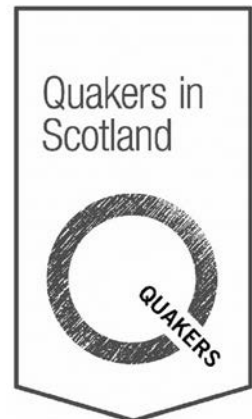


GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

At a blended Meeting held in Inverness at the Methodist Church, Huntly St, Inverness IV3 5PR, and by Zoom, on 16th September 2023



MINUTES

23/09/01 Opening worship

During our opening worship, our assistant clerk has read section 15.01 *Quaker faith & practice*, where Christine Davis describes a Quaker understanding of stewardship that rests on being faithful to 'prayer, thought and application'.

23/09/02 Andy Byer

Andy Byer, the minister here at the Methodist Church, has welcomed us.

23/09/03 Welcome to all present

We welcome all Friends who are with us today, both by Zoom and in Inverness.

The numbers of those present for all or part of the meeting were:

East Scotland AM	13 (3 in Inverness, 10 on Zoom)
North Scotland AM	22 (16 in Inverness, 6 on Zoom)
South East Scotland AM	17 (6 in Inverness, 11 on Zoom)
West Scotland AM	20 (6 in Inverness, 14 on Zoom)
Visitors	1 (1 in Inverness).

Total: 73, including 4 attenders

We thank North Scotland Area Meeting Friends acting as elders for us: Bryan Ashley online and Anthony Buxton in Inverness. We ask East Scotland AM to provide Friends to act as elders for our next meeting.

23/09/04 General Meeting Administrator

Sue Proudlove, who has served us as our Administrator since 2019, left us as an employee, on 7th September after a handover to Jane Booth of Aberdeen Meeting. We thank Sue for her service, which has been much appreciated, and welcome Jane to this role.

23/09/05 Agenda

We adopt the agenda as circulated in advance and as now amended.

23/09/06 Reporter to *The Friend* and *Scottish Friend*

We thank South East Scotland Area Meeting for arranging for Mary Woodward (Portobello & Musselburgh LM) to report on this meeting for *The Friend* and *Scottish Friend*. We ask North Scotland Area Meeting to provide the name of a Friend to report on our next meeting.

23/09/07 New members, transfers and deaths

From Area Meeting minutes since General Meeting held 10th June, we record the following:

TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

Helen Conner from Central England AM to WSAM

Jennifer Copey from SESAM to WSAM

NEW MEMBERS

Mark Huxham (SESAM)

DEATHS

Irene Allan (ESAM) on 13th February 2023

Rosina Gentle (ESAM) on 14th May 2023

Gill Conacher (ESAM) on 19th May 2023

Mary Collier (ESAM) on 8th August 2023

Isobel Thomson (WSAM) on 8th August 2023

Eleanor Fairclough (NSAM) on 19th August 2023

Michael Newbury (SESAM) on 24th July 2023

Jim McAuslin (SESAM) on 12th August 2023

[ESAM = East Scotland Area Meeting; NSAM = North Scotland Area Meeting;
SESAM = South East Scotland Area Meeting and WSAM = West Scotland Area Meeting]

23/09/08 Options for Scotland

Further to minute 23/06/11, we receive the further report of the Options for Scotland 2 Working Group (Paper A1). This has been before all four Area Meetings in Scotland, and we receive their minutes as follows (Paper A2):

- 23.08.04 of East Scotland AM held 12th August 2023;
- 035/23 of West Scotland AM held 19th August 2023;
- 15/23 of North Scotland AM held 26th August 2023;
- 2023/09/08 of South East Scotland AM held 6th September 2023.

Copies of these minutes and the introductory paper from the Options 2 Group are filed with our minutes.

The report includes this paragraph:

“In order to make progress we want Friends to feel that they will enjoy and be energised by being part of a single community of Quakers in Scotland. To get there we have to undertake the administrative and legal steps required to make the transition to new arrangements. This transition must be flexible to accommodate the pace of change at which the AMs and GM feel ready to move. We imagine that the Options for Scotland 3 group will undertake its work by involving Friends across Scotland so that what emerges feels realistic, hopeful and worthwhile.”

The clerk has summarised the path to this point. We have heard from members of the current working group, giving personal reflections on their service. The experience of becoming in unity felt wonderful, as well as the benefit of being together with Friends across Scotland. There was hope coming from the sense of adventure. Our structures are like windows which give access to the Light beyond. We have to care for our windows and ensure they can be seen through, but it is the Light beyond that is our purpose.

The clerk wrote to Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, to seek advice on the constitutional status of General Meeting for Scotland in relation to a possible merger into a new charity. This is because General Meeting is defined in section 5.03 of *Quaker faith & practice*, which may only be changed in substance by Yearly Meeting in session. Paul Parker has replied to say:

“I’m encouraged to see that General Meeting for Scotland is progressing with its consideration of options for Scotland. I’m comfortable that if a single body were created to provide governance of all Quaker activities in Scotland, replacing or absorbing the functions of the current GM and the four AMs, then BYM would see that as the successor body to General Meeting for Scotland for the purposes of *Quaker faith & practice* 5.03.

“Meeting for Sufferings has already given its encouragement to Friends in Wales & the Marches and in London to move to having an overarching body, and, as you say, Scottish Friends would need to do the same. I don’t think it would be necessary to seek additional endorsement in advance from Yearly Meeting before proceeding to put in place arrangements for the duties laid upon the GM in 5.03 to be carried out by the new overarching body. I would assume that the current financial arrangement whereby the GM receives a grant from BYM for those functions would continue also.

“Once the arrangements are in place, the book of discipline can be amended to reflect them. This could probably be carried out by Meeting for Sufferings under the arrangement whereby minor amendments can be handled by them and reported to Yearly Meeting after the event. It’s likely that the new book of discipline will focus on underlying principles more than on the detail of how they are reflected in structures. That means the current 5.03 may well be considerably simplified and more explanatory in nature, so it will just be a question of keeping the current text in line with practice until that can be approved by YM, which we currently expect to be in 2030.”

The questions asked of Area Meetings (and General Meeting) were:

1. Is the AM interested in taking the planning for a single charity further? (A definite commitment will come later when we have done more detailed work on things like the constitution so that Friends can have a clear idea what they are considering joining.)
2. Is the AM happy to have the GM nominations committee find any further names needed for Friends to serve in particular ways in relation to Quakers in Scotland? (For example they may need to find Friends to serve as the first trustees of a new SCIO.)
3. Are Friends happy to work with Friends across Scotland in fleshing out the various aspects of Quakers in Scotland beyond the work towards the single charity?
4. Are Friends content that General Meeting write to Meeting for Sufferings on behalf of all Area Meetings explaining the work we are engaged in?

All four Area Meetings answered in the affirmative to all four questions. Dundee Friends Property Trust also wishes to be part of this process.

We note the comments and affirmation from area meetings and also note the concerns expressed in the South East Scotland AM minute. Friends have spoken to and considered those concerns.

We, as a General Meeting, also agree affirmatively to these four questions.

We asked last time for a new working group, Options for Scotland 3, to be set up and will hear nominations to it, and consider its convenorship, shortly. The clerk, as asked, drew up terms of reference for this group and we ask the clerk to update these in the light of comments made today, and to bring the revised document to our November meeting for approval. We agree to change the name of the group to Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group.

What we have agreed to today gives authority to the new group for our Scotland-wide process to work with our structures so that our diverse and active community of Friends can adapt to the situation we are now in. We are giving authority for:

- draft documents to be brought to us for the decision on having a single charity, following liaison with the six trustee bodies;
- wider options to be brought to General Meeting and the four Area Meetings on how best our meetings might evolve, if they wish, and be grouped together;
- how we could improve common ways of working together, such as for eldership and pastoral care, and for learning and growth.

In moving forward, we need to ensure we maintain the Quaker principle whereby all can take part in decision making in a structure that allows for that. We also need to ensure that a new trustee body is able to continue the broader long-term work currently undertaken by GM Trustees within the context of a wider remit that would include finance and property.

We are grateful to the Options for Scotland Working Group 2 for their service on our behalf as it is laid down today.

We began this wider process some five years ago, starting with a reading of *Advices & queries 27*:

“Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God’s guidance and offering counsel to one another?”

This is still very relevant for us today. We have celebrated what we are already, and hope what we can become will give us new adventure.

23/09/09 Nominations Report

There were no appointments made by between-meetings procedure since our last meeting.

Nominations Committee has brought us the following nominations to serve on the Options for Scotland Working Group 3 (now the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group):

To serve from the rise of General Meeting on 16th September until the process is through, or as determined by the General Meeting:

Pam Brunt	(East Scotland AM, St Andrews LM)
Peter Christy	(West Scotland AM, Ayrshire LM)
Kate Gulliver	(West Scotland AM, Ayrshire LM)
Ken Jobling	(South East Scotland AM, Central Edinburgh LM)
Alex Page	(North Scotland AM, Forres LM)
Martin Pippard	(East Scotland AM, Dundee LM)
Lesley Richards	(Worcester & Shropshire AM) – as convener
Neil Turner	(South East Scotland AM, South Edinburgh LM)

One further name to come.

We agree to these nominations, as amended in this meeting, with Lesley Richards appointed as a member of the group and for the group to choose its own convener.

We agree that further appointments to the group be made by the between-meetings procedure.

We thank members of our Nominations Committee for their service.

23/09/10 Quaker Truth & Integrity Group (QTIG)

Further to minute 23/06/09, we have heard that some Scottish Friends have joined the Quaker Truth & Integrity Group (QTIG). Our Parliamentary Engagement Group is keeping abreast of developments in this area.

QTIG is running two webinars with Woodbrooke, on 16th November and on 23rd November - both in the evening. Speakers will include Members of the Westminster Parliament. See the Woodbrooke website for details.

23/09/11 Enquirers' days 13th May and 23rd September

We heard about the spring enquirers' event at our last meeting (minute 23/06/17 refers) but sadly the 'Meet a Quaker' event planned for Falkirk on Saturday 23rd September (Paper C) has had to be cancelled owing to lack of any take-up. We thank Mariot Dallas and Cath Dyer for all the work they put in for such a disappointing outcome.

We thank South East Scotland AM for arranging enquirers' events this year and ask West Scotland Area Meeting to undertake the event(s) in 2024, asking other Area Meetings to appoint Friends to work with them. This should meet the request noted in minutes 22/11/17 and 22/03/23 about involving area meetings not currently asked to hold these events.

23/09/12 Meeting for Sufferings report

The last Meeting for Sufferings was held on 1st July, at the end of the extra day of Yearly Meeting. This session was open to all Friends registered for Yearly Meeting. In the limited time for discernment, Meeting for Sufferings was not able to give full time to two items to which it will return: the practice of giving a 'loyal address' to the monarch and whether to support the aims and campaign of Stop Ecocide International.

We have received notice from Meeting for Sufferings to nominate a representative and an alternate to Meeting for Sufferings for the triennial period from Yearly Meeting 2024 until Yearly Meeting 2027. This has been passed to our Nominations Committee.

23/09/13 Parliamentary Engagement Working Group report & GM Climate Justice Report

We receive the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) Report to General Meeting September 2023, including the report for GM on Climate Justice

(Paper F) and Martin Pippard has spoken to it, giving us a flavour of the current work. The report has bridge-building as a common theme of the PEWG work. We welcome our new Parliamentary Engagement Officer, Sarah Komashko, who joined us in July. We shall have the opportunity of meeting with her at the next General Meeting on 11th November.

The PEWG heard from Billy Vaughan (BYM Public Affairs Officer) on a new initiative of quiet diplomacy trying to bring together (Westminster) parliamentarians who share our concern for the defence of democratic institutions and truth and integrity in public life. Billy is working closely with QTIG (Quaker Truth and Integrity Group). PEWG can learn from and hope to implement this approach in our work in Scotland.

The children's performance on International Peace Day (21st September) and the Peace at the Heart (PATH) exhibition for MSPs the following week, are imminent. Friends Ellis Brooks and Isabel Cartwright of Quaker Peace & Social Witness' (QPSW) Peace education section have created an inspirational exhibition, and Mary Troup – Glasgow Friend and our YP and Children's coordinator - has created the children's music event which will be shared with MSPs. Representatives of the EIS (Educational Institute of Scotland) teaching union and various mediation organisations have shown a lively interest in the PATH project and several will be guests at the children's performance and will help us staff the exhibition. It is being arranged for them to have a separate meeting (at Edinburgh Central Meeting House) with Ellis Brooks, Peace Education Coordinator for QPSW, to discuss ways to strengthen the adoption of peace education in its broadest sense. It is hoped to draw members of the Parliament's Committee on Education, Children and Young People into these discussions –the MSP sponsoring the events, Michelle Thomson, is a member of that committee and is very enthusiastic about the PATH ideas.

The PATH exhibition has already been on the high road - to Aviemore for the EIS conference, to Pitlochry for our Family Weekend, and to Elgin for the NSAM annual in-person AM gathering in August. Further 'touring' of the PATH exhibition is now starting to take shape. Clearer information about what it consists of, and how to host it, is now available, so Friends and Meetings may contact either our Local Development Worker or the PEWG members if there is a potential venue in your area.

PEWG continues to link connected concerns over Climate Justice.

Tweedale LM Friend Lesley Morrison could be watched earlier this year online for the "Time for Reflection" (TFR) on 'Are we being good ancestors?'. Her sponsoring MSP, Christine Grahame, has since agreed to sponsor a Parliamentary event on the theme 'The Climate Crisis is a Health Crisis', which will be led by Lesley along with two or three other Friends who are members of MEDACT (health workers for health justice). It will be a panel discussion with Questions and Answers, in early 2024. More TFR offers from Scottish Friends are in the pipeline.

PEWG continues to work closely with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS). In contributing to their recent policy 'manifesto' the focus was on the importance of truth-telling about emissions targets; the Make Polluters Pay principle; and the building of Loss and Damage funding and action. PEWG members are also attending SCCS-organised round-tables with officials drawing up the Scottish government's next Climate Change Plan (2024-2040).

PEWG values the partnership with Christian Aid in work related to Loss and Damage, sharing campaign actions and resources, for example around Make Polluters Pay Action Day on 23rd September.

PEWG thanks Friends for taking up opportunities from time to time to work alongside them, for example writing to MSPs about our response to the Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, and asking them to support the PATH events in Parliament. It is so encouraging to know that many Friends across Scotland are working on our shared concerns in a local context. Parliamentary work can be rewarding, but it does mean we can never nestle our heads in the sand. Speaking personally as Convenors, Carolyn and Richard can struggle at times to pluck up motivation in the face of what can be disheartening policy decisions, conflicting priorities, or policy that feels so slow and inadequate as we all face the truth about the future of our wonderful life-giving earth. We continue to hold them in the light, and let them know when Friends are taking advocacy action. Opportunities for service on PEWG from 2024 are available if Friends are interested in joining PEWG.

We thank our PEWG members and convenors for their work on our behalf.

23/09/14 Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

We have received a request from Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) for a one-off donation to support their work. Richard Raggett, co-convenor of our Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) writes:

“The PEWG works with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) to keep up-to-speed on climate advocacy. Andrew Tomlinson chaired its Policy and Advocacy Subcommittee when he was our PEO; Sarah Komashko, our new PEO, attends the monthly meetings of this Subcommittee. She is in contact with the two key SCCS officers and SCCS is our key ally for work on Climate Justice, one of the three PEWG priority areas. We have received a letter from Mike Robinson, chair of the SCCS coalition asking members of the coalition to consider making a donation to SCCS and also mentioning a small increase to subscription rates next year. He sees a great need to "up SCCS's game" for the next critical years leading up to 2030, by which year we need to have made further significant reductions in our carbon emissions to meet the statutory target.”

The suggested amount is £500. Britain Yearly Meeting may make a donation of that amount too. GMS Trustees have considered this request. Their minute (on 12th September) concludes: "We support the donation of £500 from GM funds to SCCS on a one-off basis."

We agree to make this donation.

23/09/15 Correspondence and other business

a) Carbon Emissions Land Tax (CELT)

With the advice of the Parliamentary Engagement Group, the clerk signed a letter to the Scottish Government on 19th June supporting the John Muir Trust's policy proposals on the Carbon Emissions Land Tax (CELT).

b) Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill

With the advice of the Parliamentary Engagement Group, the clerk signed a letter on 19th June to the Deputy First Minister urging a rapid transition to a Wellbeing Economy. The letter was drafted by the Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland, to support the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament.

c) Endorsing the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

With the advice of the Parliamentary Engagement Group, and at the behest of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, the clerk signed a letter on 13th August, on behalf of General Meeting for Scotland, endorsing the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative. Britain Yearly Meeting has also endorsed this initiative.

d) Christian Aid prayer for Afghanistan

General Meeting for Scotland Parliamentary Engagement team works (with the GM clerks) closely with Christian Aid Scotland. The latter asked us to contribute to their UK-wide Prayer for Afghanistan on August 15th which was the 2nd anniversary of the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. Extracts from various readings of this prayer were combined to mark the occasion. Our GM Ecumenical Officer, Mary Woodward from Portobello & Musselburgh Meeting, read it for us and she appeared on the final result as a contribution from Quakers in Scotland.

e) Letter to world leaders attending the G20 Summit

Kate Arnot, our representative on the Scottish Religious Leaders Forum, advised us that we were invited to sign the letter drafted by the Interreligious Dialogue Committee of the Catholic Church in Scotland to send to the leaders attending the G20 Summit in India on the 9th and 10th of September. The letter asks leaders to reconsider their support for, their manufacture of, and their possession of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear arms. The clerk signed this letter on 5th September, on behalf of General Meeting for Scotland.

f) Letter to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee

The clerk sent a letter to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee for its meeting on 16th September (today) outlining issues alive amongst Friends in Scotland that might be considered right to bring before Yearly Meeting 26th - 30th July 2024. This letter will be posted on the General Meeting website.

23/09/16 Local Development Worker – priorities for 2024

Our Local Development Worker (LDW) for Scotland, Zoe Prosser, works annually with her Britain Yearly Meeting line manager and ourselves to determine her priorities for the coming year. Last year, General Meeting endorsed a mechanism for Friends in Scotland to contribute to this process.

An invitation (as in Paper E) has been sent out to Area and Local Meetings in Scotland and Scottish Friends to submit suggestions, by the end of September, for the priorities of the Local Development Worker's work in Scotland for 2024. In mid-October GM Committee, the 4 Scottish Area Meeting clerks, the LDW, and the LDW's line manager will consider the suggested priorities and select two to bring to General Meeting in November.

The current priorities agreed by this process last year are:

1. Expanding role-holder networks
2. Supporting Quaker community building - locally, for families, and for everyone
3. Pointing the way to information about available resources and materials, including videos and non-traditional resources, to help Quaker Meetings and role-holders identify what they need.

To assist us in this task, Zoe has sent us a report (Paper H) of her work this year, and she has spoken to this with a helpful presentation.

We are delighted to have Zoe amongst us.

23/09/17 Central European YM report

Central European Gathering (CEG) was held in Gdansk, Poland from 25th to 28th May 2023 and Busa Cochrane-Muir represented us and was able to attend in Gdansk. She has spoken to her report (Paper D) and brought home to us the reality of how such a diverse and small group of Friends connect and be together. A Friend came up with a metaphor of threads of different colours being woven into one cord which binds all of us together. The event was particularly special in that CEG has now become a Yearly Meeting. The theme for this year's Gathering was "Diversity is our Strength." Friends came from Sweden, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Ukraine, Portugal, the UK, Australia, and Poland who were our hosts this year. The event strengthened the diversity of community of Friends and this year's highlight was

to hold a meeting for worship for Peace in front of the medieval prison in Gdansk old town where Quakers, in the 17th century, had been incarcerated.

23/09/18 Minute from North Scotland AM on Ecocide

We receive minute 34/23 of North Scotland Area Meeting held 26th August on Ecocide (Paper G). We are asked to consider the Stop Ecocide Manifesto for the Criminalisation of Ecocide.

The aim of Stop Ecocide International is to amend the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court by recognising ecocide as a fifth crime against the peace and security of humanity. It is considered no less serious than war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide or aggression.

In June 2021 the Independent Expert Panel for the Legal Definition of Ecocide convened by the Stop Ecocide Foundation, which is the charitable arm of Stop Ecocide International, produced the following definition: "Ecocide" means unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.

We ask our Meeting for Sufferings representatives to report to us in November on its consideration of Ecocide, following which we can undertake our own discernment. We note that West Scotland AM is also looking at this issue in October.

23/09/19 Racial Justice: minute from West Scotland Area Meeting

We receive minute 016/23 on Race and Privilege (Paper B) from West Scotland Area Meeting held on 25th February 2023 and Ann Kerr has spoken to it.

We note that Britain Yearly Meeting is setting up an equity network (led by Edwina Peart, Britain Yearly Meeting Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator) which will have a number of groups including one on anti-racism led by Kate McNally. Woodbrooke is providing a number of learning opportunities to further work on anti-racism, including one on reparations 6-8th October in Milton Keynes. Links to this information will be circulated. We ask Friends to be ready to respond to the West Scotland AM minute next time.

23/09/20 Upcoming business

On 11th November, the business is expected to include the development of the Quakers in Scotland initiative, hearing from our Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group, the GM Budget and donations / affiliations for 2024, receiving the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group report, reviewing our peace witness and giving guidance on priorities for the work of our Local Development Worker. We should also have the Shindig report.

23/09/21 Concluding Minute

We record our thanks to North Scotland Area Meeting Friends for being our hosts today, for all the arrangements for our venue in Inverness and their hospitality that enabled this blended meeting. We also thank our Zoom hosts for this General Meeting.

There being no further business to bring before General Meeting, we conclude, intending to meet next for a blended meeting in Perth on 11th November 2023, if nothing occurs to prevent.

Michael J. Hutchinson,
Clerk

Susan Mitchell,
Assistant Clerk