

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

Project news

LWP involvement

With climate change continually in the news, Friends are increasingly asking what they can do about it. Lots of new meetings are getting involved in LWP and seeking to develop their sustainability witness. The link group gathering this month brings together nearly 30 Friends, including first-time participants from Chepstow, Ludlow, Reading, Warwick, Watford and Wellington. It's also good to see several new names from meetings that have been participating for some time – helping to strengthen the connection with the network.

EcoTeams

Our Quaker EcoTeams have all now completed the course from Global Action Plan (GAP), working with a handbook over four sessions to explore ways of reducing their households' environmental impacts. We'll be evaluating our experience at the Link Group gathering this month, and a staff member from GAP is joining us.

We've been very positively surprised by the number of Friends wanting to participate in EcoTeams. Several more meetings are interested in running the course. The feedback so far suggests that we need to adapt the approach to work better with Quakers.

The existing material concentrates mainly on measuring and reducing household waste, electricity and gas use. We would probably want to extend it to go into more detail on car use, aviation and other forms of travel. We'd also probably want to add a session on food.

Be the Change

Some meetings are beginning to experiment with *Be the Change*, a booklet of study group sessions for Quaker meetings. Please do send Laurie feedback if you've used it. See below for some initial reactions from Stafford Friends. The sessions follow a similar format to *Hearts and Minds Prepared*, the course

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from Woodbrooke that has been used in many meetings. But you don't have to have done *Hearts and Minds* first!

Environmental audits

There is also growing demand for the booklet on *Carrying out an environmental audit in your meeting*. Again, feedback from meetings that have used the booklet would be very much appreciated. There is a separate sheet now available to help you work out the greenhouse gas emissions from your meeting.

Funding

Several more meetings have made contributions to LWP's costs in the form of either donations or event facilitation fees. Income for the current financial year stands at about £8,700. At the moment, this is mostly covering my office costs, travel and salary. Most Friends attending Link Group gatherings have either obtained funds from their meetings for travel and accommodation, or paid for themselves. Any further donations would be really helpful!

Laurie Michaelis

News from meetings

Stafford

Stafford meeting has started the 5 sessions of 'Be the Change'. At the time of writing we have got as far as session 2 and rather than give chapter and verse I will give a feeling of what we are achieving.

We have found the sessions have enabled us to affirm each other's actions and viewpoints. We have managed to stay away from guilt trips about what we are **not** doing but we are focussing on what we **are** doing and **can** do. Two comments I found especially telling were:

Firstly, "I believe that individuals can make a difference".

Secondly "George Fox said ..."walk cheerfully over the world" now I feel I am allowed to walk over the world providing my footprints aren't too big"

At the end of the 'Be the Change' sessions we hope to continue the LWP ideas and actions as individuals, a group and as a meeting.

Nigel Peckett

Forthcoming Events

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

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 in the Urban Jungle @ 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. Hosted by Gill Westcott near Ilfracombe, Devon.

8-10 September. Towards World Healing weekend course at Claridge House facilitated by Laurie.

13-15 October. Sustainability and the Quaker Testimonies weekend course at Swarthmoor Hall facilitated by Laurie.

Scarborough

Since joining LWP in September last year we feel we have achieved a lot. We meet once a month and regularly have an attendance of around nine or ten Friends. We alternate between shared meals at the Meeting House after Meeting for Worship on a Sunday and a mid-week evening meeting at a Friend's house and find that apart from the core group of four or five we get a different group at each venue. At our last shared lunch we were visited by a member of the Rainbow Vineyard Project - a community allotment project run by the local parish church, with an ambitious aim to plant a small vineyard as well. Much interest was shown by our group.

We have a number of projects in progress including a fund raising Fair Trade coffee morning during Fair Trade Fortnight, helping our Premises Committee find an ecological replacement for our old Meeting House boiler, examine our recycling facilities and our use of paper in the Meeting House (we already have a dry battery recycling project), a Green Transport Day for Scarborough (during National Bike week), looking into the possibility of buying low energy light bulbs in bulk to enable all Friends at the Meeting to obtain at least one. We also have a number of discussion topics to work through.

At our last PM we persuaded the Meeting to become a Fair Trade Meeting. This was agreed and we now have the certificate to prove it.

Elders have been asked to consider "Be the Change" for our next Study Group sessions.

Pete Redwood

Sustainability in Britain Yearly Meeting

Sustainability is beginning to be taken on board as a serious concern in the work of our Yearly Meeting. There are still voices expressing doubt – is climate change really happening? do we as Quakers have anything particular to offer? shouldn't we focus our energy on our established work and the things we know we do well? But minutes from Yearly Meeting itself, and from Meeting for Sufferings, are clear that we feel we must act, and we must change our lives, even if we aren't quite sure how.

Particular attention has been devoted to this issue by QPSW Testimonies Committee, which has been asking whether we do have a testimony on sustainability

or the environment and, if so, how we are to recognise it. Like the rest of the Society, Testimonies Committee seems to be finding that it includes a broad range of views.

It seems pretty clear to me, though, that we do have *testimony* on sustainability, whether or not we call it a *testimony*. It is reflected in the lives, actions and campaigning of individual Friends and of meetings – including many meetings that are not involved in LWP. The difficult question has been whether our testimony is sufficiently coherent to be expressed in Yearly Meeting corporate statements and action. That question is beginning to be answered positively.

Meeting for Sufferings' Operational Plan for the centrally managed work for 2006-2008 includes explicit mention of environmental work; this is also included in the annual report to Yearly Meeting, *Quaker Work in 2005*. A one-off environmental audit of the centrally managed work is being planned. And all of the QPSW groups, the subcommittees that oversee the work, are being encouraged to find ways of introducing an environmental dimension. More substantial initiatives will have to wait until Meeting for Sufferings thinks again about its Long-Term Plan.

At the same time, our testimony is beginning to find expression through other Quaker organisations. You may have seen the special sections on climate change in *The Friend* at Christmas/New Year and on 6 January.

And as you'll see from the calendar overleaf, Quaker retreat and study centres are offering more courses on environmental issues.

Change can seem slow, partly because all of these organisations plan their work a long way ahead. Hopefully we'll see a lot more emerging in 2007.

Laurie Michaelis

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

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Meetings represented and involved in LWP:

Ackworth PM, Bedford PM, Bournemouth & Swanage MM, Bristol & Frenchay MM, Chepstow PM, 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, Ludlow PM, Machynlleth RM, Manchester Mount Street PM, Newcastle PM, Northampton PM, Norwich & Lynn MM, Oxford PM, Reading MM, Scarborough PM, Settle PM/MM, Southampton PM, South Wales MM, Staffordshire MM, Taunton PM, Warwick PM, Watford PM, Wellington PM, Wolverhampton PM, Wythenshaw PM, Young Friends General Meeting