



Agenda for a meeting of the Council of the Friends of Friendless Churches
**1pm on 10 March 2026 in the
Basement, 70 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EJ**

Item	Declarations	Lead
	Apologies for absence	RE
	Declarations of interest	All
1.	Minutes of meeting 02 12 2025	RE
2.	Matters Arising	All
3.	Team reports	Various
4.	Governance	SE & RM
5.	Finance	PS, AE, RM
6.	Staffing	RM & SSC
7.	Staff Handbook	RM
8.	Health & Safety	RM
9.	Tour d'Horizon	RM
10.	Dates of 2026 meetings	RE
11.	Any other business	All

1. Minutes

See Appendix A for minutes of our meeting on 02 12 2025.

Please send any comments on content or accuracy to the Chairman or Director in advance of the meeting.

2. Matters Arising

2a. New vestings

The transfer of Cote Baptist Chapel completed on 23 01 2026. Please can this be minuted.

2b. St Tyfi's, Llandyfeisant, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire

RM had successful meeting with the Wildlife Trust of South West Wales (WTSWW) who currently own surrounding woodland and manage the churchyard. A plan to manage trees was agreed, and many have already been felled.

The Church in Wales are organising an easement over WTSWW land.

In early March, RM completed the second phase grant application to Cadw, under their Listed Buildings Regeneration Grant Scheme. We do not know when the outcome will be published.

RM is giving a talk about the FoFC, and our repairs to St Tyfi's, to Llandeilo Civic Society on 05 05 2026.

2c. Other potential vestings in Wales

Recently, we reviewed a long list of churches from the Church in Wales, and five were shortlisted for further investigation. I have not made any progress on these yet.

2d. Summer Gathering and AGM

Considerable time was given to the discussion about future AGM arrangements, particularly around timing of the annual accounts, staff capacity, printing costs, and more. At this meeting, it was agreed that the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer (PS and JE) would aim to have accounts completed by July, with ample time for Trustees to review and corrections to be made.

It was agreed that in 2026, the AGM should be held in late September or early October. It could be held in person in The Gallery space at Cowcross Street. This way, we would have sufficient facilities, including AV and WC, and be able to live-stream the AGM for members who cannot travel to London. As per the minutes, venue availability was researched, and The Gallery is free on Thursday 8th October. **Does this date suit Trustees?**

A summer gathering will be held on 16th July. As per the December discussion, this will be on a weekday at one of our churches. It will have a morning of meeting the conservation team at a church, a chance to hear from staff and catch up with members. As per our usual format, there will be an Evensong/Evening Prayer at 2pm.

The location for the members' day is still be decided.

Please can I have minuted agreement that Trustees are happy with this change in format?

2e. St Peter's, Llancillo, Herefordshire

The Chairman will provide a brief oral update.

2f. St Mary's, Sturmer, Essex

The Chairman will provide a brief oral update on access.

3. Team reports

3a. Membership

For report see Appendix B.

Plus an oral update on the 70th anniversary.

3b. Maintenance and Minor Repairs

For report see Appendix B.

David Farrington will be joining us online to present his report.

3c. Communications

For report see Appendix B.

Pamela Welsh and Daniel Wilson will be joining us online to present their reports.

3d. Projects on site

For report see Appendix B.

3e. Staffing Committee

Oral update from the Chair of the Committee.

3f. Investment Committee

Oral update from the Chair of the Committee.

4. Governance

4.1 Forecasting

I am extremely grateful to Simon Evans for his time and effort on devising a cashflow model. This model was circulated to the Governance Review committee, as well as RE, PS and JE. The model in Appendix C uses predicted figures for 2026-27 and 2027-28.

A preamble from Simon:

The Governance Review paper considered at the December 2025 trustee meeting mainly focused on non-financial matters. The short section in the paper on the relevant part of the 2025 Charity Governance Code on "Managing resources and risk (Principle 6)" commented that our trustees did not have sufficient information on financial matters, and this was a serious weakness in our governance. This, in turn, hampered the trustees' ability to make reliable decisions on the "batting order" for new vestings and ability to pay for major repair projects. The lack of information is particularly acute because our fixed costs have risen sharply in the last three years, and our sources of income have become less predictable.

Against this background, and as suggested at the trustee meeting, I have worked on a basic version of a forecasting model, on which Rachel has provided input. I am not an accountant (like most trustees), and I would emphasise the following before explaining how the model works:

- (a) this is designed to identify - based on particular assumptions which will change over time - what funds we have to spend on Projects (that is, major expenditure on our existing estate and new vestings - not routine R&M);
- (b) as such, it is not a substitute for conventional financial information and the budgeting process; and
- (c) the purpose of the model is to improve forecasting. It therefore works in very round numbers, which is appropriate given the unpredictability of many items in the model. And it simplifies - eg it doesn't distinguish between England and Wales - but the person operating it knows the relevant rules.

Operation of the model

In outline, the model works as described below, looking at 2026/27 and 2027/28. In principle, the model could cover more distant years, but these years seem right for now. At this stage, some numbers are "imaginary" and are designed to explain the model.

1. Item A. This is our routine, fairly predictable income - just looking at main categories. This is largely "unrestricted" in the sense that we can decide how it is spent. even though (for instance) the Cadw and CiW money needs to be spent in Wales. Rachel has included here half the remaining Tanner Trust money in 2026/27 and a quarter of that money in 2027/28.

2. Item B. This is where we introduce the unpredictable nature of "non-routine income". See Low Case, Middle Case, High Case. The categories are self-explanatory - and include the unrestricted element of Broyd's donation (as opposed to e.g. Llandyfeisant).

3. Item D. Routine expenditure is effectively the cost of running the charity, plus routine R&M. These would only be cut in extremis, but it is obviously helpful for the forecast to confirm that these costs are covered by routine income (Item A). On these figures, you will see that only the use of the Tanner Trust/General Deposit money has enabled this to be achieved on the illustrative data for both years.

4. Item E. This is the surplus after Item D - representing what can be spent on Projects, according to Low Case, Middle Case, High Case. This is the most important row.

5. Projects for Year is effectively Rachel's list of churches in their chosen batting order. This does not distinguish between our existing estate and new vestings. For each church there is a gross cost, then a deduction for anticipated/ potential grants/ gifts that would be dedicated to that church project (including amounts we could move from "restricted funds" if permitted for that

project) - then a net amount of expense. Obviously, a better financial position (High Case etc) enables particular churches to be completed sooner, and to move lower down the list. For 2026/27, Low Case only covers the cost of Churches A and B, whilst Church C could also be done under Middle Case and High Case.

6. Any surplus is carried forward to the next period. However, as it is “unspent” Project money the surplus is brought in as an additional row in Item E for 2027/28 - rather than higher up, where Items A to D address the above matters for that year. Here, Church C is repeated (as it was not done under Low Case in the previous year), with Churches X and Y being the “new” churches for the year.

The point to emphasise is that the model permits Rachel to re-forecast e.g. every six months if (as is certain to happen) a change is needed. There are numerous examples where this might arise - e.g. a big unrestricted gift or legacy (on the income side), or (on the expenditure side) the vesting of a super-priority church which demotes the remainder of the batting order. Or adjustments to the gross cost for works on particular churches (e.g. if building costs increase), or to the net cost if a dedicated grant or gift is received. Some of the batting order may be influenced by gifts - e.g. if we decided to do work on Gwernesney, it would appear by magic at zero cost because we are about to get a £600k legacy which would not otherwise appear anywhere in the model (if it is money dedicated to a church we weren't planning to work on).

There would need to be a simple “before” and “after” explanation for changes to the forecast.

4.2 Honorary roles

A paper will be circulated on behalf of Simon Evans in advance of Tuesday's meeting.

5. Finance

5.1 Financial statements

These will be circulated by Peter Scott in advance of the meeting.

5.2 Xero

Oral update on progress from AE.

5.3 Budget 2026-27

Please find a draft budget for discussion in Appendix D. Please note, this budget does not include any income for legacies (as timing is too unpredictable) or grants where we do not yet know the outcome of our application.

5.4 VAT and beyond

As you are not doubt aware, the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme has now closed. In the year to date, we were unable to reclaim £281,443.21 in VAT.

A new scheme, the Listed Places of Worship Renewal Fund will be launched in the coming months and administered by Historic England. There is conflicting information from Historic England as to whether our churches will be eligible. The fund will target areas of most need – not in terms of building condition, but deprivation levels. As confirmed by Ian Morrison, heritage at risk will not be a criteria.

There is no sign of a similar fund for England, but Cadw say some decisions might be made post May elections.

6. Staffing

I expect the items in this section to be informed by items in section 8. Finance.

6.1 Renumeration

As we begin a new financial year, please can Trustees discuss pay increases in line with inflation.

6.2 Estate Officer

In January, David Farrington requested to reduce to four days a week. The Staffing Committee discussed and agreed this. From 01 April 2026, David will work 4 days a week.

Consideration has been given to whether we ought to/can afford to hire a part-time (3 days a week) Estate Officer who would support the maintenance of and minor repairs to our estate. For instance, David could cover buildings across the north of England and Wales, and the new Estate Officer could cover southern areas. Discussion was also given to whether David would have capacity to help with more major projects.

6.3 Volunteer & Community Officer

In early January we advertised the volunteer support officer role. We received in excess of 290 applications. AE and RM created a long list. We are grateful to CC for reviewing the long list applications. Phone calls were made to ten applicants, with a view of making a shortlist of four people to interview in person.

Just three candidates were deemed wholly suitable (experience, geography, understanding of the role, etc). Interview were held on 26 February, and our thanks to SE for supporting this process.

An offer of full-time employment was made to Sally Porter. Sally is currently Head of Operations at Sandringham Estate, but previously led the volunteer programme at Ely Cathedral and the Churches Conservation Trust.

Sally has asked if the salary could be increased slightly from the advertised £35,000 to £38-39,000 to be closer to her current salary. This is under review by the Staffing Committee.

7. Staff handbook

Our staff handbook, which was developed by RM in consultation with our HR consultants can be found in Appendix E. Please can Trustees review this. In particular, I need guidance on how to deal with Display Screen Equipment on pg. 15.

If possible, I would like to have this piece of work signed off so it can be shared with staff.

8. Health and Safety policy

Our Health & Safety Policy has been developed by RM in consultation with our H&S consultant and can be found in Appendix F. There is a legal requirement on the organisation to have a written H&S policy when employing five staff or more.

Please can Trustees review this. If possible, I would like to have this piece of work signed off so it can be shared with staff.

We still have several hours of this consultant's time which we can allocate towards specific problems – or indeed, revising this policy, if that is Trustees' recommendation.

In addition to this policy, AE would like to raise a suggestion from her recent First Aid training, about purchasing a portable defibrillator for FoFC events. AE thinks that, given the increased number of events we hope to organise in the future, this would be a reasonable investment to make, given the remote nature of most of our churches.

A machine, like the one from the St John's Ambulance, costs about £800 and is expected to last 5 years. It doesn't require an electricity outlet and weighs 1.5kg - so we could easily carry it around as and when needed.

Legally speaking, we are not obliged to have one, but it is strongly recommended as it increases the CPR success rate from 5 to 50%.

9. Tour d'Horizon

Please note, I am not proposing that we take action on any of these buildings. I am simply presenting here for your attention. If Trustees wish to acquire more buildings beyond the six we will acquire in 2026-27, then significant consideration needs to be given to how this can be achieved.

9.1 St Helen's, Biscathorpe, Lincolnshire

This is an old case for the FoFC, so please do refer back to previous papers if additional information is required. In December, the architect's report was presented to Trustees. This report estimated that repairs would cost c. £209,720 plus VAT, plus professional fees.

RM doubted this, and as an action from that meeting, liaised with a QS who does pro bono work for us. He was unable to visit the church but he did read the architect's report and called her on the phone to discuss.

A revised estimate of £696,076 has been presented. This includes professional fees and the full VAT bill.

9.2 St Swithun's, Old Weston, Cambridgeshire

This was brought to Trustees in December and RM visited in February. The structural movement is severe and in multiple locations – through wall heads, window frames, and various abutments of the porch to nave, nave to tower, and nave to aisle. This, coupled with the bat colony and the limited interest to the interior, gives this church scanty appeal for FoFC (at present).

Images can be seen in Appendix G.

9.3 St Peter's, Treborough, Exmoor, Devon

A Grade II* listed church with origins in the early 14th century, later expanded in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Its architectural distinction lies foremost in its construction from rare Treborough slate (morte slate). The tower and porch are all in one; there are cinquefoil-headed medieval windows; and from, what I could glean from the rain and fog, an attractive Arts & Crafts weathervane on the tower. In the porch are a flight of stone steps that lead to a missing bell ringing chamber. The tower at bell level has not been accessed for many, many years. The interior is narrow, with two banks of C17-C18 benches, a fairly average Perpendicular font, a functioning medieval piscina, and a big (C19?) stone altar painted black and white with a large 'Templar' cross. A wooden carving, by Rachel Reckett (1965), of a figure at prayer has been removed to another local church.

This church is in poor condition. The pebble dash render is cracked, detached and lost from several areas of the building, exposing its slate rubble core. This would need to be removed completely. The roof is damaged in many areas, in particular the tower, which needs urgent attention. No inspection of the roof timbers has been made in 10 years or more.

The Diocese, who are extremely proactive, held a meeting between the vicar, the Exmoor National Park Conservation Officer, the FoFC and the Church Commissioners. The church PCC voted to close the church last November, currently, the Exmoor Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group are deciding whether to recommend that the church should be closed for regular public worship.

The Park Conservation Officer helpful said that they would never give consent to convert the church to a house. Its public value in the moor is too great.

Images can be seen in Appendix G.

9.4 St Michael and All Angel's, Greinton, Somerset

An informal approach from the Diocese about a Grade I church that has been teetering on the edge of closure for some time.

The church has 12th-century origins, and was developed through the 13th–15th centuries. It has a two-stage embattled west tower, Decorated and Perpendicular windows, and a C15/C16 wagon roof in the nave. 19th-century restorations added stained glass, a north porch, and converted the former south porch to a vestry. The 15th-century tower containing a ring of six bells—two medieval and several dated 1586–1899.

9.5 St Martin's, Yapham, East Yorkshire

The Church Commissioners raised this on our biannual call.

A Grade II* listed rural church with 13th-century origins, retaining C12–C14 fabric and evidence of multiple later rebuilds in stone, ashlar, and brick. It is a nave and chancel in one, with a timber bellcote, south porch, and a mix of rubble stone and brick. Internally, there is a Norman font, Victorian tiles, C18 pew elements and a C14 bell.

Its condition is very poor. The building suffers severe structural movement due to unstable clay soils, with major cracking, a buckled propping system, and subsidence at multiple corners. The east window (1911, Shrigley and Hunt) has been removed for safety, and the church was placed on the Heritage at Risk Register in 2024. It is registered as Priority A, indicating immediate risk of further rapid deterioration.

The SAC have highlighted that it's not a candidate for direct vesting, but merits preservation; either by conversion to a suitable new use, or care by a local trust/vesting in the last resort. According to the Commissioners, 'given its condition and the fact that there is a village hall right next door, I'm not sure what the future would hold for this building.'

Because of the condition, the church has not been used for many years. Formal closure started earlier this year.

[BBC News article here.](#)

9.6 St Chad's, Harpswell, Lincoln

The Church Commissioners raised this on our biannual call.

A Grade I listed medieval church of 11th–14th-century origin, retaining substantial historic fabric including a stone Saxon tower, Early English and Decorated windows, and a medieval three-cell plan with nave, chancel, west tower, and south aisle. Its interior contains a Transitional barrel-shaped font, 13th–14th-century effigies, 15th-century bells, medieval pew ends, and notable fragments of late-13th/early-14th-century stained glass.

The 2017 Quinquennial Inspection reports urgent structural concerns relating to the belfry beams and tower walling, with additional issues including cracked tower masonry,

damp-affected walls, and roof tile damage. Access to the bell tower is unsafe, and ongoing monitoring is required. Despite these issues, the church is not on the Heritage at Risk Register.

The church is progressing to closure and the Commissioners have appointed an estate agent to develop sales particulars.

9.7 St Wilfrid's, Melling, Lancashire

The Church Commissioners raised this on our biannual call, but had not specific information to share with us.

A Grade I listed church of major architectural and historical significance, with fabric originating c.1300 or earlier and the majority of the existing structure dating from the late 15th century. Its construction in sandstone rubble with stone-slate roofing, a west tower with diagonal buttresses and embattled parapet, and a nave, chancel, aisles, porch, and south chapel. A south aisle window contains medieval stained glass. There are fragments of Norman chevron masonry. Successive restorations in the 18th and 19th centuries produced new furnishings. A major restoration was undertaken in 1891 by Paley, Austin & Paley.

I do not have any information on condition.

9.8 St Andrew's, Crosby Garrett, Cumbria

The Church Commissioners raised this following our biannual call, but did not have any specific information to share with us

St Andrew's is a Grade I listed church with origins in the 11th century and substantial surviving Norman and early medieval fabric. Its most significant architectural features include a three-bay Norman arcade (c.1175), a pre-Conquest Saxon arch, a 14th-century rebuilt chancel, a 1662 south porch, and a Romanesque-style north aisle rebuilt in 1866. The west tower, dating from the 13th century, was rebuilt in 1874, and the church contains numerous early features such as a 13th-century piscina, medieval aumbry, and 13th–14th-century bells.

The church is in the same benefice as the famous Kirkby Stephens church.

9.9 St Basil's, Toller Fratrum, Dorset

The Chairman was contacted by a member of the parish who is concerned about the future of the church, as per email exchanges.

In Wales, in addition to the churches we agreed to commission reports on, we have also been notified of:

9.10 St Michael's, Cilycwm, Carmarthenshire

A Grade I listed church dating mainly from the 14th and 15th centuries, notable for its double-nave plan, fine 15th-century wagon roof, and its rare early-modern wall paintings from 1724 and 1795, considered the building's most important feature. The structure includes a late-medieval tower, rubble-stone construction, and a south aisle of equal length to the nave, giving the church its distinctive large medieval form.

We do not have any information on the building's condition, but TL indicates that it is in good repair, having had a Lottery grant ten years ago to fix the stone tiled roof.

9.11 St Ilan's, Eglwysilan, Caerphilly

A Grade II listed church occupying an ancient ecclesiastical site with Pre-Norman origins, including a C8–C10 carved Early Christian stone. Architecturally, it retains a largely medieval fabric: a C13 nave, C15–C16 west tower with embattled parapet and pinnacles, a C14 porch. The church has C19 stained glass, a wagon roof and significant monuments. The churchyard is unusually rich, containing multiple Grade II and II* listed memorials. (We would not be taking this.)

The 2022 quinquennial report identified substantial urgent works, especially due to damage from past cement repairs. There is a significant crack in the tower's south face, some internal monuments are moving, and surrounding access conditions have worsened, contributing to reduced use.

9.12 For information, the churches we agreed to explore are

- St Eugrad, Llaneugrad, Anglesey
- St Michael, Llanfihangel Helygen, Swansea & Brecon
- St Dogfael, St Dogwells, St Davids
- St Michael, Llanfihangel Gobion, Monmouthshire

10. Dates of meetings

- 9th June
- 16th July members day (location TBC)
- 22nd September
- 8th October – AGM, London
- 2nd December

11. AOB

11a. An invitation from Susan Dalton

Trustees kindly donated to the St Mary's, Batcombe, Dorset belfry restoration project, which Susan Dalton, our former field officer, organised in memory of her husband, Christopher. A

celebration event will be held on 12 July 2026. Susan asks you to save the date.