



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

At a meeting of

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Held Tuesday 25 (evening), Wednesday 26 (evening), and 28 November (daytime) 2025, by video conference

Minutes

Present: Catherine Brown, Lis Burch (minutes BYMT/25/11/01 to BYMT/25/11/12b), Kit Fotheringham (minute BYMT/25/11/06 to BYMT/25/11/12b), Ursula Fuller (minutes BYMT/25/11/01 to BYMT/25/11/05, BYMT/25/11/08 onwards), Jo Hills (minutes BYMT/25/11/01 to BYMT/25/11/18), Chris Jardine, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King (Assistant Clerk), Liz Law, Silas Price (BYMT/25/11/01 to BYMT/25/11/05 and BYMT/25/11/08 onwards), Elizabeth Redfern, Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

Prevented: John Lewis, Ruth McTighe

In attendance: Sarah Donaldson, Senior Change Leader: Quaker Governance; Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk (minutes BYMT/25/11/01 to BYMT/25/11/07 and BYMT/11/13 to BYMT/11/18); Vipan Narang, Finance Director; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Lisa San Martín, CEO Quiet Company

BYMT/25/11/01 Welcome and Introductions, Agenda Check, Conflicts of Interest Check

During our opening worship, we heard read an extract from Quaker faith & practice 20:36:

I wish I might emphasise how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an over-burdened programme of good committees and good undertakings.

Acceptance of service on a weighty committee should really depend upon an answering imperative within us, not merely upon a rational calculation of the factors involved.

And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and co-ordinated life-programme of social responsibilities.

Thomas R Kelly, 1941

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We have considered our agenda.

We receive a list of continuing minutes.

BYMT/25/11/02 Minutes Received

We receive the following minutes:

Minutes received

- Kingston & Wandsworth Area Meeting July, Separated Minute
- Yearly Meeting Transition Project Board July Minutes
- BYMT Internal Audit & Risk Committee September minutes
- QLCC September Minutes
- QLCC Separated Minute re PPC Nominations
- QPSWCC September minutes
- QPSWCC Separated Minute re PPC Nominations
- Reparations Working Group September Minutes
- APC October Minutes
- Agenda Planning Committee October, Separated Minute
- Quiet Company Board October Minutes
- Yearly Meeting Transition Project Board October Minutes

We ask that the Recording Clerk to respond to the minute from Kingston & Wandsworth Area Meeting on our behalf.

BYMT/25/11/03 Items taken on draft minute

- a. We note that our Annual Return and Accounts for the Year Ending 31 December 2024 have been submitted to the Charity Commission.
- b. We have reviewed and note the Gold Minutes recorded during 2024.
- c. We have reviewed the Scheme of Delegation and approve the updates and changes made since the last review. The next review will be in 2027.

BYMT/25/11/04 BYMT Governing Document and Terms of Reference Revision

We receive an updated note, following our September meeting, recommending updates to the terms of reference (ToR) for BYM Trustees necessary to take account

of the laying down of Meeting for Sufferings. We note also proposed changes to the BYM Governing Document in light of legal advice received on the draft agreed at our September meeting (minute BYMT/25/09/03).

We support these recommendations and ask staff to prepare the revised documents to be laid before Yearly Meeting in session in May 2026.

We send this minute to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, with the accompanying papers.

BYMT/25/11/05 Clerk's Report

We receive our Clerks' report.

BYMT/25/11/06 Recording Clerk's report & performance dashboard

We receive the Recording Clerk's report and performance dashboard, which covered a vast range of work areas across BYM and the Quiet Company.

We heard that there is a high level of concern in civil society about its ability to be effective due to external pressures. We are pleased to hear of the publication by the government of the Civil Society Covenant, along with a joint board to oversee its implementation. We are saddened to hear of the withdrawal of the Sheila McKechnie Foundation and Bond from this area of work within the sector. We welcome the news that staff are exploring opportunities for funding to enable BYM to pick up some of the work that Bond was doing on campaigning, policy influence, and right to protest.

We welcome information about the support that Area Meetings that are considering their future are receiving from staff.

We thank the staff who have contributed to the report and answered our questions.

BYMT/25/11/07 Memorandum of understanding with Woodbrooke

We receive a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between BYM and Woodbrooke prepared for us by staff of both organisations. We note that the document will be supplemented by several appendices relating to individual projects in due course and ask staff to complete these.

Woodbrooke trustees approved the MoU at their meeting on 22nd November 2025.

We approve the proposed MoU, as amended to clarify the point on secondments, and look forward to receiving annual reports covering all aspects of this partnership from next year.

BYMT/25/11/08 Opening worship

We reopened the second part of our meeting with a period of worship. We heard in ministry a call to stay centred in our work and answer what Love requires of us.

BYMT/25/11/09 Finance, IT & Property reports

a. 2025 Quarter 3 report

We receive the finance reports for Q3 2025. Vipan Narang, Finance Director, spoke to the report.

Income is better than budgeted and includes a legacy of £1.5M. The Quiet Company's contribution is below budget, but significantly higher than in the same period last year. The increase in staff costs is due to the increase in employers' contributions to National Insurance and the use of agency staff to provide additional capacity at times. Progress is being made on recovery of old outstanding debts owed to BYM.

We thank staff for the careful preparation of this report.

b. Minutes of Finance, IT & Property Committee

We receive the minutes from the FIPC meeting which took place on 10 November 2025, noting that the committee recommends the proposed budget for 2026 which is before Trustees at this meeting.

Catherine Brown, clerk of FIPC, spoke to the paper and drew our attention to the IT strategy, and the issues of cloud-first infrastructure and cyber security that are being further looked into. In future there will be more work done to improve the evaluation of grants made to other bodies.

We are impressed that the return on investment of resources in fundraising stands at £9 received for every £1 spent on fundraising, even with the allocation of overheads in the calculations. This is significantly higher than the sector standard and due to the generous donations given by Friends in response to being made aware of the need to support the work.

We are pleased to hear that a business continuity plan is in place to mitigate against a number of risks.

We thank the committee for their work.

BYMT/25/11/10 Budget 2026

We receive the proposed budget for 2026 and thank staff for their work in preparing it. We note Finance, IT & Property Committee minute FIPC/25/54(c) which recommends acceptance.

We note that the budget shows an unrestricted deficit of £1.02m (2025 forecast £1.04m), with a total deficit (restricted and unrestricted funds) of £2.75m (2025 forecast £1.46m). The proposed capital budget totals £1.8m and will be subject to further scrutiny by Finance, IT & Property Committee as funds are required to be released.

This budget is part of the process to achieve a balanced budget by the end of 2028. For 2027, further reductions in expenditure have been identified.

We approve the budget.

BYMT/25/11/11 Operational Plan 2026-2028

We receive the proposed Operational Plan for 2026-2028 and thank staff for the work that has gone into it.

We note that the Operational Plan is more closely aligned with the risk register and the budget, making the planning process more efficient and holistic.

We approve the plan.

BYMT/25/11/12 Changes to investment governance

a. Revised Investment Policy Statement (IPS)

In Minute BYMT/25/09/06(c) we approved a revised IPS and asked for some changes to be made. We have now received a report BYMT 2025 11 11a and our Treasurer has spoken to it.

We note that the wording has been changed to make it easier to understand.

We agree the policy, subject to the following amendment. We wish to expand the sentence excluding companies which profit from the illegal occupation of Palestine to include all companies which profit from conflicts and situations in breach of international law. This would include profits from the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the Russian occupation of parts of Ukraine, and similar situations in other parts of the world.

We have already recognised that in our complex world we cannot truthfully guarantee that our investments have zero exposure to the areas which give us concern.

This exclusion would therefore be added to the list of companies which derive no more than 5% of their annual revenue from the excluded activities and in which we do not knowingly invest.

We thank the working group for developing this document and adopt the new statement.

b. Appointment of Investment Managers (Equities)

FIPC by its Minute FIPC 25/27 recommends that we approve the appointment of Royal London Global Sustainable Equity Fund as managers of our equity investments.

We appreciate that there will be risks as well as benefits by moving away from the discretionary management which we have been used to, but in the light of our

experience we consider that this is the right decision. We note that it will be carefully explained to Friends. We agree to this recommendation.

c. Terms of Reference of the Investment Committee

We have considered these Terms of Reference (Paper BYMT 2025 11 11b) and approve them. We ask the Recording Clerk to appoint a member of staff as secretary to the committee.

We note that FIPC has agreed to the appointment of Nicola Parker as our investment consultant for 2026.

d. Appointment of Investment Managers (Fixed Interest)

We note that the Investment Committee will be meeting on Friday 5 December to consider tenders to manage our fixed income investments. We agree to deal with their recommendation by the between-meetings process.

BYMT/25/11/13 Worship

We reopened our meeting with a period of worship. We heed the call to prayer which we hear in different ways in our lives and ask ourselves what this call requires us to do.

BYMT/25/11/14 Risk management – biannual review

We receive a report summarising our risk picture following the latest, 6-monthly review of our risk register. We find the presentation of the risk register and review paper to be useful and accessible and thank staff for their hard work on this.

We agree that we should continue to look at the balance between strategic and operational risks in the way we record the risks in order to ensure that we can focus clearly on those risks which most need attention at trustee level.

We note that further work is scheduled with Management Meeting and Operational Managers to moderate scores and granularity, but we welcome the progress made in engaging with risk in our planning and budgeting.

We ask staff to bring a small number of strategic risk areas to a future BYMT meeting for an in-depth look.

BYMT/25/11/15 Strategic Priorities

We receive a paper reporting on the work to update our strategic priorities for the coming five-year period. This draft takes into account comments and questions raised by Meeting for Sufferings at their meeting in October.

We agree to forward this draft to Quaker Life Central Committee and Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee for their review, hoping to receive feedback from them by our February meeting.

BYMT/25/11/16 Communications & Fundraising Report

We receive a report from David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising, summarising the work to deliver against our Communications Strategy in the past year.

We are pleased to hear about the high level of achievement of the Communications and Fundraising team and thank staff for their work.

BYMT/25/11/17 Theology of Trans Inclusion

Following our discussion in September, we gladly receive a minute (QCCIR/25/11/17) from Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations and a revised paper on the Theology of Trans Inclusion, together with the communications plan requested from staff.

We note that this paper will be before Meeting for Sufferings on 6 December and await their discernment as to the next steps.

We thank the committee for their hard work in preparing these documents, and we thank staff for the communications plan.

BYMT/25/11/18 Reparations Working Group

We receive the latest annual report from the Reparations Working Group. The Group has been working tirelessly over the last year on this multi-faceted work. We are pleased to hear that work continues nationally and regionally around the Yearly Meeting, as well as with other churches and Quaker meetings in the UK, the Americas, and Africa.

We agree to extend the period of work for the Working Group to the end of 2027.

Whilst we await firm proposals from the group as to our approach to making reparation, we agree to offer the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Pan-Afrikan Reparations use of Friends House for their annual conference once each year until at least 2033 (the bicentenary of abolition in the UK) in addition to those held at Friends House in the last three years. This would be a gift in kind with an equivalent financial value of around £250,000 over this period and will mean that the APPG will not have to reapply each year. We are conscious of the privilege that enables us to make such an offer, and the continuing impact of colonial influences on philanthropic giving, which we are keen to move away from.

BYMT/25/11/19 Health, Safety & Environmental Committee Annual Report

We receive the Health, Safety, and Environmental Committee annual report for 2025.

We have heard that the Estates & Facilities team have been making progress on improving compliance at Friends House, the Yorkshire Centre, and Swarthmoor Hall.

A Health and Safety Strategy is also in development for presentation to FIPC and to the QC Board with a view to having it ready for implementation during 2026.

We are pleased to hear about the work being done to strengthen our approach to contractor safety and compliance and the introduction of quarterly Fire Warden sessions, and to know that a thorough review of our risk assessments has been undertaken.

We were saddened to hear of the RIDDOR-reportable incident that occurred at Swarthmoor Hall earlier in the year, when one of our volunteers experienced a medical emergency on site, and died shortly after. We are reassured that the Health Service Executive (HSE) did not deem any action necessary, and that staff have taken time since the incident to reflect on the lessons learned and put together a formal Fatal Incident Response and Reporting (Including RIDDOR Reporting to HSE) procedure.

We are heartened to hear of a new Net Carbon Reduction plan, and a new scheme for reporting carbon emissions quarterly to include, from this year, food, drink, paper usage, and travel.

We are glad to hear of work being done to improve the culture around first-aid, as something vital to not only the peer-to-peer protection of staff and ensuring the safety of visitors to our buildings, but it allows us to be prepared should an incident occur in our day-to-day lives.

We thank the committee for their report.

BYMT/25/11/20 Nominations

We receive the following nominations from our Nominations Group:

Internal Audit and Risk Committee (IARC)

- Tina Leonard (Oxford & Swindon AM), renominated to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

Employment Committee

- Tony Clodd, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028 as representative of the Quiet Company Board
- Chris Jardine, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028
- We receive a request for release with immediate effect from John Lewis

Finance, IT, and Property Committee (FIPC)

- Catherine Brown, renominated to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027
- Steve Pullan, renominated to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027
- Jo Hills, renominated to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

Clerk of Finance, IT, and Property Committee

- We agree to appoint a Co-Clerk of FIPC and ask staff to amend the Terms of Reference accordingly.
- Catherine Brown, renominated to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026
- Jo Hills, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027

Programmes and Prioritisation Committee

- Klaus Huber (Quaker Life CC), to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2027
- Jonathan Lingham (QPSW CC), to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2026
- Adam Drury (QPSW CC), to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2027
- Paul Whitehouse, to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 dec 2028

Quiet Company Board of Directors

- Lis Burch, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027
- Lucy Parker (Norfolk & Waveney AM), to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

BYMT Elders

- Catherine Brown, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026
- Elizabeth Redfern, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026

Anti-Oppression Champion

- Liz Law, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2027

Investment Committee

- Elizabeth Redfern, to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2028
- Paul Whitehouse (YM Treasurer), to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2028
- Alastair Jackson (Chair of Friends Trusts Limited), to serve from 29 November 2025 to 31 December 2028
- Two further names to follow to be appointed between meetings if necessary

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

BYMT/25/11/21 Appointments to Nominations Group

We receive the following nomination from our Clerk and Assistant Clerk, who are asked to find names to serve on our Nominations Group

Nominations group

- Ruth McTighe, to serve from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

We agree to this appointment and thank our Clerks for their work in bringing us this name.

BYMT/25/11/22 Meeting for Sufferings Preparation

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings.

In our preparations, we noted that Meeting for Sufferings in December has on its agenda an application from a group called Sex Matters to Quakers to receive Quaker Recognised Body status. In our view accepting this application would be understood to be an endorsement of their beliefs which are not inclusive nor welcoming of transgender and non-binary people, and thus incompatible with our ability to fully carry out our functions and duties as Trustees in relation to inclusion.

The matter is coming to Meeting for Sufferings for discernment. Trustees are members of MfS and regularly consider the business coming for decision in light of our role in the structure. As the body responsible for ensuring that staff fulfil the will of the Yearly Meeting through the centrally managed work, for safeguarding against reputational risks to the organisation, agreeing policies as to the use of our facilities, and for employment, Trustees have the following concerns about this application:

- **Realising Yearly Meeting commitments**

- As trustees we have the responsibility to deliver on Yearly Meeting's commitments in every aspect of the work that comes under our governance.
- Sustaining our national church is one of our charitable purposes, but this only works if we act on the decisions taken at national level. The principles and practices of Sex Matters to Quakers are in contradiction to the will of the Yearly Meeting expressed in minute 31/2021, and other pronouncements of the Yearly Meeting in session.

- **Organisational reputational risk**

- Our inclusive policies, which enjoy the overwhelming support of Friends who gave feedback after Yearly Meeting 2025, have been complained about by this group, alleging that the Religious Society of Friends "has been infiltrated by trans activists" and being trans inclusive "would damage the reputation of Quakers and could be the thing that finally destroys them." Our public support for trans inclusion has led to a number of religious and civil society groups citing us as an example of steadfast solidarity at a time that many feel constrained in their ability to be open about their desire to be trans inclusive. Granting Quaker Recognised Body status to this group would undermine the leadership role that Quakers enjoy on inclusion, and indeed the work we are doing to make the Religious Society and society as a whole a safe place for trans and non-binary people. Promoting Quakerism and putting faith into action are two more of our four charitable purposes, and we believe our ability to do effective outreach with young people

especially would be affected. Many Quakers are working locally to be more trans-inclusive, and the recognition of this body sends a message that is likely to undermine that.

- **Employment**

- We have committed to being a trans-inclusive employer (a commitment that was criticised by people involved in Sex Matters to Quakers). We have had in the past, have currently, and are likely to have in future employees undergoing social and/or medical transition. The people we employ may have close family or Friends who are transgender, non-binary or intersex. We have a duty of care towards them, and towards communications staff who have to moderate social media spaces where transphobic discourse is posted. Granting Quaker Recognised Body status to this group will give it a legitimacy which would be deeply troubling to a considerable number of our employees and could cause confusion in others who may feel entitled to disregard our inclusive policies.

Within the text of the application the group describes itself as condemning hostility, exclusion, and harassment, as well as upholding equality and integrity. As a body this is not our experience. This group's public social media presence does not align with its self-description and Trustees, as a body and as individuals, have experienced very hostile interactions with group members.

We send this minute to Meeting for Sufferings and ask that our concerns be considered.

BYMT/25/11/23 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT/25/11/24 Time with the Recording Clerk

We have spent time with the Recording Clerk.

We have heard a proposal for a process to review Management Meeting.

BYMT/25/11/25 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

BYMT/25/11/26 Clerks' offering

Due to the nature of our lives outside of our service as Trustees being busy, we had to split our meeting over two evenings and a morning. Despite the challenges that come with this, the strength of our community enables us to work in alternative ways and the prayerful upholding of one another was felt by all of us, wherever in the world we joined the meeting from.

In the spring of 1683, the Elders and faithful Brethren of Philadelphia wrote the following to Friends in Britain:

*Oh, remember us, for we cannot forget you:
Many waters cannot quench our love,
Nor distance wear out the deep remembrance
of you in the heavenly Truth:
We pray God preserve you in faithfulness,
That, discharging your places and stewardships,
You may be honoured and crowned
with the reward of them that endure to the end.
And though the Lord has been pleased
to remove us far away from you,
as to the other end of the earth,
Yet we are present with you,
Your exercises are ours;
Our hearts are dissolved
in the remembrance of you,
Dear brethren and sisters in this heavenly love.
And the Lord of heaven and earth
who is the father of our family,
Keep us in His love and power,
and unite, comfort and build us all,
More and more,
To His eternal praise, and our rejoicing*

Marisa Johnson
Clerk

Kit King
Assistant Clerk