**Summary of how Option 4 (evolving) might work**

**Jane Mitchell, Lesley Richards, January 2025**

In listening to Friends discuss Option 4, it has become apparent that it opens the way for a variety of different approaches in different parts of Scotland. Quakers in Scotland (QiS) is made up of worshipping communities of Friends. Assuming all four current AMs decide to formally become part of QiS, Quaker membership, for all Scottish Friends, would be held by QiS as their new AM. Worshipping communities may be geographically based Local Meetings (LMs) or Worshipping Groups (WGs), e.g., Nairn WG, or they may be online e.g., WSAM Sunday Evening Meeting or a group such as Glasgow Young Friends. Friends from these communities could, as sometimes happens at present, come together into what we are calling intermediate meetings (IMs). We originally imagined these meetings as being flexible and fluid, but it would be possible to have a group of worshipping communities decide to meet regularly and to appoint a clerk for a set term, as current AMs do. Friends could connect in a variety of combinations and patterns as suits them, for example

* residential events, e.g., Pluscarden, Wiston weekend, Away Days and West Coast Friends Gathering,
* meetings of the Friends in one of the current AMs
* learning events, e.g. study groups, discussion groups, Woodbrooke courses, held in person, blended or online
* joint meetings for worship
* social events, meetings for eating, ceilidhs, poetry reading groups, walks etc
* some outreach events.

The initiative and planning for these events would come from Friends in the worshipping communities involved. Such intermediate meetings may, or may not, choose to handle some items of QiS business delegated to them, but they are under no obligation to do so. QiS might, if an IM desired, delegate items of business, such as applications for membership, appointing a chaplain for a local hospital, arrangements for marriage, in each case nominating elders and pastoral care friends as appropriate to the grouping. They might also take other items of local business, not the responsibility of QiS. Where an IM, in agreement with QiS, takes on formal QiS business, whether as a one off basis, or more regularly, it would need to comply with some agreed principles:

* It is organised by a team comprising some mixture of Elders, Pastoral Care Friends, and LM clerks to ensure that the Quaker business method is correctly followed.
* These Friends must be from at least three different communities to avoid congregationalism.
* A Friend must be named to act as clerk so that there is a clear responsibility for managing the business.
* The meeting, with its agreed agenda[[1]](#endnote-1), must be advertised[[2]](#endnote-2) and open to all Friends in the AM to permit any Friend to attend if they are so led.
* The minutes would be full minutes of QiS and would need to be sent to the QiS clerk as soon as practicable.

1. The agenda needs to be agreed in advance with the QiS clerk so that they can keep track of what business is being considered at which meeting. It is important that no IM agrees a minute that imposes an obligation on other QiS Friends whose worshipping communities are not part of the IM. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. It is important that all Friends are able to decide if they feel led to attend the meeting, but a flood of separate emails giving notice of meetings would be counterproductive. Friends will need to agree a minimum notice period, say a fortnight. If an IM were planned its meetings for a whole calendar year, these dates could be published alongside the dates for QiS. If the date of an IM is planned in time for this to be recorded in the QiS minutes a fortnight ahead of the meeting, then this would give the necessary notice. If an IM is planned without it being possible to use the QiS minutes to give notice, then some other means of informing Friends needs to be found to comply with Qf&p 4.07. The details of ongoing communications have not been agreed. It would be enough for the clerks of Local Meetings to give notice, or possibly just general reminder that a list of forthcoming meetings can be found on the Scottish Quaker website.

   The website could also be used to publish the agreed agenda. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)