other roles serving and supporting our community can be undertaken by attenders.
- What is membership is currently under consideration within the Society and we can all contribute to the discernment on this.

How would LMs benefit from this change? Particularly the large ones with property and employees? Will it be possible to manage property, lettings and employment centrally?

- A single organisation would enable a pooling of our human resources so those individuals currently stretched in separate AMs could be joined together to form a central committee to work on strategy and support.
- Economies of scale could make it more effective to buy in professional help in some areas.
- LMs will still need their local property committees to handle the day to day running of their Meeting House. But a central committee would be able to support and provide them with external advice when required.
- Whilst we have given thought to a possible model of working there is still a lot of work to be done by the meetings involved to agree ways of working together in the future.

A major part of our trustees' work is around management of our meeting houses. They know the premises; indeed, they often meet there. How could this work if trustees had to cover all properties in Scotland?

- This can be managed with careful agreement of responsibility between local meeting and the area meeting.
- Some area meetings have a body; a property trust or limited liability subsidiary of AM to take on the management of their properties and commercial lettings, for example, London and Central England.
- Wales has developed some sample Memorandums of Understanding MoUs already, which we could adapt.
- It could be a system of LMs having their own property committee, each LM committee contributing one or more members to a central property committee which could provide a shared knowledge base and management skills.
- Professional support could be brought in to support the central property committee.
- Trustees would still be responsible and make strategic decisions, but the AM property could handle the management work and the LM committee handle the day to day running of their meeting house.

How many members and attenders are there in Scotland? Has our demographics changed?

- In 1945 there were around 300 Quakers in Scotland, in 2 area meetings, since then numbers have fluctuated, and LMs and AMs have been laid down and created.
- In 2011 we had 706 members, 189 child and 666 adult attenders: **1,561** in total.
- In 2021 we had 687 members, 108 child and 550 adult attenders: **1,345** in total.
- Our numbers have fallen over a ten-year period, though they have increased in the last year.
- In 2020 we had 678 members, 107 child and 448 adult attenders: **1,233** in total.
- We hope the process of change might invigorate the community and encourage new awareness and interest in Quakerism.

For more information you can consult the tabular statement

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/tabular-statement-2022>