***FSSE 2020***

***Trustees’ Annual Report***

2020 has been a challenging year for everyone, and the last 12 months has seen FSSE make changes to the way it runs its events. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we took the collective decision that FSSE’s events would not run in the same way as in previous years. Junior Gathering for 11-14 year olds did not run this year, and Senior Conference for 15-18 year olds ran as remote, technology-enabled event over the course of a shorter week than previously. Trustees believe that despite this new context, those involved in planning and running the event were able to ensure it served Quakers well, and facilitated according to firm Quaker values. Although not an in-person event, Senior Conference remained, thanks to the work of the event coordinators, arrangements committee, team of base group facilitators and the support of the participants, a place where young people could give and receive spiritual input and learn more about Quaker values and testimonies.

Trustees are of the view that FSSE remains on a sure financial footing. The shift to our event programme consisting of one non in-person event rather than the two residential events FSSE has traditionally provided saw an expected shift in our annual accounts, with fewer transactions and decreased costs.

As reflects a longer-term, Young Quaker group wide pattern, not just the different nature of the 2020 event, our financial reserves have fallen since last year. Our reserves would still just about enable us to meet the cost of one in-person event failing in future years. Over time we expect that participant fees will need to rise, although we do not anticipate this happening in 2021. We know many AMs and LMs support our participants, their families, and FSSE finances through part funding of participant places, and are grateful for this.

Regardless of what form future events take, we will continue to focus on increasing our participant numbers, as well as taking time over the next few years to scope out potential options for how we can meet the needs of our young people through the format of the events we run.

We worked hard to make our events open to everyone, regardless of means. In previous years this has included helping participants with difficulties find bursary funding locally where possible, and where not possible, providing bursary funding from FSSE's own limited funds. For the 2020 event, the issue of access was not so much financial (we asked participants for a small nominal donation in lieu of fees) as ensuring potential participants were aware the event was running. We have taken on board the learning from this year’s successful event, and will ensure publicity campaigns happen earlier, in a highly targeted way, to ensure we reach as many potential attendees as possible.

We pay careful attention to the safety of our events, with designated trained child protection team members. We carefully assess possible risks so that we mitigate them, or are prepared should we have an emergency.

Comments from the adult helpers and parents, as well as participants' feedback from Senior Conference events, indicate that FSSE was very successful in meeting our objectives.

Since AGM 2019, Trustees have held separate meetings five times, across the year, via video-conferencing services. Some of these meetings were also attended by event coordinators and people other FSSE management roles, to help discern the most effective way to run our events, and their time and input is invaluable.

We would like to thank everyone who helped run and oversee our events this year, for the courage, tenacity, positivity and sense of purpose they have shown throughout a backdrop which none of us anticipated or would have chosen. We are grateful also to the Quaker meetings and other bodies whose bursaries were still able to help our finances. The sense of joy and inspiration FSSE events bring has not been diminished, and it remains a privilege to be connected to this organisation, its events and the people who contribute to them.

Thank you.

*James Barnard – Clerk to FSSE trustees*