



Yearly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends  
(Quakers) in Britain

## **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Friday 5 and Saturday 6 September 2025, by video conference

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Catherine Brown (minute BYMT/25/09/06b onwards), Lis Burch, Kit Fotheringham, Ursula Fuller, Jo Hills, Chris Jardine, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King (Assistant Clerk), Liz Law (minute BYMT/25/09/11 onwards), Ruth McTighe (minute BYMT/25/09/01 to minute BYMT/25/09/09), Silas Price, Elizabeth Redfern, Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer) (minute BYMT/25/09/01 to minute BYMT/25/09/09, minute BYMT/25/09/11 onwards)

**Prevented:** John Lewis

**In attendance:** Sarah Donaldson, Senior Change Leader: Quaker Governance; Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk (minute BYMT/25/09/11 onwards); Vipin Narang, Finance Director (minute BYMT/25/09/01 to BYMT/25/09/09 and BYMT/25/09/11 onwards); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Lisa San Martín, CEO Quiet Company (minute BYMT/25/09/01 to BYMT/25/09/10); Ali-Haider Hussain, Finance Business Partner (minute BYMT/25/09/08)

**Visitors:** Georgina Bailey, former BYM Trustee (minute BYMT25/09/07a); Val Brittin, Trustee, Woodbrooke (minute BYMT25/09/10); Mandy Cooper, Chief Executive Officer, Woodbrooke (minute BYMT25/09/10); Elaine Green, Clerk of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (minute BYMT25/09/11); Nicola Parker, consultant (minute BYMT25/09/06c)

## **BYMT/25/09/01 Welcome and Introductions, Agenda Check, Conflicts of Interest Check**

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We considered our agenda.

During our opening worship, we heard read extracts from Minute 1 (Engaging Across Differences) from Emily Provance's *A Testimony of Community*:

*“Seek relationships with a diversity of people. We see God in our relationships with the community. This is one way God speaks. Diversity includes ideological diversity. If you know the truth and are correct, exposure to people with different ideas is no threat to you. You can hide from change by isolating yourself from all who are different. But if you are not open to change, you are sowing the seeds of war. To isolate yourself from others is to cut off your ability to learn from God.*

*We tend to be afraid of people who are different. Differences serve a useful purpose. Look kindly at your differences and love across all differences. To love each other is to love Christ. Appreciate differences among your friends and associates.*

*We are challenged by our different individual and group experiences of God and sometimes even enraged. It’s human nature to feel jealous and angry when God loves people who aren’t like us (and accepts and rewards them), but that’s God’s decision that we must accept. Even if it is extremely difficult, we must interact with people that our society says we shouldn’t. To refuse to engage with people you disagree with is to refuse to influence history. If you think an idea is wrong, criticize the idea and not the person who said it. You cannot truly love God without also loving your sisters and brothers.”*

## **BYMT/25/09/02 Continuing Business**

We receive a list of continuing minutes.

## **BYMT/25/09/03 Minutes Received**

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC), 3 June 2025
- Reparations Working Group (RWG), 5 June 2025
- Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC), 14 June 2025
- Friends Trusts Limited (FTL), 20 June 2025, separated minute
- Agenda Planning Committee (APC), 20-22 June 2025 and 10 July 2025
- Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations (QCCIR), 20-22 June 2025
- Internal Audit & Risk Committee (IARC), 24 June 2025
- Finance, IT, & Property Committee (FIPC)/IARC Joint Meeting, 14 July 2025
- FIPC, 14 July 2025
- Quiet Company Board (QCB), 15 July 2025
- Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee (YMAC), 25-27 July 2025, separated minute
- IARC, 21 August 2025, separated minute regarding Changes to investment management

## **BYMT/25/09/04 Dates of Future BYMT Meetings**

We considered the proposed meeting dates for 2026 and 2027 circulated with the papers (BYMT 2025 09 03).

We agree to meet as follows in 2026 and 2027, if nothing occur to prevent:

### **2026**

- Saturday 7 February 2026, online
- Saturday 30 May 2026, online
- Saturday 5 to Sunday 6 September 2026, residential
- Friday 27 November 2026, online

## **2027**

- Saturday 6 February 2027, online
- Saturday 5 to Sunday 6 June 2027, residentially
- Friday 10 (pm) to Saturday 11 (am) September 2027, online (Catherine Brown prevented)
- Friday 26 November, online

## **BYMT/25/09/05 Trustees Annual Report and Accounts 2024**

We receive the draft Trustees' annual report and financial statements for 2024 (paper BYMT 2025 09 04a), and the external auditor's management letter (paper BYMT 2025 09 04c). We also receive the minutes of the Finance, IT, & Property Committee/Internal Audit & Risk Committee (FIPC/IARC) Joint Meeting on 14 July 2025 (paper BYMT 2025 09 02i) and note the recommendations to us in minute FIPC IARC 25/03.

Our Treasurer has introduced this item. We have also heard from the Finance Director and Clerk of FIPC.

We note FIPC/IARC's recommendation that we use graphics to illustrate our current and future financial positions in our presentation of the accounts and ask staff to explore this next year. We also take note that our external auditor has drawn our attention to changes to the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for the year ending 2026 which we should consider as we prepare the 2025 accounts.

We are very pleased to note the continued improvement in the way the annual accounts are prepared and congratulate the Finance Team on sustaining this progress.

It is the trustees' responsibility to consider each year whether the charity is a going concern for the year ahead. We have taken account of the strength of our balance sheet and the expected cashflows to the end of 2026 and confirm that we consider the charity to be a going concern.

We approve the annual report and financial statements and authorise our Clerk and Treasurer to sign them on our behalf, following approval from Meeting for Sufferings.

We authorise our Treasurer to sign the Letter of Representation to the auditors.

We thank staff and others for their work in producing these documents.

The annual accounts and financial statements will be provided to Friends at Meeting for Sufferings, filed with the Charity Commission, and made available on our website.

## **BYMT/25/09/06 Financial Report**

### **a) Quarter 2 Finance Report**

We receive the Quarter 2 finance report (BYMT 2025 09 05a). At the end of June, we were slightly behind on budget, mainly due to lower income from legacies. Work is progressing towards improving our debtors position.

### **b) Preparations for 2026 Budget**

We note the update on preparing the 2026 Budget included in the Recording Clerk's report (BYMT 2025 09 07).

When considering deficit reduction, we need to be clear that we are not talking only about expenditure control or contraction but also stimulating increase in income generation. Further elements that will influence our budgeting in the coming years will be our approach to managing staff costs, decisions about the future of Drayton House, and capital budgets including sustainability implications. When we receive the draft budget for 2026 at our November meeting, we will also receive some projections of future budget trends until 2028, when we expect to have a balanced budget.

We note that the Programmes & Prioritisation Committee (PPC) will begin its work later this year. This will enable BYM to take a broad cross-programme view of resource allocation and ensure that we continue to deliver the work as discerned by the Religious Society.

### **c) Changes to Investment Governance**

We receive paper (BYMT 2025 09 05b) from our Treasurer, setting out the context for the process we initiated to review our investment governance, including retendering management of our portfolio, and summarising its findings. This work has been supported by a working group consisting of Elizabeth Redfern, Vipin Narang, Alastair Jackson (chair designate of Friends Trusts Limited, which has joined this exercise) and our Treasurer, with advice from external consultant Nicola Parker, who has joined us for part of this item to answer our questions.

We also note the minute we have received from the Internal Audit & Risk Committee (BYMT 2025 09 02m) responding to the investment governance review's recommendations.

The working group are recommending three groups of changes:

- A different approach by using funds rather than discretionary managers;
- A move to promoting a positive engagement attitude to investment rather than relying solely on negative screening;
- In order to have a policy that can be implemented with integrity we should adjust our policy to recognise the possibility of exposure at low levels to stocks that we may be uncomfortable with. In such cases we would want to be aware of their existence and work with the fund

managers to reduce any such exposure and apply pressure on the companies in question.

We have heard that in the retendering process we have now shortlisted five funds in the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) field which focus on positive change. Moving away from screened funds will mean that the working group will need to assess carefully whether each fund complies with our investment policy, and this will need to be monitored continuously if we invest with them, but the nature of their ESG priorities, seeking out sustainable and forward-thinking companies, means this is low risk. We recognise that it is not possible with integrity to lay claim to an absolutist position, in which we exclude investments in funds with any association with pornography, munitions and related products, and fossil fuel extraction, given today's extended supply chains and obscure company ownership structures. It is this which requires us to take a positive engagement approach in order to minimise exposure to these stocks while aiming to make a positive impact on the market.

We have considered the working group's proposal for how our Investment Policy Statement (IPS) might be redrafted to clarify our expectations. The new policy will have more emphasis on positive impact and less on screening. We have heard that there are further refinements to be made to the wording in the policy we received in paper BYMT 2025 09 05b. We ask staff, including those working in relevant programme areas, to work with BYM Trustees to produce these refinements and bring a final draft to our November meeting.

We have also considered the recommendation that, once the latest retendering process has finished and the new investment managers are appointed, we hold more regular meetings with them and engage an investment consultant to support us in holding them to account. We agree to this and ask our Finance, IT & Property Committee to establish a subcommittee for this purpose. Such a committee might invite staff members responsible for campaigning to attend where this would be beneficial. We ask staff to bring draft terms of reference to FIPC for consideration.

We note the points raised by Internal Audit & Risk Committee in BYMT 2025 09 04 about the need to retender our investment management at least every 5 years, to facilitate greater engagement with our investments from Trustees by providing updates and information that are easier to understand for non-specialists, and about the heavy workload weighing on FIPC which leaves limited capacity to monitor investments and oversee their management.

We ask staff to produce text to stand alongside the new IPS in order to convey our excitement about this new way forward for BYM's investments.

#### **d) Sale of land at Lakenheath**

We receive a report from John Dash, Property Management Advisor, (BYMT 2025 09 05c) outlining the circumstances which have prompted the proposed sale of a parcel of land at Docking Drove, Lakenheath, farmland which was left to Quakers in Britain while a sitting tenant was farming it. That tenant's sons are now farming it, though there is no tenancy agreement in place. The proposed sale arrangements involve agreeing a sum with the tenants to

facilitate vacant possession; a deed of surrender has been drafted and a payment of £58,500 to the tenants is suggested by way of consideration.

Having considered John Dash's paper, a report from local agent, Simon Pott, the associated legal advice, and the draft contract and deed of surrender documents included with BYMT 2025 09 05c, Trustees are satisfied that the proposed disposition of the Property at Docking Drove, Lakenheath, is on the best terms that could reasonably be obtained by the Charity, and agree to the sale.

## **e) Changes to CAF Signatories**

We receive a request to authorise a change of mandate for our CAF bank account (BYMT 2025 09 05d).

We authorise our Treasurer to sign a letter requesting the proposed changes as follows:

### Signatories to be added

The following individuals are to be added as signatories to both BYM accounts (Account numbers: [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]):

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Additionally, all new signatories are to be authorised for online banking setup

### Signatories to be Removed

The following individuals are to be removed as signatories and as the primary account contact:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

### New Primary Contact

The new primary contact for the accounts is to be:

- [REDACTED]

## **BYMT/25/09/07 Employment Committee**

### **a) Employment Committee annual report**

We welcomed Georgina Bailey, former BYM Trustee and former Clerk of Employment Committee (EC). We receive a report on the work of EC in 2024 (BYMT 2025 09 06a).

We note that anti-oppression work has become more of an embedded part in all work streams, as well as being its own item on EC's agenda. We are pleased to hear that safer recruitment procedures have received appropriate attention.

We thank Georgina for preparing the report and for her service as clerk to the committee in recent years.

## **b) Employment Committee terms of reference**

We receive a proposal to change the terms of reference of the Employment Committee (BYMT 2025 09 06b).

We accept the proposal and authorise the change.

### **BYMT/25/09/08 Operational Plan 2025 Mid-Year Report**

We welcomed Ali-Haider Hussain who spoke to the report. We note the progress towards fulfilling the Operational Plan for 2025 and are pleased to see the reduction in the number of projects that are delayed compared to previous years.

We thank Ali-Haider and the Operational Managers for producing the report.

### **BYMT/25/09/09 Recording Clerk's Report**

We have received the Recording Clerk's report from Management Meeting, covering June to September 2025.

We also receive the reporting dashboard dated September 2025 with indicators of key information on compliance, communications, and organisational health.

### **BYMT/25/09/10 Woodbrooke Discussion**

We welcomed Mandy Cooper, Chief Executive Officer, and Val Brittin, Trustee, from Woodbrooke. Mandy and Val gave an overview of the history, original intentions of the organisation, and developments since Woodbrooke ceded their building to the Bournville Village Trust in 2023. Mandy described the journey Woodbrooke has been on over the last two and a half years in streamlining costs, developing teaching and learning programmes, and broadening Woodbrooke's reach to Friends and enquirers across 45 countries. We were encouraged to hear that Woodbrooke is utilising their established reputation as a vital source for Quaker education to scale their offering while utilising new and developing technologies to increase access. We are pleased to hear of the return of *Equipping for Ministry* (a two-year learning journey for Friends who want to deepen their understanding of Quakerism), and since the announcement of the 2026 programme there have been over 400 expressions of interest in the course.

Woodbrooke has a new energy, shifting their focus from surviving to thriving. We look forward to redeveloping the relationship between Woodbrooke and BYM and will receive a proposal for a new Memorandum of Understanding between the organisations at our meeting in November.

### **BYMT/25/09/11 Theology of Trans Inclusion**

We welcomed Elaine Green, Clerk of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations.

In February 2024 (Minute BYMT/24/02/11) we asked Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations to consider preparing a document which sets out the

theological basis for our intention to “welcome and affirm trans and non-binary Friends” (minute 31 of Yearly Meeting 2021), to mirror the work that went into *We are but Witnesses* following Yearly Meeting’s recognition of same sex marriage in 2009. The committee has prepared a carefully crafted and thoughtful draft, which has benefited from consideration by Quaker Life Central Committee, and some consultation with a small number of Friends.

We receive the document with gratitude and are conscious of the challenges that had to be addressed in preparing it. We have considered some of the risks that might arise from publication and have proposed a small number of edits that will address these concerns. We have also considered some theological points that are beyond our remit as trustees and ask QCCIR whether they would be comfortable in endorsing an amendment to paragraph 10. We will abide by their discernment on this.

We ask staff to bring us some options for publication and any additional documents such as advice on lettings and the development of learning resources by Woodbrooke and/or QLCC that may be helpful to accompany the release of this paper.

We thank Elaine Green and QCCIR for their deep, careful, and compassionate work in preparing a document which we trust will help our Yearly Meeting to come closer to mutual understanding and the longed-for unity we have been seeking on this subject.

We send this minute to QCCIR and QLCC. We will return to this at our November meeting.

### **BYMT/25/09/12 Strategic Priorities**

Following our consideration of this topic at our June Meeting, and introduction of the process to Meeting for Sufferings in July, we receive the report of progress from Jo Hills, Chris Jardine, Paul Parker and Siobhán Haire.

We have offered our suggestions on the draft, noting that text concerning support for Quaker meetings may not be finalised until Quaker Life Central Committee’s work on their own strategy in this area is further advanced. We ask for a version including our comments to be circulated to QPSWCC and QLCC for their comments and agree to share this version as a working draft with Meeting for Sufferings in October.

We send this minute to Quaker Life Central Committee, Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee, and Meeting for Sufferings.

### **BYMT/25/09/13 Relationship with Yearly Meeting**

#### **a) Draft Yearly Meeting Governing Document**

We receive a revised draft of the Yearly Meeting Governing Document from Sarah Donaldson (paper BYMT 2025 09 11a).

We endorse the changes as laid out in the paper, and forward it, with the changes agreed today, for final approval by Yearly Meeting in session, and thank staff for their hard work on this.

Having agreed these changes in principle, we now ask staff to bring forward revisions to our terms of reference in line with this draft, so that the two documents can be presented to Yearly Meeting.

## **b) Meeting of Clerks**

Our Clerk and Assistant Clerk met with Ingrid Greenhow, Clerk of the Agenda Planning Committee for Yearly Meeting, on 30<sup>th</sup> July, to explore options for how Trustees will report to the new continuing Yearly Meeting at its more frequent sessions.

Trustees feel positive about the way forward as discussed in paper BYMT 2025 09 11b and hope that this will be an opportunity to engage more frequently with the Yearly Meeting, highlight the breadth and depth of the work of staff, and develop a stronger relationship with the Yearly Meeting. We look forward to reporting more often on the financial position of BYM, in addition to presenting the annual report and accounts.

We receive the other updates contained in their paper (BYMT 2025 09 11b) and look forward to receiving future Clerks' Updates.

## **BYMT/25/09/14 Appointments**

We receive the following nominations from our Nominations Group:

### **Buddy to support new trustee in their first year of service:**

- Liz Law to support Ruth McTighe

### **Programmes and Prioritisation Committee:**

- Lis Burch to serve from 7 September 2025 to 31 December 2027
- Ruth McTighe to serve from 7 September 2025 to 31 December 2026
  - We expect to appoint the remainder of the PPC at our November meeting, to begin work shortly after.

### **Quiet Company Board**

- Rosie Bekhradnia, Devon Area Meeting, to serve from 20 July 2025 to 31 December 2027
  - In minute BYMT/25/06/21, we agreed to appoint Rosie Bekhradnia (formerly Rosie Hakes) to the Quiet Company board, subject to her being accepted into membership. She was accepted into membership on 20 July 2025.

### **Drayton House Project Board**

- Jo Hills to serve for the lifetime of the project
- Kit Fotheringham to serve for the lifetime of the project

We agree to these appointments and thank Nominations Group for their hard work in bringing us these names.

## **BYMT/25/09/15 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings**

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings.

## **BYMT/25/09/16 Reviewing the meeting**

We have reviewed the meeting.

## **BYMT/25/09/17 Time with Recording Clerk**

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

## **BYMT/25/09/18 Time without staff**

We have spent time without staff.

## **BYMT/25/09/19 Clerks' offering**

Quaker Faith and Practice, 21.06 partly reads:

*“Through our discussions we recognised our anxieties and fears. We realised that we are individuals and that we are alone but, as part of a loving community, to be alone does not necessarily mean to be lonely. We discovered that it is acceptable to have confused feelings, to be different, to do things our own way. We should not feel guilty when we are wrong, and appreciate that there must be room for mistakes. There are people who want us to be exactly as we are.*

*Epistle of Junior Yearly Meeting, 1991”*

We closed our meeting with a period of worship. We have witnessed, through the ministry in our meeting and in our prayerful upholding of one another, that BYM Trustees continue to be a living, evolving, and loving community, with every aspect of our work being driven by the will of God as heard in deep worship.

We depart hoping to meet again on 7 November 2025, should nothing occur to prevent this.

Marisa Johnson  
Clerk

Kit King  
Assistant Clerk