

## **Report on “Working Together” held 29 November 2025 in Manchester**

Seven members of East Cheshire area meeting joined Friends from many of the twenty local meetings in and around Merseyside, Manchester and Cheshire to talk about how our four area meetings could work more closely together in future.

We received a presentation from Lesley Richards who was involved in bringing AMs (area meetings) together into a single charity: in one case keeping the original AMs, and in another where the discernment was to form a single AM. We also discussed less radical ways in which AMs can work together for their mutual benefit.

We appointed a working group to explore these ideas further and to report back to a Regional Gathering at Liverpool on Saturday 19 September 2026.

There will also be a Regional Gathering Fun Day at Central Manchester Meeting House on the 21<sup>st</sup> March from about 10-5.....all welcome!

Andrew Backhouse (East Cheshire),

*Here is the minute agreed at the meeting:*

### **Working Together – Quakers in the North West**

On 29<sup>th</sup> November 2025 Friends from East Cheshire, Hardshaw and Mann, Manchester and Warrington, and Wirral and Chester Area Meetings met at Central Manchester Quaker Meeting House. We jointly acknowledged the governance challenges we all face in finding a workable balance between our spiritual, witnessing Quakerly work, and the “keeping the show on the road” tasks. We considered various aspects of this:

*One group said – We’ve met, and there is a vision for our spiritual growth, nourishment and witness. We want to tell our Area and Local Meetings that we would benefit from doing more together across the region, to share resources and skills. Our Area Meetings may amalgamate in the future. We look forward to invites to Manchester Fun day in March, and a General Meeting in September.*

*A group of trustees said – we feel that a North West Region could run with a group of 12 trustees who would have a support group for each area of responsibility. We need to identify the skills our Friends have to offer and the Trustee body would need administrative support.*

*The Safeguarding group reported forming a group working across Hardshaw and Mann and Manchester and Warrington Area Meetings on difficult areas. They have worked on challenges around ex-offenders coming to Meeting; oversight of challenging staff members; and local chaplaincy roles.*

*A group of treasurers recognised that conflict resolution may be needed around exploration of different models of treasurership. Our current preferred model is to do away with any need for local meeting treasurers, [with most property matters*

*administered centrally and] with LBMs directing payment from AM, with the potential to be supported by a single finance team at a wider level.*

We have heard that Sue Johnson and Valerie Clark are working together on an All Age Fun Day [with all welcome] in March 2026 at Central Manchester Meeting House, which will build community across the four Area Meetings, and which might be the beginning of forming a General Meeting to allow us to come together joyfully to support one another in all aspects of our Quaker life.

We ask Andrew Backhouse and Gill Alcock to plan a further gathering for September 2026.

We ask Yvonne Dickson, Eric Silk, Robert Wilson and Andrew Backhouse with others they coopt to form a Working Together working group in which they take forward experience shared by Lesley Richards and thoughts developed today to build ideas of how we might most usefully move forward on working constructively and supportively together. We ask this group to explore with our neighbouring Area Meetings whether they would want to be part of this development. We ask the group to report back at the September gathering.

We agree to send this out to our Area and Local Meetings.

Clerk this time – *Frances A Hill*, East Cheshire AM

Who's who?

Sue Johnson – Manchester and Warrington AM

Valerie Clark – Manchester and Warrington AM

Andrew Backhouse – East Cheshire AM

Gill Alcock – East Cheshire AM

Yvonne Dickson – Wirral and Chester AM

Eric Silk – Hardshaw and Mann AM

Robert Wilson – Manchester and Warrington AM

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Since the meeting Gill Alcock has sent the following request to Area Meeting.

At the day event at Mount Street before Christmas considering closer links between our AMs in the region, Andrew Backhouse and Gill Alcock agreed to organise an all age regional gathering, and to co-opt other Friends to help. We have booked Liverpool Meeting House for Saturday September 19 September and have a provisional theme around Hope and Fun. Further details will be available in due course.

We ask ECAM for a budget of £300 to cover mainly speaker costs. Liverpool are not charging for the venue.

