

Loving Earth Project

Report on activities in 2021



Summary

2021 was a busy and fruitful year for the Loving Earth Project. Making textile panels proved an occupation very suitable for Covid lockdowns, and by the end of the year over 400 had been created. Online events drew in people from many parts of Britain and beyond.

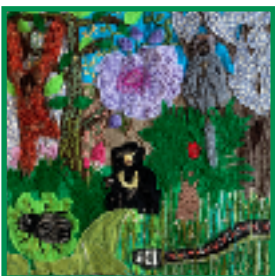
From the summer it became possible to start exhibiting groups of panels, and several displays were mounted around Britain, especially in and around Glasgow during the November COP 26 United Nations climate conference. These enabled wider community engagement with the issues, inspiring hope and action, and the project was cited as one of the best cultural events in Scotland for COP 26.

To achieve this, the Quaker Arts Network worked in partnership with a wide range of organisations and individual volunteers, receiving generous financial support from a number of sources. Thanks are due to all of these. The project will be able to build on this success, continuing to exhibit groups of panels until 2023. providing resources for workshops, and developing further materials to help deepen people's engagement with the growing environmental crisis and inspire creative, forward-looking responses.

<http://lovingearth-project.uk>

@lovingearthpro1

@LovingEarthProject



Activities

When a group of potential facilitators and other supporters met at Woodbrooke in January 2020 we were feeling optimistic. Woodbrooke had agreed to partner with Quaker Arts Network (QAN) to develop and run the Loving Earth Project (LEP) since its inception in 2019. Then the Covid pandemic struck, and everything changed. Courses and exhibitions were cancelled, but the Loving Earth Project quickly adapted and became very successful despite the uncertainties and difficulties of the period.

By the start of 2021 we were running regular online events for people wishing to make textile panels, and these continued, working with a variety of partners. Woodbrooke (the Quaker learning organisation) organised a range of events and supported the project in other ways until late 2021, when this came to a natural end. Woodbrooke continues to use Loving Earth materials as part of its learning offerings, and to support the project through representation on its Steering Group.

Another formal partnership with Sustainable Merton (a local environmental charity in South West London), resulted in a series of events for local residents focusing on their changed experience of the environment during Covid lockdowns. This helped many people through difficult times, led to greater involvement in local environmental initiatives, and resulted in some beautiful textile panels which will eventually return to Merton as a long term legacy.

Exhibitions were able to start in early Summer, first at Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre (Surrey), Bainbridge Quaker Meeting House (Yorkshire) and Wimbledon, and later in other parts of the country, from Kent to East Anglia, the North West and Scotland. We prioritised exhibitions in Scotland in the lead-up to COP 26 and held six very successful exhibitions in and around Glasgow during the conference itself, as part of the Climate Fringe, with one of them (at the Scottish Maritime Museum) hailed by thelist.co.uk as “one of the best cultural events in Scotland for COP 26”. These were in different kinds of venues all over Glasgow, and were seen by local people and conference delegates alike. Support from local Quakers, faith groups and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (organising Climate Fringe events) was essential in planning and publicising this. Workshop and discussions and other activities were organised at many of the venues, to enable people to explore the issues more deeply, and 'green heart' postcards featuring with Loving Earth questions enabled people to take the questions with them as a reminder, or in some of the venues to respond on the back of the postcard and add it to installations. A short video showing some of these events and a few responses to the exhibitions is at

Most Loving Earth Project events are listed on our website a summary is at in Annex 2. Photos of some of the exhibitions are also on the website .

Loving Earth Resources

This project was planned from the outset as a community textile project which people could participate in remotely and with whatever textile materials they had to hand, in order to be low carbon, inclusive, and cheap for participants. Despite the disappointment of having to cancel a number of events, the project has adapted well to online events in Covid times and these have enabled wider geographical participation.

Our website has been key to the project, and during 2021 we developed this considerably. As well as the main pages introducing the project, its process, and a gallery featuring over 300 textile panels and accompanying texts, we now have videos introducing the project, meditations suitable for different groups, and demonstrating techniques that can be used to make panels. A range of downloadable guidance for making panels, running workshops and for potential exhibitors and an online shop page have recently been added.

Nearly 1000 postcards featuring the Loving Earth queries were distributed. We also produced a set of 8 greetings cards early in 2021, each with a beautiful image of one of the textile panels and an extract from the maker's text. The main aim was to continue to encourage engagement with these issues. We weren't able to start selling them until summer exhibitions started, but nonetheless by the end of the year, some designs had sold out. We anticipate that the greeting cards will be broadly self-funding.

An e-newsletter was produced every two months or so during 2021, with support from Woodbrooke. This was important in preparing for COP 26 and in building the Loving Earth community. This year, articles about the project were published in *Resurgence* and *Green Christian*.



Responses to the project

By the end of 2021 around 400 panels had been made and exhibited in one or more exhibitions, or on the website. Each of these was accompanied by a text; in some cases we had sustained conversations with the makers over some time as they worked out what action they felt called to take; they always seemed pleased to have done this, and often went on to address further issues.

While the panels touch on a wide range of themes, most panels have initially focused on issues such as litter, trees, wildflowers and loss of wildlife species. This may be because of the wording of the questions. Since the project started, most people are much more aware of the environmental crisis and we have been developing alternative wordings and uses of the project, to encourage a broader range of responses and to illustrate changes that could be (or are being) made by organisations, communities or governments, without discouraging those individuals only just acknowledging the need for change and taking their first tentative steps towards sustainability.

A number of Loving Earth conversations were held alongside exhibitions. These invited people to share their responses to one or two panels of their choice. An online conversations with invited speakers was hosted by Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre and two blended (in person/online) ones by Glasgow Quakers. These involved members of the wider community connected with the hosts and led to interesting, open and often deep reflections on the topics chosen. It was particularly lovely to hear from participants in different parts of the world and with different areas of expertise joining via the internet and finding much common ground as they explored the impact of changing weather patterns, on human and other communities.



Different ways of engaging with the panels were offered elsewhere. At Bainbridge, many local people (including some nationally known personalities) were invited to record a short video in response to one of the panels on display. Poetry writing workshops were held in Birmingham (for a group of young people) and at Riverhouse Barn. The online gallery has been used as a resource for online discussions of a similar kind. The anonymity of the makers and the variety of styles and topics makes this a disarming way to start quite personal conversations without being judgmental, and exhibition visitors have been encouraged to respond in similar ways, sometimes using our postcards.

It is clear from the feedback that participation in the LEP has been very valuable for panel-makers and has led to significant deepening of their engagement with climate issues and to wider personal growth. Some have developed their sewing skills changed their buying or travel habits, held conversations with family members, written to businesses or politicians, or started to join campaigns. Others have taken this project into their own community, to snowball its impact. A few participants shared their responses in a video on the Resources page of our website.

Comments on exhibitions have been very complimentary. Visitors found them thought-provoking, joyful, hopeful and yet demonstrating an awareness of a great threat overshadowing the world (reminiscent of the Nazi Holocaust). There was joy at the very personal and diverse images, unified by colour, size and a sense of community despite the dispersal of the makers (who remained anonymous). They demonstrated love and blessing, as well as concern and a wide variety of actions being taken - from growing food, to changing travel habits, talking with family or moving home. There is a sense of needing to encourage further learning, and of positive creative and courageous responses to build resilience and adaptability in future ... all for the sake of love.



Funding and oversight

The Loving Earth Project is formally a project of the Quaker Arts Network¹ whose committee has been very supportive. A Steering Group oversees the project and the QAN treasurer managing LEP finances. Two members of the LEP Steering Group are also members of the QAN committee, providing liaison and accountability.

Annex 3 summarises the financial position in 2021. This only includes those expenses covered via QAN, not those incurred by partner organisations. Woodbrooke and Sustainable Merton worked with us to offer activities for the communities they serve. Their main roles in the project came to a natural end during 2021, though a Woodbrooke representative is staying on the LEP Steering Group and they are continuing to use LEP materials. We also collaborated with a range of exhibition hosts, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and a great many volunteers.

QAN was delighted and grateful to be awarded grants to help towards the costs of exhibiting and producing associated materials from the Westhill Foundation, the Edith M Ellis Trust and the Southall Trust, as well as from a few Quaker Meetings, and individual Friends. QAN underwrote some of the costs to enable plans to be made, and has contributed to publicity, communications, and other expenses.

Woodbrooke's work on the project was funded by Quakers in Britain as part of their wider work on 'Climate Crisis: Spiritual Nurture & Learning'. Woodbrooke did not receive any funding raised by the Quaker Arts Network. Sustainable Merton paid LEP a fee and other exhibition hosts contributed in different ways.

By October 2021 it was clear to the Steering Group that exhibitions should continue till late 2023. Our main constraint was volunteer time to manage and coordinate the project centrally; a task made more demanding by the success of the project. With facilitation help from Alison Maitland, the Steering Group decided to concentrate on larger and longer exhibitions. Together with developing further resources to extend the project's influence, we hope this best support our overall aim to inspire and widen active engagement with climate issues without overwhelming people.



¹ QAN is, a Quaker Recognised Body accountable to Quakers in Britain. See <http://quakerarts.net>.

Annexes

Annex 1 Steering Group membership 2021

The following were members of the LEP Steering Group members during 2021

Emily Boulting (Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre) - until Summer

Rici Marshall Cross (clerk from November)

Tracey Martin (Woodbrooke) (co-clerk until November)

Linda Murgatroyd (QAN), (co-clerk until November)

Rachael Swancott (Woodbrooke) (until November)

Sue Tyldesley (QAN)

Sue Chisnall-Sumner

Matt Rosen

Annex 2 Loving Earth Project Events during 2021

Workshops and courses organised by Loving Earth Project

Monthly online starter workshops and monthly chats for panel-makers until late Summer.

Volunteers and other have worked, with a large variety of small groups around Britain including a refugee group, a public library, a variety of textile craft groups, faith groups (mostly Quakers and church groups), school and neighbourhood groups, social clubs for the elderly etc.

Further afield, workshops have been held for gatherings of European Quakers, Protestant and Quaker gatherings in France and California respectively, and the project was taken up by a school in Uganda.

Loving Earth project also contributed talks and in other ways to events organised by Christian Aid Scotland, Froglife, and a variety of local events.

Organised by Woodbrooke (Quaker Learning Organisation)

Deepening Our Commitment (8 weeks - online course)

Loving Earth spiritual online retreat

Quakers in Britain Yearly Meeting Gathering - practical workshops and discussions for a wide range of groups

Lockdown Legacy Project with Sustainable Merton .

Seven online workshops were provided for local people to reflect on how the Covid lockdown

affected their relationship with the environment and to make textile panels. A Further Education centre for young adults with learning difficulties also participated. Sustainable Merton hosted an exhibition in the local Centre Court shopping centre. The resulting panels can be seen at <https://www.sustainablemerton.org/loving-earth>. Panels have joined the LEP touring collection and will be returned to Merton afterwards as a permanent legacy.

Exhibitions

Substantial exhibitions were held in the summer and autumn at Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre, Centre Court Shopping Centre (Wimbledon), and Bainbridge Quaker Meeting House (Yorkshire), and as part of other events, such as the *Earth Matters* textile exhibition (Astley Park, Lancashire), *Le Grand Kiff* Christian youth residential gathering in Albi, France, and in shop windows and local Green Fairs and other events around Britain.

In September, a dozen or so exhibitions (small and large) were held as part of the week-long events organised by the Climate Coalition (including in Canterbury, Birmingham, and Buckinghamshire) and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland.

Six exhibitions were held in and around Glasgow during COP 26, including in the Gorbals Parish Church, Maryhill Burgh Halls, two Save the Children shops, the Quaker Meeting House and the Scottish Maritime Museum - the latter was open for four months altogether. Further exhibitions in Scotland were held before and after COP 26, including in Edinburgh, Ayr, Arran, Alloa, Dundee and Tayside.

Other events were also held alongside many of these exhibitions, both creative events (textile craft, poetry writing/reading) and discussions about environmental issues. Details of most public events can be seen at <http://lovingearth-project.uk/events-2/>, and some photos and reports were in newsletters or on the exhibitions page of the site. A number of other events were organised less formally or for a limited group.

Annex 3 Financial Summary

Loving Earth Project : Income and Expenditure 2021	
Income	
Donations	£5202
Fees	£568
Sales	£617
Other income	£38
Total	£6425
Expenses	
- Printing/videos	£1479
- Exhibition costs	£1007
- Postage and sundries	£135
- Advertising	£270
- Other overheads	
Total	£2891
Balances	
Bought forward at the start of the year	£388
Surplus of receipts over payments	£3383
Carried forward at end of year	£3771

Note: These figures form part of the accounts of the Quaker Arts Net

work which are examined independently. The money is held in the Quaker Arts Network's bank account.