

Loving Earth Project: Report of Activity in 2023

Introduction

2023 was a busy year for the Loving Earth Project. It was expected that the project would finish at the end of the year, but by the middle of 2023 we already had requests for loans of panels for 2024 and 2025, so we agreed to continue, albeit in simpler form. Two further successful publications have enabled the project to reach people in different ways. The amount of enthusiasm for the project to continue, together with a brief review of participants' experiences, suggests that the project has largely been successful in its aims of helping people to engage more deeply with the environmental crisis, without being overwhelmed.

This is the final stand-alone report on the project; we expect only to report via the Quaker Arts Network's annual reports, in future.

Exhibitions and events

By the end of the year over 500 textile art panels had been made and exhibited somewhere. Most of these have also been included in our online gallery, though photos or texts are not available for all of them. A list of exhibitions during



One of the participants in a workshop at the exhibition in the Protestant church at Le Havre, France, shows her work-in-progress to the group.



The Speaker of the House of Commons discusses panels in the Loving Earth exhibition on display in Westminster Parliament's Portcullis House with Linda Murgatroyd.

2023 is attached at annexe 3.

Highlights included an exhibition in Portcullis House at Westminster Parliament, which gained coverage on the BBC "Sunday" radio programme, and two series of exhibitions abroad, in California and in Northern France and Belgium. Other exhibitions around England, from the North-East to the South-West and many places between, culminated in three large exhibitions in London, at the end of the year, which were partly concurrent. Exhibitions were held in a variety of venues, from museums, arts centres, theatres civic halls, to churches and Quaker Meeting Houses, and garden or nature centres, so they will have been seen by a wide variety of people. We are aware that a number of other exhibitions and events have been held, by groups who have used Loving Earth

materials and developed their own events and exhibitions but have not sent us details.

Many venues also held other events. Workshops to make textile panels were made ahead of exhibitions or during them. A series of online poetry workshops yielded a rich variety of poems inspired by Loving Earth panels some of which were presented at an in-person poetry reading. Talks, book launches and exhibition launch events also offered opportunities for reflection and discussion.



Children from the local school discuss what they can do to help protect and care for the environment, inspired by the exhibition in a local church and the Loving Earth questions.

Publications

Two further books were published in 2023, building on the success of



Tracy Martin launches the Out of Excuses poetry book at a poetry reading at Friends House, London

our earlier books *Out of Excuses, A Loving Earth Poetry Book* (ISBN 978-1-7391405-2-6) featured poems by 17 different authors. *Caring for the World We Love: A Loving Earth Book for Kids (for all ages)*, (ISBN 978-1-7391405-3-3) introduced the Loving Earth project in a way that could be used with children (and adults) of different ages, together with links to the other resources on our website. These have sold well, and the children's book is being taken into a number of schools and libraries, and shared with interfaith groups. Each of the books featured many colour illustrations of Loving Earth panels, together with general information about the project and encouragement to readers to explore the Loving Earth questions themselves.



Finances

The Loving Earth Project is formally a project of the Quaker Arts Network¹, and our funds have been administered by its treasurer and accounted for in its accounts. Annex 2 summarises the financial position for 2023.

We have been grateful that this project has been supported financially by the Southall Trust, the Edith M Ellis Trust and Westhill, as well as the Quaker Arts Network. This support, along with a huge amount of time from volunteers and groups with whom we have worked, has enabled the project to reach far beyond our initial expectations. By the end of 2023, the grants donated to fund this project along with other donations to Quaker Arts Network had largely been spent. Some expenditures had not been paid by the end of the year and so didn't feature in the 2023 accounts. The small amount of remaining funds will be transferred to the QAN general account, and used to maintain the online database of panels, website and other infrastructure during 2024. The Quaker Arts Network continues to fund some other expenses associated with the project, sharing exhibition costs with those hosting exhibitions.

Reviewing the impact of the project

The underlying aim of this project was to help people engage more deeply with the environmental crisis, and to take actions inspired by love and without being overwhelmed. The Steering Group wanted to try and gain some indication of whether this had succeeded, and invited responses to a quick and simple survey late in 2023.



A group of local Quakers explore the Loving Earth exhibition at Bournemouth Central Library

¹ QAN is, a Quaker Recognised Body accountable to Quakers in Britain. Its accounts and annual reports are available at <http://quakerarts.net/documents>. In 2023 it registered as a Charity in its own right: Charity number 1202268.

Responses to the survey were very few, and it was not a group representative of those who had been involved with the project - let alone those who had seen exhibitions or the books. Indeed, most respondents to the survey said they already had longstanding concerns about environmental change.

However, their responses, together with other comments and reports, suggested that most people who had engaged with the project had indeed taken some further action or changed their behaviour as a result. This included changes in their personal lifestyles, more engagement with campaigning groups, and/or further learning or exploration. Some people said that the project had had an influence on major decisions such as moving house; others mentioned engagement with community groups or campaigns. Many said they were more aware of the impact of their spending or how they cared for their surroundings, and changed some habit accordingly. Some people had surprised themselves by the changes they made, though not everyone found themselves able to carry through their intended action.

In general, people found the project encouraging, validating, and they came away with a stronger commitment to action on environmental issues. The combination of art/craft and



Loving Earth exhibition at the Museum of science and Curiosity in Sacramento,

texts or conversations about the substantial issues was particularly appreciated, engaging people at different levels. Using beauty and imagination helped make it more enjoyable for people to explore some challenging issues and encouraged them to do so.

People tended to get involved with this project either because they were attracted by the craft element of making a panel, the local community involvement of mounting an exhibition or event, as well as the opportunity for raising awareness of the issues more widely. Workshops also offered opportunities for conversation both about textile matters and the environment, especially for groups that met several times with time in between for needlework and/or research. A number of people were grateful for the gentle learning they had done, whether in the process of making panels or in viewing exhibitions. Exhibitions in churches or Quaker meeting houses which were off the beaten track were sometimes less effective at outreach than those in more public building or events, but many good conversations were held nonetheless.

Although no children or young people responded to the survey directly, we know from other sources that the project has been valuable for them, and that it has been used successfully with schools and Quaker or church groups of all ages. Indeed children often seemed to have the clearest views of the issues, and the need for action, and were

particularly pleased to discover that they could take some actions themselves, which helped reduce their own anxiety.

A number of people used the project to reach out in their own community, with workshops for groups in schools, churches Quaker events, or with other community groups such as refugees or vulnerable adults. Such projects were often used either in association with exhibitions of panels, or using one of our books or videos as a starting point. The resources on our website were highly praised.

The Future of the Project

Owing to popular demand, the Steering Group decided to continue with the project for another year or two beyond the end of 2023, our initial end date. However due to limited volunteer time and other resources, we are simplifying our offering and our structure, for example the <http://www.quakerarts.net/> website and social media will be the main sources of publicity. We continue to encourage others to use the resources from our websites and books, and to develop their own versions, perhaps adapting them for the increased urgency of action. We will no longer offer our own workshops (though some of us may do so as individuals) and we shan't accept new panels for the travelling exhibition. Photos of new panels and texts will continue to be added to online gallery at <http://lovingearth-project.uk/test-gallery/> .

A reduced number of groups of panels will continue to be available for exhibition, but without flexibility as to which panels are available in particular places. Exhibitions planned for 2024 include some at the National Needlework Archive (Newbury), in South West England (Devon, Somerset, Hampshire), in South Wales, and in Cheltenham and Norfolk.

A group of 50 panels has also been loaned to the Protestant church in France (Eglise Protestante Unifiée de France) for two years, and they plan to develop their own French

language materials for the project, including for children, and to hold exhibitions and events around France.



Part of a wall of responses on postcards made by visitors to a Loving Earth exhibition. Over 2000 such postcards have been printed

The Quaker Arts Network intends to produce a Loving Earth art calendar for 2025, illustrated with photos of Loving Earth panels, and QAN continues to oversee the project and to take financial responsibility. Future developments will be reported via the QAN communications and annual reports, available at <https://quakerarts.net/>.

March 2024

Annexe 1 : Loving Earth Project Steering Group 2023

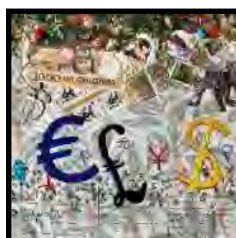
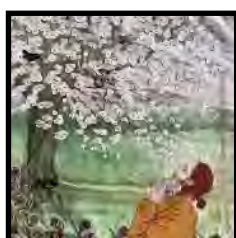
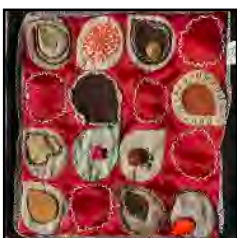
The following were members of the LEP Steering Group members during 2023:

Rici Marshall Cross (Clerk)
 Tracey Martin
 Linda Murgatroyd (QAN)
 Sue Tyldesley
 Matt Rosen

Annexe 2; Financial report 2023

Loving Earth Project income and expenditure 2023

Expenses	
Book design and ISBNs	£525
Advertising and leaflets	£135
LEP Exhibition costs	£962
Honoraria	£500
Postage & office expenses	£718
Total expenses 2023	£2,840
Income	£0
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	-£2,840
Funds	
Brought forward	£3,230
Income	£0
Expenditure	-£2,840
Carried forward	£390



Annexe 3: Loving Earth exhibitions during 2023

Bournemouth: Central Library, followed by other local libraries	January and February, with other exhibitions later in the year
Westminster Parliament - Portcullis House	February and March
Salford University	February and March
Richmond, Yorkshire: The Station	March and April
Ashburton Devon : Arts Centre, Quaker Meeting House	April
Sacramento, California : Sacramento Museum of Science and Curiosity, Atrium 916, Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento, Effie Yeaw Nature Center, St. Anthony Catholic Parish Church, Sacramento Earth Day 2023	April and May
Ludlow Methodist Church	April and May
Northumberland: Alnwick Playhouse	June and July
Devon and Somerset: Totnes, Quaker Meeting House, South Brent Sustainability Hub, RHS Rosemoor, Taunton, Minehead, Wincanton, Street, Sherborne Abbey, Ilminster	May to August
Gloucestershire: Nailsworth, Cheltenham	August
Sussex: Chichester. Bognor, Worthing.	June and July
Brussels: Maison Quaker	August to September
Normandy (76) , France : Bénouville, Etretat, Le Havre	May to September
Hertfordshire: Tring Library, St Peter and St Paul's church, Tring	September
London: Friends House , Applecourt Arts, St John's Church, Waterloo . Merton Libraries	September to December

