

Report of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group to GM 13th June 2020

Appointment of a Parliamentary Engagement Officer:

We had 38 applications for the post from which a shortlist of 4 was drawn up however because of the lockdown and the financial implications of this for BYM, it was decided by BYM trustees and agreed by GM trustees, that we should not go forward with interviews or appoint at this stage. Some area meeting representatives on the PEWG have reported that there is some concern in their meetings about this delay, given the opportunities for advocacy at this time when climate action and a new green economy are issues which many Quakers see as of immediate importance. Grace Da Costa who is Public Affairs and Advocacy manager at Friends House is acting PEO for the moment as well as undertaking her own work at BYM level.

Members of the PEWG are all working hard to attend the many meetings and webinars on Scottish Government matters as well as working with partner organisations on advocacy. The PEWG has met by Zoom twice in recent weeks to co-ordinate work on Stop Climate Chaos Scotland actions, responses to consultations and discussions on green economic recovery

Climate Action:

Just Transition: the PEWG has submitted a response to the Just Transition Commission Interim Report consultation. The Just Transition Commission was set up by the Scottish Government last year to provide Scottish Ministers with practical, realistic, and affordable recommendations for action and should deliver its final report early next year. The PEWG was greatly assisted in its consultation response by the staff member at Friends House who heads up the work on sustainability and economic justice. We are emailing copies of our submission to local clerks who can identify who in their meeting would be interested to read this.

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland: Members of the PEWG have been attending SCCS All Coalition meetings as well as the public campaigns sub group and the interfaith sub group. There is a great deal of work being done by SCCS which requires quick responses to position statements, letters to Government and responses to consultations.

COP26 UK coalition: this is the Stop Climate Chaos UK coalition which drafted letters to the UK Prime Minister and to the First Minister of Scotland. Once we had altered a small part of the wording Elizabeth Allen signed the letter to Nicola Sturgeon on our behalf. Paul Parker signed a similar letter to Boris Johnson.

Climate Action and economic recovery: Recently, the independent Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER), set up by the Scottish government to provide expert economic advice in response to the COVID-19 crisis, asked for submissions from interested parties. There was a very short time-frame and SCCS

co-ordinated a response which we fed into. Increasingly groups are coming together to look at how a “green recovery” can be achieved.

Friends of the Earth, Christian Aid, War on Want and Action Aid recently held 2 webinars to discuss how the UK and Scotland’s fair share of climate action can be delivered. Members of the PEWG attended and wrote a report. Other individual Quakers also attended.

Advocacy and local meetings: we have a sense that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is quite a groundswell of interest and energy in local meetings in relation to how we can build an economic recovery round green principles and economic justice. We feel that local meetings are not always aware of the work being done nor the ways they could channel their concerns. We will therefore be circulating our Just Transition submission to local meetings so that they could use some of that for their own advocacy. Local meetings may want to get involved with other groups in their area even creating mini-citizen assemblies to look at what needs to be done to ensure that both local and Scottish governments “build back better” and do not slip back to the old way of doing things. We also plan to get in touch with the political parties at Holyrood to see how we can feed into their manifestos in preparation for the Scottish elections next year. We would then create some templates so that local Quakers can lobby their MSPs.

Build Back Better: BYM is part of the Build Back Better UK coalition which will be launched on Tuesday 2nd June and will then say something about it on the Quakers in Britain website following a joint statement from coalition members a few days after. ‘Build back better’ is of course a broader term being used by lots of organisations, and at BYM they are talking about what it means for Quakers specifically.

Interested local Quakers note that there is a QPSW online event on 16th June on Build Back Better

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):

Grace has been attending meetings about the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scottish legislation. We are working on this with Together Scotland the umbrella organisation for children. Our particular interest is in relation to military visits to schools.