

## **Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees**

Monday 8 May 2025, by video conference

### **Minutes**

**Present:** Ursula Fuller, Jo Hills, Chris Jardine, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King (Assistant Clerk), Liz Law, Elizabeth Redfern, Silas Price, Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer), Danielle Walker Palmour

**Prevented:** Catherine Brown, Lis Burch, Kit Fotheringham, John Lewis

**In attendance:** Sarah Donaldson, Senior Change Leader: Quaker Governance; Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk

### **BYMT/25/05/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check**

We welcome Chris Jardine to his first meeting of BYM Trustees. There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest. We convene for the consideration of one item, namely receipt of minute MtM-2025-05a-01 Toilets, supported by a paper considered by Management Team, and shared with us, on the background and reasons for having to make adjustments to the provision of sanitary facilities at Friends House and all other properties that form part of BYM estate.

### **BYMT/25/05/02 Arrangements for sanitary facilities in BYM estate**

#### **Background**

The Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland v. The Scottish Ministers* [2025] has affected the interpretation of some parts of the Equality Act 2010. No provision in respect of protection from discrimination for trans people has been affected, nor has the Gender Recognition Act 2004. Following the ruling, the Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued interim non-statutory guidance, which goes beyond the scope and actual statements in the ruling. This is already contested and subject to legal challenge. Further guidance and a code of practice are expected to follow in due course. Whilst we may hope that this may reverse some of the transphobic aspects of the interim guidance, it is possible that provisions will be confirmed and even extended, and that the status of the guidance may change from non-statutory to mandatory.

#### **Principles**

We endorse the principles stated in minute MtM-2025-05a-01. Our responsibility as trustees is to deliver on the commitments made by Yearly Meeting. Part of minute 31 of Yearly Meeting 2021 reads “*We seek to provide places of worship and community that are welcoming and supportive to trans and non-binary people who want to be among us. Belonging is more than fitting in.*” The property on the BYM estate must be a shining example of this, not only for Friends, but as outreach to all who come into our buildings. We agree that we must respect the dignity of each person to live with integrity, informed by the truth of their lived experience.

We agree that it is not possible or indeed desirable to monitor the use of our facilities, that we will not ask for any disclosure by trans, non-binary, or intersex people that is

not required of cis people, and that we will protect the provision for people with disability to avoid any erosion of dedicated facilities.

We agree that any reports of inappropriate and harassing behaviour should be dealt with quickly and robustly.

### **Consideration of recommendations in minute MtM-2025-05a-01**

1. We endorse the recommendation that all facilities in Friends House and Swarthmoor Hall shall continue to be refurbished, following the pattern of the recent changes to the facilities on the second floor of Friends House, to result in completely self-contained provision. We expect to receive a costed programme of work to be considered by Finance, IT & Property Committee before decisions are taken on the extent and timing of such work, which may be brought forward to be completed sooner.

The term “self-contained” is used throughout this minute to mean separate lockable rooms including a toilet and private washbasin.

2. We accept these recommendations, including that, for the time being, all toilets available for public use at Friends House be designated as open to all genders with the exception of ground and first-floor toilets which would be designated as “trans inclusive” – i.e. for men (including trans men) and women (including trans women). We remain concerned about provision for non-binary and intersex people, and hope that the signage that is going to be adopted will make it clear that people are welcome to select the facilities that best align with their lived experience, as well as ensuring that those who require greater privacy are aware of the provision of self-contained toilets on the second floor.
3. We accept the recommendation to consult with staff over arrangements for toilets located on the third floor of Friends House, and agree to the course of action suggested in the paper with regard to staff changing facilities at Friends House.
4. We accept the recommendation to designate the accessible toilet at Swarthmoor Hall to be a self-contained toilet open to all users.

We note that the Quakers in Britain Yorkshire Centre only has one self-contained toilet facility, and thus no changes are required.

We wish to collect feedback to inform a review of the operation of these arrangements, especially from trans, non-binary and intersex people. A review of such kind should also inform discernment on whether we are still committed to bringing forward the capital expenditure of refurbishing the ground floor toilets. This review should take place at our meeting in September or November. Following the outcome of any legal challenges and/or further guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, we shall assess any risks posed to our freedom of religion.

We want to make sure that everyone using premises belonging to Britain Yearly Meeting is aware that they have the option of self-contained toilet facilities for their greater comfort and privacy. Our commitment to equality requires that we extend the same respect and consideration to every person.

We support plans for staff to offer guidance to Area Meetings and Local Meetings to ensure that they align with our corporate commitment enshrined in Yearly Meeting minute 31/2021.

We would welcome some public advocacy that demonstrates that Quakers in Britain stand by those who are vulnerable and under pressure simply because of who they are, rather than being judged for their individual actions, like everyone else.

We thank staff for the thorough briefing they have prepared for us and appreciate the work that they are having to do under great time constraints.

We hold in the Light all trans, non-binary, intersex, and gender non-conforming people whose lives are being made more difficult. The rights and inclusion of people belonging to these communities is not, and should not be, just about toilets. We will continue to work to make our corner of the Commonwealth of Heaven on Earth a more welcoming and accessible place. This is what Love requires of us.

Marisa Johnson  
Clerk

Kit King  
Assistant Clerk