

23/06/11 Options for Scotland

Further to minute 23/03/18, we receive the report of the Options for Scotland 2 Working Group. This has been before all four Area Meetings in Scotland, and we receive their minutes as follows:

- 035/23 of West Scotland AM held 15 April 2023;
- 15/23 of North Scotland AM held 22 April 2023;
- 2023/05/05 of South East Scotland AM held 9 May 2023;
- 23.05.03 of East Scotland AM held 13 May 2023.

Copies of these minutes and the introductory paper from the Options 2 Group are filed with our minutes.

The recommendations from Options 2 Group both to Area Meetings and to General Meeting for Scotland are that:

- We form a single body, 'Quakers in Scotland' through which we support all our Local Meetings, where our membership is held and which enables us to speak, as Quakers, on Scotland wide issues.
- We form a single charity (a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), to be responsible for the stewardship of all our resources across Scotland.
- We develop further the use of paid professional support to undertake routine tasks and provide advice, easing the load for the Friends we ask to give the greatest practical ministry.

We have noted the area meeting minutes and observe that all understand the need for change. We have heard of the pain caused to some by our process in forming the working group. Also concern about what happens to existing area meetings, and disquiet about some of the implications and nature of the recommendations. In particular, how we maintain our communities of faith and witness, especially through our systems of eldership and pastoral care. We have been reminded of the need for a wider support in maintaining properties, and we have heard of the opportunity to do some things differently. We find we are not in unity over the recommendations at this point but recognise the need to explore further the issues raised today, and in the area meeting minutes. One Friend expressed how we wrestle with the words "faith, trust, hope, realism and practicalities" in relation to the issues before us. We are aware of the real and current difficulties facing us all in maintaining existing structures and of the responsibilities we have for each other. We also need to be clear of how the role of General Meeting, as defined in 5.03 of Quaker faith & practice, is maintained.

We agree to extend the life of Options for Scotland 2 Working Group until 16 September 2023 so preparatory work on the recommendations may continue. We agree to set up

an Options for Scotland 3 Working Group from that date, to serve until the end the end of the process, as outlined in the Options for Scotland 2 Working Group document “OfS2 Path for Implementation”.

We ask the existing group to bring suggestions to us in September about how we might support current structures where they are in difficulty. We feel that we could unite about moving to a single charity for Quakers in Scotland as a first step, and this might go some way in helping Area Meetings. We ask the group to make clear what would be involved in this.

We ask our Nominations Committee to bring in the names of Friends to serve on the new working group with the following make up:

“About ten Friends to serve, including balanced representation from each of the four area meetings, plus a convenor. Continuity with Options 2 Group would be an advantage. Formal connections are required with the five existing trustee bodies, and Dundee Friends Property Trust, through direct representation or through clear links. The Local Development Worker to be in attendance.”

The basic remit of the new group is summarised in the introduction to the Responses to the Options 2 report (paper A2), particularly this paragraph, as modified in this meeting:

There is still much to do to agree how a new single body would function, how we would maintain our local communities, how responsibilities would be shared and undertaken. Sorting out these details is the next stage of the journey, working together on a model for Quaker Stewardship in Scotland, to develop a Governing Document and Memorandum of Understanding for the new single body, to prepare policies and procedures that will support and connect our LMs and maintain our communities, to find ways of working as a single community of Quakers in Scotland.

The group will seek to engage with Friends throughout Scotland, not just through existing formal structures. The group will need to respond to the concerns raised by the Area Meeting minutes and today in this Meeting.

We ask the clerks to draft formal terms of reference to guide Nominations Committee and the members of the new group.

We will return to this matter in September.

We thank Friends on our Options 2 group for their continuing work on our behalf, and express our gratitude and appreciation for their service.