

TRANSITION TO QUAKERS IN SCOTLAND

General Meeting for Scotland and Scottish Area Meetings agreed to the establishment of 'Quakers in Scotland' as a potential new structure with a single trustee body for all Scottish meetings.

This trustee body has already been set up and would be responsible to a single Quakers in Scotland meeting for business, with General Meeting, the four Area Meetings and the Dundee Friends Property Trust transitioning or joining the new body when ready to do so.

We receive minute 2025/05/09 of South East Scotland Area Meeting (see appendix) which asks some questions for reassurance before the AM could take such a step.

The next stage is for General Meeting to transition to the new body in order that it can start to function and work on how it will operate.

General Meeting for Scotland on 7th June is asked to approve:

- **that the functions of General Meeting for Scotland be transferred to Quakers in Scotland at its meeting on 20th September in Perth and online;**
- **that the Trustees of General Meeting for Scotland are asked to transfer the assets of General Meeting for Scotland to Quakers in Scotland by this date;**
- **that current General Meeting service appointments transfer to Quakers in Scotland on 20th September, other than the GM Treasurer and GM Trustees.**

If the proposals are acceptable to General Meeting, we would minute Meeting for Sufferings of these intentions, suggesting that the current GMS responsibilities as set out in *Quaker faith & practice* 5.03 become responsibilities of Quakers in Scotland. All Friends in Scotland would become part of Quakers in Scotland for these purposes.

Scottish Area Meetings (East Scotland, North Scotland, South East Scotland and West Scotland) would have opportunity to transfer assets and join with Quakers in Scotland as they decide, and this will necessitate some additional description to the responsibilities and activity of Quakers in Scotland.

The manner in which Quakers in Scotland will operate will become a function of the new body, to evolve as Friends then see fit. The Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group are preparing papers towards this, and are posting drafts on the GM website for Friends to view. The pre-meeting on 4th June at 7pm will be an opportunity for Friends to meet informally with members of the Co-ordinating Group to discuss these. The present drafts are:

- Governing Document
- Draft General Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Draft Finance Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Possible arrangements for Spiritual and Pastoral care
- Possible committee structure and nominations process
- Possible financial structure and organisation
- Summary of how Intermediate Meetings IMs might work
- What difference might it make to the number of roles

They are on the GM website at Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group documents on: <https://quakerscotland.org/general-meeting/qis-documents>

On 7th June we will consider how a Quakers in Scotland Nominations Committee will operate, as most current service appointments end with the GM triennium on 31st December 2025. Zoe Prosser will speak to this.

Michael Hutchinson

APPENDIX

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Minutes of Area Meeting held on Tuesday 6 May 2025 at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House and by remote videoconferencing

2025/05/09 Quakers in Scotland

Following our threshing meeting on 1 March 2025, the planning group prepared the paper *Quakers in Scotland proposal: a suggested response*. This was circulated in advance of this meeting and comments invited.

Judith Ward (K) has set out some of the points that emerged from the threshing meeting; things that are valued in our current practice; some of the opportunities that change might offer.

Elizabeth Allen (EL), co-convener of trustees for Quakers in Scotland (QiS), has explained the present state of play: the charity has been incorporated; General Meeting for Scotland (GMS) will on 7 June be invited to lay down GMS on 20 September, becoming part of the new charity; Dundee Friends' Property Trust and East Scotland AM have indicated they plan to follow soon after.

We are reminded that as things stand, 'joining' Quakers in Scotland means the dissolution of our Area Meeting as a charity.

We have heard of the joy and excitement felt by some at the process we have been through in setting up Quakers in Scotland and the opportunities for shaping the change that is to come.

Others are not reassured by the current process. There is a feeling that greater detail is needed on matters such as funds. The questions in the suggested response (referred to in para 1 above) demand attention.

We recognise there is a range of viewpoints.

We ask ourselves where trust lies: are we unwilling to embark on an adventure with the rest of Scottish Quakers?

We have heard that this is part of a bigger picture – making ourselves into a simpler church to take our message into the world. Across Britain at both local and national levels, Quakers are taking steps. A spiritual journey will not have a blueprint, but we should work together in love.

We are reminded that SESAM's expressed reluctance to commit is causing anxiety in other parts of the Quaker body in Scotland; and that the prospect of joining QiS is causing anxiety within SESAM. We are also reminded that Area Meeting is simply a vehicle for how we do our work; we do not worship our structure.

We ask the QiSCG and the trustees of the QiS charity to offer:

1. Plans for how key issues will be handled following the transfer of responsibilities: specifically sharing of finances; management of property; safeguarding;
2. An outline of whether fewer jobs (other than trustee roles) will be needed;
3. Proposed arrangements for maintaining eldership and pastoral care under any new, more flexible system;
4. Proposed systems to guard against local meetings becoming isolated: from surrounding LMs, from QiS, and/or from BYM;
5. Ideas for how the current Area Meetings might work together, and together with QiS, as an interim measure or for the foreseeable future.

We wish through this process to reach a position where we can make an informed and guided decision as to dissolving SESAM in order to be part of Quakers in Scotland.

Alastair Cameron, clerk