

FINAL version

Central England Quaker Environmental Policy

Background

Our environmental policy centres on how Central England Quakers live as a faith community. In 1772 John Woolman wrote: *“The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age”*. These words continue to be relevant today. Notably, such teaching is also found in the spiritual texts of other faiths. Quakers believe that climate change is not just a technical problem to be fixed, but a symptom of a greater challenge which we, along with many others, are facing; how to live sustainably and justly on this Earth¹.

The Commitment to become a Low Carbon Community was made in 2011 at Britain Yearly Meeting². It asks Area Meetings to consider “how truth prospers” with regard to sustainability. It draws on all our testimonies – peace, truth, simplicity, equality and care for the environment. Local and Area Meetings are encouraged to practise speaking truth to power at local level, establishing relationships with all sections of local communities, including politicians, businesses and schools, to encourage positive attitudes to sustainability. The Commitment issues a clear call to action to individual Friends, asking them to consider the effect of their lives on the world’s limited resources and CO₂ emissions. It reminds Friends that our actions must flow entirely and only from love.

In February 2017, Central England Quakers minuted its discernment to register as, and take steps to become, an Eco Area Meeting as part of its journey to becoming a Low Carbon Community.

Policy:

The Central England Quakers’ environmental policy is set in the framework of the A Rocha Eco Church scheme and covers not only buildings and land, but also worship and teaching, community and global engagement and lifestyles. The environmental policy is:

- To ask our elders to help Friends and Local Meetings to make links between our low carbon commitment and Quaker testimonies in our meetings for personal spiritual practices and Meetings for Worship.
- To support individual Friends on their journeys towards reducing the impact of their lives on the world’s limited resources
- To encourage and support Local Meetings in becoming Eco Meetings, recording and sharing their experiences and challenges as an encouragement to others.
- To take steps to reduce the environmental impact of Area Meeting activities, ranging from making them ‘public transport friendly’ to embracing the opportunities presented by new technologies.
- To use all our buildings as exemplars of good practice in terms of sustainability and public education reflecting the range of properties owned by Central England Quakers and their different uses
- To work actively with other faith groups and churches on sustainability and environmental matters, sharing our insights as Quakers and learning from other faith perspectives.
- To manage our investments ethically without fossil fuel involvement, and to choose banks that follow ethical practices³ sharing with others our learning, and our struggles with the dilemmas involved.

Notes:

¹ Lindsey Fielder Cook, the Quaker United Nations Office climate representative, has summed this up with the words *“Many say climate change is the greatest challenge facing humanity. We disagree. We believe it is a symptom of a greater challenge, how to live sustainably and justly on this Earth.”*

² In 2009 a statement on climate change made by Meeting for Sufferings included *“Our immoderate use of the Earth’s resources violates the entire biosphere, threatening the lives of millions of people and the habitats of thousands of species. Many of the poorest people are already suffering a changed climate; they are asking us all to act”*.

³ Central England Quakers has an (ethical) investment policy (July 2017) and guidelines on ethical banking (April 2015).

Agreed at CEQ Low Carbon Commitment forum Saturday 13 October 2018