



**FRIENDS OF
FRIENDLESS
CHURCHES**

Minutes for a meeting of the Council of the Friends of Friendless Churches
**2pm on 02 December 2025 in the
 Basement Conference Room, 70 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EJ, London**

Item	Declarations	Lead
	Apologies for absence	RE
	Declarations of interest	All
1.	Minutes of meeting 20 September 2025	RE
2.	Elections	RE
3.	Matters Arising	All
4.	Team reports	Various
5.	Report of the Governance Review Group	SE
6.	Cote Baptist Chapel registration	RE
7.	Changes to AGM	RM & AE
8.	Finance	PS
9.	Cottam Will Trust	RM
10.	Brief Tour d'Horizon	RM
11.	Dates of 2026 meetings	RE
12.	Any other business	All

The meeting started at 2:05pm

Attendees

Roger Evans, Peter Scott, Simon Evans, Catherine Cullis, Paul Britton, Liz Green, Richard Halsey, Tom Lloyd, Kirstie Robbins, John Vigar, Rachel Morley, Agata Eltman and Katie Toussaint-Jackson attended in person.

John Edwards and Richard Halsey attended via Microsoft Teams.

Apologies for Absence

Alex Barrow and George Bulmer sent their apologies.

The chair received a resignation letter from Philip Gray, which he read to the Board. The entire Board expressed their thanks to Philip and agreed to appoint him as a Vice President in honour of his years of service.

Declarations of Interest

None.

1. Minutes of meeting 20 September 2025

The minutes were signed as a true and accurate record.

2. Honorary posts

Roger Evans was appointed as Chairman and Simon Evans as Company Secretary. Peter Scott was appointed as Honorary Treasurer. He intends to resign from this position at the 2026 AGM and to ensure a smooth transition, John Edwards was appointed as Deputy Treasurer until that date.

3. Matters Arising

a. New vestings

Transfer for Farfield was signed and sealed at today's meeting.

b. The Economic Crime & Corporate Transparency Act 2023

PS is liaising with Xeinadin about his authorisation.

CC to locate code and share with KTJ.

Action: PS and CC

c. St Tyfei, Llandyfeisant, Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire

RM discussed this church with RB, who as a result, has given us a further donation, with the idea that it is spent on St Tyfei's. RM has also discussed the project with Cadw, who said they were interested, given that the potential project aligns with their objectives. There was a broader question about how

to handle churchyards we don't own. TL offered to look into the history of St Tyfei's, which was noted as potentially beneficial for future grant applications. It was agreed that the Friends would take both the church and the churchyard, but noted that the decision to take the churchyard was due to the exceptional circumstances.

Action: TL

d. St Peter's, Marksbury, Somerset

RM reported on her findings about the bells, that locally there is a fund of £8,000 for them, and that the architect has reviewed the engineer's report. RM also wrote to the Diocesan Secretary regarding St Peter's and whether it is truly friendless, but has not heard back. RH highlighted that it would need to be made clear that rehangng the bells would not be a priority for the Friends, while RE commented that the bells should not be lost. RH commented that there is a number of funds restricted to bell repairs in the UK.

The trustees agreed to take St Peter's.

4. Team reports

a. Membership

AE highlighted that further information on cost per member has now been provided and shared a preliminary lineup of events for 2026, two of which have been confirmed already. Trustees would like to return to the discussion of the cost of membership in June.

Action: AE to prepare further information on costs for serving members at the June board meeting

b. Maintenance and Minor Repairs

DF reported on his work, with an aim to provide a snapshot of where the programme of small repairs is at this year and looking ahead. He also reported on the Fire Safety work, which is ongoing. Trustees commended DF for his work. He commented that overall the estate is in a reasonable state, and his aim is to keep on top of things so that small problems don't escalate. Concern was raised about the time required for fire safety, and the possibility of the new volunteer coordinator assisting with some aspects of it in the future. DF reported that he brings in professional advisors when necessary, which comes at a cost, but he feels it delivers added value.

PB questioned whether the proposed 2026 maintenance budget is realistic and DF confirmed that the overall proposal was prepared considering the availability and capacity of the small pool of craftspeople, the FoFC rely on.

c. Communications

PW reported on backend improvements to the website and the gathering of data, which can help drive more visitors to the website and help us understand where visitors heard about the FoFC. PW noted that while the primary goal would always be membership, having a secondary goal of raising brand awareness was valuable. RH commented on the more emotive tone of some recent communications. RM highlighted that since PW started in July, the Friends have been on the BBC three times, on ITV, an MP visited one of our churches, and we are being included in Country Life. Further prospective article from The Guardian is also in the pipeline.

d. Projects on site

South Runcton: RM thanked RH for his help with this project. The trustees agreed to uncover the vine decoration on the reredos.

Worthenbury: RM thanked DF for his support here. This project should have been completed in August, but is now due to finish in January.

Action: RM to speak to the architect about the Friends' expectations and if he can deliver them on future projects (Llandyfrydog).

Kenderchurch: Ross Cook, archaeologist, undertook some pro bono work and has dated the roof to between 1496 and 1502 and identified that it was the same roofers (group of three carpenters) as at Llangua. The external walls will be bagged and limewashed, following the advice from the conservation officer. The plan is to reopen in March.

Action: RM to circulate samples of the lime wash colour

Gumfreston: RM has heard from Cadw that their grant was confirmed, but has not received an official letter yet. £30,000 was awarded from The Pilgrim Trust. Ross Cook will develop the interpretation once conservation is complete.

Brownshill: Is due to finish on the 19th of December.

Lightcliffe: Further issues due corroding iron cramps, huge areas of cracking, and prior repairs failing. RM reported that the predicted final account includes an extra £20,000 for scaffold and stone repairs. Trustees advised to progress with all additional repair work, justifying the extra expense by the cost of erecting scaffolding alone.

Castlemartin: the new window is in place. The skelings will be replaced in lathe and plaster with a beading strip for extra reinforcement.

Looking forward, RM has met with the architect for Stratton-on-the-Fosse and is working on the specification and has instructed an ecologist. This won't be on site until the second half of next year. At Llangatock-Vibon-Avel, RM held a community meeting there last month and talked with neighbours about parking. RM reported that Brithdir needed to be on site next year for urgent reroofing. She has talked to Natural Resources Wales about our plans. At Wood Walton, there is a need to do roof repairs and reglazing, so RM has been liaising with the architect. The Trustees asked to obtain the quote for all glazing in the church, and it is to be determined which windows will be prioritised.

The recent flooding at Llangua was reported to have done no serious damage, with the maintenance contractors doing the heavy cleaning and volunteers doing lighter cleaning.

JV thanked RM for the helpful photos in the report.

e. Staffing Committee

LG reported on the progress of the staffing committee. They have now taken over the line management of the Director and have telephone catch-ups roughly fortnightly, as well as quarterly in-person meetings, and plan to continue this pattern. They have been refining RM's job description and looking at capacity management, including priority pieces of work. The 70th anniversary book has been postponed as a result of increasing strain on capacity, and this has been communicated to the publishers. Further work to review the team's JD is to be carried out. CC was thanked for conducting a departure interview with MG after she left this autumn. This feedback has been used to refine the job description for the volunteer coordinator (either 1 FT or 2 PT positions), which is hoped to be advertised from mid-January.

f. Investment Committee

RE reported on the work of the investment subcommittee. Both the Friends's portfolio and that of Cottam Will Trust have increased in value.

The Friends's portfolio has increased in value from £3m to £3.64m (reflecting the overall global market situation), while the Cottam Will Trust is currently worth £1.3m.

5. Governance

SE reported on the work of the Governance Review Committee, including considering term limits, board effectiveness, and setting up a noncom to manage the potential transition phase. It was suggested that the subcommittee model be adopted to focus specifically on matters related to audit (and finance) and conservation. The need for improved forecasting was reiterated.

SE thanked the members of the committee for their work. LG commented on the importance of staff members in this conversation and the role of the Board to support the work of staff and the charity. PB praised the work of the committee and commented that this would bring the Friends' governance in line with many other charities. The need for more streamlined reporting to the Board was noted.

KR left the meeting at 4:30

The Board approved the suggestions made in the paper and requested that the Governance Review Committee commence the next stage of their work.

Action: The Governance Review Committee to look at next steps and report back as soon as possible, via Teams if necessary.

6. Cote Baptist Chapel registration

Cote is with solicitors, and the HCT have been in contact with the Baptist Union. PB, supported by others, stressed that the covenant in question must not come in the way of the Friends saving the building. The Trustees agreed to take the building.

Action: RM to reply to HCT stating the above.

7. Changes to the AGM format

JE and PS raised concerns regarding the annual accounts timeline, given the July deadline. The Board agreed that the aim would be to have the accounts completed by July, but that the date of the AGM would remain in September for this year, likely physically at Cowcross Street and online as well. The 16th July would instead be a members' day at a location determined through conversations with staff.

Action: AE to find out venue availability in September/ October for AGM

Action: RM and AE to discuss possible locations for members' day

Action: Check articles regarding the provision of an online AGM

8. Finance

8.1 Financial statements

These were circulated in advance of the meeting. PS thanked AE for her work on this.

8.2 Xero

Work is still ongoing.

8.3 Cashflows

RM highlighted that this report only shows cash for the next 36 months. SE expressed the view that a less granular (and less actual figures-based) forecasting model is to be developed to better understand fixed costs and current project commitments.

Action: SE and AE to discuss forecasting in more detail

9. Cottam Will Trust

a. Sts Peter & Paul, Black Notley, Essex

The Board approved a grant of £10,000.

b. All Saints, Pocklington

The Board approved a grant of £4,000, but would like to see further designs of the frame.

10. Tour d'Horizon

a. St Helen's, Biscarthorpe, Lincolnshire

RM has spoken to the architect and arranged a call with the contractor, who both thought the costings were appropriate. The current cost is exclusive of contractor preliminaries, professional fees and all access needs. The Board still expressed concerns about the cost reported by the architect, so RM will contact a known quantity surveyor who has offered to do pro bono work. Concerns were expressed that the Church Commissioners are not responding. RM reported that the Historic England are potentially interested due to the location of the church, by The Viking Way. It was commented that the Church Commissioners should be held more accountable for the raised cost of repairs, due to the years-long vesting process. PB suggested that

Biscathorpe should be accepted as it is, and we should raise concerns around the delayed vesting of Sturmer.

Action: RM to contact the quantity surveyor
Action: RM to provide PB with further details about Sturmer so he can contact the Church Commissioners

LG left the meeting at 5:35

- b. CONFIDENTIAL St Swithun's, Old Weston, Cambridgeshire
The trustees authorised RM to look at this in closer detail and approved spending on any relevant reports.
Action: RM to visit the church to assess the nature of the structural movement.

- c. St John the Evangelist, Oulton, Leeds
The trustees agreed this was not one for the Friends and there would be no further action. JV and RE raised objections, but other Trustees felt the scale of the repair cost made this church unfeasible for the FoFC resources.

11. Dates of meetings in 2026

The following dates were agreed:

10th March)

9th June

16th July members day (location TBC)

22nd September

2nd December

The decision on a trustees' tour was adjourned to a later date.

12. AOB

- a. Blue Plaque
Ivor Bulmer-Thomas is getting a Blue Plaque to be unveiled in 2027, and RM is involved in discussions with the family about this.

- b. Great Expectations
PB provided an oral summary of the Great Expectations conference held at the V&A.

The meeting was declared closed 18:05