**Quakers in Yorkshire**

**Simplifying Charitable Functions Group**

**Notes on meeting held on 31 July 2023 by zoom**

**Present:** David Bower (Central Yorkshire AM), Erica Cadbury (Craven & Keighley AM), Deryck Hillas (Brighouse West Yorkshire AM), Ann Hindley (Sheffield & Balby AM), David Olver (QiY Trustees - Convenor), Lesley Richards (Worcestershire & Shropshire AM), Helen Rowlands (Pickering & Hull AM), Martina Weitsch (York AM).

**Prevented:** Rosie Darwood (Leeds AM).

We opened with a period of worship.

**1. Welcome**

We welcomed Lesley Richards who we had invited to describe her experiences of working with Welsh and Scottish Friends on simplification.

**2. Developments in other parts of yearly meeting**

Lesley described, with the aid of slides, the developments in Wales, Scotland, and London – noting the similarities and differences. Lesley started by saying how she has helped facilitate consideration of options in Wales and Scotland and this was helped by being a member of Worcestershire & Shropshire AM.

Wales

* 4 AMs (one straddling Welsh/English border) plus CCQW (Meeting of Friends in Wales).
* Three years of discussions and consultations.
* Leading to proposal to form one charity and retain area meetings.
* This frees AMs for spiritual nurture and witness, reduce duplication, reduces number of roles.
* Extensive consultation leading to all bodies approving proposal.
* Now there is a committee working on the nuts and bolts, preparing policies, unifying financial procedures, working with solicitor and BYM staff.
* Aiming for implementation at the start of 2024.

Scotland

* 4 AMs geographically entirely in Scotland plus General Meeting for Scotland.
* Many differences from Wales – AMs cover huge geographic areas; distances Friends have to travel can be very large; a number of informal Quaker groups have naturally developed to aid Quaker communities; national identity and separate legal system; slightly different charitable structure.
* Proposal is for one unified body absorbing AMs.
* All or nothing approach seems to be more likely to succeed.
* Proposals still being considered by AMs.
* Options for Scotland Committee is producing detailed proposals and flow-charts.

London

* 7 AMs plus London Quakers and London Quaker Property Trust (which owns and runs meeting houses and other properties).
* Long period of development of proposals by Pan London Governance Group.
* Planning on a single AM charity but with possible options and opt-outs.
* Currently looks as if five out of the seven AMs might accept. Aiming for decision by end September 2023.

Elsewhere

* Lesley noted that the AMs north and north west of Quakers in Yorkshire are considering how they might work together or merge.
* There are also early discussions in East Anglia and the South East of England.

**3. General discussion**

We had a general question and discussion period on some of the issues raised.

* Issues of how to deal with inherited money and assets and some local meetings being relatively wealthy and others relatively poorer. Ideally there should be willingness to share resources. Welsh Friends currently grappling with this issue.
* Hiccups inevitably occur and need dealing with issue-by-issue, particularly over the initial setting up a single charity.
* Lack of trust between local meetings can be a real hurdle and there is a need to deal with tensions that can arise when considering proposals for mergers.
* Difficulty of getting Friends to work together across geographic boundaries.
* For Yorkshire it might be better to start with the Welsh model of merged charities rather than merging area meetings.
* Is it feasible to think of a flexible approach which allows gradual merging of AMs?
* How should we interact with the AMs surrounding QiY?
* Quaker Gospel Order should indicate that strong AMs have the resources and willingness to help weaker AMs. We are one spiritual body.

**4. Next meeting**

Strong feeling that the time is right for a face-to-face meeting. Martina offered to host at Hartrigg Oaks. Date to be agreed.

**5. Thanks**

We expressed our warm thanks to Lesley for sharing her extensive experiences of working with Welsh Friends and Scottish Friends.

David Olver

31 July 2023