

SESAME

Number 265: April 2026

Area M^{ts}, 13 April/Trustees' reports/Job advert./Prison experiences, 1662, concluded/BDRC: exciting news/George Borrow/QiS/QTIG Award nomination/NFPB/M^{ts} for Sufferings for the last time/Climate Justice news/"85 Seconds to Midnight"/Christian Aid/QPSW discussion paper, A Changing International Order/Woodbrooke courses/Risk Register/AM minutes, January / &c.



A collage of images of the anti-war demonstration at Faslane on 14 March
[with thanks to David Somervell for passing it on].

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SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

The next Area Meeting will be on Monday 13 April at 7.00 pm at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House and online. All associated with Quakers in South East Scotland are welcome.

Sara Davies
Clerk

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Worship and introductions
2. Minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2026
3. Matters arising from previous meetings
 1. *Bursary help for social justice events* (2026/01/05.1 refers)
 2. *Quakers in Scotland* (2026/01/03.1; 2026/01/09)
 3. *Bursary comparison* (2026/01/06.2)
 4. *Paristamen application* (2026/01/12)
4. Trustees [See opposite, and pages 4-5 and 6-7]
 1. *Grant funding of project proposals*
 2. *Actions with QiS*
5. Edinburgh Meeting House Management Committee
 1. *EMHMC: Henry Thompson's final report as convenor*
 2. *Succession planning and future arrangements*
6. Between meetings decisions
 1. *Joint Public Issues Team letter via Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees*
7. Tabular Statement
8. Membership matters
 1. *Report on membership visit*
 2. *Memorial minute: Madeline Patterson, Central Edinburgh*
 3. *Membership resignation*
 4. *Membership transfers*
 5. *Membership queries*
 6. *Membership Reports – recommendations*
9. Appointments
 1. *Nominations received*
 2. *Released from service*
 3. *BYM appointments*
 4. *Yearly Meeting representatives*
10. Matters from local meetings
 1. *Falkirk & Polmont: Cladhan Hotel witness*
 2. *Central Edinburgh: Threshing Meeting on Intermediate Meetings*
 3. *Quaker Meeting in Berwick-upon-Tweed* (2024/11/08.3; 2025/01/03.3)

11. Outreach and Reports
 1. *Nomination for Quaker Truth and Integrity Award* [See page 21]
 2. *Enquirers' event*
 3. *Parliamentary Engagement Officer*
 4. *Yearly Meeting* [See pages 43 & 59]
12. Closing minute

TRUSTEES OF SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

Report to Area Meeting, 13 April 2026

Introduction

Trustees are reporting progress on two items for this Area Meeting: recommendations on grant funding of projects, and actions to further collaboration with QiS.

Recommendations on Funding of Projects

The outline budget approved by Area Meeting in November (minute 2025/11/7) includes £100k over the next three years to fund projects other than building works. Proposals have been invited from Friends, and nine were received. We are grateful to Friends for the effort which they put into considering and formulating them. Projects were considered by Trustees at their meeting on 31 March. Mark Ballard, as proposer of one of them, recused himself from the decisions made.

The attached table [*overleaf*] summarises six projects recommended to Area Meeting for funding (subject to certain conditions). Three other proposals received are not recommended for funding at this stage. Further detail on any or all of the proposals is available on request. The total commitment would use up the allocated £100k, but there is potential for co-funding to reduce the final cost.

Area Meeting is asked to consider the recommendations. Suggestions for revision of the project proposals may be sent to the Trustees in writing.

Collaboration with Quakers in Scotland

SESAM minuted at its meeting on 19:1:26 "*We find unity in our desire to be a continuing part of the Quaker community in Scotland and in our willingness to assist in exploring new and creative ways of meeting and working both regionally and nationally*" and later in the minute "*We want to work with QiS in developing our relationship. We ask our Trustees to ... provide a review of options in due course and explore a written agreement.*"

Following that mandate, SESAM Trustees, in consultation with QiS Trustees, have drawn up the attached table [*pages 6-7*] of possible next steps in collaboration. In each area of activity our proposal is to share information on policies and activities, align these where possible, and integrate them wherever there is clear advantage in doing so. None of them makes any

[Continued on page 6]

| Proposal | Proposer(s) | Description |
|---|--|---|
| Children & Young People's Development Worker (CPDW) | Mark Ballard (SESAM) Kirsty Philbrick (BYM staff) | <p>Employment of a p/t CPDW (3 days pw) to be managed formally through BYM staff structures, but with SESAM Friends closely involved in recruitment, discerning priorities and monitoring delivery.</p> <p>At the recent Wiston weekend, only two of 60 attendees were aged 11–18, highlighting the need for focused support to strengthen long-term engagement and sustainability.</p> <p>A CYPDW would work with Quakers across the region to expand and strengthen opportunities for children and young people. The role could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Helping Local Meetings better welcome and include children, young people and families. * Supporting outreach beyond Quaker families and finding ways to release parents. * Developing or strengthening youth groups and residential opportunities for teenagers. * Assisting with volunteer recruitment, training, safeguarding and event planning. * Encouraging new models of community, such as area-wide family gatherings or residential camps. |
| Research into Quakers in Scotland and slavery. | Mark Bitel (SESAM) | <p>Researching into the involvement of Quakers in Scotland in the enslavement of Africans, the trade of goods produced by enslaved people and in abolition efforts.</p> <p>In 2025, Central Edinburgh LM, SESAM, and subsequently QiS adopted a concern to find out more, following similar research by Meetings in England.</p> <p>An outreach event attended by 57 people, demonstrated strong interest in taking this forward. The project would be overseen by an advisory group of Friends and supervised by Professor Tommy Curry of the University of Edinburgh.</p> |
| Holidays for refugees and asylum seekers | Lynne Barty (SESAM) | <p>To arrange for one or two groups comprising 12 x 12 refugees/asylum seekers plus 2 x 2 volunteer leaders to stay at Glenthorne, Grasmere on one or two of their Welcome weekends, dedicated for this purpose, dependent on their availability. This would take forward some of the work for which an unsuccessful bid to "Paristamen" was made.</p> |
| Work that reconnects | Chris Booth Lesley Morrison (SESAM) | <p>A weekend workshop at Wiston (not the Wiston weekend) to support Quakers in responding spiritually and practically to the climate crisis. Its purpose is to acknowledge the existential challenges we face, build resilience, and nurture hope-filled action. Participants will be guided through the spiral process developed by Joanna Macy: Starting from gratitude; Honouring our pain for the world; Seeing with new/ancient eyes; Going forth with hope. Parallel sessions for teenagers and childcare for younger children will ensure the event is family-friendly and accessible. 60% of accommodation costs to be paid by participants.</p> |
| Outreach | Rosemary Hartill (SESAM) | <p>Three elements to this proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Quakers meeting here" teardrop flags (cost c. £300 ea.) for each of our ten Meetings to display during Meeting for Worship. • An interactive session to reflect on our purpose, strengths and direction in light of challenges and opportunities. • A practical, facilitated session focused on outreach including exercises and discernment of concrete actions. |
| Life Writing for Transformation (LWT) | Anna Levin (SESAM) | <p>LWT, devised in Canada, was brought to Woodbrooke by Stuart Masters; it can be seen as a contemporary revival of an established Quaker tradition of spiritual autobiography. Anna is a trained LWT facilitator and proposes a workshop, free to participants, to result in a published anthology of personal stories so that "people deepen their own awareness of their Quakerism and by sharing these stories, strengthen connections and so deepen the community of our Area Meeting."</p> |

| Total Cost | Trustees' Recommendations |
|---------------|---|
| £82k | Trustees recommend that funding is committed to enable recruitment for a two year post, but with an invitation to QiS to co-fund and co-own if they wish, to extend the geographical scope and provide parity across Scotland. MoU between SESAM and BYM to be amended to include appropriate management arrangements. |
| £5k (£10k) | The request was for £10k out of an overall cost of £20k for a one year postgraduate research project. Trustees recommend commitment at this stage of £5k and an invitation to QiS to co-fund, since the project is equally relevant (or more so) to other areas of Scotland. |
| (£4.7k) | In principle Trustees would like to support this project but need more information on how it will work in practice, including developing a support team within SESAM. |
| £4.6k | Trustees recommend committing these funds, noting that the workshop will only go ahead if there is sufficient demand identified. For transparency we have added here the £600 also requested towards the cost of running a fourth series of these workshops at St Mary's in Edinburgh. |
| (<£3.7k) | Trustees recommend pursuing elements of this proposal, which could be funded out of the outreach budget. Flags could be offered to local meetings on a pilot basis. More work needs to be done on this and the workshops would need to be linked closely with SESAM activity and meetings. |
| £2.7k | Trustees recommend committing these funds, noting that the workshop will only go ahead if there is sufficient demand. Contributions towards costs will be invited from participants. |

[From page 3] assumption about whether SESAM continues to exist or not – a question on which SESAM has not decided – but the results of the exercise should be beneficial in either case. Area Meeting is invited to note these actions. Trustees would be happy to receive any comments or suggestions on them in writing.

Martin Ward
Clerk to SESAM Trustees

Possible next steps for a number of SESAM responsibilities

General plan

Phase 1, mandate from Area Meeting on 19 January 2026 for SESAM office holders to work jointly with QiS office holders to:

Harmonise policies > Align processes > Combine processes > Report progress to SESAM

Phase 2, dependent on future SESAM decisions:

Whether to hand over assets and risks to QiS > Whether to merge charity with QiS >

Whether to lay down or transform AM

| | Lead | Next Steps | Deliverables | Questions and notes |
|-------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Governance | | | | |
| Governance | Trustees and AM/QiS clerks | Establish task force of QiS and SESAM Trustees Compare governing documents Identify issues | Clarification of 'attenders', 'members', 'Quakers' in governing documents. | <i>How are trustees kept accountable to the worshipping community (where "church" and "charity" meet)? Are the worshipping communities able to reach decisions and guide trustees? Can Trustees be accountable to more than one Area Meeting (experience from Wales, Yorkshire, London and Legal issues with this)? Could the 'intermediate meetings' proposal meet SESAM needs?</i> |
| Charity | | | | |
| Finance | Treasurers (SESAM Treasurer is on QiS finance c'ttee) | Compare financial systems and processes Identify issues | Aligned financial systems and processes, incl. multi-year budget. | <i>Future of restricted, designated and unrestricted funds? Restricted funds for building maintenance?</i> |
| Property | Attendance from Edinburgh and Kelso MH committees (or trustees) at QiS property committee by invitation. Invitation to QiS property c'ttee members to attend SESAM MHMCs. | Compare property histories, use, management Compare & collate resources e.g. internal and external expertise Finalise and share MoUs on property management | Scotland-wide property strategy | <i>Edinburgh MH is a larger scale enterprise than other properties. How to encourage engagement with EMH from Friends in neighbouring meetings, not just CE?</i> |
| Employment | Trustee reps | Compare employment policies and processes, including line management | Aligned employment policies and processes, including on line management. | <i>How to ensure compatibility and links with budget setting process? SESAM has combined property and finance committee for EMH to manage this link</i> |

| | | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|--|---|
| | | and pension provision | | |
| Insurance | Covered by finance c'ttee | Compare policies, coverage and costs | | <i>Can a single policy cover two charities?</i> |
| Risk Management | Trustee clerks | Compare risk management approaches | Aligned registers of risks. | <i>Risks sit with SESAM until explicitly transferred once QiS has agreed to take them on.</i> |
| Safeguarding | Safeguarding leads | Confirm aligned safeguarding policy and procedures | Continue Scotland-wide safeguarding policy | |
| Health & Safety | H&S leads | Compare H&S policies and procedures | Aligned H&S policies and procedures. | |
| IT | IT leads | Compare current policies and practice | Joint IT strategy | <i>Largely done already.</i> |
| Data Protection | Data protection leads, membership clerks, IT team? | Compare current policies and practice | Aligned data protection policy applied | <i>Draft Data Processing Agreement sent to QiS Trustees for their consideration. This would enable QiS Administrator to continue maintaining the list of members as data processor for SESAM, while SESAM remains as data controller respecting wishes of those who have not agreed to be members of QiS.</i> |
| Archives | Archiving leads | Compare archiving policies Locate archives Recommend locations for archives | Aligned archiving policy applied | <i>Where to archive paper records (National Archives no longer accepting paper?). Whether to trust electronic storage.</i> |
| Church | | | | |
| Membership | Mem'ship clerks Administrator Elders/pastoral care reps? LDW | Comparison & alignment of procedures Planning for how SESAM mem'ship might be transferred | Seamless continuation of list management and administration, compliant with data protection rules. | <i>How to welcome fellow seekers into a worshipping community in a way meaningful to both parties?</i> |
| Eldership | Convenors of Elders LDW | Compare appointment, training, networking opportunities | Elders supported by effective networks | <i>How to help meetings which are struggling? How to deal with conflict in meetings?</i> |
| Pastoral care | Pastoral care convenors LDW | Compare appointment, training, networking opportunities | Pastoral care teams supported by effective networks | <i>Back-up resources for specific pastoral care needs? Could be jointly with Elders?</i> |
| Appointments | Nominations convenors LDW | Compare appointment processes and align | Finding the right Friends for roles whether appointed by QiS or SESAM. | <i>Filling roles and involving Friends – finding the right balance How to maintain links between LMs and, e.g., BYM representatives (congregationalism risk)?</i> |

NOTE: 'LDW' = Local Development Worker

NORTHERN FRIENDS PEACE BOARD

Coordinator – job & application details

Three years initially, 28 hours per week

We are looking for a Coordinator to help our small Quaker peace organisation to continue to thrive when our current Coordinator retires at the end of 2026.

You will work with NFPB trustees and members to support Quakers in the North of Britain in their peace work, which covers a wide range of issues. As the only employee, you will need to be self-motivated, flexible and able to work with volunteers and other organisations. The role includes planning and arranging events, networking, communications and administrative tasks. We are looking for someone who is passionate about helping others work for peace.

We would like the new Coordinator to be in post by early October to allow a reasonable handover with the current Coordinator.

Location: Home and NFPB office (location to be determined after appointment – currently in Bolton).

Salary: £31,200 (FTE £39,000)

Selection timetable

Closing date for applications: 24 April 2026, 5pm

First interviews for shortlisted candidates: 19 May, online

Second interviews: 23 June, Quaker Meeting House, Bolton

Contact: recruitment@nfpb.org.uk

Job description and person specification:

<https://nfpb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/NFPB-Coordinator-job-des-person-spec-March-2026.pdf>

NFPB background information:

<https://nfpb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/NFPB-Background-information-document-March-2026.pdf>

There is more about the most recent meeting of the NFPB on page 23; and more about its next, in York on 13 June, on page 59.

Prison Experiences of an Early Friend *continued*

Having been arrested in October 1662 as part of a crackdown on dissenters after the discovery of an alleged plot to assassinate Charles II for which six men were hanged, drawn and quartered, Thomas Ellwood spent ten weeks in the prison at Bridewell, between Fleet Street and the Thames, before appearing at the Old Bailey. He then was sent to Newgate, where he and the other Friends with him were "thrust into the common side", which he describes as "hell upon earth". Our first extract from his Journal, The History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood, ended when he was on the point of being returned to Bridewell; here he describes how this came about:

WHEN WE CAME THERE [to Newgate] we found that side of the prison very full of Friends, who were prisoners there before (as indeed were at that time all the other parts of that prison, and most of the other prisons about the town), and our addition caused a great throng on that side. Notwithstanding which we were kindly entertained by our friends whom we found there, and entertained by them as well as their condition would admit, until we could get in our accommodations and provide for ourselves.

We had the liberty of the hall, which is on the first stor[e]y over the gate, and which in the day-time is common to all the prisoners on that side, felons as well as others, to walk in and to beg out of; and we had also the liberty of some other rooms over that hall, to walk or work in a-days. But in the night we all lodged in one room, which was large and round, having in the middle of it a great pillar of oaken timber, which bore up the chapel that is over it.

To this pillar we fastened our hammocks at the one end, and to the opposite wall on the other end, quite round the room, and in three degrees, or three storeys high, one over the other; so that they who lay in the upper and middle row of hammocks were obliged to go to bed first, because they were to climb up to the higher by getting into the lower. And under the lower rank of hammocks, by the wall-sides, were laid beds upon the floor, in which the sick and such weak persons as could not get into the hammocks lay. And indeed, though the room was large and pretty airy, yet the breath and steam that came from so many bodies, of different ages, conditions, and constitutions, packed up so close together, was enough to cause sickness amongst us, and I believe did so. For there were many sick and some very weak, though we were not long there, yet in that time one of our fellow-prisoners, who lay in one of those pallet-beds, died.

This caused some bustle in the house; for the body of the deceased being laid out and put into a coffin, was carried down and set in the room called the Lodge, that the coroner might inquire into the cause and manner of his death. And the manner of their doing it is thus: As soon as the coroner is come the turnkeys run out into the street under the gate, and seize upon every man that passes by, till they have got enough to make up the cor-

oner's inquest. And so resolute these rude fellows are, that if any man resist or dispute it with them, they drag him in by main force, not regarding what condition he is of. Nay, I have been told they will not stick to stop a coach, and pluck the men out of it.

It so happened that at this time they lighted on an ancient man, a grave citizen, who was trudging through the gate in great haste, and him they laid hold on, telling him he must come in and serve upon the coroner's inquest. He pleaded hard, begged and besought them to let him go, assuring them that he was going on some very urgent business, and that the stopping him would be greatly to his prejudice. But they were deaf to all entreaties, and hurried him in, the poor man chaffing without remedy.

When they had got their complement, and were shut in together, the rest of them said to this ancient man, "Come, father, you are the oldest among us; you shall be our foreman". And when the coroner had sworn them on the jury, the coffin was uncovered, that they might look upon the body. But the old man, disturbed in his mind at the interruption they had given him, and grown somewhat fretful upon it, said to them: "To what purpose do you show us a dead body here? You would not have us think, sure, that this man died in this room! How then shall we be able to judge how this man came by his death unless we see the place wherein he died, and wherein he hath been kept prisoner before he died? How know we but the incommodiousness of the place wherein he was kept may have occasioned his death? Therefore show us," said he, "the place wherein this man died." This much displeased the keepers, and they began to banter the old man, thinking to have beaten him off it. But he stood up tightly to them: "Come, come," said he, "though you have made a fool of me in bringing me in hither, ye shall not find a child of me now I am here. Mistake not yourselves: I understand my place and your duty: and I require you to conduct me and my brethren to the place where this man died: refuse it at your peril."

They now wished they had let the old man go about his business, rather than by troubling him have brought this trouble on themselves. But when they saw he persisted in his resolution and was peremptory, the coroner told them they must go shew him the place.

It was in the evening when they began this work, and by this time it was grown bedtime with us, so that we had taken down our hammocks, which in the day were hung up by the walls, and had made them ready to go into, and were undressing ourselves in readiness to go into them; when on a sudden we heard a great noise of tongues and of trampling of feet coming up towards us. And by and by one of the turnkeys, opening our door, said: "Hold, hold; do not undress yourselves: here is the coroner's inquest coming to see you."

As soon as they were come to the door, for within the door there was scarce room for them to come, the foreman, who led them, lifting up his hand, said: "Lord bless me! What a sight is here! I did not think there had

been so much cruelty in the hearts of Englishmen to use Englishmen in this manner. We need not now question," said he to the rest of the jury, "how this man came by his death; we may rather wonder that they are not all dead, for this place is enough to breed an infection among them. Well," added he, "if it please God to lengthen my life till to-morrow, I will find means to let the King know how his subjects are dealt with."

Whether he did so or not I cannot tell; but I am apt to think he applied himself to the Mayor or the Sheriffs of London, for the next day one of the Sheriffs called Sir William Turner, a woollen-draper in Paul's Yard, came to the press-yard, and having ordered the porter of Bridewell to attend him there, sent up a turnkey amongst us, to bid all the Bridewell prisoners come down to him, for they knew us not, but we knew our own company.

Being come before him in the press-yard, he looked kindly on us and spoke courteously to us. "Gentlemen," said he, "I understand the prison is very full, and I am sorry for it. I wish it were in my power to release you and the rest of your friends that are in it. But since I cannot do that, I am willing to do what I can for you, and therefore I am come hither to inquire how it is; and I would have all you who came from Bridewell return thither again, which will be a better accommodation to you, and your removal will give the more room to those that are left behind; and here is the porter of Bridewell, your old keeper, to attend you thither." [...]

The Sheriff then bidding us farewell, the porter of Bridewell came to us, and told us we knew our way to Bridewell without him, and he could trust us; therefore he would not stay nor go with us, but left us to take our own time, so we were in before bedtime.

Then went we up again to our friends in Newgate, and gave them an account of what had passed, and having taken a solemn leave of them, we made up our packs to be gone. [...]

[Then] we took our bundles on our shoulders, and walked two and two abreast through the Old Bailey into Fleet Street, and so to Old Bridewell. And it being about the middle of the afternoon, and the streets pretty full of people, both the shopkeepers at their doors and passengers in the way would stop us and ask us what we were and whither we were going; and when we had told them we were prisoners, going from one prison to another, from Newgate to Bridewell, "What!" said they, "without a keeper?"—"No," said we, "for our word, which we have given, is our keeper." Some thereupon would advise us not to go to prison, but to go home. But we told them we could not do so; we could suffer for our testimony, but could not fly from it. I do not remember we had any abuse offered us, but were generally pitied by the people.

When we were come to Bridewell, we were not put up into the great room in which we had been before, but into a low room in another fair court, which had a pump in the middle of it. And here we were not shut up as before, but had the liberty of the court to walk in, and of the pump to wash

or drink at. And indeed we might easily have gone quite away if we would, there being a passage through the court into the street; but we were true and steady prisoners, and looked upon this liberty, arising from their confidence in us, to be a kind of parol[e] upon us; so that both conscience and honour stood now engaged for our true imprisonment. [...]

Under this easy restraint we lay until the Court sat at the Old Bailey again; and then, whether it was that the heat of storm was somewhat abated, or by what other means Providence wrought it, I know not, we were called to bar, and, without further questions, discharged.

In the 1900 edition of the journal, the editor, C. G. Crump, suggests the prisoner who died in Newgate, though not identified by Ellwood as a Friend, was probably Anthony Skillington, mentioned in Joseph Besse's Sufferings of the People called Quakers as having died there "in a stinking place" and his death being the subject of a coroner's inquest. Besse names twenty Friends who in 1662 died either in Newgate or afterwards from sickness contracted there, including, in August, Richard Hubberthorn ("a faithful Minister of the Gospel") and, later, aged only 29, Edward Burrough: "a zealous, couragious and faithful Preacher" whom Thomas Ellwood called his "father in Christ".

Ellwood was imprisoned twice more in the next four years. In 1665, all those attending a Quaker funeral in Buckinghamshire were brought before two justices, Bennett and Clayton, who "picked out ten of us, and committed us to Aylesbury gaol, for what neither we nor they knew; for we were not convicted of having either done or said anything which the law could take hold of". The judge at the assizes refused to deal with the case, and sent it back to the magistrates: this time the Quakers were fined, and, for their refusal to pay, sent back to prison for a month, after which time they were released.

Then, the following March, the same Justice Bennett committed six Friends, including Ellwood, to prison again; Judith Parker, who was not a Quaker but had in error been arrested with them, told Bennett that "the pestilence" [plague] was reported to be in Aylesbury, and "in handsome terms desired him to consider in time how he would answer the cry of our blood, if by sending us to be shut up in an infected place we should lose our lives there." Instead, they were sent to "the House of Correction at Wiccomb" [i.e. High Wycombe] and "were kept close prisoners there till the 7th day of the month called June, 1666, which was some days above twelve weeks, and much above what the Act required." As Ellwood says, many in authority were "little regardful" of keeping to the letter of the law when dealing with Quakers.

One effect of this was the opposite of what the persecutors intended. The puritan cleric Richard Baxter (1615-91), who viewed Friends as dangerous fanatics, even alleging that "Franciscan friars and other Papists have been proved to be disguised speakers in their assemblies", recalled the widespread arrests of 1662 in his autobiography (published in 1696), and noted: Yea, many turned Quakers, because the Quakers kept their meetings openly, and went to prison for it cheerfully ... – ED.

DO YOU come faithfully to meeting for worship, with heart and mind prepared? Do you seek to know communion with the Holy Spirit in your midst? Are you sensitive to one another's needs and to God's promptings, whether your response be in silence or through the spoken word?

QUERY 7, from *Advices & Queries* (1967)

Book of Discipline Revision Committee – update: It's coming! Soon!!

YOUR COMMITTEE MET IN FEBRUARY at Hinsley Hall in Leeds. After seven years, we knew we were approaching the point of having to let go of our draft text to let BYM's publications department prepare it for releasing to Friends at the end of this year. I wasn't sure how I would feel about this, so it was helpful to be invited to show it in a physical way. *How would you feel if you were told the text was going to be released next week?* was an illuminating question – and it was illuminating too to see most of those present bunched around the midpoint of the continuum between “let it go!” and “no no no!”. Some were readier than others; one person's reservations were because one part of our text has had less work than the rest. Overall the feeling was “we've done our best, it's time to let go and get other people's reactions to the draft”...

This is not to say we didn't spend most of the weekend looking carefully at our draft to see what still needed work before it goes to Publications. We have had time to read both volumes of the text Craig Barnett has crafted: the general response is deep gratitude for the care and skill with which he has distilled the essence of what we had written, creating a unified whole without repetitions and overlap, and producing a readable and, we hope, inspiring text for BYM to consider.

Committee members had sent in responses both in respect of the ‘dots and commas’ of the text, and of its content, suggesting where there might be gaps or the need for editing. The group reviewing the draft text in Welsh noted that the text is very anglocentric, with some content in Welsh and/or from a Welsh perspective, but very little distinctively Scottish representation – so one outcome of the weekend is that the three Scottish committee members (Alastair Reid, Nuala Watt, and myself) have been tasked with finding some. Blessedly, all we have to do is find extracts! It will be up to others to decide whether, and where, these might be placed – possibly in the sections on Quaker history, identity and belonging, and community.

Other groups will be looking at how to make the church government sections more inviting/easier to digest, and considering whether ‘well loved phrases’ from *Quaker Faith & Practice*, and other suggested extracts that haven't so far made it into our draft need to be added. We are confident we trust the small group appointed to oversee alterations and additions to do the final ‘sign-off’ on our work. Our whole working process so far has been guided by “trust and let go”: this is yet another example of how we have worked over the past seven years and will continue to be guided until our work is done.

We spent time considering whether the new Advices and Queries needed to be at the front of the new Book, at the back, or appear in appropriate

places within the text. It became clear both that they needed to be at the back of the Book and that giving them a new title would make it easier for them to be read as new creations rather than a rewrite of the *Q. F & P.* ones. The title agreed for the draft, not yet finalised, is *Living as a Quaker*.

The really exciting news is that **the draft text of *Our Quaker Way: the spiritual discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain* is going to be launched at Yearly Meeting on 21 November this year!** This means that Friends will have a good seven months to read and digest the text before it comes to Yearly Meeting Gathering in July 2027. It also means that the Communicating with Friends group, of which I am a member, will be spending the next few months working with Woodbrooke and BYM staff to provide study guides and material to help Friends Read, Reflect, and Respond to the draft text once it is available. Our work will be part of the Sunday morning session at Yearly Meeting (on 3 May).

It is both a relief and an excitement to be letting go of the last seven years' labours and looking forward to a new chapter in the life of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee. It's also your chance to be fully involved in the work! Clear your diaries, and prepare to receive the draft text in November – and spend the time up to then thinking, and talking with your friends and families, about what you might want to see in *Our Quaker Way: the spiritual discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*.

And, of course, please continue upholding us as we move into this new phase of our work: we simply can't do it without you!

Mary Woodward

Key messages from the meeting are:

1. *The committee has met for the 25th time.*
 2. *We celebrate having completed a first draft text of *Our Quaker Way: the spiritual discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*. With final agreed amendments, the main text will shortly be passed to the BYM publications team.*
 3. *The final section of this draft to be completed will be a new version of *Advices and Queries*. We have agreed a working title of 'Living as a Quaker: Advices and queries for Quakers in Britain'.*
 4. *The BYM publications team will finalise the book preparation as a Document in Advance of YM in July 2027. It will be launched later this year at Yearly Meeting in November 2026.*
 5. *Woodbrooke staff are working with us on resources that will help Friends to 'read, reflect and respond' to the draft book of discipline ahead of community discernment at Yearly meeting in July 2027.*
 6. *In the meantime join us for progress updates at YM 2026 Special Interest Meetings on 21 and 23 March, as well as during YM on Sunday 3 May.*
-

“The Salt of the Earth”

George Borrow (1803-1881) was an English writer who from 1833 to 1840 worked for the British & Foreign Bible Society, travelling on the Society’s behalf to Russia (1833-35) and then Spain (1835-40). As a youth, he had met Joseph John Gurney (1788-1847), the brother of Elizabeth Fry, who caught him fishing – he was certainly trespassing and probably poaching – close to Earham Hall near Norwich, and on the strength of their conversation, invited him to the Hall to borrow books to further his study of Hebrew. Borrow recounts in *Lavengro* (1851) how he only took up this invitation years later, and regretted that he did not do so at the time.

In July 1854, Borrow, with his wife and step-daughter, went on holiday to Wales, they to stay at Llangollen – they would have preferred the more fashionable “Leamington or Harrowgate [sic]” – and he to travel the country, mainly on foot, a tour described in *Wild Wales* (1862). This is an extract from Chapter CVI. The phrase “salt of the earth” is from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5: 13).

THE SUN WAS HASTENING towards the west as I passed a little cascade on the left, the waters of which, after running under the road, tumbled down a gully into the river. Shortly afterwards meeting a man I asked him how far it was to Caerfili [sic – *the f is doubled in Welsh*].

“When you come to the Quakers’ Yard, which is a little way further on, you will be seven miles from Caerfili.”

“What is the Quakers’ Yard?”

“A place where the people called Quakers bury their dead.”

“Is there a village near it?”

“There is, and the village is called by the same name.”

“Are there any Quakers in it?”

“Not one, nor in the neighbourhood, but there are some, I believe in Cardiff.”

“Why do they bury their dead there?”

“You should ask them, not me. I know nothing about them, and don’t want; they are a bad set of people.”

“Did they ever do you any harm?”

“Can’t say they did. Indeed I never saw one in the whole of my life.”

“Then why do you call them bad?”

“Because everybody says they are.”

“Not everybody. I don’t; I have always found them the salt of the earth.”

“Then it is salt that has lost its savour. But perhaps you are one of them?”

“No, I belong to the Church of England.”

“Oh, you do. Then good-night to you. I am a Methodist. I thought at first that you were one of our ministers, and hoped to hear from you something profitable and conducive to salvation, but —”

“Well, so you shall. Never speak ill of people of whom you know nothing. If that isn’t a saying conducive to salvation, I know not what is. Good evening to you.”

I soon reached the village. Singular enough, the people of the very first house, at which I inquired about the Quakers’ Yard, were entrusted with the care of it. On my expressing a wish to see it, a young woman took down a key, and said that if I would follow her she would show it me. The Quakers’ burying-place is situated on a little peninsula or tongue of land, having a brook on its eastern and northern sides, and on its western the Taf. It is a little oblong yard, with low walls, partly overhung with ivy. The entrance is a porch to the south. The Quakers are no friends to tombstones, and the only visible evidence that this was a place of burial was a single flag-stone, with a half-obliterated inscription, which with some difficulty I deciphered, and was as follows: –

To the Memory of THOMAS EDMUNDS
Who died April the ninth 1802 aged sixty years.
And of MARY EDMUNDS
Who died January the fourth 1810 aged 70.

The beams of the descending sun gilded the Quakers’ burial-ground as I trod its precincts. A lovely resting-place looked that little oblong yard on the peninsula by the confluence of the waters, and quite in keeping with the quiet Christian people who sleep within it. The Quakers have for some time past been a decaying sect, but they have done good work in their day, and when they are extinct they are not destined to be soon forgotten. Soon forgotten! How should a sect ever be forgotten, to which have belonged three such men as George Fox, William Penn, and Joseph Gurney?

By the time Wild Wales was published, Quaker’s Yard had a railway station; it was not close to the village (and Edwardsville and Treharris have since grown up in between) but in 1858 it was the only nearby place-name of note. The station survived the Beeching cuts and is still open, although the trip to Caerphilly (eight miles, rather than seven) is not nowadays possible without changing, and so is quicker by bus.

The village is now known as Mynwent y Crynwyr, a direct Welsh translation of the English. The burial ground that gave it its name was first used in 1667, on land owned by a Mary Chapman, who left it to Friends in her will of 1700. It has since been built over, and despite Borrow’s description, its exact location is uncertain.

The dwindling in numbers which Borrow saw as leading to the inevitable extinction of the Religious Society of Friends was reversed in the 1860s, as referred to in my article ‘Quakers in Scotland: Unresolved Anxieties’ in the last issue – ED.

Portobello & Musselburgh – Extra evening meeting

In months with five Sundays, Portobello & Musselburgh LM now meets on the fifth as well – 7.00 pm, Hollies Community Hub, 183 High Street, Musselburgh EH21 7DE. Contact portymussclerks@gmail.com for more information.

Quakers in Scotland

Online only, 7 February

THE YEAR'S first meeting of Quakers in Scotland had 109 participants, with Adwoa Burnley and Pleasaunce Perry taking over as clerk and assistant clerk. Full minutes (but with names redacted) are at the QiS website <https://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/minutes/QiS%202025%2012%2015%20minutes%20for%20website.pdf>

Much of the business at this meeting was necessarily administrative, with numerous appointments to roles in the new body, a report from trustees, and confirmation of the meeting dates and venues for this year, as proposed at the meeting on 8 November. [See Sesame 264, page 10; the meeting at Glasgow on 6 June will also be online.] A paper was received on 'Intermediate Meetings'; it was noted that this name is felt to be unsatisfactory, but, in that more work is still to be done on whatever might emerge between local meetings and Quakers in Scotland, the term would be kept in use for the time being. As previously noted, the paper is on the QiS website (it is the same draft as was put up in October last year).

Support for American Friends

A minute was received from Glasgow local meeting expressing concern at the situation in America: it highlighted in particular the brutal treatment of supposed illegal immigrants and the shooting by ICE agents of two protestors – both unarmed and both US citizens – in Minneapolis. The QiS clerks were asked to contact the World Office of FWCC [*Friends World Committee for Consultation*] to ask if there is anything useful we can do, and to write to the American Friends Service Committee [*the counterpart of QPSW*] on behalf of QiS. [See below, page 19.]

Perth and online, 26 & 28 February

The pattern of a Thursday-evening online meeting and a Saturday blended meeting was followed again, as in November. Friends gathering in Perth at the Bell Library on Saturday (there were 85) held in their hearts all those affected by the “emerging horrific conflict” that had been unleashed in the Middle East that morning; during the opening worship they heard read part of a minute from London Yearly Meeting held at Exeter in 1986, as quoted in *Quaker Faith & Practice* 10.02, on the power of God's spirit.

Parliamentary Engagement

The first substantive item of business was a presentation by Lucy le Roux, our Parliamentary Engagement Officer; it was followed by the written report of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG).

Lucy introduced to Friends the resources to help them prepare for the Scottish Parliamentary Election on 7 May. These comprise *A Guide for Quakers*,

a 24-page booklet “for individuals, groups and meetings” setting out four key issues that are important to most of us (Truth and Integrity; Climate and Economic Justice; Peace; and Compassionate Justice and the Prisons Crisis); *Engaging Candidates*, an 8-page booklet of “Guidance on approaching Scottish election candidates”; a *template letter* providing the skeleton of an email to be sent on behalf of a meeting to a person standing for election; *Guidance for Quaker Communities*, issued by Friends House and applicable across the UK, summarising matters that might be problematic for a charity (such as the Religious Society of Friends) involved in political campaigning; and a guide to *Hosting a Hustings* from the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO). All can be accessed at

<https://www.quakerscotland.org/documents/468>

[*Christian Aid has also produced campaigning resources for the Holyrood election – see page 34 – and David Mackenzie offers his own thoughts – on page 32 – on what voters should regard as the main issues.*]

The PEWEG report detailed the Group’s plans for the last month before the parliamentary session ended on 31 March, in particular in relation to climate change – it was hoped that there might be progress on the Government’s draft Climate Change Plan – and also in respect of the funding by Scottish Enterprise of firms involved in arms manufacture, an issue which is also of concern to Amnesty International.

Meeting for Sufferings

The meeting heard a report of Meeting for Sufferings’ December session (about which Katrina McCrea wrote in *Sesame* 264) that focused mainly on the paper presented by QCCIR [*Quaker Committee of Christian and Interfaith Relations*], ‘Towards a paper on gender diversity in our church: Our differences are a blessing’. The document had been requested by BYM trustees to explore ways of welcoming and affirming trans and non-binary Friends; it was endorsed by Meeting for Sufferings, which minuted that it is “*an articulation of our position, providing us with a language and framework for further conversations.*”

Nominations and appointments

Among new appointments agreed at the meeting, **Lesley Morrison** was appointed as convenor of the PEWEG, with **Carol Jennings** as assistant convenor, both to serve from 1 February 2026 to 31 December 2027; **Martin Burnell** was appointed a QiS trustee, and **Sue Holland-Smith** (Perth LM) QiS Registering Officer. They are both to serve from 1 February 2026 to 31 December 2028.

The Nominations Committee is looking for an editor for *The Scottish Friend*, a person to serve on the Interfaith Group on Domestic Abuse, and someone with particular interest/ knowledge of human resources to join the Trustees Employment Committee. Please contact **Marilyn Higgins** (page 51 in the Book of Members) if you can suggest a name.

Enquirers Event

It is intended to hold an event for enquirers later in the year. Elaine Millar of Dunblane LM was appointed to work with Alastair Cameron in planning for it; they are to report to QiS when they are ready.

Communicating with American Friends

Further to the concern of Glasgow LM, brought to the meeting on 7 February, the assistant clerk had written to Friends in Minneapolis as follows:

“Quakers in Scotland send a heartfelt message of love and support to you all, in response to the horrific impact ICE has had in your city. We give thanks for your peaceful protest and reconciliation work, and are grateful for your loving demonstration of faith in action. In our book of Advices & Queries, number 33 asks us to be alert to practices here and throughout the world which discriminate against people on the basis of who or what they are, and to bear witness to the humanity of all people.

“Scottish Friends will continue to prayerfully uphold you in your work to overcome discrimination in your city and seek better lives for your citizens.

“We know in some deeply spiritual place what is right and what is essentially and clearly wrong, and with the help of each other we can act to help bring heaven on earth, just as Friends always have. We see that war and injustice is a human failure to respond to God’s promptings. We can choose instead an unscripted life open to the winds of the Spirit. Through us, God’s love streams into the world, in all our encounters, in our community: we are vessels of God’s love.

*“Ben Pink Dandelion, Open for Transformation: Being Quaker
2014 Swarthmore Lecture, p 91”*

Other Business

The meeting approved a tabular statement for its membership in 2025, based on the figures for the former Area Meetings. It received a report from trustees, presented by Michael Hutchinson, on the transfer of properties from East and North Scotland AMs, and which referred to the task group of trustees from QiS and SESAM whose work is set out in the table on pages 6-7. Kate Gulliver, as treasurer, presented her End of Year report.

Online only, 28 March

62 Friends attended; there were two Attenders, who were especially welcomed. Membership matters dealt with at the start included two resignations and the transfer from South East Scotland AM of Alison Burnley’s membership.

Meeting for Sufferings

Elaine Miller spoke to a report of the final session of Meeting for Sufferings. [Katrina McCrea’s report is on page 25.]

Quaker Truth & Integrity Award, 2026

The Quaker Truth & Integrity Group (QTIG) is inviting nominations for its 2026 award, to be submitted before 30 April. Alastair Cameron had proposed to nominate the group **Defend Our Juries**, in which he has the support of Portobello & Musselburgh LM, and asked that QiS should also endorse the nomination. The meeting agreed to this. [*See opposite.*]

QiS Meetings in 2027

The clerks proposed the following dates, times and (tentatively) venues:

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 6 February | <i>online</i> | 0930 – 1330 | |
| 4 March | <i>online pre-meeting</i> | 1900 – 2030 | |
| 6 March | <i>all-day blended meeting</i> | 1030 – 1630 | ? Glasgow |
| 3 April | <i>online</i> | 0930 – 1330 | |
| 15 May | <i>online</i> | 0930 – 1330 | |
| 3 June | <i>online pre-meeting</i> | 1900 – 2030 | |
| 5 June | <i>all-day blended meeting</i> | 1030 – 1630 | ? Perth |
| 21 August | <i>online</i> | 0930 – 1330 | |
| 16 September | <i>online pre-meeting</i> | 1900 – 2030 | |
| 18 September | <i>all-day blended meeting</i> | 1030 – 1630 | ? Aberdeen |
| 23 October | <i>online</i> | 0930 – 1330 | |
| 11 November | <i>online pre-meeting</i> | 1900 – 2030 | |
| 13 November | <i>all-day blended meeting</i> | 1030 – 1630 | ? Edinburgh |

2028

| | | | |
|------------|---------------|-------------|--|
| 5 February | <i>online</i> | 0930 – 1330 | |
|------------|---------------|-------------|--|

These, it is hoped, will be confirmed in May. Local Friends in each place will need to check the suitability of the building where they plan to meet.

Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG)

Carolyn Burch, the former co-convenor, gave an oral report updating Friends on the last four weeks' work. The Group is concerned about the Crime & Policing Bill (which in some of its provisions extends to Scotland) currently close to being enacted at Westminster.

Proposed Membership Procedure for QiS

A paper was presented to the meeting – it is not yet on the website.

Central European Yearly Meeting 2026

Among correspondence received was an invitation to QiS to send a representative to Central European YM, at Gniezno, near Poznan (Poland), 4-7 June; anyone interested in this role is asked to contact **Marilyn Higgins**.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Reports

The meeting heard from Stella Cranwell (Perth LM) and Mary Woodward. Stella had attended the Methodist Church synod in May 2025; two meetings of the governing board of the Iona Community; worship for the World

Day of Prayer; and the Diocesan Synod (St Andrews, Dunblane & Dunkeld) of the Episcopalian Church. Mary's highlight had been the ceremonial around the signing of the 'St Ninian Declaration' (of friendship between the Scottish Episcopal Church and the [R.C.] Bishops Conference).

Proposals for Pastoral Care within QiS

A paper was presented to the meeting – it is not yet on the website.

[Notes by the Editor based on the Meeting minutes.]

Quaker Truth & Integrity Award 2026

Nomination for Defend our Juries

I write to nominate the organisation Defend Our Juries (<https://defendourjuries.net/>) for the 2026 Quaker Truth & Integrity Award.

I believe the work of the organisation upholds the values of the Truth & Integrity Award; it does so at time when the tradition of jury service in the UK is under severe threat, both from Government and from wider media discourse. I have knowledge of Defend Our Juries' work through the support they have offered to our Friend Justin Kenrick, a member of Portobello & Musselburgh Quakers (of which I am also a member) as he has witnessed to justice in Gaza and against the unreasonable proscription of Palestine Action (PA).

Justin is one of a number of people who demonstrated peacefully and in silence outside the Scotland Office building in Edinburgh for an hour (on 9 August, 6 September, and 18 & 29 November 2025) holding placards saying "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action". These silent vigils, which Justin calls 'sittings', bear a close resemblance to a Quaker meeting for worship, though the participants are by no means all Quakers. Though the sittings were not prevented or disrupted by police, participants were later visited at their homes and arrested.

Meanwhile, juries in England have exonerated PA activists, the English High Court has ruled the Government's actions unlawful, and the Court of Session in Scotland has agreed to carry out its own judicial review.

Defend Our Juries was established to shine a light on what it describes as a constitutional crisis. The principle of 'jury equity' has been enshrined in legal practice for centuries and was highlighted in 1670 in the case of two Quakers, William Penn and William Mead who were accused of 'preaching to an unlawful assembly'. The jury refused to convict them, despite being locked up without food for two nights and fined by the case judge. A plaque recording this is on a wall inside the Old Bailey.

In 2023, Trudi Warner, a retired social worker, was arrested for holding a sign outside inner London crown court carrying the same text as this plaque: juries have a right to "give their verdict according to their con-

victions". Trudi was sent, ironically, to the Old Bailey for trial for contempt of court, where she was found not guilty. Several months later, the Solicitor General abandoned plans to appeal against this ruling.

The principle of jury equity, and indeed of jury trial itself in some cases is now under threat. Defend Our Juries is providing a rallying point for those who wish to stand against this.

The work of Defend Our Juries aligns with the criteria of the Truth & Integrity Award in the following ways:

- ***Acknowledgement of the positive and the affirmative***
It asserts the positive power of trusting jurors to follow their consciences ('convictions' in 17th century language) and resisting an increasing tendency of judges to exclude contextual evidence behind actions of civil disobedience
- ***Consistency with "kinder ground"***
By kinder ground, I understand the criteria to mean that we should view the world with a degree of sympathy, not always thinking the worst of people. Defend Our Juries upholds the right of juries to look behind the actions to the motivations of the actors. The actions of the state in imprisoning people unnecessarily for actions taken to uphold personal belief are grossly at odds with the need, recognised by the same state, to reduce the numbers of people imprisoned
- ***Impact in furthering the truth as an individual/organisation and displaying integrity***
Defend Our Juries is based on principles of truth-telling and exposing where democracy and the rule of law are being compromised by political exigencies
- ***Courage and willingness to take risks***
There are fewer risks more significant in peacetime than the willingness to take put oneself at risk of arrest and imprisonment
- ***Diversity***
It is unreasonable in the present atmosphere of threat to people from minoritised communities or younger people to expect them to take action which can involve imprisonment and a criminal record. For this reason among others, Defend Our Juries activists have tended to involve people with established position in life; these include university lecturers like Justin Kenrick, retired social workers like Trudi Warner, ministers, doctors, nurses, teachers, grandparents. Having said this, Defend Our Juries will support anyone who supports the objectives and is willing to take a stand
- ***Outreach potential linked to awareness of reputational risk***
Defend Our Juries has shown itself very skilled at achieving press coverage which explains clearly the issues involved in protecting the jury tradition. Reputational risk is mitigated by the involvement of prominent lawyers and academics.

Northern Friends Peace Board: Darlington, 28 February

THE ATTENDANCE at our first meeting of 2026 was the highest since the Board met at Derby on the eve of the pandemic in February 2020; including visitors from nearby meetings, we had more than thirty-five in the room with around a dozen online. Those who had made an early start to get there had not heard the news of the American and Israeli attacks on Iran that morning – the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader, was not announced until the following day, nor the fact that Keir Starmer had at first refused to support the attacks – the meeting asked that a letter be written urging de-escalation. (This was done – the text is at <https://nfpb.org.uk/iran-nfpb-letter-to-pm/> – but no answer to it had been received by the time of going to press. Other responses and comments, from Quakers and from the wider peace movement, are collected at <https://nfpb.org.uk/iran2026-some-responses/>)

Reports

Routine business of the day included a report from trustees, spoken to by Jayne Meadows, and an update from Till Geiger on behalf of the planning group working on our meeting in York in June (see page 59).

We heard about progress on the recruitment of a successor to Philip Austin (see page 8). It has been decided, in view of the uncertainty of future funding, to make the Coordinator's role part-time (four days a week rather than five) which will mean a reduction in the work s/he undertakes – decisions are yet to be taken on what will have to be lost.

Philip told us of his own recent activities on our behalf: he did *not* mention that the Community of Christ, one of the twenty member bodies of the Network of Christian Peace Organisations along with NFPB and QPSW, had decided to present him with their European Peace Award for 2026 – see <https://cofchrist.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/News-Update-Feb-12th.pdf> – in recognition of his work on the Board, “*where for over 35 years he has been encouraging ordinary people to make a peace difference*”, and for being a “*guiding light*” at NCPO. We did however hear from him about a proposal for a Quaker-led peace march, probably in the early autumn, and about the Global Days of Action on Military Spending, which run from 10 April to 9 May. (It is to be hoped there will be more information by then at <https://demilitarize.org.uk/global-days-of-action/> or at the website of the International Peace Bureau, <https://ipb.org/events/gdams-2026/>.)

Members' Forum

Board members shared news of vigils (in various town and city centres, as well as at Fylingdales and Menwith Hill, which, nominally RAF stations, serve primarily as American bases); of involvement in ecumenical and interfaith work and conflict resolution; of activities to raise awareness of the arms trade (see <https://www.quaker-roots.org.uk/2026/02/17/knitting-to-stop->

the-arms-fair/), and of a project to support conscientious objectors in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus organised by FWCC-EMES [*the Europe & Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation*].

Paul Rogers

We were pleased to welcome Paul Rogers, emeritus professor of Peace Studies at Bradford, who has been an acknowledged expert on peace and security matters over many decades, and was to speak to us about the global situation. He had, he said, delivered a similar talk some fifteen months before, in which he had looked ahead to what had then seemed likely to be the state of the world in 2030; a future which is now unthinkable, chiefly owing to the re-election of Donald Trump, with deleterious effects on environment, economy and security. Questions and discussion followed, in which the importance of solidarity was emphasised.

A video recording of Paul Rogers's talk is at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoUHckMFpQk>

and his later thoughts, after ten days of the war, can be read at

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/mar/11/us-israel-iran-plan-b-strategy-dahiya-doctrine>

Being a confident Quaker voice for peace

Hannah Brock-Womack introduced the work that she is currently undertaking as Peace Lead for Quakers in Britain, consulting Friends on the theme of being a confident Quaker voice for peace. A number of online facilitated considerations have taken place this year and Hannah led us through a shorter version of the exercise. We had discussions on the question, What should we be doing and saying *now* with a confident voice for peace? The reflection paper used with the online groups had been distributed to members before the meeting, and, slightly shortened, is on pages 35-37. (It has of course been overtaken by the assaults on Iran and Lebanon and the aggressive Iranian response, the outcome of all of which is still unknown.)

Next meeting

We meet next on 13 June, at Friargate Meeting House in York, for a special meeting to consider our Peace Testimony. It is hoped that Friends other than board members will also wish to attend, and that Area Meetings will enable them to do so if bursary help is needed. The Board itself may also be able to offer financial support.

Alan Frith

*It was a shock to hear that **Peter Cheer**, of Perth, a long-standing member of the Northern Friends Peace Board and a former trustee, died suddenly at the Easter weekend. We were also saddened to learn of the recent death of a former member, active over many years, **Kurt Strauss**, whose obituary from The Guardian is at <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2026/apr/03/kurt-strauss-obituary>*

Meeting for Sufferings: Friends House, 7 March

AFTER SOME 350 YEARS, the Meeting for Sufferings has now held its final session. Across the centuries, this Meeting has played a central role in holding the work and witness of Friends. While its role has evolved, it has consistently gathered in worship to help guide the life of our Yearly Meeting and to care for our community.

As a manifestation of the Church, we are a people called out for service. Our focus is not simply on duties, but on responding faithfully to the promptings of love and truth. The work of Meeting for Sufferings has taken many forms: practical and administrative, as part of the teaching ministry of the Church, and in the quieter work of healing, nurturing compassion, and restoring relationships when we have hurt one another.

Meeting for Sufferings has been concerned, above all, with how we might help reweave the world so that it more nearly reflects the Gospel Order to which we bear witness. In doing so, it has sought to hold before us both the condition of our community and that of the wider world.

We live in a time marked by deep challenge: geopolitical conflict and nuclear risk, an accelerating climate crisis, and technological and systemic disruption. In such times, the call to faithful witness remains urgent. Friends noted with concern the recent police raid on Westminster Quaker Meeting House, in which non-violent activists were arrested [*see page 41*], reflecting wider anxieties about increasing restrictions on peaceful protest.

During our business sessions, we considered a wide range of matters. We approved several appointments and membership changes across Quaker committees and roles, including representatives to European Yearly Meetings. We also agreed the re-registration of three Quaker Recognised Bodies and noted the closure of two charities.

Friends recorded the arrest and court appearance of a Friend in the Court and Prison Register in connection with protest activity, and noted that this register will in future be maintained by Yearly Meeting.

We also recorded several governance developments. These included the establishment of the Cymar charity to support Quakers in Wales and the Marches, and the decision of Young Friends General Meeting to adopt the new name General Meeting of Young Friends in Britain. We received minutes from a number of meetings and committees, including the laying down of Quaker Life Representative Council, ongoing work on proposals for non-geographic membership, concerns from Sussex West Area Meeting about restrictions on the right to protest, and warm greetings from Quakers in Scotland.

Friends approved letters of greeting to Yearly Meetings in the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation, holding in the Light those affected by conflict in the region. We also approved sev-

eral minor changes to *Quaker Faith & Practice* and the final annual report of Meeting for Sufferings.

We heard an introduction to the agenda for Yearly Meeting, which will take place at Friends House and online from 1-4 May 2026 [See page 59]. Friends will be invited to reflect on what unites us as a Spirit-led community and how we seek peaceful resolution of conflict within our meetings and in the wider world.

Reports were received from the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations and from Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees. Trustees shared proposed new strategic priorities for centrally managed work, which Friends endorsed. We also heard that Trustees have endorsed the *Challenging antisemitism* document. While some disquiet was expressed during the meeting, which needs to be heard, Friends are encouraged to engage with the document and offer feedback.

We also heard from staff working on Peacebuilding in Britain and were encouraged to reflect on how love and nonviolence can guide our responses to conflict in our communities.

The Friends World Plenary Meeting in 2024 reminded us that “*with radical hope, we trust in our collective ability to recognise, repent, redeem and restore, and to work together in beautiful and transformative ways*”. This captures something of the spirit to which we have aspired.

It is easy to compare ourselves with the remarkable achievements of earlier Friends. Yet those moments were made possible by patient preparation, by relationships carefully tended, and by the quiet faithfulness of many people over long years. We are not called to be remarkable, but to be faithful: to lay foundations, to support one another, and to trust that our service matters.

Finally, we held an extended period of worship to mark the laying down of Meeting for Sufferings. Friends shared deep gratitude for those who have sustained this Meeting across the centuries, sadness at the end of an era, and hope for the work that will now continue through Yearly Meeting.

As this final session closes and its responsibilities return fully to Yearly Meeting, we do so in trust: that Friends will continue to discern the leadings of the Spirit, and that we shall meet again in that shared work and purpose.

For more details including a letter from the Recording Clerk, outlining practical matters arising from this transition, see:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>

Friends may find this helpful in responding to questions locally.

Katrina McCrea

Threshing Meeting: an Invitation

IN FEBRUARY, Quakers in Scotland (QiS) asked local meetings (LMs) to consider what have been referred to so far as 'intermediate meetings', sitting between QiS and LMs, and what names might be appropriate for such meetings. There is a paper on possible uses of 'intermediate meetings' on the QiS website, in which the term is defined as:

'.... a meeting of Friends from a number of different worshipping communities who come together. It might be for worship, learning, to eat, walk, anything that enables them to get to know one another and build community.'

(See <https://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Intermediate%20meetings%20Oct%202025.pdf>)

Come and join us on **Sunday 12 April** at 7 Victoria Terrace between 1.00 and 2:30 pm while we thresh through our thoughts on this, perhaps coming up with potential options. The following questions may help our deliberations:

- *As the shape and form of QiS begins to become clearer, what are the processes and functions that need to sit between QiS and LMs?*
- *What forms will best serve the fulfilment of these?*
- *How will these serve our spiritual needs?*
- *What names might we offer to reflect these forms and functions?*

This Threshing Meeting will be facilitated by **Elizabeth Allen** of East Lothian Meeting. Friends from other local meetings within SESAM are invited to join Central Edinburgh LM for this session, and for our usual soup lunch after the 11.00 am Meeting for Worship.

Please notify Mark Bitel (mark@mbtg.one) if you intend to come.

Recommendation: a book from the AM Library

This is Who I Am: Listening with Older Friends

Volume 9 of the Eldership and Oversight Handbooks (2003)

Books I choose to recommend are often Pendle Hill pamphlets or Swarthmore lectures, or else come from Woodbrooke or Quaker Quest; this one was prepared with the needs of elders and pastoral care committees particularly in mind. It has much of interest to say to our elderly Friends (like me) and to their carers, and grew out of conferences in the 1990s on 'Living Adventurously' and 'The Time of Your Life', which led to the formation, in 2000, of the Spirituality & Ageing Group. The back cover says it will be useful "to people of all ages who listen to each other in love and friendship"; now that we no longer have a funeral committee, our conversations with younger Friends have to fill this gap.

Rachel Frith

Climate Justice and the Rule of Law – *recent news items*

LLIUYA v. RWE, an ultimately unsuccessful claim against a German energy firm (see *Sesame* 261), nevertheless established that fossil-fuel companies can be held to account for climate impacts such as flooding and extreme heat. Evidence in the case came from the **Carbon Majors** database of historical production data from 178 of the world's largest oil, gas, coal, and cement producers. These are used to quantify the direct operational emissions and emissions from the combustion of marketed products that can be attributed to these entities, which include 100 investor-owned companies, 72 state-owned companies, six nation states, 85 oil producing entities, 86 gas entities, 104 coal entities, and eight cement entities. Data go back to 1854, and contain over 1.44 trillion tonnes of CO₂e covering 70 % of global fossil fuel and cement emissions since the start of the Industrial Revolution in 1751. See <https://carbonmajors.org/>.

In January, Carbon Majors reported that just 32 companies had been responsible for more than 50 % of global CO₂ emissions in 2024; a year earlier it had been 36. Saudi Aramco was the biggest state-controlled polluter, responsible for 1.7 bn tonnes of CO₂. State-owned fossil fuel producers made up 17 of the top twenty emitters in the report; all are controlled by states that opposed a proposed fossil fuel phaseout at the Cop30 UN climate summit in December. ExxonMobil was the largest investor-owned polluter, responsible for 610m tonnes of CO₂. There are more details at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/jan/21/carbon-dioxide-co2-emissions-fossil-fuel-firms-study>

THE FACT that in 2025 wind and solar generated more electricity in the EU than fossil fuels is reported at

<https://ember-energy.org/latest-insights/european-electricity-review-2026/>.

It is to be hoped, of course, that no litigation could result from this development. The shift away from gas and oil was nevertheless attacked by the US commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, who suggested, at the World Economic Forum at Davos, that it makes Europe “subservient” to China, because of the latter’s leading role in battery manufacture.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/jan/22/wind-and-solar-overtook-fossil-fuels-in-power-generation-for-eu-in-2025-report>

ALSO AT DAVOS, Donald Trump confirmed America’s withdrawal from the Paris agreement, as reported here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/27/trump-withdraws-paris-climate-agreement>

His administration’s transformation of the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is outlined at

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/28/trump-epa-environmental-rollbacks>.

The EPA announced in 2025 that it would rescind the ‘endangerment find-

ing’, a landmark 2009 determination affirmed by the Supreme Court, that greenhouse gases such as CO₂ harm human health; it did so on 12 February: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/12/trump-epa-rollback-pollution-regulation-endangerment-finding>.

At the start of the year, it said it would no longer consider the cost to health of two common air pollutants, nitrogen oxide (NOx) and soot, but will still weigh the cost paid by industry for regulatory compliance: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/14/epa-air-pollution-cost-savings-deaths>

During 2026, the US is set further to increase gas-powered electricity generation which, with EPA encouragement, tripled in 2025. See: <https://globalenergymonitor.org/projects/global-oil-gas-plant-tracker/>

The repeal of the endangerment finding has been described as a “*shameful and dangerous action ... [which] is rooted in falsehoods, not facts, and is at complete odds with the public interest and the best available science*”; the American Public Health Association, together with 16 other organisations, has begun a legal challenge in the Washington DC circuit court, see <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/18/trump-epa-environment-climate-lawsuit>

However, repeal might well expose fossil-fuel firms to *more* litigation: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/24/trump-climate-endangerment-repeal-oil-lawsuits>

IT TOOK A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST by the Green Alliance to get the UK Government to release a report, believed to have been compiled by the Joint Intelligence Committee (on which sit the heads of MI5, MI6 and GCHQ), on the impact on national security of global biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse. It is now available as a 14-page PDF at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/696e0eae719d837d69afc7de/National_security_assessment_-_global_biodiversity_loss_ecosystem_collapse_and_national_security.pdf

but it has been significantly abridged – probably, according to George Monbiot, to avoid highlighting the inadequacy of the present government’s response to these issues, even by dismal standard of its predecessor. He writes: “*When the ruling party compares unfavourably with the one that brought us Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, it’s worse than a betrayal. It’s a threat to our survival.*” See

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/jan/27/uk-government-report-ecosystem-collapse-foi-national-security>

The website of the Green Alliance is at <https://green-alliance.org.uk/>.

That security now depends more on addressing the climate crisis than on military spending had already been emphasised in September last year by Achim Steiner, retiring head of the UN Development Programme (UNDP): <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/06/higher-defence-spending-pointless-without-climate-aid-says-un-chief>.

NEGOTIATIONS AT THE UN on a global tax treaty resumed at the start of February: if enacted, the proposed convention would create a legally binding framework requiring multinationals to pay tax where they employ staff and do real business rather than where they lodge their profits, thus introducing unitary taxation and ensuring fair profit allocation. The Tax Justice Network (TJN) reckons that countries lose \$492 bn a year in tax, as multinational corporations and wealthy individuals use tax havens to avoid payment. Sergio Chaparo Hernandez of the TJN was quoted in *The Guardian* as saying: “The next round of talks in New York will be a real test: can member states craft international tax rules that are fit for the age of climate catastrophe? Civil society is pushing for the convention to include a clear mandate to advance progressive environmental taxation: making sure polluters pay, and that richer countries lead in ways that reduce global inequalities and support climate-resilient development in countries most affected”. Despite the US having withdrawn from the talks, it is hoped that agreement may nevertheless be reached so that the convention could be adopted as soon as the end of 2027. See

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/feb/01/fossil-fuel-firms-may-have-to-pay-for-climate-damage-under-proposed-un-tax>

MSPS VOTED on 5 February by 90 to 26 (with four abstentions and nine not voting) to advance the Ecocide (Scotland) Bill to the second stage in the process of becoming law. (The Parliamentary website, <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-20606> shows how individual members voted.) It had been previously announced that the Scottish Government supported the Bill's general principles and would “work constructively and rapidly” to prepare amendments addressing technical concerns including ECHR compatibility and defences for licensed activities, so that it could be passed before the end of the session. However a date for Stage 2 consideration had not been set prior to dissolution. Passing environmental legislation in the next session may be harder if a significant number of MSPs are returned representing Reform UK.

Ecocide legislation has already been enacted in Belgium and France, and is under consideration in Italy, Brazil, the Netherlands, Ghana, Argentina, Peru, Mexico, French Polynesia and India. The European Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law, which includes ecocide-level offences, has been signed by the European Union, Luxembourg, Portugal, Latvia and Moldova; the EU's own Environmental Crime Directive has to be transposed into the national law of member states by May this year. For more, see

<https://www.stopecocide.earth/bn-2025/scottish-parliament-votes-to-advance-ecocide-bill>

ALSO on 5 February, *The Guardian* reported on the likely impact of the UK Government's reduction in climate finance (part of the overseas aid budget) from £11.6 bn in the last five years to £9 bn in the next five – a reduction of more than a fifth, which equates to a 40 % cut in real spending

power since 2021. See

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/feb/05/uk-cut-climate-finance-poor-countries-by-fifth>.

The article notes that the cut is being made despite the warning in the recent report on British national security (*see page 29*) that the collapse of ecosystems such as the Amazon or the Congo would inflict serious damage on the UK, including soaring food prices and the risk of war. It also refers to the figures for climate finance being in any case “meaningless”, since the government no longer abides by the EU’s reporting standards. There is more on this in the ‘Down to Earth’ newsletter at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/mar/05/how-uk-cuts-to-climate-finance-could-bankrupt-ecosystems-at-home-and-abroad>

The UK Government has also cut by a third its funding of the World Food Programme; see

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/feb/07/starmer-accused-of-hypocrisy-over-sharp-cuts-to-world-food-programme>

A DRAFT UN RESOLUTION put forward by Vanuatu which called for countries to submit a registry of ‘loss and damage’ suffered from the impacts of an overheating world such as storms, floods and droughts so that polluters could be held liable, has been watered down, owing to pressure from the United States. As presented in March, it now urges that member states “*comply fully with their obligations under international law as they relate to climate change*”, consistent with last year’s ruling by the International Court of Justice that countries could face paying reparations if they fail to stem the climate crisis. It also calls for “*a rapid, just and quantified phase-out of fossil fuel production and use*”. See

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/mar/05/vanuatu-un-climate-crisis-trump>

IT WAS REPORTED IN OCTOBER (*see Sesame 263*) that Arcom, the French media regulator, was fining broadcasters who allowed climate change denial to go unchallenged, and that this contrasted with the inaction of Ofcom in the UK. Following a letter from the Good Law Project in January, however, Ofcom is now reconsidering a number of complaints; see

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/mar/24/ofcom-complaints-climate-change-denial-talkto-talk-radio>

World Landmines Day, 4 April

On 8 December 2005, the UN General Assembly declared that 4 April each year should be observed as the *International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action*. The day was marked in Cambodia this year by the unveiling of a statue, in the city of Siem Reap, of Magawa, a sniffer rat, responsible for the clearing of over a hundred landmines between 2016 and 2021, as well as other unexploded ordnance. A report with pictures is at

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0rx7xzd10xo>

Doomsday 2026 and the Scottish Election

THE UPCOMING election for a new Scottish Government is critical if the Scottish people and our civic institutions are to be effective as stakeholders and contributors to stability, human rights and sustainability at home and across the world.

Labour's Anas Sarwar has said that May's Holyrood election should be strictly about Scotland. We know what he means – it should not deal with matters reserved to the Westminster parliament. That restriction can't and won't happen. Scotland is not hermetically sealed from the rest of the world. The grim business of nuclear weapons illustrates perfectly the inward and outward impacts. Campaigners have in the past stressed the fact that the existence of Faslane/Coulport makes Scots a key target for nuclear attack. While that is true, it is questionable whether that makes us significantly more vulnerable. An attack on the Clyde bases with nuclear weapons would almost certainly be part of a general nuclear exchange. If that point is reached then all of humanity would be in a hot war which would likely end civilisation as we know it, within a matter of weeks. In that context, the focus should rather be on the potential for the bases of being the launch pad for hideous weapons of mass destruction. NIMBY just doesn't work for anyone, any more than "National Security" measures protect individuals on either side of man-made borders. Think of the effects of pandemics, the effect of nuclear power accidents, and cyber terrorism. At the same time getting these weapons out of Scotland would be a huge step forward, first of all for the encouragement it would give to the worldwide nuclear disarmament movement by dramatically bucking the current trend in the opposite direction and clearly demonstrating that nuclear capability does not have a democratic mandate, but also because it would mean the end of the UK's submarine-delivered nuclear arsenal since the Clyde bases cannot be feasibly relocated within the UK.

For nukes, the backyard is the entire world. If you have any doubts about that read Annie Jacobson's *Nuclear War – A Scenario*. (If you prefer to watch a film, try *House of Dynamite*, streaming on Netflix). On 27 January, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists'* Doomsday Clock – a metaphor for how close we are to catastrophe – was moved to 85 seconds to midnight, the closest it has ever been: see <https://thebulletin.org/2026/01/press-release-it-is-85-seconds-to-midnight/#post-heading>. This is based on a multi-disciplinary assessment of the main existential threats we face – climate collapse, disruptive technologies like AI, and nuclear war. There is nothing inevitable about these terrifying scenarios; we have the potential to sort them all. We have the knowledge and the necessary skills and resources. In the case of nuclear weapons, after the initial step of de-escalation and mutual arms control we have to make real progress on complete elimination. When, at the height of the Cold War, Reagan and Gorbachev embarked on a bilateral de-escala-

tion that saved us temporarily from disaster it was their original intention to complete the job – they agreed that we would have to get rid of nukes altogether. They did not act on that.

The tool to complete the elimination job exists – the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). 74 UN states have already ratified it, a further 25 have taken the initial step of signing, and there are around 30 more states who regularly support it when it is on the agenda at the UN General Assembly. That solid majority is mainly drawn from the Global South – Ireland, Austria and Malta are the European exceptions. It is no surprise that these parts of the populated world should be collaborating in establishing and strengthening the TPNW. They are where the climate crises and the resultant human migration are doing most harm, and where the strong links and causalities between nuclear war and a climate disaster beyond remediation are best understood. This is well understood by the Atomic Scientists and is their reason for re-setting the Doomsday Clock.

Scotland's place and potential role in that must be high on the agenda as we approach the May election. Nuclear weapons are a domestic issue. A stance on nukes is a key marker for the whole basket of interconnected issues: long-term versus short-term; human welfare and well-being; ecology, climate and the environment; education for a peaceful society; sane economics; the right to life; global justice and equality; human security and human rights; international humanitarian law and legal remedy for war crimes; realism and prudence; just transition; food and farming; health, both physical and mental; diversity and inclusion; violence reduction; international peace; internal and community peace; creativity and the arts; relating to the natural world; ethics and morality; transport; cats and foxes; oceanic health; peace in space and so on *ad infinitum*. It's bread and butter, it's the day-to-day.

The UK Government is regularly divergent from the views of Scottish voters, and given the small number of Scots MPs (59/660 at Westminster) the Scottish Government has a significant role in our representation at home and also on the world stage. So for May, choose your own red lines and set your criteria for electing a government fit to represent Scotland as well as it can do, whether it is seeking self-determination or not.

David Mackenzie

David Mackenzie also reminds us that that the UN Treaty on Nuclear Non-Proliferation (NPT) is shortly due to be reviewed. (The last review, in August 2022, ended without agreement following a Russian walk-out, as reported by Rebecca Johnson in Sesame 244.) The official stance of the UK Government, whichever party is in office, is that the NPT is “the cornerstone of the international nuclear nonproliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament” (a phrase used in two letters sent to the AM clerk in 2021 by the Correspondence and Parliamentary Questions Unit in the Foreign,

Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)) – see Sesame 234 and 235. David suggests that those of us with Labour MPs might write to them in the terms he has used in a letter to his own MP, as follows:

“You will be aware that the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will take place from 27 April to 22 May 2026. You will also be aware that the last two review conferences (in 2015 and 2022, the latter postponed from 2020 due to the COVID pandemic) failed to reach an agreed outcome. The threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons is currently on the increase, with politicians from Japan, South Korea, Germany and Scandinavia asking whether they need to acquire a nuclear arsenal due to growing doubt about the reality of the US nuclear ‘umbrella’.

“Does the UK government still consider the NPT to be the ‘cornerstone’ of nuclear disarmament?

“If it does, what specific, concrete and measurable steps will it take to fulfil its obligation under Article VI of the treaty to ‘pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.’?”

This might serve, he says, as “the opening gambit in what hopefully would be a reasonable interchange”. (ED.)

Christian Aid News

Scottish Parliamentary Election 2026

The 2026 elections will be a vital moment for shaping Scotland’s future on poverty, justice, and climate. Christian Aid has a list of ‘manifesto asks’, on **Addressing the climate crisis; Promoting a culture of peace; Making amends for Scotland’s involvement in colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade; and Being a responsible global citizen**. More details are at

https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2026-01/christian_aid_manifesto_asks_2026_scottish_elections.pdf

Christian Aid also has resources for groups planning to hold hustings events or individuals hoping to engage with candidates on global issues; email **Leanne Clelland** (lclelland@christian-aid.org) for more information.

Christian Aid Week: Launching Soon

Christian Aid Week is coming, 10-16 May. It’s a great time to start thinking about holding a sale, event or collection. Get in touch if you would like support, at edinburgh@christian-aid.org. There are also more details at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

A theme this year is standing in solidarity with and sharing the stories of mothers like Fridah Moraa and Belinda Kasudi who live in a crowded informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya. They are being empowered by specialist training from CA's partner Beacon of Hope to grow fresh vegetables in small urban spaces – this not only feeds their families but also brings an income to pay for education and healthcare. These projects are literally growing HOPE. See <https://caw.christianaid.org.uk/>.

Philanthropy event –Edinburgh

Philanthropy is changing. Christian Aid is co-hosting an event at the Library of Mistakes in Edinburgh [33A Melville Street Lane, EH3 7QB], on **Wednesday 29 April**, from 5.00 pm to 9.00 pm, to launch its new social investment product. This allows people to invest their money for a return, but the money will be financing local partners. Please do encourage anyone interested in ethical finance and philanthropy to come along. There is more information at

<https://www.philanthropy-impact.org/events/the-future-of-philanthropy-trends-tools-and-impact-in-partnership-with-christian-aid-edinburgh/>

or you can email **Fionnuala Shakespeare** (Fshakespeare@christian-aid.org).

Praying for Peace in the Middle East

Each month, supporters gather for an hour on Teams to hear from partners and friends of Christian Aid and to pray for a just peace in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. The next session is on **Friday 24 April**, starting at 7.00 pm. To sign up, go to

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/prayers-for-peace>

There is more about Christian Aid's campaigns, events and resources at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved-locally/scotland>

A Changing International Order

This reflection paper (slightly edited) was prepared by the Central Committee of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) for its consultations with Friends in early 2026 on "how Quakers can have a confident voice for peace in this world." Hannah Brock Womack, Peace Lead for Quakers in Britain, used it in her presentation to the Northern Friends Peace Board in Darlington – see page 23.

Unstable international norms

Recent global political events demonstrate rapid shifts in international relations and conflict. In an unequal world order many international structures (like the UN) are limited in their ability to transform systems but have long been supported by Quakers and others who recognise their role in enabling negotiation as an alternative to force. Today, many international norms are unstable and even crumbling – consider recent US military activity in Venezuela. Assumptions about how global challenges are handled have been turned upside down. Some of these trends have been evident for some time,

but the second US Trump presidency has brought many to the fore.

Increasing culture of militarism and military spending

There's been an increase in European military spending and rearmament already heightened after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This was ostensibly to bolster NATO but is undoubtedly also to appease US demands. In 2025, the UK's military spending plans rose to 3.5% of GDP by 2035 (up from 2.5% by 2030). Questioning rearmament is rare, including in left-wing spaces.

There are particular risks around nuclear proliferation. The Doomsday clock is at its closest ever to catastrophe [see page 32], because of breakdowns in treaties, and alleged testing by nuclear states. The UK's 2025 Strategic Defence Review (SDR) ploughed £15bn into the 'sovereign nuclear warhead programme' and more closely linked the UK with NATO. Europe is currently "awash with proposals to share, extend or procure nuclear weapons". However, with 191 states signed up to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it remains one of the most widely accepted global treaties, and a source of hope.

The SDR also called for increased militarisation through a 'whole of society approach' to warpreparedness. This will increase the presence of the military and arms companies in education, culture and other spaces. Weapons manufacturer BAE will spend £3.5 million on its schools roadshow in the next five years, and an Armed Forces 'gap year' has been launched. There has been much talk of military recruitment drives and a return to conscription/national service (reintroduced in some form in Germany, Croatia and Bulgaria).

In 2024, civilian deaths in conflict rose by 40% compared with 2023. ACLED [*Armed Conflict Location & Event Data*] reports that 1 in 6 people were impacted by conflict in 2025. Wars and genocide in Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine and elsewhere (though very different in nature) have met with grassroots international despair but with inter-national mechanisms unable to stop the slaughter – in many cases superpowers have protected aggressors.

In all cases, regulation failed to stem weapons flows, and these conflicts were shop windows for arms company's latest AI and autonomous weapons technologies, like armed drones whose human targets are selected by AI. Their dehumanising nature is clear and there's no regulation to meet this.

Authoritarianism, populism and dissent

The growth in militarism and challenges to international cooperation are happening alongside the implementation of authoritarian policies in many countries, which reduce the ability of citizens to protest and have a chilling effect on dissent. In the UK there has been a steady shrinking of space for civil society to engage in the democratic system, and to protest about war and for climate justice.

Such policies are closely linked to the growth in nationalism and the far right. In 2023, populist governments were at a 20-year low. Since then, they've won power and gained traction: there are right-wing or far right populist governments in Hungary, Italy, Turkey, Argentina, El Salvador, the US, India and Chile, to name a few. There is a particular challenge for people of faith as far right leaders evoke 'Christian-ist' nationalism. We witnessed the worst racist,

anti-migrant violence for decades in the summer of 2024, and this continued into 2025 (in all four UK nations to varying degrees). There's a clear connection between the far right and disinformation, as many lose faith with traditional media and established institutions, and a well-funded far right exploit 'alternative media' opportunities. Anti-immigration narratives from mainstream politicians have surged.

All this, within climate crisis

Alongside these trends is the underlying reality that powerful states and corporations are tying our collective hands as we respond to man-made climate breakdown, driven by an extractive economic system itself sustained by war and militarism, and super-fuelled by massive military emissions.

This crisis will remake much of the world, rendering many homes unliveable, land unfarmable and fracturing longstanding relationships between people and nature. The interconnections of climate change, migration and conflict are complex, but we know that the same people win and lose from climate change as from war, and that responses to the climate crisis are increasingly militarised.

Meanwhile conflict, including wars for oil, leaves ecosystems devastated, stripped of the natural, social and financial resources communities need to heal. This exacerbates inequalities, including for those marginalised because of class, geography, sexism, racism, ableism and in other ways.

Silencing human security concerns

Overall, there's reduced space and spending on human security priorities, which focus on the tangible things that make people feel safe – housing, healthcare, basic living standards and a safe climate. Instead, there's an emphasis on military strength and the fear of attacks from abroad. It's always been challenging to make the human security argument in mainstream political spaces – now it's pushing against the tide, especially following cuts to overseas aid to increase military spending.

Signs of hope

This is a hard summary to read. BUT ... There are solidarity movements rising up to challenge genocide, acting for a liveable planet, against fascism and for those seeking asylum. As always in armed violence, civilians try to look after each other – like in Emergency Response Rooms in Sudan. We have more understanding (if not necessarily more wisdom) than previous generations, as democratised media allow us to hear directly from oppressed groups. And at a governmental level, the multilateral system may be down, but it's not yet out. With political will there's scope to work cooperatively together. And with it, there's the potential to build something that is more equitable and representative than what's come before, encompassing women's, and poor and Indigenous people's perspectives to pursue justice for all.

Join us to talk

At the start of the session [*this text was distributed before an online discussion*] we will ask: what strikes you from this summary? What can you add? At the end, we'll consider how Quakers can have a confident voice for peace in the world.

Woodbrooke Courses: Mid April to July

Unless marked otherwise, events are online. It is necessary to book beforehand (at <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/>) as places are limited. If a price is shown, it is the **standard** fee, and a **50 % discount** is usually available to participants aged 18–35. If a price is *not* shown, participants are invited to “pay as led”: there is a cost to Woodbrooke in putting on events and courses, and it is hoped contributions by those taking part will cover them.

The Editor welcomes participants' reports for possible inclusion in Sesame.

A Guide to the Quaker Business Method

2 sessions: Tuesdays, 14 & 21 April, 11:00-13:00 BST

David Heslop

Meet the Students: Oscar Malande

Tuesday 14 April, 16:00-17:00 BST

Oscar L. Malande, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion

Watch on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/live/Fy8arC2siPI>

Resourcing and Resilience for Social Justice

Tuesday 14 April, 19:00-20:30 BST

Bridget Holtom, Ella Asheri, Ailish Carroll-Brentnall

Millennials, Gen Z and the Quaker Way

£25

2 sessions, Thursday, 16 April & 23 April, 19:00-20:30 BST

Josh Selfe, Wendy Hampton

Peace Within: Forgiving Ourselves

Tuesday 21 April, 19:00-21:00 BST

Paul Ricketts

George Fox and Early Quaker Culture [RESIDENTIAL]

£325

Glenthorne Guest House, Easedale Road, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QH.

The course begins with the evening meal at 19:00 on Friday 24 April, and ends at lunchtime on Sunday 26 April.

Hilary Hinds, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion

Contact Glenthorne to book – tel. **015394 35389** or email info@glenthorne.org.

Quaker Trusteeship in a Nutshell

£45

Saturday 25 April, 10:00-16:00 BST

Sarah Donaldson, Linda Craig

Quaker Concern: From Awareness to Action

Tuesday 28 April, 19:00-21:00 BST

Wendy Hampton

The Start of the Quaker Way

4 sessions: Friday 8 May, and then Thursdays, 14, 21 & 28 May, 19:00-20:30 BST

'Ben' Pink Dandelion

Essentials of Quaker Eldership

Monday 11 May, 19:00-20:30 BST

Ruth Audus, Elize Sakamoto

People Need People: Radical Communing

£48

5 sessions: Mondays, 11 May – 15 June, NOT 25 May, 18:00-20:00 BST

Shweta Sanjeev, Lottie Child, Lisa Sattell, Emily Stewart

A Quaker Approach to Listening

Tuesday 12 May, 19:00-20:30 BST

James McCarthy

- Seeking Goodness: The Philosophy of Iris Murdoch*** £60
6 sessions: Tuesdays, 12 May – 16 June, 19:00-20:30 BST
Natasha Alden, Samuel Cooper, Sasha Lawson-Frost
- Early Quaker Sufferings: Tithes and the Cost of Conscience***
Wednesday 13 May, 16:00-17:30 BST Sally Gold
- Finding the Words: How To Explain Being a Quaker*** £48
3 sessions: Wednesdays 13 – 27 May, 19:00-21:00 BST
Elize Sakamoto, Simonne Wood
- Making Peace With Conflict: Skills for Difficult Conversations*** £54
6 sessions: Wednesdays, 13 May – 17 June, 19:00-21:00 BST
Lottie Child, Jenny Tipping
- Enquiring Into: Quaker Worship***
Thursday 14 May, 19:00-21:00 BST Rosie Carnall
- Christ in the Stranger and Outcast***
Saturday 16 May, 19:00-20:30 BST Frances Kreimer, Cherice Bock
- Wrestling With the Bible: Psalm 137***
Sunday 17 May, 15:00-17:00 BST Ann Conway-Jones
- The Poetry of Eden***
Monday 18 May, 19:00-21:00 BST James Priestman
- Soul Scrolling: Spiritual Exercises for the Digital Age***
Tuesday 19 May, 19:00-21:00 BST Josh Selfe
- Serving on a Quaker Committee***
Thursday 21 May, 12:30-14:30 BST Jennifer Barraclough, Elize Sakamoto
- Embodying Spiritual Wisdom Through Chant***
Thursday 21 May, 19:00-20:30 BST Paulette Meier
- Walking With Francis of Assisi Today***
Wednesday 27 May, 18:00-20:00 BST Nigel Thomas, Jennifer Kavanagh
- God in All Things: A Quaker Look at Ignatian Spirituality*** [RESIDENTIAL] £295
Glenthorne Guest House, Easedale Road, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QH.
The course begins with the evening meal at 19:00 on Friday 29 May and
ends at lunchtime on Sunday 31 May. Mark Russ
Contact Glenthorne to book – tel. **015394 35389** or email info@glenthorne.org.
- Jewish Earth Wisdom*** £72
6 sessions: Mondays, 1 June – 6 July, 19:00-20:30 BST Yael Roberts
- Artificial Intelligence: Angel or Armageddon?*** £48
4 sessions: Tuesdays, 2 – 30 June, NOT 23 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Kenneth Cukier
- Clerking Quaker Discernment Online***
Wednesday 3 June, 18:30-20:30 BST Elize Sakamoto, Christine Habgood-Coote
- Calligraphy and Spirituality: The Lindisfarne Gospels***
Thursday 4 June, 19:00-21:00 BST Liz Barrow

- Quaker Nominations in a Nutshell*** £45
Saturday 6 June, 10:00-16:00 BST Lucy Parker
- Wrestling With the Bible: Genesis 22:1-19***
Sunday 7 June, 15:00-17:00 BST Ann Conway-Jones
- Essentials of Quaker Eldership***
Monday 8 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Ruth Audus, Elize Sakamoto
- Rewilding Quakerism, Rewilding Ourselves*** £72
5 sessions: Tuesdays, 9 – 30 June, & 14 July, 19:00-21:00 BST
Max Hope, Ella Asheri
- Quakerism and Hannah Arendt: Hope in Dark Times*** £54
4 sessions: Thursdays, 11 June – 2 July, 19:00-20:30 BST
Lily Chadwick, Benjamin Wood
- Wondering Words: Poems for Your Daily Life***
5 sessions: Fridays, 12 June – 10 July, 19:00-20:30 BST Till flo* Krapoth
- Sunday Sessions: Quaker Ministry***
Sunday 14 June, 12:15-13:15 BST Wendy Hampton
- Navigating Change as Quaker Communities:***
A Day for Retreat and Reflection £45
Saturday 20 June, 10:00-16:00 BST Alistair Fuller, Elize Sakamoto
- To Everything There Is a Season: Deepening Our Faith in Later Life***
[RESIDENTIAL] £365
Foxhill House, Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6XB
The course begins at 17:00 on Tuesday 23 June and ends with lunch on
Thursday 25 June. Rosemary Field, Annique Seddon
This course is FULLY BOOKED – to be put on the waiting list go to
<https://woodbrooke.beaconforms.com/form/3784ecef>
- Feeding Back as Quaker Elders*** £72
4 sessions: Wednesdays, 24 June – 15 July 18:30-20:30 BST
Elizabeth Bayliss, Elize Sakamoto
- Holding in the Light: What Does It Mean?***
Wednesday 24 June, 19:00-20:30 BST Rhiannon Grant
- Black Lives Matter: What is Racial Justice today?***
Thursday 25 June, 11:00-12:3 BST Edwina Peart, Tanya Hubbard
- Quakers and the Law: The Annual CRQS/QSRA Quaker Studies Conference***
[BLENDED] £40 (in-person); £25 (online)
Bristol Central Quaker Meeting House, Champion Square, Bristol BS2 9DB
Saturday 27 June, 10:00-17:00
This is the annual academic Quaker studies conference co-sponsored by the Centre for Research in Quaker Studies at Woodbrooke and the Quaker Studies Research Association.
- Spiritual Nurture and Pastoral Care in a Nutshell*** [IN PERSON EVENT] £45
St Martin in the Bull Ring, Edgbaston Street, Birmingham B5 5BB
Saturday 27 June, 10:00-16:00 Heather Rowlands, Helen Chambers

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>How To Pray</i> | 41 £72 |
| 6 sessions: Mondays, 29 June – 3 August, 19:00-20:30 BST | Mark Russ |
| <i>Journeys With Jonah</i> | £54 |
| 4 sessions: Tuesdays, 30 June – 21 July, 19:00-20:30 BST | Josh Selfe |
| <i>The Women of Swarthmoor Hall: Margaret Fell's seven daughters</i> | |
| Wednesday 1 July, 19:00-21:00 BST | Lucy Saint-Smith, Lily Chadwick |
| <i>Quaker Treasurership in a Nutshell</i> | £54 |
| Saturday 4 July, 10:00-16:00 BST | Wendrie Heywood |
| <i>Wrestling With the Bible: John 8:31-59</i> | |
| Sunday 5 July, 15:00-17:00 BST | Ann Conway-Jones |
| <i>Letting Go: Steps in the Spiritual Life:</i> | |
| <i>Jennifer Kavanagh in Conversation with Ben Pink Dandelion</i> | |
| Tuesday 7 July, 19:00-20:00 BST | Jennifer Kavanagh, 'Ben' Pink Dandelion |
| <i>Enquiring Into: Deepening Worship</i> | £25 |
| 2 sessions: Thursdays, 9 & 16 July, 19:00-21:00 BST | Rosie Carnall |
| <i>Essentials of Quaker Eldership</i> | |
| Monday 13 July, 19:00-20:30 BST | Ruth Audus, Elize Sakamoto |
| <i>A Short Guide to Stilling the Mind</i> | |
| Tuesday 14 July, 18:00-19:00 BST | Diana Lampen |
| <i>Embodying Spiritual Wisdom Through Chant</i> | |
| Thursday 16 July, 19:00-20:30 BST | Paulette Meier |
| <i>Infinite Wonder: Mathematics and Spirituality</i> | |
| Tuesday 21 July, 19:00-21:00 BST | Graham Wood |
| <i>Book Group: The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis</i> | £72 |
| 6sessions: Wednesdays, 22 July – 2 September, NOT 12 August, 19:00-20:30 BST | Mark Russ |
| <i>Reckoning With 'Principled Impartiality' in Palestine and Israel</i> | |
| Thursday 23 July, 10:00-12:00 BST | Tanya Hubbard |
| <i>Sunday Sessions: Radical Welcome</i> | |
| Sunday 26 July, 12:15-13:15 BST | Cathy Barney, Wendy Hampton |
| <i>Dealing With the Dead: Early Quaker Burial Practices</i> | |
| Tuesday 28 July, 19:00-21:00 BST | Anna Cusack |

For bursary help, speak to a Pastoral Friend, or email sesamtreasurer@gmail.com.

Westminster Meeting House raided again

For the second time in twelve months, the Metropolitan Police entered the Friends Meeting House in St Martin's Lane to arrest activists meeting there: see <https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quaker-meeting-house-raided-by-metropolitan-police-again>. The group Take Back Power was said to be planning shoplifting – which is perhaps questionable as a form of non-violent protest.

Stephen Tilley, June 1948 – February 2026

Simon Jackson writes:

Steve was an Attender at Central Edinburgh Meeting, coming regularly until he was prevented by illness. After his decline in health, I would visit him, first in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital in Morningside and later in the Trinity House Care Home in Craighall Road.

I remember Steve when he was fit and active. At that time, I was living in Portobello. Steve lived quite nearby and he would cycle down to the town to do his shopping. We would meet for coffee and a chat. Steve was always a brilliant raconteur. He could tell wonderful interconnecting tales about the doings of Edinburgh folk. He seemed to know everyone.

I had worked in mental health settings in London and had completed a degree in the Philosophy and Ethics of Mental Health. In conversation it soon emerged that Steve was part of what used to be called the 'Anti-Psychiatry' movement, in his role as a mental health nurse and subsequently as a lecturer on Mental Health. He took a radical 'bottom up' view of psychiatry, being particularly interested in empowering and giving voice to service users.

Steve's academic work focused on what were known as 'Mad Histories': he had become particularly interested in radical work being done in Toronto. He had got in touch with a man in Canada called David Reville who, as a law student, had had a breakdown and ended up in a mental hospital. By the experience of being forcibly detained, he had been radicalised and politicised, along with others who had endured the same. 'Mad People's History' as written by David became linked to what Kirsten MacLean in Scotland, was calling 'Oor Mad History', and this became the start of a call and response exchange over a period of twelve years between folk in Toronto and the psychiatric survivor community in Lothian, including service user/survivor, academic and service allies.

An example of the kind of issue Steve was keen to investigate and make known is the story of the great French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) and his patient 'Blanche' whose supposed problem was 'Hysteria'. Charcot gave demonstrations of his masterful talents in which he would appear to 'cure' Blanche before the eager eyes of the public. Steve would want to know 'And what about Blanche?' What was her take on this strange performance? Did she consider *herself* mad? Or was she in effect 'brainwashed' by the charismatic Charcot, so that she was whatever he said she was? How could she regain her autonomy and become her own person again?

David Reville had set up a course which he describes as an 'Archive of the Survivor Movement in Toronto.' Mad People's History, he says, is a collection of service-user stories as distinct from the stories psychiatry tells

about them. He used a painting to illustrate the difference between the stories you tell about yourself and the one told about you.

David says there is another reason why he is interested in mad people and their stories, because he has a mad history of his own. To which Steve says 'I certainly have a mad history of my own, I don't know about you.' To which I say 'so do I'.

How and where do we see differences? History is structured by way of class, race, gender, sexual orientation. David says 'Too much sanity is madness', going on to say (parodying the Declaration of Independence), "We hold this truth ... that all humans were created *different*."

Quakers have a long history of concern for people with mental health problems, rooted in the belief that 'There is that of God in everyone'. This leads to a compassionate, non-judgemental support for those in mental distress. Historically Quakers pioneered humane, moral treatment for mental illness at The Retreat, founded by William Tuke in York, in 1796. Today, Quaker Voices on Mental Health support this focus through advocacy and grants. Their website is at <https://quakervoicesonmh.org.uk/>.

Changes to Yearly Meeting

The following is based mainly on a letter sent from Friends House in March in the name of Paul Parker, the Recording Clerk, to the clerks of Area Meetings and others.

IN 2026 THERE WILL BE THREE SESSIONS OF YEARLY MEETING: 1-4 May, 18 July and 21 November. All Friends are welcome and you can find the details for how to register at www.quaker.org.uk/ym/bookings. (See also page 59.)

Meeting for Sufferings, which since the 1670s has been "the standing representative body entrusted with the general care of matters affecting Britain Yearly Meeting" has been laid down (see pages 25-26), and decisions will now be made in Yearly Meeting sessions. It is hoped this will bring greater participation in, and engagement with, national-level Quaker decision-making, with the full spectrum of Quaker experience present and heard. For this to happen, Friends need to feel connected to the community and business of the yearly meeting, and Area Meetings are asked to encourage Friends to attend – either online or by coming to the venue. Friends can be at as many sessions each year as they wish – they are welcome at all of them, but if they cannot attend one then they can still attend the others.

Yearly Meeting Representatives

AMs are also asked to appoint representatives. Their presence should:

- Create continuity of attendance – making sure there is a group of Friends committed to attending most or all sessions.
- Strengthen connections between local Friends and the yearly meeting as a

whole – ensuring someone in the local Quaker community knows what is happening at Yearly Meeting sessions, and can encourage Friends to attend sessions and to use the preparation materials.

- Together reflect the diversity of Quaker experience – ensuring Friends are present from across the yearly meeting and hopefully with a range of experience to share.

Representatives should be appointed in time for them to attend the Yearly Meeting sessions from July onwards. Their expenses will be paid by BYM. AMs can appoint someone of any age, with any amount of Quaker experience – what is important is that they are willing to engage, learn and participate. Meetings should think widely and consider appointing someone whose perspective might not otherwise be heard at Yearly Meeting. A current Meeting for Sufferings representative might be the right Friend to take on this service, but nominations committees should exercise discernment rather than assuming that the same Friend should continue in a new role.

Sending minutes to Yearly Meeting

Agenda Planning Committee (APC) is the new committee which will work with Yearly Meeting clerks to set the Yearly Meeting agendas.

Part of its role will be to receive and consider minutes sent in by AMs.

Previously, minutes sent to Meeting for Sufferings were considered by its Arrangements Group and not all were included in a Sufferings agenda; this will also be true for minutes received by APC. Some will need further testing (perhaps by the meeting that sent them or by a committee); some will be most suitable for sharing with other meetings to see if there is parallel discernment happening that could help to take the matter forward; some will need no further discernment but may be shared for information.

Minutes should be sent to: YMagenda@quaker.org.uk. Quakers in Britain staff will log receipt of minutes and will contact the AM to say when Friends can expect a substantive response. At that stage they might send follow-up questions by email or arrange a call to make sure they are clear about what the meeting thinks should happen with the minute, and to request any necessary additional information.

The minute will then be shared with APC for its discernment. If APC needs more information or decides that the matter is not ready for discernment by Yearly Meeting, then someone will contact the AM to discuss the next steps. If APC discerns that the minute should be added to a future Yearly Meeting agenda then someone will be in touch to discuss whether and how the sending meeting might help with introducing it.

Find out more

New pages are being added to <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation>.

The best way to keep up to date with Yearly Meeting developments is to subscribe to the newsletter *Hope So!* You can read about the newsletter and find a subscription link at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters/hope-so>.

RISK REGISTER FOR S.E. SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

JANUARY 2026

*This risk register has been prepared to facilitate discussion among SESAM Trustees about plausible risks to which SESAM is exposed, based on the experience of other organisations, and the best ways of mitigating those risks. Many risk mitigations are already in place, and the inclusion of a risk in this draft does not mean that it can reasonably be considered to be likely. Text in **bold type** adds updates from the April 2025 version and relates to the creation of QiS and risks to SESAM's charitable objectives. **If SESAM dissolved these risks would transfer to QiS.***

[The table continues overleaf and on the following page. Risks are listed in descending order of seriousness; for each, the **likelihood** of the issue giving rise to problems is given a numerical rating between 1 and 5 (so that the high probability of difficulties in the formation of Quakers in Scotland gives it 5, whereas the likelihood of fraud within the Area Meeting is reckoned only to be 1), and the **impact**, if the event *did* occur, is similarly rated between 1 and 5. These two values are multiplied together to give an **overall** figure for the significance of the risk.

Trustees note that the existence of QiS may mitigate certain risks, whether or not SESAM dissolves; but that others would be transferred, rather than eliminated, by the Area Meeting's giving up its functions, or else aggravated by the greater distance between local meetings and Scotland-wide decision making than currently exists between them and the Area Meeting. – *Editor*]

| Risk | Description | Mitigation in place | Likelihood | Impact | Overall | Notes and Action |
|------------------------|--|---|------------|--------|---------|--|
| | | | (L) | (I) | (L x I) | |
| | | | 1-5 | 1-5 | 1-25 | |
| Risks from QIS process | Proposals for the new QiS charity do not meet the organisational or spiritual needs of Quakers in S.E. Scotland or there is division in the AM on whether QiS will meet our needs. | A clear and transparent process for discerning if QiS should take on the legal, charity and regulatory responsibilities of SESAM, a shared plan for how the transition might work, and the appropriate information about the implications of laying down SESAM being made available to members. | 5 | 3 | 15 | Trustees should prepare to implement decisions of AM. If SESAM lays itself down we can draw on experience of N, E and W for dissolving into QiS. If not we can prepare for an evolving relationship between SESAM and QiS through a regularly revised MoU. |
| Decline | Membership numbers and energy decline | Outreach, welcome, strong communities, focus on what seekers are seeking, avoiding administrative overload | 3 | 4 | 12 | |
| No vision | Failure of organisation to nurture a strategic vision | New revision of Book of Discipline. Eldership in meetings. | 4 | 3 | 12 | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|----|---|
| Roles unfilled | AM unable to appoint to key roles | As for decline plus strategic planning by nominations cttee, willingness to redefine what are key roles, availability of training, team building, job shares, mentoring. | 4 | 3 | 12 | Consider more team building, mentoring and job sharing. This risk could be relinquished now to QiS, which was intended, in part, as a response to its becoming acute in other AMs. Transfers the risk rather than removing it. |
| Congregationalism | LMs go their own way and do not recognise the authority of AM | Building community across SESAM, ensuring appointments made from a range of mtgs, be-ing responsive to LMs' needs, appointing link trustees for each LM | 3 | 3 | 9 | Greater distance between LMs and QiS decision making could increase congregationalism, with a gap opening between theory (QiS trusteeship) and practice (local knowledge and control). |
| Factionalism | Theological, political or practical differences of view harden into factions dividing SESAM or LMs. | Worship together under the care of Elders, listening, mediation and reconciliation skills. Willingness to ask for help beyond the LM concerned, or SESAM. | 3 | 3 | 9 | There have been differences of opinion about the QiS process. Trustees will respect the discernment of the AM, working with imagination and kindness to find the right way forward. |
| Loss of role holder or staff member | Role holder moves, dies or is incapacitated | Recording of tasks, deputising arrangements, rotation of role holders | 3 | 3 | 9 | QiS may reduce this risk by making a wider pool of expertise available (whether or not SESAM dissolves). |
| Loss of data | Loss of current/historic records through fire, flood <i>etc.</i> | Backup of current data. Archives to be passed to relevant secure facilities according to agreed schedule | 3 | 3 | 9 | Ensure key documents are maintained in multiple locations. |
| Data breach | Personal data held by SESAM is shared inappropriately | Data protection policy and procedures | 3 | 3 | 9 | |
| Reputational damage | Damage to reputation <i>e.g.</i> from inappropriate letting or public statement by a Friend or meeting. | Compliance with legislation. Regularly review of lettings policy. Clarity on authority to make statements for SESAM. Risk management should not prevent SESAM from supporting unpopular causes | 3 | 3 | 9 | Review lettings policy during 2025 |
| Failure of governance | Inability or unwillingness of officers to discharge governance roles appropriately | Appropriate skill set among trustees and other officers, training, compliance with OSCR guidelines and SESAM constitution. Identification and management of any conflicts of interest or loyalty. | 2 | 4 | 8 | Learning session on accounts and budgeting to plan with treasurer and accountant. SESAM dissolving into QiS could bring a larger, stronger trustee body, but further from the coalface and with a wider remit. |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Safeguarding | Abuse of child or vulnerable adult occurs or is alleged. Failure to comply with policy. | Safeguarding policy in place, implemented and promoted through training and reminders | 2 | 4 | 8 | |
| Pandemic | Pandemic or other disruption to lettings business | Contingency plan for loss of major part of lettings income | 2 | 4 | 8 | |
| Unexpected repair bill | Sudden call on funds as a result of an unexpected and urgent requirement to repair buildings or equipment | | 4 | 2 | 8 | |
| Fire/flood | One of SESAM's buildings burns down or is otherwise rendered unavailable | Insurance, fire safety inspections, awareness of other venues as fallback | 2 | 3 | 6 | |
| Bankruptcy | SESAM cannot meet its financial obligation | Careful financial planning and budgeting, reserves policy, investment advice | 2 | 3 | 6 | |
| Internet failure | Loss of safe access to internet and related services | Retained memory of internet independent working. | 2 | 3 | 6 | |
| Employee discontent | Employee is discontented or makes a claim against SESAM. | Employment legislation and policies, regular review meetings w. manager, escalation route for problems or disputes. Guidance for volunteers working with staff. | 3 | 2 | 6 | Check escalation / appeal route for employees and guidance for any Friends working with staff. |
| Loss of service provider | Loss of key service provider – architect, accountant, electrician, lift engineer <i>etc.</i> | Continuing alertness to alternative providers. | 2 | 2 | 4 | QiS may reduce this risk by making a wider pool of expertise available (whether or not SESAM dissolves). |
| Third party claim | 3rd party claims for damages / injury by SESAM negligence. | Health & safety policy in place, implemented and promoted. Insurance. | 2 | 2 | 4 | |
| Fraud | Money misused or wasted | Financial rules (<i>e.g.</i> dual signatories), examination / audit, alertness to scams. | 1 | 3 | 3 | |

Reproducing this document here necessarily means using very small print (albeit larger than on the A4 sheet seen by Friends present at Area Meeting) and I apologise to those who find it hard to read. The version of Sesame on the AM website (at <https://www.quakerscotland.org/south-east/newsletters>) is larger than the paper copy if viewed on a PC, and can be magnified further. Please contact the Editor if you do not have computer access and would like a larger print version of these pages (or of any other recent item). – ED.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND AREA MEETING

**Minutes of Area Meeting held on Monday 19 January 2026
at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House and by remote videoconferencing**

2026/01/01 Worship and introductions

During opening worship we heard a reading from *Quaker Faith & Practice* 19.57. Wiltshire Quarterly Meeting in 1678 set down advice on the conduct of meetings for church affairs: “... that all business that comes before it be managed with gravity and moderation ..., and the meeting may have opportunity to weigh the matter, and have a right sense of it.”

...

[The full minutes are included in both the print edition of Sesame, and in the PDF emailed to Members and Attenders on the circulation list, but are redacted in this publicly available version. – Editor]

2026/01/11 Reports**1. Work That Reconnects *course and future***

Chris Booth (P&M) summarised the detailed report on the *Work That Reconnects* and the future. The report will be circulated with the minutes [*and was in Sesame 264*].

2. *Scottish Reparations for Slavery report*

Juliet Henderson (CE) described the event held in Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House and noted a report is in *Sesame*.

2026/01/12 Paristamen grant application

Lynne Barty spoke about the recent opportunity to apply for a grant to fund refugee support. She briefly outlined the options and opportunities. The outlined approach was welcomed and there was support for the application [*which, however, Lynne has since been notified was unsuccessful – ED.*].

2026/01/13 Closing minute

59 Friends (55 members and four attenders) have been at all or part of this meeting, either in person or on Zoom.

Local meeting attendance is indicated below:

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Central Edinburgh 20 | Central Fife 2 | East Lothian 4 | Falkirk & Polmont 3 | Kelso 5 |
| Penicuik 1 | Portobello & Musselburgh 11 | South Edinburgh 13 | Tweeddale - | <i>Visitors/Others</i> - |

We record our thanks to the Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House staff for their work and support today. We thank David Sterratt for managing the Zoom today.

We meet again on Monday 13 April 2026, 7.00 pm – 9.00 pm, at Edinburgh Quaker Meeting House.

(Signed)

Sara Davies, Clerk

Jacqueline Noltingk, Assistant Clerk *this time*

From the meeting of AM Trustees, 13 January 2026 – see 2026/01/06.1**Minute 6. *QiS Process and SESAM Risks***

Our understanding is that Quakers in SE Scotland are already part of Quakers in Scotland. We have considered Trustees' responsibilities, including our responsibilities in the event that SESAM chooses to vest all of its Area Meeting responsibilities in QiS and lay itself down. The question is on the agenda for Area Meeting next week, and Trustees need to be prepared to implement whatever decisions are taken. Trustees will not take a collective view on the question. However we have identified some risks to SESAM's charitable objectives from the process, have added them to the risk regis-

ter and will share the amended risk register and this minute with SESAM Friends before Area Meeting and with QiS Trustees.

Regardless of whether or when SESAM decides to lay itself down, there are many ways in which SESAM Trustees can meanwhile work with QiS Trustees to co-ordinate Quaker work and witness across Scotland in areas such as property strategy, residential events, work with children and young people, and alignment of financial and other processes. We hope that AM will give its blessing to this co-operation.

The allocation of responsibilities between SESAM and QiS should be captured in a regularly reviewed written agreement.

NORTHERN FRIENDS PEACE BOARD

Living our Peace Testimony – A Gathering

Saturday 13 June 2026

Friargate Meeting House, York YO1 9RL

Quakers have found ways of living our peace testimony in different ways at different times. What do our current times call us to do? How can we support one another in our individual and collective peace witness, in all areas of our lives?

This event is for Friends from across the North. We are planning a day that we hope will be challenging, nurturing, inspiring, stimulating, encouraging and connecting. The day will be participative and for Friends of all ages and backgrounds.

To register an interest, contact:

nfpb@gn.apc.org 07730 070167

Or complete the form here: <https://forms.gle/d6RbrvrcKs8TW1mx8>

Britain Yearly Meeting 2026 – 1-4 May

Friends House, London NW1 2BJ, and online

Attendance at Yearly Meeting is open to all Friends, but registration is required so that the meeting stays within the agreed capacity limits. Booking is open until **27 April**; go to <https://www.quaker.org.uk/ym/bookings>.

The Yearly Meeting team can be contacted from 9.00 am-5.00 pm, Monday to Friday: email ym@quaker.org.uk or telephone **020 7663 1040**.

QUAKER MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP IN SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND

Contact details of named Friends are in the Book of Members. 'QMH' = Quaker Meeting House

MEETING IN PERSON

Central Edinburgh – QMH, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2JL

Sundays at 9.30 & 11.00 am. Tea & coffee afterwards; soup and bread & cheese lunch, 12.30.

Wednesday, 12.30–1.00 pm. Tea & coffee; you may bring your own lunch.

Contact the office for updates.

Central Fife – The Old Kirk, Kirk Wynd, Kirkcaldy KY1 1EH

On the 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays at 10.30 am. On 1st Sundays, also at 10.30 am, at

Linburn Scout Hall, Abbey View, Dunfermline KY11 4HA.

Contact **Laura Pearson** for further information.

East Lothian – Dunbar Town House, 79 High Street, Dunbar, EH42 1ER

On the 1st, 2nd & last Sundays of the month at 10.45am. Worship on 1st Sundays is all-age; there is a children's meeting on the last Sundays. Contact **Phil Lucas** for updates.

Falkirk & Polmont – Trinity Church, Manse Place, Falkirk FK1 1JN

Sundays, 10.30. Contact **Denise Marshall** if bringing children; **Anna Levin** for updates.

Kelso – QMH, Abbey Row, Kelso TD5 7JF

Sundays at 10.30 am. Contact **Anne Macnaughton** for updates.

North Edinburgh worship group – 4th Sunday in the month at 7.00 pm, meeting in Friends' homes. Contact **Tony Gross** or **Rufus Reade** for further information.

Penicuik – For confirmation of the venue, contact penicuikquakers@hutcheson.org.uk

1st Sundays at 11.00 am – contact **Mark Hutcheson** for updates and further information.

Portobello & Musselburgh – Bellfield, 16B Bellfield Street, Portobello EH15 2BP

On the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 11.00 am, with a children's meeting.

1st Sundays: Evening meeting at 7.00 pm; NO children's meeting.

3rd and (when there is one) 5th Sundays: Hollies Community Hub, 183 High Street, Musselburgh EH21 7DE, 7.00 pm. Contact **Robin Liebmann**, **Sarah Martin** or **Marian Willoner** for further information, portymussclerks@gmail.com.

South Edinburgh – The Open Door, 420 Morningside Road, Edinburgh EH10 5HY

Sundays, 10.30 am. For information contact the clerking team, sedclerks@gmail.com.

Tweeddale – 2nd Tuesdays, at 7.30 pm, and 4th Sundays at 10.30 am, meeting in Friends' homes. For further information contact **Lesley Morrison**

MEETING BY ZOOM

Central Edinburgh – for login details contact centraledinburgh@quaker.org.uk

Every Sunday at 9.30 am ONLY (blended with the meetings in person).

Central Fife – for login details contact **Laura Pearson**

Every Sunday at 10.30 am; blended with the meeting in person on 1st, 2nd, 4th & 5th.

Penicuik – available if requested in advance – for details contact **Mark Hutcheson**

South Edinburgh – for login details contact sedclerks@gmail.com.

Sundays at 10.30 am, blended with meetings in person.

1st Thursdays at 7.30 pm (online only). Meeting for worship (30 mins) followed by chat.