

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE) Annual Report

Year ended 30 September 2023

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FSSE (Friends Southern Summer Events) is a small Quaker charity, entirely run by volunteers, whose purpose is the advancement of the Religious Society of Friends through the provision of educational events for young people.

Object and Activities

FSSE's objects are:

- (a) to promote and advance the religious education of the community and in particular of young people, including those of the Quaker tradition, and others with an interest in learning more about Quakers;

AND in furtherance thereof:

- (b) to organise and promote events for the spiritual growth and moral benefit of the community and in particular of young people with an interest in Quakers;
- (c) to disseminate by whatever means the ideals of truth, non-violence and equality within a Quaker background; and
- (d) to promote any purpose that is charitable according to the laws of England and Wales and for the benefit of the public as may from time to time be determined by the trustees.

FSSE usually runs two week-long events: Junior Gathering, for 11-14 year olds; and Senior Conference for 15-18 year olds. The catchment area is southern England, though others are welcomed if there is space.

Public benefit statement

FSSE exists for the promotion and advancement of the spiritual nurture and religious education of young people including both those of the Quaker tradition, and those with an interest in learning more about Quakers and Quakerism. This benefits personally the participants who attend the events, and also benefits the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) more widely, through the spreading of Quaker ideas and ideals.

In carrying out these purposes, FSSE usually organises two annual residential Quaker events in August of each year: Junior Gathering (for young people aged 11-14) and Senior Conference (for older participants aged 15-18). These events benefit enormously the young people who attend them, by providing spiritual education through workshops which advocate the Quaker testimonies of peace, simplicity, equality and truth. The events provide spiritual nourishment from new (and old) friendships, shared worship and activities including sports, games, drama, music and other creative arts.

Based on the feedback participants provide, we know our events are significant in the lives of those who attend, helping to build confidence, knowledge and supportive friendships which in some cases last a lifetime. We see young people wanting to come back year on year, and also those who want to give back some of what they gained by helping at the events.

Funding

FSSE is funded primarily through participant fees. Fee income is supplemented by grants and gifts from charitable trusts, Quaker Meetings and individuals.

Some participant fees are funded in part or in whole by a young person's Local or Area Quaker Meeting. FSSE's aim is to ensure that no-one who wishes to come to Junior Gathering or Senior Conference is prevented from doing so for financial reasons. Grants and gifts enable us to support participation by young people who could not otherwise afford the full fees. Decisions to apply grants and gifts to support participation are taken by the bookings secretaries in consultation with the treasurer.

Achievement and Performance - Trustees' Annual Report

With COVID-19 still a recent memory, and the cost of living crisis still ongoing, Trustees are extremely pleased that both Junior Gathering for 11-14 year olds and Senior Conference for 15-18 year olds were able to not only run, but run as successful, week-long, fully in-person events this year. We are heartened that both events are able to attract skilled coordinating teams, enthusiastic volunteers, and very special cohorts of young people who give as much to the spirit of our events as they take from it, and hopefully use their experiences to help them throughout the year, and in their lives.

FSSE's event coordinators, trustees and officers met on a regular basis in the months leading to the events. This was a very useful way of keeping in touch with each other, and for everyone involved to understand the tasks involved in running the events and the timescales required to achieve them, and to ensure all had the chance to express their ideas or any concerns. It meant all were aware of the numerous arising issues and challenges and could offer support, advice and suggestions where needed. As with previous years, it enhanced the links between the two events and the officers in cross-event roles.

We note that FSSE made a significant loss in 2023. This is due to a range of circumstances which coincided at one time. Conscious of our participants' families' financial situation, we had made the decision to raise participant fees by only 5% even though the venues raised their own accommodation charges by 22% (Leighton Park) and 17% (Sibford). Also, as per our policy that no participant should be excluded from not being able to pay the fee, we have been pleased to make a larger number of bursaries available than previously, as this is what the bursaries are for. We remain committed to ensuring no participants are excluded for financial reasons, and are pleased that our financial model allows us to do this.

We had also made provision for a larger than average staff team at Junior Gathering, as the previous year's team had been stretched, and also for paid-for volunteer training. These aspects were operationally necessary, but, mindful of the need to maintain our organisation's financial health, we will, in the next 12 months, increase our drive to source additional grant funding, and raise our fees. We are grateful for the large and small donations we receive to continue our work. We know many AMs and LMs support our participants, their families, and FSSE finances through part funding of participant places, and, in the context of universal price rises, are glad that this approach continues so robustly, and how well it represents our place in the Quaker community.

We pay careful attention to the safety of our events, with designated trained safeguarding team members. We carefully assess possible risks so that we mitigate them, and are prepared should we have an emergency. All event-based volunteers must have a clean DBS check in place prior to the event. Following problems the previous year with the Disclosure & Barring Service not returning checks of the type requested, we paid special attention to this in 2023 and the process was completed straightforwardly.

We run our events as two distinct, fully in-person, gatherings and we anticipate this pattern will continue for the future. We have learned, especially over the last four years, to be flexible to changing circumstances; regardless of what form future events take, we will continue to focus on increasing our participant numbers, as well as taking time over the next few years to scope out potential options for how we can meet the needs of our young people through the format of the events we run, and the venues they run in.

This year has been a particularly strong reminder that FSSE's events are managed by skilled, conscientious, committed and courageous teams. The planning process for both events, not to mention logistical issues at the events themselves, has not always been straightforward, but the willingness and ability of both events' planning teams, as well as those in supporting roles, to deal with significant, time-consuming external factors has been heartening to see. We are also grateful for the support we have received, individually and collectively, from other Quaker bodies and role-holders. We are not a set of distinct work-groups working in isolation, we are a group of people working hard to provide and oversee events which bring joy and inspiration to many. We would like to thank everyone involved wholeheartedly for bringing this ethos to their work.

In many ways, our capacity to deal with issues as they arise is a testament to the events. The continued willingness of former participants to give up their time and talents to run our events shows not only how important the events have been in their lives, but how the skills and approaches they developed as participants is put to good use in their wider lives. Our events give people the confidence to be themselves, and to know they are valued, and to facilitate this feeling in everyone they come across, in whatever walk of life. We are confident that, whatever our participants do with their lives once they leave our events, they will be working hard to make a difference to other peoples' lives, ensure all tasks they are responsible for are undertaken in the most positive, conscientious way, and find positive solutions to any challenges that arise. By continuing to run our events the way we do, whilst being mindful of the way the Society of Friends and indeed the wider world continues to evolve, we will continue to ensure our events remain a place for young people to grow and to pass their skills on to others.

It remains a privilege to be connected to this organisation, its events and the people who contribute to them.

Thank you.

James Barnard – on behalf of FSSE trustees

Junior Gathering Epistle 2023

To all Friends everywhere,

From the 19th to the 26th of August 2023, 41 young people and 19 staff gathered at Leighton Park School for a week of exploration and reflection on the theme of “The Past and Present of Quakers around the world”.

Both internal and external speakers helped us better understand and discuss our theme through interactive sessions, workshops, and talks. Debbie Fleck and Sue Crosfield came from the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) and spoke about their experiences of documenting the conflict in Israel and Palestine from a Quaker perspective. This helped us understand the extremes of what is happening in that area at the moment. Rhiannon Grant, from Woodbrooke, ran a very interesting session about the ways that different Quakers speak about their experiences of meeting for worship. The session helped us open up and have a conversation, learning a lot about each other and the diversity of our community.

Gwen Da Sousa Correa, a volunteer staff member at the event, spoke about how individual actions of Quakers in the past saved and helped many people during the Hungarian revolution, such as a man who drove resources and aid across the border. Gwen offered inspiring quotes from Quakers and others which got us to think about how we could take action and help improve the world in the future. Chris Skidmore spoke about Quaker myths and legends. We learned about the history of the Religious Society of Friends and how our collective values can be reflected in stories of past Friends, but also recognizing the more difficult aspects of where our understanding and misunderstanding of our history actually comes from, and questioning our sources.

At the event, our days started with Meeting for Worship and ended with epilogue. During our Meetings for Worship, we heard a range of meaningful insights and readings from young people. We shared hopes and fears and had a number of meaningful activities that helped us focus and connect. In epilogue, we had reflective music or quietness and candles which helped us wind down for the night and find focus.

Over the course of the week, there were many fun small group activities led by the volunteers, this included debate, domino toppling, Chillin’ ‘n’ Spillin’ (a chatting activity), and various crafts. As a whole, we came together to do group activities such as tower construction, an Alice in Wonderland puzzle activity and base group challenges. We also enjoyed sessions consisting of barn dancing, a ‘fictional characters’ themed disco and much more. Lifelines gave us a chance to hear about the experiences of the volunteers and the ups and downs of their lives so far. These fun activities helped us to connect better as a group of young Friends.

During the week we had the opportunity to leave Leighton Park for the day. We travelled to Oxford to share Meeting for Worship with Senior Conference and local Friends. We had the freedom to explore Oxford in our own ways and use the free time to connect with friends. We also had a lovely sunny afternoon in the Harris Gardens.

One of the best parts about Junior Gathering was the community that we all built together. One way we did this was in base groups, which gave us an opportunity to connect, discuss the speaker sessions, and play teambuilding games. We also all took part in 'secret friends' which was a way of creating connections throughout the week, leaning about fellow participants, and making their day with gifts and kind messages. Free time also gave us the chance to connect with friends, new and old, and giving us a time to reflect by ourselves. All of these things helped create a welcoming and inclusive environment for everybody.

One piece of ministry that we felt spoke to our theme was Ghandhi's quote of "be the change you wish to see in the world".

Overall, Junior Gathering's theme has helped our understanding of Quaker roots and how Quaker values can improve the world, even if we are not necessarily all Quakers or members of other groups instead. This week has given us an opportunity to practice putting Quaker values in action. We really look forward to next year's young Friends events.

In our Meeting for Worship for Business, it was discerned that the theme for Junior Gathering 2024 would be on the topic of understanding gender and sexual identities and equality.

Signed in and on behalf of Junior Gathering 2023,

Clerks

Charlotte B and Fergus B

Elders

Ilana J and Rosa D

Senior Conference Epistle 2023

To all Friends everywhere,

From the 19th to 26th August, 55 young Quakers and 13 adult volunteers gathered together in Sibford School in Oxfordshire for a week of fun, friendship and spiritual growth. Through a variety of speaker sessions and time spent as a community, we explored the theme of "Simplicity and Sustainability in an Unequal World". We grew in our appreciation and understanding of the complexities of the world around us, and where we fit in it as young people and as Quakers.

Our first speaker session was the Black Lives Matter and climate crisis activist Queen Niche, aka, Nelly Adams. Nelly gave a powerful, challenging and occasionally uncomfortable talk on racism, identity and its intersectionalities. She spoke on her journey of self empowerment and finding her 'roar', including through poetry, and encouraged us all to speak out against injustice in our unequal world. We discussed the power of allyship, how what we say can make ripples that change the world, and how the first step must include recognizing White privilege, as well as embracing our diversities. We found the session to be engaging, thought provoking and inspiring.

Quaker Peace and Social Witness campaigns co-ordinator Anna Lewis gave us new insight into the importance of viewing climate change through the lens of justice, including Anna's work with the Make Polluters Pay campaign. Consideration of the continuing legacy of

colonialism, slavery and global power imbalances, and the resulting disproportionate impact of carbon emissions overwhelmingly produced by the West and the adverse effects of the climate crisis, led us to explore new perspectives on sustainability. We discussed reparations and the various forms they can take, looking towards building a just future as well as taking accountability for the wrongs of the past.

Our exploration of the theme took a creative and experimental turn with the third speaker Julia Dover. In her drama workshop, we used the power of imagination to turn chaos to simplicity. We celebrated the power, and the gift to those around us, of showing up as ourselves. It took us a step outside our comfort zones. In it, we embodied adversity, and explored how small changes inspired by the Light can completely transform our perspective.

Throughout the event, the sense of community and friendship was tangible, and extended through base groups: small family groups 'like their own planet', that met throughout the week for fun, discussion and dressing up. Secret Friends, bedtime stories and even a hug bandana helped create an inclusive, warm, welcoming atmosphere. The fun continued with many different workshops from sports to crochet and a trip to Oxford with Junior Gathering. In our adult volunteer "Any Questions" session, we shared in both laughter and vulnerability, and learned about important life lessons. Evening entertainments such as Hunt the Committee, the Base Group Challenge, disco, night walk, quiz and more offered an opportunity for new friends, experiences and fun!

In daily prologues and epilogues, the value of having safe spaces, and of being completely yourself was explored through powerful, fruitful and diverse ministry. In worship, including several meetings outdoors, we celebrated our connection to the natural world around us, and beautiful centrepieces grounded us and opened our hearts, resulting in rich ministry.

We leave the week feeling tired, but happy and fulfilled, with new and rekindled connections to each other, and a greater sense of our power to change the world.

Signed in and on behalf of Senior Conference 2023

Aidan A and Aspen S-E

FSSE Annual Accounts

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Friends Southern Summer Events (charity no. 1155420)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30 September 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date: 4th April 2024

Name: Keith Barnes

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body: Fellow, CIMA

Address: 2 Beeforth Close
New Earswick
York
YO32 4DF

Receipts and payments to 30 September 2023

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)

Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2023 - Consolidated

	2023	2022
Receipts		
Grants, contributions & donations	1,666	750
Participant fees	36,918	38,258
Bank interest	61	19
Total receipts	38,645	39,026
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	291	372
Planning expenses	834	442
Skills development	2,270	0
Total pre-event	3,396	814
Event		
Accommodation	38,869	31,779
Staff event travel & services	2,010	1,478
Group event travel & services	3,260	3,498
Speakers expenses	286	264
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	-27	11
Materials & supplies	532	823
Minor equipment	14	95
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	44,944	37,948
General		
Management meetings	47	0
Trustee expenses	0	0
Subscriptions	239	129
Insurance	554	549
Bank charges	60	96
Total general	899	774
Total payments	49,240	39,536
Receipts less Payments	-10,595	-509
Balances brought forward at 1 October	23,922	24,432
Balances carried forward at 30 September	13,328	23,922
Prepayment	3,948	3,948
Cash at bank and in hand	24,837	35,536
Less payments not cleared at year end	17,457	15,942
Plus deposits not cleared at year end	2,000	380
Reserves	13,328	23,922

Notes

(1) "Prepayment" is a deposit paid to Sibford School on a venue for Senior Conference 2024

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)**Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2023 - Junior Gathering**

	2023	2022
Receipts		
Grants, contributions & donations	0	0
Participant fees	16,180	18,860
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	16,180	18,860
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	0	0
Planning expenses	449	126
Skills development	830	0
Total pre-event	1,279	126
Event		
Accommodation	19,816	17,152
Staff event travel & services	525	727
Group event travel & services	2,055	2,049
Speakers expenses	0	0
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	-1	23
Materials & supplies	0	159
Minor equipment	14	47
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	22,409	20,157
General		
Management meetings	0	0
Trustee expenses	0	0
Subscriptions	0	0
Insurance	0	0
Bank charges	0	0
Total general	0	0
Total payments	23,688	20,283
Receipts less Payments	-7,508	-1,423

Notes

(1) 2023 fee income reflects 41 participants (2022: 50).

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)
Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2023 -
Senior Conference

	2023	2022
Receipts		
Grants, contributions & donations	0	0
Participant fees	20,738	19,398
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	20,738	19,398
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	0	0
Planning expenses	385	316
Skills development	840	0
Total pre-event	1,225	316
Event		
Accommodation	19,053	14,627
Staff event travel & services	1,485	751
Group event travel & services	1,205	1,449
Speakers expenses	286	264
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	-26	-12
Materials & supplies	532	664
Minor equipment	0	47
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	22,535	17,791
General		
Management meetings	0	0
Trustee expenses	0	0
Subscriptions	0	0
Insurance	0	0
Bank charges	0	0
Total general	0	0
Total payments	23,760	18,107
Receipts less Payments	-3,022	1,291

Notes

(1) 2023 fee income reflects 56 participants (2022: 52)

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)
Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2023 -
General Income & Expenditure

	2023	2022
Receipts		
Grants, contributions & donations	1,666	750
Participant fees	0	0
Bank interest	61	19
Total receipts	1,727	768
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	291	372
Planning expenses	0	0
Skills development	600	0
Total pre-event	891	372
Event		
Accommodation	0	0
Staff event travel & services	0	0
Group event travel & services	0	0
Speakers expenses	0	0
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	0	0
Materials & supplies	0	0
Minor equipment	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	0	0
General		
Management meetings	47	0
Trustee expenses	0	0
Subscriptions	239	129
Insurance	554	549
Bank charges	60	96
Total general	899	774
Total payments	1,791	1,146
Receipts less Payments	-64	-377

Notes

(1) In 2023, grants, contributions and donations comprised: £1,000 from the CB & HH Taylor 1984 trust, £200 from Cambridge Jesus Lane Quaker Meeting, £94 from Friends House Quaker Meeting, £48 from NW London Area Quaker Meeting, and £324 from several individual donations. Donations particularly help FSSE support participation by young people who could not otherwise afford the fees. In 2023, the bursaries provided totalled £2,517.

Statement of assets and liabilities at 30 September 2023

The charity had no material assets or liabilities at the end of the period other than the net Reserves (£13,328) reported under Receipts and payments.

The Trustees declare that the charity has given no guarantee where potential liability is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

The Trustees declare that the charity has no outstanding debts which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets of the charity at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

Appendix 1: Reference and Administrative Details

Name: Friends Southern Summer Events, known also as FSSE.

Charity registration number: 1155420

Governing Document: FSSE is governed by its constitution, a copy of which may be found on FSSE's website at <http://fsse.org.uk/files/FSSE-CIO-Constitution.pdf>

Contact address: 30 Lucombe Way, New Earswick, York, YO32 4DS

Trustees (at 30 September 2023): James Barnard, Candia Crosfield, Rebecca Kennard, Kit King, Kai Sim, Oliver Waterhouse, Michael Wood

Clerk to trustees: James Barnard

Clerk to management committee: Oliver Waterhouse

Treasurer: Graham Torr

Bankers: CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4TA

Appendix 2: Reserves and Investments Policy

Reserves

FSSE requires reserves for normal operational reasons, as follows:

1. cash flow during the year;
2. planned additional expenditure in a particular year;
3. expenditure higher than expected;
4. income lower than expected.

We understand that it is normal practice for a charity to hold 25%-50% of annual expenditure as an operational reserve. With experience of our cash flow requirements, we agree that we will budget to hold between 30% and 50% of the previous year's expenditure.

Investment

We will hold our reserves as liquid assets to support the operations of FSSE, in a manner in keeping with Quaker principles. If it is possible to keep some in a higher-interest bearing account without operational difficulties, the Treasurer is requested to do so.