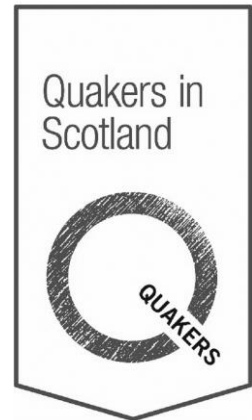


# GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

At a special General Meeting held by video conference, on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2024



## MINUTES

### 24/04/01 Opening worship

During our opening worship our assistant clerk has read section 10.4 from *Quaker faith & practice* where William Charles Braithwaite, in 1905, reminds us that: "The life of a religious society consists in something more than the body of principles it professes and the outer garments of organisation which it wears. These things have their own importance: they embody the society to the world, and protect it from the chance and change of circumstance; but the springs of life lie deeper, and often escape recognition. They are to be found in the vital union of the members of the society with God and with one another, a union which allows the free flowing through the society of the spiritual life which is its strength".

### 24/04/02 Welcome to all present

We welcome all Friends who are with us today through Zoom. We are pleased to welcome the following as ecumenical visitors:

John Bremner, United Reformed Church Ecumenical Officer, and  
Mary Welsh, Ecumenical Officer, Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland.

We also welcome as a visitor:

Lesley Richards (Worcester & Shropshire AM), convenor of the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group.

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

East Scotland AM	17
North Scotland AM	15
South East Scotland AM	38
West Scotland AM	36
Visitors	3

**Total: 109**, including 3 attenders and 3 visitors

The following Friends are acting as elders for us today: Anthony Buxton and Esther Shreeve.

## **24/04/03 Agenda**

We adopt the agenda as circulated in advance.

## **24/04/04 Reporter to *The Friend* and *Scottish Friend***

The clerks will send in reports to *The Friend* and *Scottish Friend*.

## **24/04/05 Nominations and appointments**

By minute 24/03/14, we nominated Douglas Shaw (WSAM, Lanark Local Meeting) to serve as a trustee for Peace and Justice. Douglas is unable to take this service up, so no nomination has been forwarded.

## **24/04/06 Quakers in Scotland: proposals for a single Quaker charity / body**

We meet today to receive Area Meeting minutes giving guidance on questions sent to them on 2<sup>nd</sup> February; reflect on the process so far of forming a single Quaker charity/body in Scotland and where we are now; consider the possibilities for linking together; and determine next steps. In preparation for this meeting, the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group (QiS CG) arranged two online consultations on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> March, at which some 58 Friends took part, in addition to the Co-ordinating Group members.

All Area Meetings (AMs) and General Meeting had previously approved the concept of working towards a single charitable body for Quakers in Scotland, instead of the present 6, and given authority for preparatory work to proceed. In February, Area Meetings were asked to:

1. Confirm approval of the draft Governing Document as a working document.
2. Give authority for the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group (QiS CG) to work with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) to set up the single charity (the SCIO - Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation), within the limits noted below. Appointment of initial trustees will come when the time is ready.
3. Take note of the evolutionary approach to forming Quakers in Scotland, with all Area Meetings and General Meeting engaged together in finding ways forward.

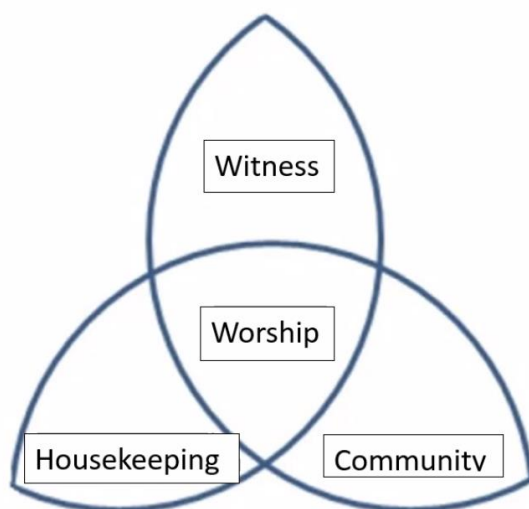
Three AMs have endorsed the draft Governing Document as a working document. The other believes the wording of the draft Governing Document is not yet ready and asked Friends to continue the process of improving it, by raising with the QiS CG matters with which they are unhappy.

Three AMs were content with QiS CG working with OSCR (the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator) to proceed to set up the single charity, whilst one was not in unity on this. This was because some Friends remain uncertain of the wisdom of proceeding to form a single body while certain matters remain unresolved, particularly relating to the ways in which local meetings will work together and relate to one another. One of the other AMs requested that the QiS CG gives clear information on how being a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) is the best option for us, as compared with any other charitable organisation, especially in respect to how membership in the SCIO works in relation to our Membership of the Society of Friends.

Area Meetings generally recognised the evolutionary nature of the overall process, although there was some uncertainty expressed around the proposed timeline and parallel processes. Whilst it was also recognised that some AMs have consistent difficulty filling key roles and this puts pressure on the time process, one AM believes that that work to identify how to strengthen and adapt the Quaker community in Scotland, as part of the re-structuring process, must proceed with urgency first. The AM hopes this will lead to greater clarity in the constitutional areas.

One AM would welcome support and guidance in the extended interim period to ensure it can maintain adequate governance and support its role holders.

The Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group has given us a presentation based on the overlapping trefoil Celtic knot diagram of Quaker organisation and activity (developed by SE Scotland AM) and how these elements all contribute to a fully working religious body:



The diagram also provides a useful way to consider the roles in a Governing Document and Memorandum of Understanding to describe the right ordering of a living body.

We have had time in breakout rooms in response to the presentation, considering the question *What business and activities need to be done at what level by Friends in Scotland?* Notes from each group have been taken for the use of the QiS CG.

In a following time back together, we have considered, through worship sharing, where we are now and potential next steps.

No structure will be perfect, but it can be 'good enough' and the trefoil diagram is a helpful tool to assist us in thinking things through. We can look to harnessing the spirit of excitement and opportunity we have felt today in seeking to work together more flexibly as 'Quakers in Scotland'. Spiritual nurture and pastoral care will be the basis of the way we support our communities. Greater flexibility may become apparent through the way we look at our currently overlapping geographical boundaries. We need, though, to recognise and respect the range of diversity within our AMs. There will be costs and benefits in the process of change and we need be aware of these to ensure the benefits outweigh any detriments. If we find the process feels too complex, we can reflect on our testimony to simplicity to bring us back to where we need to be. Structures need clear purpose and responsibilities, and to be anchored in the needs of the community.

Whilst work on the draft Governing Document will continue, we are not able to proceed in setting up the new charity until further work has been undertaken by QiS CG in response to the minutes received. We are clear we wish to work in unity with each other as Area Meetings and General Meeting, and to take the opportunities given us for thinking through the way we form Quaker communities in Scotland.

We ask the Co-ordinating Group to take note of the issues raised here today and from the Area Meeting minutes and bring us proposals both for our future potential governance and how Friends within Scotland can work in community – ie the 'charity' and the 'church' aspects. The Co-ordinating group will be looking to Friends across Scotland for their input to this work.

Kate Gulliver of QiS CG has briefed us on the revision of the draft Governing Document for a 'Quakers in Scotland'. She has explained how this continues and referred to the reasons for a SCIO giving us the best model for the proposed charity. Friends are encouraged to contact the Co-ordinating Group if they have further queries or comments on the draft Governing Document.

In all of this process, we need to be ready to listen to the still, small voice of the Spirit calling us. We have come back again to the trefoil diagram, which has inspired us.

Waiting is a spiritual discipline that improves our listening and makes us ready for the way that opens. We wish to revitalise our 'tired institutions' so we can carry out our ministry in witness and community, always through the primacy of worship. We must trust each other in moving forward to find a new vision for our future.

We are grateful for the work of Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group: their insights and discernment are valued.

### **24/04/07 Concluding Minute**

We record our thanks to our Zoom hosts and others for the arrangements for our General Meeting today. There being no further business to bring before General Meeting, we conclude, intending to meet next on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2024, if nothing occurs to prevent.

Michael J. Hutchinson,  
Clerk

Susan Mitchell,  
Assistant Clerk