

PREFACE TO THE DOCUMENTS

Here we have before us the whole proposal – the details. Thumbing through we may reasonably want to hunt for where this affects us – what relevance is this to me? where does my Local Meeting sit in all this? The answers start right at the beginning, where our lives as Quakers all start, where we have our roots and out of which everything grows – our Meetings for Worship. So the first document - the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between us all of how we want to organise ourselves – starts right there. With you, sitting in your Local Meeting, worshipping and participating in that which starts in our hearts and spreads out into our mutual community across Wales and parts of our borders, and on into the wider BYM. How we might work together to weave our resources and leadings together both to maximise our ability to maintain our local meetings and to help each other with all the support we can share.

So – if you look at nothing else, have a look at the first document – the General Memorandum of Understanding. Start at the top of the left-hand column. There you are, at the beginning, sitting in your meeting. Where we belong. Seeking guidance for our inner lives, and inspiration for what we need to do in the world. Run your finger down a bit and sideways there we see mutual support and sustenance with other meetings in our Area. Then beyond our local AMs we see how CCQW-wide we are involved with other opportunities - for our children to get together more widely; for us to be able to maximise the effectiveness of outreach, etc. All held together by the scaffolding of “The Charity” (a type of charitable structure known as a “CIO”).

Gradually we can see the point of this proposed structure – how we can best steward and spend our money – how you and I can guide and support our Trustees (our “stewards”) in discerning what needs to be done. How we could participate, maybe as one of the trustees from your AM, or at least interacting with them in matters relating specific to our local situation. Gradually, all our links become clear as our finger runs down the columns, starting from the “Friend on the Bench” (to use an old phrase from hardier times. (“Friend on the Chair with a Cushion” now, perhaps).

No doubt there’ll be some of us wanting to examine the detail closely. How are these Trustees appointed? How much of a say do we, our AMs, our local meetings’ property committees, our local finance people, have? Who’s to be “responsible” ultimately – how does this responsibility reflect the basic Quaker principle of being a church where authority is exercised from the “bottom up”, not the “top down”? The signposts in the Memorandum of Understanding lead those Friends (seamlessly, we hope) into the detailed documents for answers. And the Symud Ymlaen group is not going away – still there to explain.

You and I may wonder why it has taken so long to get to this point. Well, the initial process (and we can’t go any further until we in our local meetings agree the outcome) – was limited to 3 years – and we have just made it! The 11 members, at least 2 of whom were appointed by you in your AM, have taken much of the time to focus on discerning what type of charitable structure would best meet our needs, and drafting a constitution accordingly, consulting with other AMs throughout BYM, the Charities Commission and

Friends House itself – as well as coming back to you to check that we were on more or less the right path – and sometimes having to re-think in response to your comments. Then onwards, working on things like consolidated “Policies” etc., etc.

Finally, a request. Please remember that those 11 members are Friends, just like you. They have done their very best to meet the responsibility you have given them. Often it has felt like being stuck in the middle of a bog of bureaucracy-think. In considering the results of their discernment, be kind. None of us can expect perfection in this world. We pray that their very best is “good enough”.