

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

Project news

from Laurie

Website

I'm gradually adding LWP material to the website, which is currently shared with Quaker Green Action (see www.livingwitness.org.uk). It would be really good to have at least a paragraph about what each meeting is doing, if not a link to your own websites. Please let me have your contributions!

Northern LWP Meetings

We have booked Swarthmoor Hall for the weekend of 1-3 December. So far about eight LWP Link Group members have said they or someone else from their meeting will attend. It would be good to hear what you'd like for the programme but it is likely to include sharing experiences of developing a sustainability witness in our meetings, and looking at ways we can support each other. The cost of the weekend will be about £70 per participant (includes accommodation, food and other costs) but could be lower if more people come!

Next steps for LWP?

The Oxford Group on Sustainable Living (GOSLings) is working on ideas for setting up a centre for sustainability in Oxford FMH. We would very much like other LWP meetings to be involved – we could aim eventually to have a network of centres around the country – and I'd appreciate your thoughts! I hope we'll spend some time on this at the next Link Group meeting (Bilberry Hill, 27-29 October).

The basic idea is to provide support for Quaker witness and also for the wider community. We'd like to work with other faith groups and secular organisations working for sustainability, schools and other educational establishments, and local groups in the Oxford area.

The activities of the centre would include:

– producing printed and Internet resources – accounts of individual and collective ex-

Living Witness Project

**Newsletter No. 15:
August 2006**

perience (what works, what doesn't, lessons learned), information about environmental and social issues, briefings and analysis, guides to community building and action, etc.

– running events including workshops, courses and hopefully a summer school

– developing and supporting networks including, if LWP meetings wish, the Living Witness Project

– engaging with local and national policy processes.

We are responding to a particular gap in mainstream activity and thinking. Politicians and others say that we all need to change the way we live – mostly because of climate change – but there seems to be a disconnection between theory and action. There is little sign of a will for change.

I think there are Quaker gifts that could help with developing a collective will. These include our approaches to maintaining both collective and personal responsibility, valuing and working with diversity, and sustaining the balance between individual creativity and the group.

We would aim over the next couple of years to establish a staff of two or three, with a number of people working on a voluntary or contract basis. Our proposal is going to PM at the beginning of September.

Forthcoming Events

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

2006

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. Cost £9/night.

8-10 September. Towards World Healing weekend course at Claridge House facilitated by Laurie. Cost £140.

13-15 October. Sustainability and the Quaker Testimonies weekend course at Swarthmoor Hall facilitated by Laurie. Cost £130.

27-29 October, LWP Link Group meeting at Bilberry Hill Centre, Birmingham. Cost £50.

1-3 December, LWP Northern Meetings gathering at Swarthmoor Hall. Cost c. £70.

2007

29-31 January, Climate Change: Our Quaker Response, conference at Woodbrooke. Cost £120.

29-31 March, LWP Link Group meeting at Woodbrooke.

8-10 June, The Science and Politics of Climate Change, Friendly Science conference at Woodbrooke.

News from meetings

Scarborough

Scarborough Meeting Sustainable Living Group meets monthly, alternating between a discussion evening at a Friend's house and a shared meal after Meeting for Worship at the Meeting House. Composition of the group varies but usually six to eight Friends attend each meeting.

A recent theme running through our discussion evenings has been "How can we as Quakers inspire and motivate people to modify their lifestyles?" Prophets were influential people. Could we become prophets? Why not?

During our shared meals more practical matters are discussed. Our heating system is nearing the end of its useful life and we are looking into possi-

ble ideas for replacement - wood pellet and ground source heat pumps have so far been discussed. Insulation of the building is another topic that keeps recurring.

As a result of work by our group we have now become a Fairtrade Meeting. We placed an order with a local wholesaler for low energy lightbulbs giving all members of the Meeting the opportunity to upgrade at a relatively low price. We are also examining our waste and recycling arrangements at the Meeting House.

Our Monthly Meeting owns an eighteenth century building (Worfolk Cottage) not far from Scarborough that is let out as a holiday cottage to disadvantaged groups and families, and others. It is now in need of refurbishment to comply with disability access requirements and other legislation and the opportunity is being taken to carry out the work using the most environmentally sound methods and materials. It is planned that heating will be provided by a ground source heat pump, wall insulation will use sheep's wool, loft insulation will use material made from recycled newspaper, as much electricity as possible will be supplied by a wind turbine and hot water will be provided by thermal solar panels. Watch this space!

Pete Redwood

Chepstow

Quakers undertook to deal with "ecology and environment" at the "mind body and jamboree" held by Chepstow Churches Together on 23rd July. Everyone enjoyed puppets, skittles, bouncy castles and such like. It was a very enjoyable afternoon in the sunshine but few wanted to look at what showed the beauty of creation, man's misuse and what could be done. My father used to recount monologues. One was "Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone. For this sorry old earth will have all of your mirth. It has troubles enough of its own" We do not seem to realise that relation with our creator is a two way thing!

Margaret Davis

Stafford

Our meeting is still doing LWP stuff but formal meetings have stopped for the summer. The main activity at the moment centres around the following:

- 1) Stopping the M6 expansion – this runs from the meeting house but is not solely Quaker but has lots of other groups involved
- 2) Trade justice issues such as: Make Poverty History, Trade justice etc.

3) Issues to do with Trident and replacing Trident

Nigel Peckett

What's going on in the Yearly Meeting?

If you saw *Quaker Work in 2005* (the Meeting for Sufferings report to Yearly Meeting on the centrally managed work), you may have noticed several references to environmental work. Meeting for Sufferings last year agreed to a "one-off audit" of the environmental impacts of centrally managed work. This is now under way, focusing on work done at Friends House, and also looking at committee travel. The working group carrying out the audit (Laurie Michaelis, Brian Reed, Martin Quick and Heather Wilcox, with support from Ian Care) expect to report in early 2007. Friends House staff are being tremendously helpful in providing information and spending time in discussion.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee agreed last year to encourage its subcommittees to do work on environmental issues, within their existing terms of reference. The Economic Issues Group has been exploring what it can do, especially on climate change, bearing in mind that any new project may mean laying down existing work. There are also plans to develop an environmental dimension to the work that's been underway on "human security."

Quaker Life Central Committee is planning to spend time on environmental issues in its September 2006 meeting.

More substantial environmental initiatives in the centrally managed work may have to wait until Meeting for Sufferings develops the next long-term plan. Although there are several Sufferings and Yearly Meeting minutes expressing the need for environmental work, they do not offer a way of prioritising between this and the existing work on peace and social issues. Hopefully guidance will come fairly soon, as Sufferings takes on its new role as the "crucible" for developing and sharing Quaker witness!

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

**Laurie Michaelis, 15 Sandfield Road,
Headington, Oxford, OX3 7RN;
E-mail: laurie@livingwitness.org.uk.
Telephone: 01865 308306.**

Website: www.quakergreenaction.org.uk/lwp/

Meetings represented and involved in LWP:

Ackworth PM, Bedford PM, Bournemouth & Swanage MM, Bristol & Frenchay MM, Chepstow PM, Chesterfield PM, Colchester 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, Muswell Hill PM, Newcastle PM, Northampton PM, Norwich & Lynn MM, Oxford PM, Reading MM, Scarborough PM, Settle PM/MM, Southampton PM, South Wales MM, Stafford PM, Taunton PM, Warwick PM, Wellington PM, Wolverhampton PM, Young Friends General Meeting