

## Meeting of Friends in Wales (MFW)

### Report of Trustees to MFW: for meeting held 26 October 2019.

Trustees have met twice since the last meeting of MFW, on 12 July in Shrewsbury, when we met with the recording clerk, Paul Parker, when cooperation with Britain Yearly Meeting was the main subject for discussion and on 26 September in Aberystwyth when discussion centred on budgeting and planning. Full minutes of meetings are available on request.

#### 1. Regionalisation, simplification and working with Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM)

We met with Paul Parker in July to carry forward the recommendation agreed by MFW at its February Meeting, that we should explore whether it is time to have an office of BYM in Wales (recommendations from the 'Direction of MFW' paper agreed by MFW minute 2019.09, in February 2019), and MFW Minute 2019.20, agreed in June 2019.

Paul Parker informed us about the recent decisions by BYM Trustees and Woodbrooke. The three key decisions were

1. BYM/Woodbrooke working together on Meeting centred support (new term instead of Vibrancy)
2. Local Development Workers to be within reach of every Meeting within 5 years. I.e. Close enough to feel within reach and become a familiar figure in the meeting community.
3. Regional hubs, bases or clusters to be established.

The current Vibrancy workers have been offered posts in the new arrangements. An implementation manager will be appointed to begin work on the rollout.

#### Key decisions from the discussion and comments about taking it forward

- We agreed to keep in contact with the Cardiff Meeting Steering Group. We asked Huw Meredydd Owen to join Deborah Rowlands and Gordon Blackburn as our links, **and inform MFW of this addition.**
- We asked how the functions of MFW and associated Area Meetings complement each other – to be discussed at the meeting with AM clerks and clerks of Trustees in September
- How should work in Wales be funded in the future? Where is the ownership for enabling the witness, and the support for meetings? Who sets the priorities?
- A process of change enables us to think differently. But it is hard work to make change happen. One suggestion from the vibrancy work was in generic support for training for Quaker roles
- The Spiritual Hospitality project showed that we draw people to Quakers through enthusiasm and our witness. Might the future hold some support for our witness work in Wales? Peacework, especially in schools, work on economic justice, and sanctuary work are all strong in parts of Wales.
- It is vital to recognise that Wales is different. It is not the same as an English region.
- How can we augment and develop the work of the administrator we have employed? To what extent is it helpful to think of building a (small) team of workers in Wales, for support and building on their specific skills?
- Might we pool resources in Wales and buy in paid support for bookkeeping, property management bookings etc? Is this part of the 'simplification' agenda?
- Employment of the Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer shows a model of another way of partnership working within BYM: employed by BYM but part funded by Friends in Scotland. Line managed by BYM, but with priority setting done locally. There is an MoU to

establish working practices. Friends there are keen to get involved with the Engagement Officer. The fact that some of the funding is provided locally has increased the sense of engagement with her work.

- We identify with the need for all of us to engage together and educate each other with issues such as: what does it mean to be a Quaker? What is unity? What do Quakers mean by leadership and ministry? Might it help to bring in Woodbrooke more?
  - “Welsh Office”/“Welsh Government”. We used the model of “Welsh Office” (ie an offshoot of Britain Yearly Meeting working for Wales) versus the “Welsh Government”, a group within Wales (MFW) making rules and providing services for its own community. Which tasks can usefully be seen as falling under each of these headings? We were clear that Friends in Wales relationships with Welsh institutions such as the Senedd, Cytûn, WCVA, Royal Welsh show and Eisteddfod Witness and outreach relating to Wales fall into the MFW list. Support for local meetings, the health of area meetings, considering how we might simplify who does what might be part of Britain-wide support, might be the “Welsh Office” side of things. What’s needed is likely to be a hybrid.
2. **Employment matters.** New documentation and supporting arrangements for our employee has been put in place.
  3. **Update on the website.** We agreed to set up a **Website fund**: transferring £500 From the general fund with immediate effect, and allocating £2500 from next years budget to set up a designated Website fund.
  4. **Budget.** We are working towards producing a budget to bring to MFW in February which shows more clearly how money has been spent on different aspects of the work: eg Outreach, Witness, Governance, training, administration, website etc. And what funds are available. We have built up a ‘project fund’ from sales of MFW books (Towards the source, Tua’r Tarddiad) which can be used to fund future projects discerned by MFW.
  5. **Grant Application for funding.** We have applied for our usual annual funding from Britain Yearly Meeting [BYM) for our administrator, who performs such a crucial part of the efficient functioning of MFW. The application process enabled us to see how our priorities line up with those of BYM, and how we show accountability for this work. The clerk of MFW trustees met with BYM trustees in September, along with a representative of General Meeting for Scotland, to explain what we do with the money, and answer questions, so that these Friends can be more aware of Welsh affairs. The memorandum of understanding being drawn up should help to clarify relationships and responsibilities, between MFW and BYM.
  6. **Working with associated area meetings.** In September, we looked at a report of the meeting held in the Pales on 09.09.19, with representatives of associated area meetings. We will be involved with drawing up revised memoranda of understanding to help clarify how we work with these AMs.
  7. **Archives and record keeping.** We considered how we should ensure that our records, including electronic versions are kept safe.

*Deborah Rowlands, clerk of MFW trustees. October 2019*