

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE) Annual Report Year ended 30 September 2025

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Year ended 30 September 2025

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.

Objects 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

During 2025 our focus as trustees was supporting the work of the FSSE committee and considering the future plans for the organisation.

Bringing the organisation together as a Quaker community remains a priority for Trustees and a number of initiatives were undertaken and planned. We continue to work on what our calling is as an organisation and as a Quaker Meeting.

The better financial position this year gives us hope that we can also focus on the main challenges in growing the events past their current capacity limitations.

Throughout the year trustees were involved in the event support meetings that happened once a month, these served as the main operational decision making meetings alongside other committee communication channels (email/whatsapp).

This year we trialled temperature checks to speed up discernment online using consent based decision making and more traditional Quaker business method. This mixture of methods is representative of FSSE's decision making as a whole due to the high number of operational decisions needed vs the number of strategic decisions needed.

To improve the understanding of the operational and strategic domains a new living document has been created to clarify and document the institutional knowledge.

Trustees met regularly to provide historical context, policy advice, operational support, additional capacity, discernment and a number of ad-hoc tasks via the FSSE committee, such as liaising with the venue, volunteer recruitment and safeguarding training.

A particular challenge for us this year was discerning and improving the high level guidance around dorm allocation following a number of queries. We recognised the very difficult balance needed between ensuring the flexibility to meet the needs of all stakeholders and the needs for additional guidance.

To ensure the event plans were in accordance with FSSE's values, expectations, policy, legal compliance, good practice and were safe to run, a pre-event event assessment was carried out by trustees to determine that we were happy for the events to go ahead.

We have received excellent feedback from volunteers, young people and parents/guardians celebrating the creation of two very well run and successful events. We are glad to once again be alongside all those who heeded the call to service in 2025.

Signed on behalf of Trustees

Michael Wood

Clerk to FSSE Trustees

Junior Gathering Epistle 2025

To all Friends everywhere,

From the 23rd to the 30th of August 2025, 54 young people and 18 staff gathered at Leighton Park School, Reading for a week of exploration and reflection on the theme “Global Issues Regarding Conflict and Climate Change.”

This year we had internal and external speakers talking and sharing their own experiences about our theme. In Phil Wood’s session, we reflected on our thoughts about resolving conflict and positive and negative peace and how it affects people around the world. Jacqui Davis talked and educated us on the topic of climate anxiety and how we feel about what's going on elsewhere in the world. Lyndsay Burtonshaw workshop prompted us to express our feelings in creative ways such as drawing and describing creatures that represented our ideas about this year's theme. Finally, Caro and Sue Crosfield from the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) shared their experiences working as a witness amongst people living in conflict zones. All of these speaker sessions were thought provoking and deepened our understanding of Global Conflict and Climate Change.

Each morning started with a Meeting for Worship where we collected our thoughts while drawing and reading topical booklets that prompted ministry from Friends. We also ended the evening with Epilogue where we reflected back on the day and wound down with candles and calming pieces of music. This year we held a few epilogues outside, under the stars which was greatly received by all.

We had a wide range of activities which made sure everyone found themselves in a session that they were happy and comfortable to take part in. These include sports like rounders and frisbee, many crafts and board games, with swimming making a popular return. After lunch, everyone took part in an afternoon group activity which featured a fête, a film and a construction activity which challenged us to create a crazy golf hole. In the evening, we collaborated with our base groups in the base group challenge, danced to a live band in the barn dance and many more fun activities. We also had lifelines where two members of staff shared the ups and downs of their life.

On Wednesday, we and Senior Conference (who we are sharing a site with) visited and explored the city of Oxford in small, chosen groups. As one of the highlights of each event, everyone enjoyed freely roaming and having time off site. We were very grateful to hold a Meeting for Worship in Oxford Meeting House where we met back afterwards. Many of our young people have appreciated being around Senior Conference again this year, seeing friends and siblings while giving fourteen year olds a better idea for what’s to come after Junior Gathering.

We found that this event allows us to meet other young quakers which many of us do not have the opportunity to do in local meetings. Lots of us appreciated how we could talk about deep topics whilst still having fun making friends and enjoying the event as a whole. We saw this especially in Base Groups which has been a highlight again this year. It gave us space to communally collect our thoughts, play games and get to know people we wouldn't talk to otherwise.

The week has highlighted to us that even when discussing the conflict and climate crisis and other such issues, we can still find a way to make connections and new friends. We found Advices and Queries No.21 to summarize this point: “Do you cherish your friendships, so that they grow in depth and understanding and mutual respect? In close relationships we may risk pain as well as finding joy. When experiencing great happiness or great hurt we may be more open to the working of the Spirit.”

In our Meeting for Worship for Business we discerned that Junior Gathering 2026’s theme will be “Young People's Involvement in Society” and the disco theme will be “Under and Over the Sea” We very much look forward to next year’s event and wish well to those moving up to Senior Conference.

Signed in and on behalf of Junior Gathering 2025,

Clerks

Emily W and Martha S

Elders

Iris C and Seb

Senior Conference Epistle 2025

To all Friends everywhere,

“Love and justice require us to examine our own practices and behaviours, and to work for systemic change.” - Minute 27 of Yearly Meeting 2022

Between Friday 22nd and Saturday 30th August 2025, 65 Friends joined at Leighton Park School, Reading to create an intentional community. We leave with hope for the future, stemming from the clear desire expressed during the week for positive change and the possibilities for building better worlds.

Senior Conference offers us an opportunity to connect with amazing people, who work together to create an environment that is welcoming, open and committed to acceptance and valuing everyone's ideas and experiences. We come together to cultivate a space in which we can all try and be our true selves. This year's theme was 'Embracing Our Differing Truths Within a Community' and we explored this through the week with speaker sessions, meetings for worship and discussion. We also had Secret Friends, games and activity workshops.

Within the larger community we gathered in what we call 'Base Groups' to explore the theme through discussing the speaker sessions, playing games, making our costumes for the themed dinner and creating our contribution to the final night's talent show. In these more intimate settings we created smaller communities that became mini-families for us; allowing us to connect with people we might not necessarily become friends with otherwise and providing support for people who might be at the event for the first time. We also had the opportunity to connect with other base groups, allowing us to meet more people from across the event.

During the week we gathered in silent worship twice a day, in the morning for prologue and in the evening for epilogue. During the week we found that Friends expressed themselves through meaningful and insightful ministry and were willing and open to bring deep thoughts and feelings that helped us reflect, often in unexpected ways. We were struck by how many Friends ministered for the first time and this is something we found particularly special.

Our first speaker was Debby Flack, a member of the Britain Yearly Meeting Reparations Working Group and The Black, Brown and People of Colour Friends Fellowship. She spoke to us about Friends involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, including Quaker businesses that provided chains and shackles for slave traders. She also explained to us her concept of reparations, starting with an understanding of how and why Quakers were involved in the Atlantic slave trade and from there how we can make redress for our role in this historical injustice. We heard about the estimation of the financial impact of making reparations, how this would be in the trillions of pounds and she helped us conceive of how large of a number this really is. We were reminded that our Quaker values require us to tell the truth about historical and contemporary injustice, and how this commitment impels us to take accountability when we ourselves are or have been involved.

We heard from three of the Adult Volunteers (called 'The 22+ Team') who delivered a Lifelines session, in which they spoke about pivotal moments in their lives. They spoke about school experiences, family histories, neurodiversity, addiction, health and wellbeing. This session allowed us to hear about the struggles people can face on their journeys and the importance of perseverance. Through hearing these stories we took hope about how we can grow in the future through staying true to ourselves. Across all three speakers we heard of how much they had been supported by young Quaker events when they were our age and the place they held and continue to hold for them. The session helped us become a fuller community through building bridges between the 22+ team and participants, allowing us to better understand the hope the event gives us, how we carry this out into our lives and how this helps shape our futures.

Our next speaker was Lyndsay Burtonshaw, the Peace and Faith in Action Coordinator for Quaker Peace and Social Witness, who led an interactive session. We examined our differing truths through a 'body mapping' exercise in which we drew around our bodies and used this as a space to write down our own truths and examine what is important to us. We compared what we had written and saw the overlaps in people discussing their identities and values, others focusing on their experiences, likes and dislikes. We looked at truths that came easily to us, such as liking music, but also examining deeper meanings within ourselves that also brought us discomfort. Some of us designed our 'dream village' examining what we thought about labour and work; government and justice; land and natural resources; relationships, bodies and sexuality. While others did a Zine making exercise allowing us to explore where we are 'from', or creating creatures that embody our emotions. This session allowed us creative space to explore our personal truths, and in sharing them allowed us to find points of connection as well as what makes us unique.

Our final speakers were ecumenical accompaniers, Caroline and Sue Crosfield. They are a part of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) and have worked as human rights monitors in Occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank. They told us about the work they did: living in small, international teams monitoring human rights violations, preventing harassment of children walking to school and helping peace groups. They discussed how their presence in and of itself was powerful and a form of protection as they were there as witnesses. We had the opportunity to ask further questions to Caroline and Sue in the more intimate environment of base groups. Within the context of the ongoing genocide in Gaza, this session particularly sparked passionate and thoughtful discussions within this space and we held further creative listening groups afterwards. We found it challenging and productive to explore how we express our understanding of our differing truths within our own community.

We were very grateful to receive a pre-recorded video session from Yuan Yang, a Quaker Labour MP for the new constituency of Earley and Woodley. Within this she brought up how it is harder to experience communities and human contact in the world today, due to the increase of easily accessible technology, for example self checkouts at supermarkets. Yuan spoke about the difficulty in finding communities from her work in parliament and how she tries to counteract this by starting her own. She invited us to think about what we can do to prevent this trend in our own lives. This made us appreciate this event as a space for real connection and community.

Every evening we had entertainments, which included; the Base Group Challenge offering a chance to bond with the group through completing funny collaborative tasks. We had a Disco which was themed as Heroes and Villains, giving us a chance to dress up and have fun; a Barn Dance led by a professional folk band; a lively Quiz night; movie night, hunt the committee and the final night's talent show. These vibrant sessions were an opportunity to share laughter and joy, building new connections and memories.

We are struck by the openness, love and joy of this community, how we meet only once a year and become close friends with each other, for the first time, or again. For those of us returning year on year, it has become something we have come to expect from Senior Conference; the inevitability of a safe and welcoming community, one in which everyone is friends with everyone else. While many of us are sad to be moving on, we are reassured that the spirit that we have nourished here will be carried out into the world in the coming days, weeks, months and years.

We express deep thanks to everyone who is involved in making this event so special – the Arrangements Committee (drawn from our participants), which is made up of our Clerks, Elders, Ents, Universal Friends, Base Group Facilitator Coordinators, Base Group Facilitators, and our 22+ team. We also thank Leighton Park School for hosting the event. Finally, we thank all participants for taking on, supporting and engaging with the event and creating this beautiful community. We end this epistle with some words from A. A Milne – “how lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”

Signed in and on behalf of Senior Conference 2025,

Kiri A-S and Laura L
Clerks 2025

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 2025.

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: 2 March 2025

Name: Paul Whitehouse

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body: None

Address: 1 Slate Cottages
Manor Lane
Abbots Leigh
BRISTOL
BS8 3RX

Receipts and payments to 30 September 2025

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)

Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2025

Consolidated

	2025	2024
Receipts		
Grants & donations	2,398	14,829
Participant fees	60,413	40,790
Bank interest	64	55
Total receipts	62,875	55,673
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	490	313
Planning expenses	1,893	2,153
Skills development	791	823
Total pre-event	3,174	3,289
Event		
Accommodation	48,242	36,752
Staff event travel & services	2,541	2,069
Group event travel & services	3,760	2,050
Speakers expenses	0	525
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	32	-100
Materials & supplies	548	544
Minor equipment	409	84
Total event expenditure	55,531	41,924
General		
Management meetings	408	144
Trustee expenses	0	0
Subscriptions	306	289
Insurance	392	392
Bank charges	60	60
Total general	1,166	885
Total payments	59,871	46,098
Receipts less Payments	3,004	9,575
Balances brought forward at 1 October	22,903	13,328
Balances carried forward at 30 September	25,907	22,903
Prepayment	0	0
Cash at bank and in hand	24,763	23,479
Less payments not cleared at year end	325	758
Plus deposits not cleared at year end	1,040	181
Reserves (Note 1)	25,478	22,903

Notes

(1) Included in the Reserves for 2025 and carried forward into 2026 is £343 being the unspent portion of a grant of £4,000 from the Sir Thomas Reckitt Charity in to provide bursary support to young participants.

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)
Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2025
Junior Gathering

	2025	2024
Receipts		
Grants & donations	0	0
Participant fees	30,509	16,917
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	30,509	16,917
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	0	0
Planning expenses	801	473
Skills development	557	0
Total pre-event	1,357	473
Event		
Accommodation	24,705	16,171
Staff event travel & services	1,339	1,101
Group event travel & services	1,768	1,025
Speakers expenses	0	525
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	-23	-22
Materials & supplies	114	252
Minor equipment	117	70
Total event expenditure	28,020	19,123
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	29,377	19,595
Receipts less Payments	1,132	-2,678

Notes

(1) 2025 fee income reflects 54 participants (2024: 40).

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)
Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2025
Senior Conference

	2025	2024
Receipts		
Grants & donations	0	0
Participant fees	29,904	23,873
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	29,904	23,873
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	0	0
Planning expenses	1,092	1,681
Skills development	234	823
Total pre-event	1,326	2,503
Event		
Accommodation	23,537	20,581
Staff event travel & services	1,201	968
Group event travel & services	1,992	1,025
Speakers expenses	0	0
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	54	-78
Materials & supplies	435	292
Minor equipment	292	14
Total event expenditure	27,511	22,801
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	28,837	25,305
Receipts less Payments	1,067	-1,432

Notes

(1) 2025 fee income reflects 52 participants (2024: 57)

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)
Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2025
General Income & Expenditure

	2025	2024
Receipts		
Grants & donations	2,398	14,829
Participant fees	0	0
Bank interest	64	55
Total receipts	2,462	14,883
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	490	313
Planning expenses	0	0
Skills development	0	0
Total pre-event	490	313
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
Total event expenditure	0	0
General		
Management meetings	408	144
Trustee expenses	0	0
Subscriptions	306	289
Insurance	392	392
Bank charges	60	60
Total general	1,166	885
Total payments	1,656	1,198
Receipts less Payments	806	13,685

Notes

(1) In 2025, donations were received from Dorset and South Wiltshire Area Quaker Meeting (£2,000) and Cambridge Jesus Lane Quaker Meeting (£234). Personal donations were received from one anonymous donor and two other individuals, totalling £164. No grants were received.

Statement of assets and liabilities at 30 September 2025

The charity had no material assets or liabilities at the end of the period other than the net Reserves (£25,478) 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 and 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 and liabilities.

Restricted funds

As referred to in Note 1 to the consolidated statement of financial activities, a grant was received in 2024 from the Sir James Reckitt Charity for the purpose of providing bursaries to participants who otherwise could not attend. A portion of this remains unspent and is carried forward into 2026.

	2025	2024
Opening balance	2,130	0
Grant received	0	4,000
Bursaries paid	1,787	1,870
Closing balance	343	2,130

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 (at 30 September 2025): 47 St Ladoc Road, Keynsham, Bristol, BS31 2DR

Trustees (at 30 September 2025): Candia Crosfield, Imi Hills, Rebecca Kennard, Anya Moore, Kai Sim, Alex Skinner, Oliver Waterhouse, Michael Wood

Clerk to trustees (at 30 September 2025): Michael Wood

Clerk to management committee: David Holtam

Treasurer: Matthew Baker

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.