



living witness
Quakers for Sustainability

Annual Report and Accounts

Year to 31 December 2016

**Living Witness
Friends Meeting House
43 St Giles
Oxford
OX1 3LW**

www.livingwitness.org.uk

Living Witness is registered in England and Wales
as Charity No. 1119938

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Quakers for Sustainability

Annual Report 2016

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Introduction

Living Witness (LW) supports the development of spirit-led approaches to sustainable living among Quakers and in the wider society. Its aims are:

- 1) education on the many dimensions of the sustainability challenge,
- 2) encouraging and informing practical action for sustainability, and
- 3) deepening Quaker faith and practice as it relates to sustainable living.

In support of these aims, its main activities are:

- providing advice, analysis, study guides and resources for spiritually-grounded action, in person, in print and on the Internet
- speaking to groups and running courses and workshops
- supporting spiritual exploration and grounding, learning and action in networks of individuals and groups developing their own approaches to sustainability

Living Witness Project was started with a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (2002-2005). It was registered as a charitable trust in July 2007. In 2008 it merged with Quaker Green Action, the group of British Friends concerned with our sustainability witness since 1986. With an increasing Quaker activity on sustainability, Living Witness is just one among several sources of information and encouragement. However, we continue to function as the main grassroots network among British Friends, working closely with Britain Yearly Meeting (Quakers in Britain) and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.

During 2016 Living Witness was supported by Laurie Michaelis as Co-ordinator and secretary to trustees and by Dee Sayce (until March) as administrator and editor of earthQuaker. Both worked on a part-time, self-employed basis.

Our work in 2016 included:

1. Servicing BYM Sustainability Group, the committee set up to provide leadership in the yearly meeting's 2011 commitment to become a low carbon sustainable community.
2. Producing earthQuaker.
3. An in-depth review of the priorities and work of Living Witness, including a residential trustees meeting in February and a retreat to develop project working groups in October.

BYM Sustainability Group

Living Witness' main area of activity in 2016 was supporting the work of BYM Sustainability Group, set up by Meeting for Sufferings to provide eldership and oversight in the yearly meeting in relation to the 2011 commitment to become a low carbon sustainable community. From January 2015 Laurie Michaelis acted as Secretary to the group.

In addition to organising four meetings of the Group during 2016, specific activities included

- Organising the BYM Sustainability Gathering at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, in March 2016
- Organising a special interest meeting at BYM in May 2016.
- Organising a four-day event entitled *Composting the Covenant* at Woodbrooke in June 2016.
- Supporting the organisation of a Quaker Life Representative Council on sustainability in October 2016
- Work on papers and project proposals, in particular on *Nurturing our Sustainability Ministry*

earthQuaker

From April 2016 Pete Redwood was appointed as earthQuaker editor, but due to illness was prevented from taking up the position until later in the year. Laurie produced one edition in May, and Pete produced his first edition in November 2016.

Review of priorities and future work

Trustees held a residential meeting at Bamford Quaker Community in February 2016 at which they developed initial ideas for the future of Living Witness including:

- National gatherings, perhaps once a year
- Visits to local Quaker Meetings to support a deepening of the spiritual basis of our sustainability commitment
- Experiential retreats – exploring spiritual and practical aspects of sustainability and working on the land or with animals
- Joyful and spirit-led nonviolent direct action/civil disobedience
- Conflict transformation and community building
- Researching and writing about what we've learned from our Quaker journey on sustainability
- Outreach beyond Quakers, offering sustainability workshops and resources to other organisations

At a gathering at Bamford in October Living Witness Trustees and members agreed to take forward activities on:

- **well-being**, including how we work with the challenging feelings and attitudes that arise around global change, like denial, blame and guilt – we're planning a retreat at Bamford in 2017 and an event at Woodbrooke in 2018
- **green spirituality** - broadly defined as how our Quaker faith relates to sustainability. We planned a retreat at Bamford on 24-26 March 2017, feeding into wider work in Britain Yearly Meeting on "nurturing our sustainability ministry".
- **resilience** - and the Quaker role in building local community so we're better able to respond to global change. We're planning a course at Woodbrooke in 2018.
- **interfaith work** - including publicising other faith initiatives to Quakers, making Quaker witness more accessible to other faiths, and encouraging interfaith participation in our events
- **conversations** - having conversations with strangers about climate change and writing them up to share

Events and talks

In addition to BYMSG events in 2016, Laurie provided

- a seminar for the Global Sustainability Institute in Cambridge in February
- a day workshop for Notts and Derby Area Meeting in March
- a special interest meeting for Young Friends General Meeting in April
- a gathering for Living Witness members at the Quaker Community, Bamford, in October.

Other activities

Living Witness supports the Quaker Community, Bamford as an experiment in Quaker approaches to sustainable living. In May 2016 Laurie facilitated a closed week for community members, exploring their approach to meeting for worship.

People and governance

Trustees

Living Witness is a charitable trust. In 2016 the trustees held one residential meeting and met twice by teleconference, using Quaker Business Method. The trustees during 2016 were:

Rachel Howell, Aberystwyth (2014 – 2016). During 2015 Rachel was a postdoctoral research fellow in Human Dimensions of Climate Change at Aberystwyth University, and is now a lecturer in Sustainable Development at Edinburgh University.

Sue Meredith-Velado, Loughborough (2015 – 2017). Sue is active in local community work, including Transition Leicester and the Leicester Footpaths Project.

Alison Seddon, Tunbridge Wells (2015 – 2017). Alison is a trainer and facilitator working with drama and role play.

Andrew Taylor-Browne, Falmouth (2015 – 2017). Andrew and his wife Julie have a farm near Falmouth, where they care for a wide variety of animals, trees and other life.

Staff

Laurie Michaelis. Laurie acts as secretary to the trustees. He has worked on energy, climate change and other environmental policy and education for over 25 years.

Dee Sayce was the Administrator during the first quarter of 2016. She is a former member of the Quaker Community at Bamford and works as a teacher of spinning and natural dyeing.

Review of finances in 2016

During 2016 financial contributions from Friends and meetings held steady, following a decline over several years. We received £3086 in payments from Britain Yearly Meeting for servicing the BYM Sustainability Group, and a bequest of £14,000 from the estate of Hilary Judith Kramer (this was the second instalment of three, totalling £40,000).

The major expenditure was £6,000 to Laurie Michaelis for his work as Secretary to BYM Sustainability Group. Trustees' travel and accommodation expenses at £1,118 amounted to 10% of outgoings.

Living Witness Provisional Financial Summary 2016

	2015	2016
RECEIPTS		
Fees for events	827	690
Contributions from Meetings	1,555	1,569
Donations from Friends	519	257
Individual membership fees	817	1,133
Consultancy (BYM Sustainability Group)	6,159	3,086 ¹
Bequest	14,000	14,000
Bank interest	4	-
TOTAL	23,881	20,735
PAYMENTS		
Fees for contract work (Laurie & Dee)	6,933	7,737
Telephone, IT services	124	153
Equipment (incl. literature & software)	119	201
Stationery	-	14
Printing, publicity & postage	434	449
Staff travel	443	447
Staff training	145	630
Trustees expenses incl. attending events	592	1,118
Event venues, catering	30	1,145
TOTAL	8,820	11,893
Excess receipts over payments	15,060	8,841
Balance at start of Period	5,053	23,420
Closing Fund balance	20,113	32,261
End of year balance in LWP Co-operative Bank Account	23,420	32,261
Plus debtors minus creditors (unpaid invoices, unrepresented cheques)	- 3,307	- 0
Available funds	20,113	32,261

¹ Additionally £3,000 invoiced from BYM in December but paid in January. We moved from reporting accruals basis to cash basis in 2016.