

Our activities in 2017

Introduction

Who we are: Quakers from throughout the North of Britain, meeting and working together *‘to advise and encourage Friends in the North ... and through them their fellow citizens, in the active promotion of peace in all its height and breadth.’*

Our members are representatives from all Northern Area Quaker Meetings, along with a small number of co-optees . We have an office with a full-time Co-ordinator, who works with project groups and sub-committees to develop the work.



NFPB members and other Friends at our June meeting, in Dumfries

The backdrop to our work during the year was one both of hope and of profound concern on the international stage. As our own and other governments continued to put their faith and resources into maintaining and developing nuclear weapons, 121 other nations agreed a new treaty that envisages their abolition – the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to ICAN, the international network that played a crucial role in getting this new treaty agreed by the UN, seemed a fitting way for the year to draw to a close.

In our own nations, a political climate of uncertainty and mistrust threw up its own surprises and hope-filled responses. Friends have continued to reflect, to speak out and to take action, learning from and supporting one another. Our own work seeks to support all of these by creating space, resources and opportunities for sharing information, inspiration and friendly links. Thank you to all those who have contributed to and participated in our work during the year.

Workshops

At the beginning of the year, we began to offer workshops to Quaker Meetings and to other groups. We have four main themes, but are also able to adapt and develop workshops to address particular concerns or issues.

The workshop 'menu' offers workshops on:

- **Building Peace Together**
- **Productive conversations on difficult issues**
- **Rethinking security**
- **Engaging with the media**



During 2017 we facilitated:

- a workshop on Building Peace Together, focussing particularly on the issue of Populism, for Westmorland Regional Gathering at Kendal Meeting House.
- A workshop for the Merseyside Peace Network on 'Productive Conversations' particularly in relation to the Armed Forces Day events that were due in Liverpool
- A workshop on 'Talking Peace Positively' for Colwyn Bay Meeting.
- And two short workshops during the British Quakers' Yearly Meeting Gathering in Warwick
- A talk and discussion with Pickering and Hull Area Meeting Friends.

Board members' meetings

Our members, representing Quaker Area Meetings from across the North, met together three times during the year; in Bolton, Dumfries and in Darlington. We are grateful for the support of local Friends in these areas and it was good to have a number joining us at each of them.

Board members agreed to support one of our co-opted members, Janet Fenton, in her participation in the conferences in New York that resulted in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Janet kept us informed before, during and after the negotiations, inspiring Friends to take follow up action in the UK.

Divisions within our own society were addressed at our meetings, reflecting on the challenges faced by sanctuary seekers and on the tensions and fears between different sectors of society. Violent attacks in different parts of the country, coupled with political turbulence and change gave us much food for

thought. The White Rose Group in Darlington and the work with young women in a project of the Warrington-based 'Peace Foundation' were two of the positive, encouraging examples we heard from at our meetings. Tim Gee, as part of his work for Quakers in Britain in helping the discernment of a way forward for work on forced migration, led us in reflection and discussion on the challenges that many people face in seeking sanctuary in this country.

Throughout the year we also heard of the range of concerns and actions in relation to militarism, from witness against the arms trade - locally and nationally - to responses to military recruitment efforts in town centres and to military involvement in schools. This consideration was assisted by input from the QPSW Peace Education programme and from the Scottish Parliamentary Engagement work. Friends joined together in acts of witness against nuclear weapons during our meeting in Bolton and at Faslane, after our Dumfries meeting.

We have normally held four meetings in each year, but experimented with three in 2017 due to the heavy work load of other events, including the Yearly Meeting Gathering. Board members agreed to meet four-times yearly for the coming two years and then on three occasions in 2020, when the next YM gathering will take place.

We reviewed the range and spread of our communications, devoting some of our meeting in Dumfries to this. Communication is at the heart of our work, but not always straightforward, with changing needs and structures as well as changing technology. Friends' input and feedback on what is working well or less well will continue to be important as we adapt and develop how we engage with Quakers and others.

Wider links and partnerships



Members of the Network of Christian Peace Organisations

We value our links with other groups and activities, both Quaker and non-Quaker. We are pleased to have a strong working relationship with colleagues in Britain Yearly Meeting, with cross-representation with the Peace Education, Campaigning and Networking sub-committee of QPSW. Around a dozen of our members were present during the Yearly Meeting Gathering, helping with a stall and playing a full role in the week's activities and considerations.

More widely, our members played an active role in witness against the arms trade, both locally and at the DSEI arms fair in London. We were also represented in a new cross-sector working group developing action around arms conversion and defence diversification. We were pleased to support joint activities through the Network of Christian Peace Organisations and the Global Day of Action on Military Spending, and to participate in an exploratory workshop with Rethinking Security.

We continued to provide information, encouragement and support in response to enquiries, and through attending meetings of other groups and through providing and distributing our own resources and materials. Our website and social media were well used tools for making our concerns and a range of opportunities for learning and action visible to a wider audience. A regular update of our work was produced and distributed in mailings to Quakers and others throughout the year.



NFPB members joined other Friends in holding vigils during the trial of peace activists Sam Walton and Dan Woodhouse, in Burnley in October

Membership and trustees

All Northern Area Meetings were represented at Board meetings during the year. We saw a greater than average number of Friends completing their service at the end of 2017 and looked forward to welcoming new Friends to the Board. We thanked Jo Alberti for her service as Clerk and welcomed Douglas Shaw as Clerk to the Trustees. Other trustees serving during the year were Allison Challen, Mathew Guest, Robert Keeble, Lyn Pardo, Phoebe Spence (Treasurer) and Jill Tutton.



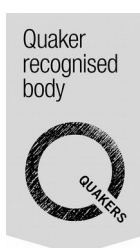
NFPB Trustees, meeting in Leeds

During the year NFPB took up the opportunity of applying to Meeting for Sufferings for the new 'Quaker Recognised Body' status. We reviewed our communications activities and made some recommendations for the future priorities in this area. Trustees undertook a risk assessment, which again included dealing with the uncertainty of the deficit in the funding level of The Pensions Trust, of which we have been an employer-member for many years. We decided to withdraw from the scheme and began the necessary processes to enable that to happen. Whilst this will reduce our invested reserves, it will also reduce a significant level of financial unpredictability, with the shortfall in the Pensions Trust's funding having been volatile in recent years.

Our income from Meetings and individuals was at a generally good level, although it was down from the previous period. We received one donation from a legacy gift. Our spending, apart from that related to the Pensions Trust (see above) was within budget. The following summary of our payments and receipts financial statement shows the transfer of funds from sales of investments as income. Full accounts are available from our website and office (see below).

	2017	2016
Receipts		
<i>Donations</i>	37,100	41,367
<i>Legacies</i>	40,000	4,698
<i>Grants</i>	5,106	5,923
<i>Sales and fees</i>	1,132	1,254
<i>Investment income</i>	7,141	8,821
Sub-total	90,479	62,063
Receipts from sales of investments	159,445	-
Total receipts	249,924	62,063
Payments		
<i>Charitable activities</i>	53,796	57,154
<i>Governance costs</i>	1,226	1,266
<i>Pension scheme exit charge</i>	80,000	0
Total payments	135,022	58,420
Net receipts/payments	114,902	3,643

A further sum of £43,656 was still to be paid to The Pensions Trust at 31/12/2017



Northern Friends Peace Board

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