

Residential Weekend at The Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT), Machynlleth on 27 Feb to 1 March 2015 – organised by Meeting of Friends in Wales

'Taking the next step in fulfilling our commitment to be a Sustainable Community'

Introduction: At Yearly Meeting Gathering in August 2011, Friends made a 'Corporate Commitment' to become a low carbon, sustainable community.

As a result of that commitment there has been a lot helpful and encouraging work carried out (e.g. Sustainability Workshop, Bangor, September 2013) and in publications, (Sustainability Toolkit, Pam Lunn's lecture (DVD) and book 'Costing Less than Everything' where she emphasises that we can't just blame somebody else for climate change and economic problems, we are part of the problem and we need to 'change our lives in ways that most people have barely glimpsed yet')

...but how are we to be nurtured to continue this work?

Well, we need a bit of regular help, we need reminders and meetings that check how we're doing, learn about new ideas and modify and improve our ways, and that's what the weekend at CAT was about.

Themes of Weekend For some of the sessions we were all together for preparatory discussions: but there were also specific themed sessions at other times that took place concurrently

The three principle themes were:

- a) Spiritual and Sustainability
- b) Economic & Environmental Sustainability
- c) Campaigning and Taking Action

My very brief personal notes which follow are from each of the sessions that I attended, they generally encourage further reading and investigation within our own meetings....did I mention that you'd be given 'homework' there's quite a lot of information to absorb and act upon!!

Informal 'settling in session' on Friday evening We were asked to explain what brought us to this gathering and what we hoped to achieve from the weekend.

My response was 'I'm angry and want to change the World!'

This was perhaps a bit of a tabloid style shock headline but was based on my recent viewing of a film Gaslands 2, documentary about the proliferation of fracking/gas wells throughout Central USA, which shows water pollution/unattended methane leaks/stories of gas companies ignoring complaints

Session 1 (All together) Spirituality and Sustainability

- We (hopefully) live in gratitude for the land that sustains us, our family that supports us
- Do we perceive the people who have little regard for the environment as the 'enemy'? Who are 'they'. George Marshalls book 'Don't even think about it' suggests that we should engage in cooperation and finding common ground
- Climate Justice helps campaign for strong international laws to protect the environment.
- Our own feelings (guilt?)
- What is happening to our Earth? How much of it is simply the Earth decaying, how much is the result of human actions?
- Are we remembering Advices & Queries 41 'Try to live simply.....' ?
- Are we applying a holistic outlook as did early Friends?

Session 2 (All together) What's wrong with our economic system?

- What has happened to the original Quaker Bankers ethos of honesty and integrity?
- GDP measures money not value, soil fertility, our biosphere or human wellbeing
- Global Divestment...asks us to lobby our big spenders (Government, Universities, Financial and Religious) to take away their investments in 'rogue' industries that are destroying our planet
- Shareholders....need more ethical ones!

