

What would a zero carbon Sheffield and Balby Area Meeting look like? What would it be like to achieve it by 2030; in just 12 years' time? What would zero carbon look like for us personally?

I will explain why these are key questions to ask ourselves. I and 3 others in our Area Meeting, went to the BYM Sustainability Conference on 19 to 21 October at Swanwick. Friday evening had background information to bring us all up to speed.

The (International Panel on Climate Change) IPCC had produced a report a few days earlier. When commissioned it was meant to be comparing the difference between global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C. Since then climate change has been happening sooner than expected and the effects are already being much bigger than the models predicted. So the report is clear we cannot afford to let global warming go above 1.5°C. Since the conference the IPCC have produced another report, saying the oceans have warmed 60% more than they had previously thought. If you are wondering why it has taken until now to realise how much the oceans have warmed and why they could not just measure the ocean temperatures with a thermometer, ask me in questions. I can also explain why how much the oceans have warmed is significant. The point is the situation is urgent.

To have a reasonable chance of not increasing global warming by more than 1.5°C, the whole world needs to reduce our carbon equivalent consumption by 45% by 2030 and to reach zero carbon by 2050. (I can explain carbon equivalent consumption in questions if you are interested).

Then (still on Friday evening) the clerk of Meeting for Sufferings reminded us of the 2011 Canterbury commitment; that is for Quakers in Britain to become a low carbon sustainable community. If the whole world needs to become zero carbon by 2050 then aiming to be zero carbon by 2050 is nothing special. If Quakers are serious about becoming a low carbon sustainable community, then we should be aiming to become zero carbon by 2030. Friends House and the centrally managed work have done some things (ask me in questions for the details), but Meeting for Sufferings is now asking what would it be like for the whole of the centrally managed work to be zero carbon

by 2030? It has asked ... to look into this question and report back. Meanwhile it is up to us to do the same at Local Meeting and at Area Meeting level.

We had three inspiring speakers on the Saturday morning, but I am going to let the other people report back on them. In the discussions and chatting to people between sessions it was good to hear about what other Quaker meetings are doing on sustainability. Not all of it was directly about reducing carbon. For example Bull Street FMH in the centre of Birmingham, uses its rainwater to flush the toilets in the Meeting House. Never the less, there was the feeling that other Quakers are all beavering away locally, and I found the conference inspiring and energising.

I had gone to the conference feeling stuck about what to do next for sustainability both personally and locally. The local transition group had folded while I was on my big New Zealand trip, and at a personal level I had done the easy things for me, to do to reduce my carbon footprint. I am vegan, I don't own a car, and cycle for local journeys in the Hope Valley. So I had been feeling unclear about what more I could do. I came away from the conference with plenty of ideas and with feeling change is possible.

So back to the idea I started with of becoming zero carbon by 2030. Starting from where we are now, that seems dauntingly impossible. But in the 1980s when peace and M.A.D. (Mutually Assured Destruction) were the big issues, there were a whole lot of workshops called "Visioning a World Without Weapons". They started from the future looking at what the world would look like once disarmament had been achieved. Over half the time in the workshop was spent on getting that vision clear. Then they worked back from the future, what would be the last step before complete disarmament, what would be the second to last step and so on. The workshops were found to be very energising and prioritising.

I think we could do something similar with zero carbon. To have a workshop to look at: what would it look like to be a zero carbon Area Meeting, and ask what would it mean in practise, I think could be helpful, even if we don't then implement all that we come up with.

I am willing to facilitate such a workshop with anyone else who would like to be involved.

Would Area Meeting like a one day workshop envisioning what it would look like for our Area Meeting to become zero carbon by 2030? Is there anyone else who would be interest to facilitate it with me?