

The Living Witness Project is a growing network of Quaker meetings and groups in Britain, exploring our corporate witness to sustainable living.

Living Witness Project

experiences of LWP meetings – Hardshaw East, Huddersfield, Llanidloes and Oxford. Friends commenting on Yearly Meeting as a whole were very appreciative of these sessions.

The sessions on Testimony at Yearly Meeting were very much squeezed for time by the deliberations on RECAST. Nevertheless, we did minute that our developing testimony in the area of environment and sustainability had been an important theme throughout the Yearly Meeting; that individual Friends are finding ways to witness to this testimony, and “the time has come to find a way of witnessing corporately.”

Project news

EcoTeams

Eleven EcoTeams have now got underway, involving about 100 Friends and others. They are in Beccles, Birmingham, Chesterfield, East London, Llanidloes, Ludlow and Reading, with two teams each in Bristol and Oxford. Participants record their use of electricity, gas and water, and weigh their waste over a three month period. For the first month they try not to change their habits. Over the next two months they aim to cut down their energy and water use, and the amount of waste they send to landfill. We've been hugely encouraged by the response from meetings. For many of us, the programme seems to have attracted a different crowd from the usual LWP groups in our meetings. Please let me (Laurie) know if you'd be interested in getting a group going in the future. I hope we can schedule another facilitator training somewhere in the north.

LWP Involvement

There's been a lot of fresh interest in LWP, partly stimulated by the strong green undercurrents at Yearly Meeting. We're expecting new participants at the next Link Group weekend from meetings including Bedford, Bradford, Exeter, Hartington Grove (Cambridge), Scarborough, Taunton and Wolverhampton.

LWP at Yearly Meeting

Although sustainability was not explicitly on the agenda at Yearly Meeting, it was very much talked about. On the Tuesday, YM divided into a several over-19, under-19 and mixed age groups, to talk about corporate witness. Seven of the groups had a sustainability theme, including four on the

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environment and sustainability had been an important theme throughout the Yearly Meeting; that individual Friends are finding ways to witness to this testimony, and “the time has come to find a way of witnessing corporately.”

Funding

We are making progress! Participating meetings have so far contributed about £8,000 to this year's cost of running LWP, with the majority still coming from Oxford PM. This is about half of what we need. Can your meeting help?

Forthcoming Events

Contact Laurie (details overleaf) for more information on any of these

29 October. LWP day for Wensleydale & Swaledale MM. Bainside Arts Centre, Wensleydale.

30 October. LWP afternoon at Northfield FMH, Birmingham.

5 November. LWP day for Derby, Lincs & Notts GM, at Chesterfield FMH.

11 February 2006. Operation Noah conference in Oxford, organised by Oxford Friends Group on Sustainable Living with Oxford churches.

24-26 February. LWP Link Group Meeting, Bilberry Hill Centre, Birmingham. Evaluating our experience with EcoTeams and making plans for the future. Food and accommodation £30.

24-26 March. Permaculture @ Woodbrooke. Weekend course facilitated by Lizz.

26-29 May. Britain Yearly Meeting. Will include a Quaker Green Action Special Interest Group and display: LWP contributions welcome.

25-29 August. QGA Summer Camp. A good opportunity to get to know other green Friends/LWP Link Group members with time to relax. Venue being sought! Any suggestions?

8-10 September. Weekend on sustainability at Claridge House.

13-15 October. Weekend on sustainability at Swarthmoor Hall.

News from meetings

Leicester

For some time there has been little to report from Leicester, but I am glad to say that events on the programme at Yearly Meeting were successful in rekindling our interest and commitment. What follows below is not a report of what we have been doing, but of what I hope will happen.

I have been reflecting on why it has been so difficult to get a group together, meeting and working on matters to do with our witness to creation and sustainability. I now accept that evening meetings, weekend events and even after-meeting events do not attract a following, and have been looking instead at what does work in our Meeting. Maybe there was a successful model I could follow? I found a possibility in my own experience!

On alternate Sundays I have been running a Fair Trade stall,

selling goods from a retail outlet in town and drawing attention to Trade Justice campaigns and issues. This has become an established feature in the coffee room after Meeting for Worship, where people gather for regular supplies of goods and discussions flourish.

I am therefore going to add a "Sustainability Support Stall" (on Sustainability Sundays...) (I might have to think of a less gruesome title). The stall will have lots of information, with space for people to exchange ideas, and ask questions. It will patiently reappear on the designated Sundays. Best of all, because this sounds small and do-able, I have a volunteer to help me.

I'll let you know how it goes!

Jenny Mattingly

Llanidloes

Powys County Council is supporting LLES in a bid for up to £2m of European money to make the town more energy efficient, and also to integrate innovative renewable energy projects. Our Friend David Utting met with the Mayor and Town Council recently who have backed the bid and gave LLES enthusiastic support for "doing so much for our community". LLES is talking to the Welsh Development Agency which is to construct a new business park on a brownfield site about making it an eco-park to attract environmentally friendly businesses to the area, and we have discussed with the architect the possibility for a combined heat and power (CHP) system for the site.

We are also looking into the possibility of producing electricity from an Anaerobic Digestion system run off the town's food waste. There are many other possibilities which are being explored, but space does not permit further detail. Even if we are not successful in securing the bid, the interest and enthusiasm raised in the community will hopefully ensure that the ideas will be implemented.

We have had our first Ecoteam meeting with 11 people participating - some Friends, some LLES members, and some members of the local community who are not specifically 'green' but interested in having a go at reducing their waste and energy use. Everyone is very keen and eager to take an active part. As one

member said "It is so good to feel you are doing something really practical."

Gwen Prince

Oxford

The Oxford Friends Group on Sustainable Living has found a new way of working. We now have a number of small groups working on a range of projects. They include planting trees with a primary school in north Oxford, distributing leaflets on climate change in the city centre, and organising Operation Noah activities with local churches. We have also started up two EcoTeams, involving about 25 Friends many of whom have not previously come to GOSLings meetings.

We still meet all together once a month for a shared vegetarian meal, mutual listening and discussion or other activity. Last month Lizz led us in an exploration of the testimonies and sustainability. This month we are considering whether to take on responsibility for trade justice activities in the meeting.

Laurie

News from other meetings

Bristol and Frenchay Friends have been looking at environmental aspects of their use of paper and cleaning projects; they have also started up two EcoTeams involving Friends, with the aim of rolling the programme out into the local community; and they plan to run study group series based on the LWP booklet, *Be the Change*, from February 2006.

Newcastle Friends LWP group are pleased with developments in their meeting. A LOAF lunch last month was well attended despite coinciding with the Great North Run day. After lunch they watched a video, "Tilting at Windmills", about wind turbines and followed it by a discussion on use of energy. About 15 Friends stayed. They are planning a meeting on green issues on 17th Oct.

For more information or to get involved in the Living Witness Project, please get in touch with:

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Meetings involved in LWP:

Ackworth PM, Bournemouth & Swanage MM, Bristol & Frenchay MM, Chesterfield PM, Cotteridge PM, Dorking PM, Exeter PM, Gloucester & Nailsworth MM, Hartington Grove PM (Cambridge), Huddersfield PM, Ilkley PM, Lancaster PM, Leicester PM, Llanidloes PM, Machynlleth RM, Manchester Mount Street PM, Newcastle PM, Northampton PM, Norwich & Lynn MM, Oxford PM, Scarborough PM, Settle PM/MM, South Wales MM, Taunton PM, Wolverhampton PM, Wythenshaw PM, Young Friends General Meeting