

NFPB vision and strategy

In the year leading up to March 2020, NFPB meetings included in their agendas opportunities for Friends to:

- *reflect on the context of Quaker work for peace and the resources we could draw on in taking action*
- *share visions and hopes of changes we wished to see*
- *and address challenges, internal and external.*

Trustees have considered the range of responses and spent time in preparing the following document. They hope that these will help NFPB, its members and sub-groups in taking our work forward together.

The pandemic has been a new and unexpected factor. Trustees were, however, very aware of a number of issues that were either already impacting or likely to impact on our work. They recognised that mapping out direction and priorities for the coming period would be helpful.

This paper is not intended as a detailed work-plan; rather a point of reference or series of signposts, and some general criteria to help us plan and evaluate our progress. The NFPB meeting in June this year, held via Zoom, received an initial draft of this document. The following is a further development of that draft and is presented to the Board for consideration at its meeting via Zoom on 7 November. The Board is invited to consider the content and whether it would be ready to accept this as a platform on which to build our activities in the coming few years.

November 2020

Our remit

1913 founding mandate – to advise and encourage Friends in the North in the active promotion of peace in all its height and breadth.

Towards a vision for NFPB

A world and society ...

- that builds peace through justice, fairness, care for the planet, active peace-building and nonviolent engagement and transformation of conflict.
- where integrity, compassion and truthfulness are prevailing values in public life
- that recognises our interdependence as humans and with other life on earth, and connectedness between these issues as the foundation for a new approach to security

An organisation and community that ...

- looks forward whilst drawing on Quaker heritage, is grounded in Quaker worship, in the community of Quakers in the North of Britain and expresses Quaker values and testimonies
- is welcoming, inclusive and adaptable
- is clear and purposeful, whilst committed to hearing and responding to new concerns
- uses resources carefully, effectively and sustainably
- brings people to together to engage, act, listen, learn and empower

Themes and threads of concern

Challenging militarism

A number of issues are important to address under this broader concern at the moment. Some of these are overarching, including the presence and activities of the military in public life, and the military-industrial complex.

There are powerful lobbies and vested interests in keeping these going, but Friends are consistent in being led to take action on these concerns. Specifically, Friends are concerned about the arms trade, nuclear weapons, military involvement in schools, Armed Forces Day, remembrance and the UK's role, through arms sales and policy, in international conflict.

The issue of military spending, and the related discussion about arms conversion, has come to the fore during the Covid-19 pandemic. Parallel to that is the need to rethink security – recognising the part that social and environmental justice should have at the heart of our desire for a more peaceful world. In reflecting on the issue of the armed forces, we are reminded that the policies and practice are what need to be tackled rather than those who join up.

Peace in communities and society

In recent years, the UK has been amongst those countries that have become increasingly polarised, politically and economically. Alongside this, and underscored by the experiences of different communities of the pandemic, the inequalities in the experiences and life chances of black and minority ethnic communities have come to the fore.

On the one hand, civility and integrity have been in short supply in the political and civic realm, whilst on the other, communities have come together in solidarity to address real need and to voice a different vision of an inclusive and compassionate society.

As we hear the cries of 'No Justice, No Peace', we are challenged to see where our testimonies lie in witnessing to a fair and just society – a prophetic calling – as well as seeking opportunities to affirm our common humanity through bridge-building and reconciliation.

Climate crisis and an economic crisis

The competitive economic model and pressures to consume continue to put pressure on the planet, and make it increasingly difficult to make the reductions in carbon emissions that are now urgently needed.

Keeping that status quo is one of the roles of the military, as countries seek to protect their interests in what Paul Rogers once described as a 'crowded, glowering planet'. The consequences of the climate crisis are likely to be increasing conflict, as populations struggle to deal with its impact.

As part of Britain Yearly Meeting, we are in a community committed to a low-carbon future, and as a peace community we recognise how crucial these concerns are to the prospects of a peaceful future. The challenge and opportunity for us is to integrate action on climate as a core part of our understanding and practice in working for peace at all levels, supporting and working with others.

SWOT Analysis – NFPB as it is currently

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <p>History Structure Relationship with AMs Independence English/Scottish /Welsh links Breadth of experience Vision and understanding of peace Compassionate and caring community</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <p>Limited capacity to develop in-depth expertise White, middle-class, and not so young Generational differences in experiences, expectations and ways of working Difficult to sustain commitment and skills for committee and project work over time with changing membership and small staff</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Mood of urgency of need for change Questioning of priorities in light of pandemic People are connecting the issues Networks BYM regional working arrangements Youthful energy that could be supported and brought in More people using technology effectively</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>Declining funding – post-Covid recession, Diminishing Quaker numbers Scale of the task Rise in totalitarian/populist politics and need to take a stand Great pressure of climate crisis and the demands that this will make in coming years.</p>

What is the Quaker potential in moving towards our vision?

- History and orientation to witness and dissent.
- Practice of developing and advocating for alternatives.
- Speaking truth to power.
- Working in the wider community and networks at grass-roots levels.
- Publishing, education, informing – raising awareness and encouraging thinking.
- Means and ends – skills and practice of peace-making and engaging in change activities.
- Mutually supportive community, with spiritual roots and inclusive processes.

Our offer to Quakers in the North includes

- Sharing insights and skills in relation to change and transformation.
- Informing about issues and opportunities for action.
- Challenging myths and articulating and sharing positive narratives around peace and conflict
- Providing a framework and opportunities for Friends to support one another.
- Being a Quaker voice on peace concerns and supporting others in doing do.
- Challenging Quakers (including ourselves) to broaden and deepen our understanding of peace in a challenging and changing world.
- Bringing people together to develop ways of taking action, facilitating contacts, conversation and connections.

NFPB's Organisational needs

- Enabling participation and ownership of our work, by NFPB members and wider Northern Friends community.

- Good quality of communications and relationships – internally and externally.
- Capacity to respond flexibly whilst retaining a core element of continuity.
- Greater diversity in our membership.
- Finding ways of developing and sharing expertise, knowledge and experience more systematically.
- More sustainable funding level from a wider diversity of sources.
- Working in a sustainable way that minimises our impact on the environment.
- Drawing most effectively on the skills, insights and concerns of NFPB members and through them the wider community of Friends in the North

Looking ahead

Pointers to organisational issues we could/should be addressing

- Possible thinking through the roles of and relationships between Board members, staff, reps – is this working as well as it could in terms of what NFPB is and what it aims to do?
- Continued and changing use of IT to enable participation in new ways.
- Proactively engage with Young Friends – what can we do that would support them and vice-versa?
- Be ready to set up and seek funding for time-limited and very focussed pieces of project activity.
- Consider delegating to representatives more specific tasks, and giving Friends generally more specific pointers to action they might take, resourced by background information and learning opportunities.

Proposed strategic goals

- When planning and review our work, to include considerations of, and action to promote,
 - sustainability and reduced environmental impact.
 - inclusiveness and diversity.
- Widening our reach
 - Broadening the number and range of people involved.
 - Sustaining and developing participation.
 - Communicating to and resourcing a wider audience.
- Setting and keeping to a clear framework for our activities.
- Paying attention to organisational resilience, through care with financial planning, fundraising, and building and nurturing relationships with Northern Quakers and other sources of finance support.
- Becoming better at responding to and taking a lead on new issues, changing context and changing needs.

Proposed strategic objectives

- Commit to using rethinking security as a framework for our programme of activities, which would involve work that
 - promotes positive peace and security through mutuality, justice, sustainability, democracy and human well-being

- promotes disarmament, reduced military spending and the redirection of resources and skills to address the needs as above.
- Give greater support and attention to the NFPB nominations processes, paying particular attention to:
 - Trustees, including the role-holders within that group.
 - Widening participation of Friends not well represented in our current membership.
 - The possibility of including people who are not Quakers in specific areas of project work.
- Developing at least one area of work/activity each year that..
 - reaches a wider audience.
 - promotes wider participation.
 - could attract additional funding.
- Putting on events (either virtual or in-person) that pick up and give space to explore and learn more about new or emerging issues or concerns.
- Developing and sustaining good quality and topical content on our website, drawing on a wider pool of contributors, and keeping a critical eye on our social media engagement as the different platforms develop and respond to the changing social and political context.
- Investigate the possible advantages or disadvantage of some form of individual membership/affiliation to NFPB, in order to strengthen the continuity and collective knowledge and experience of the organisation.
- Keep in touch with BYM committees and staff and arrange a process for ensuring that this happens throughout the year, being alert to opportunities for collaboration and paying particular attention to those that will be based in the north, either as part of a regional hub or as development workers.
- Give Representatives a number of specific tasks each year, that could include communicating specific information to AMs, consulting Friends in their AMs.

How we work is important – the following are some ideas and considerations for future activities (drawing on notes from an extra meeting of trustees in September 2020)

- Use of the arts, literature and performance
- Making complex issues more manageable
- Communication in different ways and using a range of media
- Affirming morality and highlighting positive, cooperative approaches
- Engaging in wider conversations, beyond our membership and the peace movement
- Imaginative responses and approaches under Covid restrictions
- Importance of building hope