

GMS MINUTES ON NSAM CONCERN

Minute. 5 Listening to North Scotland Area Meeting (November 2017)

We have been glad to listen to Friends from North Scotland Area Meeting. In a worship sharing session we heard of the history, life and special experiences of those living and worshipping in NSAM. Friends are scattered yet feel supported by GM and by the staff at Friends House. We give thanks for the community of the meeting.

We receive the following minute 57/17 from NSAM held 11th November 2017.

“We should like general meeting for Scotland and Meeting for Sufferings to consider the possibility of having a Trust body for the whole of Scotland. This would release many Friends who are currently trustees, for other service.

We are reminded that AM trustees do have a role in upholding the life of the meeting. Let's hang on to what we can do and hold our vision.”

We ask our GM trustees together with NSAM trustees to meet together to see how best to move forward with this consideration. We ask that they report back to GM when they are ready.

Minute 9 NSAM concern on Trusteeship (June 2018)

We welcome the minute and the following summary of the telephone conference held 18th April 2018 between GM Trustees and NSAM Trustees. We recognise that this area of concern is one that we want to fully understand and come to unity on. There is a need for those concerned to move forward, to continue to explore and look at all possibilities with as positive a light as possible. We celebrate the work of The Listening Project and want to acknowledge the passion, work and listening that went into this. We also feel the distress at the sense that the amount of work completed has been forgotten or may be repeated. We hope NSAM's role holders can be better supported. We realise that we need to seek and give support. This can be sought and found among Friends in LM, AM and hopefully from God.

We warm to the idea of setting up a meeting with Paul Parker our Recording Clerk to include Scottish AM trustees, GM Trustees, Clerks to AM and GM Nominations Committees and those in GM who feel invested in this concern. We ask all those who would like to be invited to this meeting to contact adwoabittle@hotmail.co.uk

We ask our clerk to convene and clerk this meeting and report back to GM as soon as is practicable. We ask that this meeting happens as soon as is possible. We need to find a way that allows us to feel connected, spiritually enriched and part of a growing community. We hope Friends present will hold NSAM in the light and share this concern so that there is a feeling of openness, love and sensitivity around Scotland as we work through this together.

Minute 5 Minute from meeting held 13th Sept 2019 on NSAM concerns

In minute 9 Of General Meeting held 16th June 2018, the clerk was asked to convene and clerk a meeting with Paul Parker our Recording Clerk to include Scottish AM trustees, GM Trustees, Clerks to AM and GM Nominations Committees and those in GM who feel invested in this concern. All those who would like to be invited to this meeting were invited to contact adwoabittle@hotmail.co.uk

That meeting took place on Thursday 13th September in Perth. There were 37 Friends present. The list of names is attached to these minutes so that you can find a Quaker near you with whom to talk to about the meeting, if you wish.

Our clerk has read the minute from that meeting. We are grateful for all the energy that is going into this work. We are happy to endorse the suggestion that GM on 9th March 2019, to be held in Glasgow, will be dedicated to the next steps of discernment on this matter. We are glad that Paul Parker and Jonathan Carmichael will be able to attend to continue to share in and help lead this discernment with GMS. We ask that the minute from that meeting be sent to Paul and Jonathan and be attached to these minutes.

Minute. 12 (March 2019) Part One of “Scottish Quakers: How do we liberate ourselves to focus on spiritual growth, community building and witness in the world?”

Paul Parker began his presentation with reading from Advices and Queries no.27 – Live Adventurously. He asked us to consider whether we could see this advice not just for us as individuals but for us as a collective. Can we see it as a challenge?

Can we go carefully but boldly?

Paul reminded us of the discussions and discernments we had had in Perth on 13th September last year. (See documents in advance of today's GM) We had worked out what was important to us and what makes us who we are. In Scotland we have such a strong community with so much to draw on. So much passion.

Paul led us to acknowledge how things are changing both in the wider world and in our own lives. He reminded us of what we had said were the true essentials that we felt we needed to look after. In September we had begun to consider what needs to be done differently and what needs to stay the same. Are the structures that we have working for us doing so in ways that are joyous and adventurous?

Paul spoke of the idea of coppicing. We were led to consider “What is the heartwood of Quakerism? “When we trim back, what new shoots are ready to grow?

“If I go to walk into the forest, I'd rather it was one where the Light would get in” Paul

During some reflection time we heard from Friends about the joy of service and the importance of learning about each other in the things that are eternal. We heard that meeting together in places that are counter intuitive at the time of the move ends up being just the coppicing that was needed to enable new shoots to flourish.

We are encouraged to open our eyes to different and new opportunities. Young Adult Friends are thriving, and we can learn from them. We hope we can include Woodbrooke in this adventure of learning.

There is more freedom than some of us think to do some things differently. We shouldn't constrain ourselves by looking too hard for permission.

Can we boldly (yet cautiously) take a Holy opportunity and be purposely expectant?

Are we ready to jump off a cliff and wait for the wind to be beneath our wings?

Minute. 15 (March 2019) Part Two of “Scottish Quakers: How do we liberate ourselves to focus on spiritual growth, community building and witness in the world?”

We are thankful that we have embarked on this exercise over the last few years. We are thankful for today and all that we have experienced. We are clear that we have energy, community, passion and a willingness to Live Adventurously.

We have met in small groups to consider the Menu for Change paper. This document is attached to these minutes.

On feeding back, we realise that a minute at this point cannot gather the detail, so we ask our clerks to work on a summary paper of the findings. This will be circulated as soon as it is ready. We ask that this be shared with local meetings.

We are particularly keen to enable better communication between AMs. We do have a newly constructed Communications Group who are tasked with looking at communication across Scotland. We look forward to hearing from them when they are ready.

We have returned often to the idea of inviting Woodbrooke to work in Scotland with us on spiritual and role holder courses. Indeed, all types of learning and development would be most welcome.

We were moved by the feeling in one group that, although we have been tasked by previous GM minutes to tackle our feelings of overburdened-ness, we need to be careful that we are always approaching these considerations being led by the Spirit.

We feel strongly that we don't want to lose sight of this process and discernment. We ask our GM Committee to ensure it comes back to a future GM agenda.

Minute 12. "Scottish Quakers: How do we liberate ourselves to focus on spiritual growth, community building and witness in the world?" (June 2019)

Part of Minute 15 of our last GM read "We feel strongly that we don't want to lose sight of this process and discernment. We ask our GM Committee to ensure it comes back to a future GM agenda." Please see Minutes 12 and 15 of GM held 9th March 2019 for full discernment. GM clerks propose that we ask LMs and AMs to work with this summary paper between June GM and November GM. We ask that each AM brings an action plan to Perth on 16th November for discernment. Discernment at this GM will produce action points for GM to work with. Please find this document on the Scottish Quaker website. We ask our Administrator to send it to all on her list. It has been suggested that this document be audio recorded so that it is more accessible than just through the written word. Clerks agree to explore this possibility with Rici Marshall Cross. *This paper is a separate attachment and not copied on the end of these minutes with the other*

Minute 19/11/07 Minutes received from Area Meetings

We receive the following minutes from ESAM, SESAM and NSAM

19.08.02 Improving our ways of working ESAM

At General Meeting in March 2019, we addressed the question: "Scottish Quakers: how do we liberate ourselves to focus on spiritual growth, community building and witness to the world?"

Today, the Clerk has introduced discussion on ways of working more effectively. We considered different areas, including training and support for role holders, improved efficiency and what we considered was our core purpose and key roles.

Our suggestions include:

- Focusing on our core purpose, our spirit-led community, based on 'Our Faith in the

Future' – can we make communications work better to allow the spirit to flow through us?

- Developing ideas such as 'buddies' to support role holders and thinking creatively of different ways of eldering and oversight.
- Developing practical ways to improve workings, for example a standardised accounting system, this could be done initially across Scotland.
- Support for training in video conferencing, such as 'Zoom' which is said to be easy to learn.
- Making the nominations process more transparent.

We will forward this minute to General Meeting.

2019/09/11 SESAM General Meeting for Scotland – 'menu for change'

Our clerk has presented an outline of the menu for change agreed at General Meeting for Scotland in March and has drawn our attention to the points most relevant to our situation in South East Scotland.

Key issues highlighted include:

- How we bring in, and bring on, newcomers – eg through social events, learning opportunities, and equipping ourselves through skills development
- Building community within our meetings (see minute 2019/06/11 for our discussion of how Kelso meeting approaches this) – eg through events, having fun, eating together
- What can we do jointly with other AMs? – eg sharing certain roles, sharing training
- Developing our meetings – what can we do to stabilise fragile meetings, to seed new meetings? And should we be reviewing all our meeting places, owned or rented to see if they are in the right location, with the right facilities?
- Communicating – eg using 'Zoom' to cut down on travel; how we use our websites and social media; and our use of print media.

We recognize the shortage of time to discuss these issues fully.

We encourage AM Trustees in their consideration of how to spend our legacy funds and ask them to include the possibility of using them to develop a vibrancy approach.

We note that issues of how Area Meeting is organised and held will be discussed further at our November meeting, when we review three years' experience of the STIR proposals of 2016.

We ask the clerk to send this minute to General Meeting for Scotland.

We thank the clerk for his presentation.

NSAM

Area Meeting review 67/19 We have considered the review of Area Meeting carried out by the listening Group in 2017. and considered where we are now in 2019: • We have made more of our Area Meetings residential in style; • We have a planning committee to help organise AM's including our annual residential AM at Pluscarden; • NSQT has been laid down and we have one group of trustees instead of 2; • We have laid down the search

group & E/Os are tasked with finding names for Nominations Committee; • We have taken on and paid for additional finance support to make the treasurers role less onerous; • 2 local meetings became worship groups (Nairn & Banchory) and there are worship groups in Dingwall, Brora and Caithness; • Forres Local Meeting now meets every Sunday; • We have tested and will continue to test the effectiveness of video conferencing, noting that the AM planning committee has asked GM to advise on the most appropriate VC to use.

Minute 19/11/08 Scottish Quakers: How do we liberate ourselves to focus on spiritual growth, community building and witness in the world?

Our clerk has introduced us to the work already completed on this issue. We have moved not smaller groups to consider the suggestions made by Area Meetings.

We ask our treasurer to free up a sum of money (suggested £1000) from the Jenny Auld legacy for the purposes of our following actions:

Communications

We agree to strengthen our GM Communications Group (Joyce Taylor, Ann Kerr, Anna Mitchell) which has been working for nearly a year by asking them to co-opt a few new members to include Friends from all Area Meetings. GM clerks will assist in this co-option.

We ask the group to report to GM in March.

Role Holder Support

We ask our GM clerks and GM trustees to explore how best we might support and enable our role holders across Scotland.

We ask that GM clerks together with clerks of GM working groups consider how to enable yearly gatherings for role holders to share their learning and concerns on a rolling basis.

Community Building

Community building has been a strong theme throughout this discussion. We can all see the value in strengthening our relationships through shared meals and social events all age activities etc. We see value in GM providing a space for Friends to share their experiences and ideas on community building. We ask our clerks to work on this for us and report to a future GM.

20/10/07 Minute from North Scotland Area Meeting

We note the following minute from North Scotland Area Meeting, received by our clerk on 28th October, 2020. We will return to it at our March General Meeting. The minutes referred to from Inverness Local Meeting will be circulated with the papers for GM in March.

North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting^[19th SEP] 19th October 2020,

Minute 53/20

This Meeting was arranged to consider the minute from Inverness Local Meeting on 8th October 2020 that adopted the Minute from the Meeting for Clearness held on 6th October 2020 (attached)

There was unity amongst us and North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting accepts the minutes and forwards them on to General Meeting.

We do not have answers as to what greater cooperation looks *like*. We have welcomed the cooperation to date that has involved Trustees working together on various policies (health & safety, finance, safeguarding, data-protection, to name a few) and we hope that further efficiencies can be made in the future. A single legal body for Scotland might be an option that can be considered whilst acknowledging that any new structure must recognise our local and regional experience in regard to organising social and spiritual events.

Piers Voysey
Clerk

Andrew Collins
Assistant Clerk

21/03/19 North Scotland Area Meeting minute and AM responses

The following minutes apply: 5, Nov. 17; 9, June 18; 5, Sept. 18; 12 and 15, March, 19; 12 June, 19; 7 and 8 Nov., 19; 20/03/12, 20/10/07.

Piers Voysey, clerk of NSAM, has introduced their minute 53/20. It originates from: a very real concern in North Scotland about finding Friends to serve as Trustees; their efforts towards creating simpler Meetings; and ensuring their limited time and energy are focused on spiritual nourishment of Friends and the Meeting as a whole, rather than administrative burdens.

At their meeting on 19th October, 2020, Friends in NSAM united in accepting two proposals made at a Meeting for Clearness, set up at the request of Robert Wilson. These are:

- NSAM welcomes the co-operation of the four Area Meetings and General Meeting for Scotland to date, and they hope it will increase in the future, resulting in further efficiencies.
- They suggest that a single legal body for Quakers in Scotland, amalgamating the current four Area Meeting charities and that of General Meeting for Scotland, might be an option to be considered, with the proviso that any new structure must recognise local and regional expertise regarding organising social and spiritual events.

In raising this concern at General Meeting, North Scotland Area Meeting wishes to encourage GM to be prepared for change, should the time come when one or more area meetings cannot meet their legal requirements with regard to trusteeship, including financial accountability.

After receipt of NSAM minute 53/20, and further to minute 20/10/07, our General Meeting clerk invited East, West, and South East Scotland Area Meetings to consider North Scotland Area Meeting's proposals. Their responses were circulated in advance of this meeting, as part of Paper G. To inform our discernment on this matter, Paper G also includes: a summary of the work already done by GM on NSAM's concern about the lack of active membership and its effect on finding Friends to serve in essential roles, like trustees; the minutes of Inverness LM referred to in NSAM minute 53/20; and briefing papers produced by ESAM and WSAM.

We thank the area meetings for their consideration of NSAM minute 53/20. Our clerk has summarised their responses to the two proposals.

Each area meeting has embraced the suggestion for greater co-operation, closer working and mutual support between the Scottish Area Meetings and General Meeting. They felt that the sharing of experience and expertise will simplify and reduce the workload.

At this time area meetings are not in unity over the proposal for a single legal body for Quakers in Scotland. Each area meeting consulted expressed reservations about the proposal. There was an understanding that a move in that direction would have a profound effect on area meetings and would need detailed and complex oversight by AM and GM trustees. At the same time there was a willingness to remain open to new ways of working.

Two area meetings suggested that the way forward was for GM to set up a working group. The remit of the group might be to reflect further and more deeply on a range of solutions and models, which would assist us in developing Quakers in Scotland.

GM Trustees “feel that the fundamental issue is building a flourishing Quaker community in Scotland and that a process of discernment is needed before moving to any particular change in organisational arrangements.”

We agree to take what steps we can within our current structures, to improve the functioning of our Scottish Quaker community.

We encourage GM in partnership with AMs to arrange more opportunities for role holders to meet and support one another and to explore other ways of working together.

We ask GM to set up a working group, with the following remit:

1. To reflect further and more deeply on a range of solutions and models which would assist us in developing Quakers in Scotland
2. To identify options for GM and AMs to consider, including organisational changes we can make within our current structures which would benefit us all. Work already done will be considered along with new thinking. We hope the group will be creative in generating and exploring further options.
3. To set out the pros and cons of each option
4. To write a paper on their findings for the consideration of GM and AMs

The working group should include members of each of the four Area Meetings and GM, not necessarily existing role holders. The number of Friends serving on the group should be no less than 8 and no more than 10.

We are aware that the details of this working group might benefit from further scrutiny and send this outline remit and setup to AM clerks for comment, before asking GM nominations committee to bring forward names of Friends to serve on the group.

22/03/11 Report from General Meeting Working Group to identify options for change in the way we work which would benefit Quakers in Scotland

Further to minutes 21/03/19 and 21/09/11 the report of the “Options for Quakers in Scotland” Working Group was circulated to Friends in Scotland with the papers for this meeting. Lesley Richards, convenor of the working group, has presented the report to us today and answered our questions.

We receive this report and will consider the suggested steps we can take now and what we might do in the future to address the main issues for Quakers in Scotland, and to strengthen our Quaker Community in keeping with the vision expressed in BYM’s ‘Our Faith in the Future’. We are grateful to the group for listing what they see are the current opportunities, for each opportunity giving their analysis of the benefits and difficulties of implementing it, and for a similar analysis of possible changes we might contemplate in the future.

In small, facilitated groups we have considered the following:

For some time now we have been seeking to strengthen our Quaker community in Scotland. Some Friends have expressed the need for radical change, and others the need to maintain our traditional ways of doing things, as far as possible. Today we have heard suggestions of how we might do things differently. What are your thoughts about the need for change? Has the way you feel about it altered?

Following our small group discussions, together we have responded to the report and the working group’s recommendations. We welcome this report and recognise that it is a working document, which is part of a continuing process. At this point, it is timely to look at the opportunities which are available now to help us work together more effectively. The report identifies seven:

1. Establish and support role holder networks across Scotland (building on current practice).
2. Encourage and support the formation of networks of Friends with particular interests which might also be a resource for the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group.
3. Encourage GM to appoint time-limited working groups, pulling together Friends from across area meetings to consider issues of common concern.
4. GM might reflect on whether there are other ways in which it can fulfill its role as described in Quaker faith & practice 5.03a.
5. GM and AMs might hold residential events for Friends across Scotland.
6. AMs might consider if there is any advantage to changing boundaries allowing local meetings to move from one area meeting to another.
7. General Meeting, area meetings, and role holder networks might actively consider whether there are any aspects of their duties, which would benefit from a collaborative approach. This could be Scotland wide or between two or more area meetings.

We agree that General Meeting for Scotland should work with the four area meetings to consider which of these seem most appropriate and helpful, and to work out a plan for implementing them together.

We are open to more radical change in our structures, if its purpose and the way it will bring about improvement are clear. We recognise that the pandemic has pushed change upon us and we have adapted to it. We are not alone in contemplating simplifying our structures: within BYM much work is being done on this, and other churches are also engaged in simplifying their structures. It is wise to learn from others and to share our skills. We have been reminded that fundamentally we come together to listen to the leadings of the spirit and to act on them. Our structures should support this, and release us to focus on spiritual growth, community building and witness in the world. We agree to do more exploratory work on possible future structural changes to simplify the way Quakers in Scotland function, starting with the three suggestions listed in the report.

To take things forward, we agree to set up a Working Group to serve for one year, with the following remit:

- Explore and analyse changes to our Quaker structures, which might be of future benefit to Friends in Scotland.
- Keep a watching brief on changes being adopted by Quakers elsewhere to learn from the experience of others.
- Monitor how we are putting into practice the suggestions for strengthening our Quaker community in Scotland.

We ask our GM nominations committee to bring forward the names of 6 Friends to serve on this group, plus a convenor. It would be helpful if there were some overlap with the membership of the 'Options for Quakers in Scotland' Working Group.

We thank the 'Options for Quakers in Scotland' Working Group for its report and Lesley for presenting it.

Since this group has completed its service, we lay it down and thank the members and the convenor for the considerable work they have done in generating options for us to consider.

23/03/18 Options for Scotland

Further to minute 22/09/16, the report of the Options 2 Working Group is about to be published and will be taken by each of the four Area Meetings before coming to us in June. We will then consider the proposals in the report.

22/03/19 Time for reflection: sustaining our Meetings and ourselves

How are we? As we face potential change in our structures, how are our Quaker communities sustaining us and being sustained?

Zoe Prosser, our Local Development Worker, has led us in a period of worship sharing, considering the questions:

How are we feeling about our Quaker community?

How are our Quaker Meetings being sustained?

Zoe spoke to us about some of the things she has seen through her Local Development Worker role. It is important to acknowledge that there is a lot of mourning going on, through the loss of dear and loved Friends and through the changes that we see, with potential loss, in our Quaker community (for example the closure of Woodbrooke Quaker study Centre). We can show tiredness, be overstretched, and worry about questions like “who will do the job?” and “what will happen if no one does it?” The weight of the “should” is being carried – in the sense of feeling that we should all be doing more to uphold the community. This can all be dispiriting.

We know that communities can be many things at once: both a respite and a burden, and showing both hope and fear. A worry comes as we see the importance of what has been built up that we don't want to lose. We live in a time of fear; for our communities, our world, our planet. This can be reflected in our meetings too, so we have to be responsive to each other.

But here is a lot of hope in our communities as well. Clear successes have happened: younger Friends are coming in, there is rejuvenation of Local Meetings; new people are joining us following the pandemic. There are new ways of doing things; new ways to connect to each other in a spirit of worship.

Everywhere she looks, Zoe sees signs of Spring. During our time of worship sharing together this was echoed by Friends, giving instances of the hope they see and how inspired they are being within our wider Quaker community. Having this sense of hope underpins where we are together: times move on but change doesn't always mean loss. We may have lost Woodbrooke as a centre, but not as a learning resource, and it can come to Scotland to help us. There are more groups working for positive change: people are rising with a vision of what we hope for. Friends spoke of being so grateful for the support given in our communities, by others with us who are engaged with our meetings, working groups and out in the world.

We do have struggles in adapting to change, but we are looking at it head on, taking advantage of what is possible by taking responsibility for our future together. We have flexibility, as has been seen how we use new opportunities like Zoom. We look after each other and share our experiences. There is growth all around us, despite our difficulties. Today we recognise that we can be a community of transformation as we look to adapt to the change all around us. It won't be easy, and there will be challenging and questioning. But we have each other. We need to think through how we do things, but we have the resource of each other to draw upon. Younger Friends inspire us and show us ways forward, and the rest of us can nurture them in turn.

We thank Zoe for giving us the space to recognise the positives that we have as well as understanding those things we need to work to. We can do that together.

The flowers are coming up all around us and we do have hope.

22/09/16 Options for Quakers in Scotland - update

We have welcomed Lesley Richards, Convenor of the Options 2 Working Group to our meeting today. Lesley has given us a brief update on the progress of the Group's work.

The working group is due to report back to GM in June 2023 and we have been asked us to consider whether we would like their report to include a proposal for changes we might make to benefit Quakers in Scotland. Their current remit is to:

- Explore and analyse changes to our Quaker structures, which might be of future benefit to Friends in Scotland.
- Keep a watching brief on changes being adopted by Quakers elsewhere to learn from the experience of others.
- Monitor how we are putting into practice the suggestions for strengthening our Quaker community in Scotland.

We are content for the Options 2 Working Group to bring us their recommendations, as part of their report next year.

We note that the report will go to the four area meetings, before it comes to General Meeting in June, so that any decision made lies with the whole Quaker community in Scotland.

We thank Lesley for her update.

Elizabeth Allen, clerk

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 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 Options2 group for their continuing work on our behalf, and express our gratitude and appreciation for their service.

23/09/08 Options for Scotland

Further to minute 23/06/11, we receive the further report of the Options for Scotland 2 Working Group (Paper A1). This has been before all four Area Meetings in Scotland, and we receive their minutes as follows (Paper A2):

- 23.08.04 of East Scotland AM held 12th August 2023;
- 035/23 of West Scotland AM held 19th August 2023;
- 15/23 of North Scotland AM held 26th August 2023;
- 2023/09/08 of South East Scotland AM held 6th September 2023.

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

The report includes this paragraph:

“In order to make progress we want Friends to feel that they will enjoy and be energised by being part of a single community of Quakers in Scotland. To get there we have to undertake the administrative and legal steps required to make the transition to new arrangements. This transition must be flexible to accommodate the pace of change at which the AMs and GM feel ready to move. We imagine that the Options for Scotland 3 group will undertake its work by involving Friends across Scotland so that what emerges feels realistic, hopeful and worthwhile.”

The clerk has summarised the path to this point. We have heard from members of the current working group, giving personal reflections on their service. The experience of becoming in unity felt wonderful, as well as the benefit of being together with Friends across Scotland. There was hope coming from the sense of adventure. Our structures are like windows which give access to the Light beyond. We have to care for our windows and ensure they can be seen through, but it is the Light beyond that is our purpose.

The clerk wrote to Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, to seek advice on the constitutional status of General Meeting for Scotland in relation to a possible merger into a new charity. This is because General Meeting is defined in section 5.03 of *Quaker faith & practice*, which may only be changed in substance by Yearly Meeting in session. Paul Parker has replied to say:

“I’m encouraged to see that General Meeting for Scotland is progressing with its consideration of options for Scotland. I’m comfortable that if a single body were created to provide governance of all Quaker activities in Scotland, replacing or absorbing the functions of the current GM and the four AMs, then BYM would see that as the successor body to General Meeting for Scotland for the purposes of *Quaker faith & practice* 5.03.

“Meeting for Sufferings has already given its encouragement to Friends in Wales & the Marches and in London to move to having an overarching body, and, as you say, Scottish Friends would need to do the same. I don’t think it would be necessary to seek additional endorsement in advance from Yearly Meeting before proceeding to put in place arrangements for the duties laid upon the GM in 5.03 to be carried out by the new overarching body. I would assume that the current financial arrangement whereby the GM receives a grant from BYM for those functions would continue also.

“Once the arrangements are in place, the book of discipline can be amended to reflect them. This could probably be carried out by Meeting for Sufferings under the arrangement whereby minor amendments can be handled by them and reported to Yearly Meeting after the event. It’s likely that the new book of discipline will focus on underlying principles more than on the detail of how they are reflected in structures. That means the current 5.03 may well be considerably simplified and more explanatory in nature, so it will just be a question of keeping the current text in line with practice until that can be approved by YM, which we currently expect to be in 2030.”

The questions asked of Area Meetings (and General Meeting) were:

1. Is the AM interested in taking the planning for a single charity further? (A definite commitment will come later when we have done more detailed work on things like the constitution so that Friends can have a clear idea what they are considering joining.)
2. Is the AM happy to have the GM nominations committee find any further names needed for Friends to serve in particular ways in relation to Quakers in Scotland? (For example they may need to find Friends to serve as the first trustees of a new SCIO.)
3. Are Friends happy to work with Friends across Scotland in fleshing out the various aspects of Quakers in Scotland beyond the work towards the single charity?
4. Are Friends content that General Meeting write to Meeting for Sufferings on behalf of all Area Meetings explaining the work we are engaged in?

All four Area Meetings answered in the affirmative to all four questions. Dundee Friends Property Trust also wishes to be part of this process.

We note the comments and affirmation from area meetings and also note the concerns expressed in the South East Scotland AM minute. Friends have spoken to and considered those concerns.

We, as a General Meeting, also agree affirmatively to these four questions.

We asked last time for a new working group, Options for Scotland 3, to be set up and will hear nominations to it, and consider its convenorship, shortly. The clerk, as asked, drew up terms of reference for this group and we ask the clerk to update these in the light of comments made today, and to bring the revised document to our November meeting for

approval. We agree to change the name of the group to Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group.

What we have agreed to today gives authority to the new group for our Scotland-wide process to work with our structures so that our diverse and active community of Friends can adapt to the situation we are now in. We are giving authority for:

- draft documents to be brought to us for the decision on having a single charity, following liaison with the six trustee bodies;
- wider options to be brought to General Meeting and the four Area Meetings on how best our meetings might evolve, if they wish, and be grouped together;
- how we could improve common ways of working together, such as for eldership and pastoral care, and for learning and growth.

In moving forward we need to ensure we maintain the Quaker principle whereby all can take part in decision making in a structure that allows for that. We also need to ensure that a new trustee body is able to continue the broader long-term work currently undertaken by GM Trustees within the context of a wider remit that would include finance and property.

We are grateful to the Options for Scotland Working Group 2 for their service on our behalf as it is laid down today.

*We began this wider process some five years ago, starting with a reading of *Advices & queries 27, Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?**

This is still very relevant for us today. We have celebrated what we are already, and hope what we can become will give us new adventure.

23/11/11 Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group

Further to minute 23/09/08, we have heard a verbal update on the work of the Quakers in Scotland Co-ordinating Group (QiSCG) from Neil Turner.

The Group has drawn up a draft Governing Document for the new charity and this is posted on the General Meeting website for Friends to consider. Online consultations on the document open to all Friends will be held on Thursday 30th November from 2-4 and 6.30-8.30 pm. Details will be circulated.

Two area meeting have already updated their governing documents to permit appointment of trustees from any area meeting in Scotland to their trustee bodies. This is a response to, or protection against, difficulty in recruiting trustees.

The Group plans a number of parallel streams of discussion, likely to include:

- Treasurers in discussing closer working and convergence of financial management;
- Eldership and pastoral care;
- Membership, marriages, deaths. How to manage in a larger organisation;
- Nominations;
- Property management;
- Staffing and payroll arrangements;
- Who does what: Memoranda of Understanding between the new organisation and local meetings, and any regional or other intermediate bodies that are needed.

Draft terms of reference for QiSCG (Paper C), as drawn up by the clerk, have been available for view on the General Meeting website. We thank those Friends who sent in comments.

We adopt these terms of reference, as amended in this meeting. This version will be posted on the General Meeting website.

Michael J. Hutchinson,
Clerk