

**BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST**  
**Trustees' Meeting Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2025, 7pm, Iden Green Pavilion**  
**MINUTES**

Item		
PRESENT	Kent Barker, Tom Dawlings, Martin Dickson (Chairman), Peta Grant, Julie Lewis, Sally Ann Marks, Chris Parkinson, Paul Tolhurst, Mike Taylor. Caroline Levett (Trust Manager).	
1. APOLOGIES	Apologies received from Simon Brown.	
2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING	The minutes of the Trustees' meeting held on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2025 were unanimously approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.	
3. LEASES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>St George's Club</u>  Details of communication between BVT and SGC from January to present and the legal advice received from Thomson Snell &amp; Passmore in November 2024 were circulated. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Lease Group had considered and discussed at length the issues regarding the Club's lease which remain unresolved.</li> <li>○ SGC has been chased a number of times. BVT first wrote to SGC in January 2025 and sent proposed heads of agreement in July, with a proposed new lease due to commence in August. This deadline passed, as did a deadline of September.</li> <li>○ At SGC's request BVT had provided a breakdown of BVT's market rent calculations.</li> <li>○ SGC has not yet accepted BVT's proposed heads of agreement for a new lease and the matter of agreeing a rent is still outstanding.</li> <li>○ The Group had agreed that action needed to be taken and had considered options to move things forward and it was agreed that MD would write to SGC requesting a meeting, no later than October 24<sup>th</sup>, between the Trust and Club chairmen and the two respective surveyors to seek to agree a joint proposal, covering both heads of agreement and the rent, and setting out that if no agreement is reached the matter will go to BVT full trustee meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> October with a recommendation that SGC is served a contractual notice to quit. SGC did not meet this deadline but have now agreed to a meeting in the coming week.</li> <li>○ There was lengthy discussion amongst trustees and it was agreed that those negotiating would act accordingly and advise trustees of the outcome of the meeting for all trustees to reach a decision.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Benenden Bowls Club</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ BVT wrote to BBC in January and February with a request for a meeting to discuss the lease.</li> <li>○ A follow up letter has been sent to BBC, also highlighting the fact that the Club's building is apparently uninsured.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Benenden Pre-School</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rent wef 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 increased to £4,019.09 pa, an increase of 4.4%, in line with existing agreement.</li> <li>○ 12 months' notice given, effective 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025, terminating current lease on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026 and a new lease would expire 31<sup>st</sup> August 2027.</li> <li>○ Rent wef 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026 - £6,000.</li> <li>○ BPS has acknowledged the notice terminating the current lease and is provisionally happy to agree terms, subject to seeing a full lease.</li> <li>○ BPS has indicated it is still keen to move and currently investigating alternative premises.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Woodcock Lane Field</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A grazing licence has been agreed with Don and Jo Masters of Medway Cottages, Iden Green at a fee of £80 for a 51-week period.</li> <li>○ The hedges were in need of some cutting/flailing and this was approved by the Finance Group.</li> <li>○ There was no responsibility for the previous licensees to maintain the hedges, and this has now been written into the new licence.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CL has since received an enquiry from an Iden Green resident about using the field for a pony. This will be considered in more detail in due course.</li> <li>○ SAM is researching local needs housing and the current TWBC housing list. BVT did discuss this with English Rural in the past but there was not a proven need. The housing need for Benenden is fulfilled for 7 years but there will be a call for sites from TWBC. The existing English Rural housing was approved as a rural exception site.</li> </ul>	<b>SAM</b>
4. BENENDEN RECREATION GROUND FENCING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Report from PG, supported by the Property Group, had been circulated setting out a case against fencing and recommending alternative proposals.</li> <li>● However, more urgent and likely very costly is the discovery of honey fungus affecting many of the trees along the north side of the ground, probably requiring trees, stumps and roots to be removed and disposed of appropriately in order to protect the recreation ground and surrounding area.</li> <li>● The area would have to be left fallow for at least 6 months.</li> <li>● Agreed actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Confirm the presence of honey fungus.</li> <li>○ Seek advice from TWBC Tree Officer.</li> <li>○ Obtain quotes to remove the affected trees.</li> <li>○ Seek grants/funding to carry out necessary work.</li> <li>○ Move some posts to help secure the recreation ground.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The fencing report will be considered again at a future date once the honey fungus issue has been dealt with.</li> </ul>	<b>PG/ PT</b>
5. FINANCE, GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE	<p>Minutes of the FGC Group Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> October and the CCLA quarterly report 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September were circulated.</p> <p>Items to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Income and expenditure to 30<sup>th</sup> September</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Total income BVT and BVH Q2 £23,263 (Q1 £24,584.96) - BVT: Q2 £12,331 (Q1 £11,247.04); BVH: Q2 £10,932 (Q1 £11,311.76); Fundraising: Q1 £2,026.16</li> <li>○ Total expenditure BVT and BVH Q2 £20,366 (Q1 £17,816.75) - BVT: Q2 £10,948 (Q1 £7,138.12); BVH: Q2 £9,418 (Q1 £10,678.63).</li> <li>○ Bank account balances 30<sup>th</sup> September: BVT Current Account £4,211.69; BVT Savings Account £22,173.68; BVH £12,168.55. All accounts £38,553.92.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <u>Cashflow to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026</u></li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Current year-end figures are, very approximately, income of £93,500 and expenditure of £73,000.</li> <li>○ This has been achieved through tight control of costs; BPC taking on the grounds' maintenance contract; income from COIF; no large items of expenditure.</li> <li>○ These figures do not include a rent increase for SG Club and do not allow for any additional large items of expenditure.</li> <li>○ Finance review remains ongoing and all spending will remain under strict control.</li> <li>● <u>COIF</u></li> <li>○ Income received - £5,478.75 August 2025; £5,478.75 May 2025</li> <li>○ Holdings value: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 31<sup>st</sup> March total £783,563. Income Fund £759,099; Accumulation Fund £24,464.</li> <li>▪ 30<sup>th</sup> June total £781,078. Income Fund £756,520; Accumulation Fund £24,558.</li> <li>▪ 30<sup>th</sup> September total £780,522. Income Fund £755,803; Accumulation Fund: £24,719.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ SAM had raised a question regarding COIF's performance record. MD raised this with the Trust's account manager at CCLA Investment Management. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The figures show how COIF has performed compared to a basket of investments it has chosen to compare itself against to reflect the aims of the fund - notably to produce an annual total return to investors of inflation plus 4 per cent.</li> <li>▪ COIF is an "active investor," which means it actively picks particular investments which aim to achieve the desired real return. The comparator shows the returns it would have achieved if it was a "passive investor".</li> <li>▪ COIF's recent performance relative to its own ambitions has been disappointing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The company is reviewing its investment strategy to boost returns.</li> <li>○ CCLA is shown to be performing well against rival charity fund managers.</li> <li>○ The FGC Group will continue to monitor the performance of the investment portfolio and Jupiter Asset Management.</li> </ul>	
6. PROPERTY	<p>The minutes of the Property Group meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> October were circulated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Benenden Village Hall</u></li> <li>❖ Storm damage: several ridge tiles blown from roof and repairs carried out. Velux window leak above the balcony. To monitor.</li> <li>❖ Plumbing: various works including essential work to toilets.</li> <li>❖ Lighting: two moving head LED lights purchased and fitted by the Players; donation of some lighting equipment and installation of additional sockets on balcony by Clare Jaques; new external PIR lighting – cost of electrician's time covered by CJ and BVT charged for parts only. MD has written to CJ thanking her for all her input.</li> <li>❖ Car park: longstanding issues remain with parking and large potholes which are getting worse. SAM asked if BVT would be liable for damage to cars. The car park is a private car park and there should perhaps be a sign saying cars parked at own risk.</li> <li>❖ Sound system: JB has recommended that this is replaced. PT advised that equipment will be borrowed from Peter Ellis for the Film Night.</li> <li>❖ Salt bin: the FGC Group had suggested asking KCC to add an additional salt bin close to the entrance of BVH. CL following up.</li> <li>● <u>St George's Hall</u></li> <li>❖ Stone sign plate: Tembo had been asked to quote to clean off loose flaky stone and treat with a sealant.</li> <li>❖ Stopcocks and meter work: Quote awaited from plumber. CL has chased.</li> <li>❖ Roof/chimney: advised that chimney is unlikely capped off and therefore causing damp in Pre-School. Tony Spiers advised he would organise a drone. CP and CL have chased. CP to chase Tony Spiers again and PT to try to access the loft space.</li> <li>❖ Club front window: work now complete.</li> </ul>	<p>CL</p> <p>CP PT</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Front gate post: repair carried out.</li> <li>❖ Fencing: the Property Group had recommended that work be carried out, but in light of other major expenditure identified at Benenden Recreation Ground, and whilst Tembo recovers from his accident, this will now continue to be monitored.</li> <li>• <u>Playgrounds</u></li> <li>❖ CP has carried out some urgent repairs.</li> <li>❖ Tembo had been asked to quote to carry out some maintenance.</li> <li>❖ There are no other items which need urgent attention and general maintenance items will be scheduled when Tembo is fit to return to work.</li> <li>❖ There will be the need to resurface a large part of Benenden playground and this will be included in a forward plan. CL will obtain quotes and consideration will be given to how this will be funded.</li> <li>• <u>Trees</u></li> <li>❖ Tree survey updated by PG and circulated.</li> <li>❖ Includes trees affected by honey fungus.</li> <li>❖ Various tree works required.</li> </ul>	CL
7. VILLAGE HALL	<p>Full report circulated, including full breakdown of expenditure and of hall usage and income from regular and other hirers. Other items covered under Property Group report and minutes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>EXPENDITURE</u></li> <li>○ Expenditure 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September £20,097.</li> <li>○ Electricity supplier changed to Yu Energy wef 1st August 2025 which will produce some savings. Previous account with Scottish Power was in credit for which a refund of £1034.53 was issued. Smart meter now fitted so electricity bills are no longer estimated.</li> <li>○ New broadband contract negotiated with BT at a discounted rate.</li> <li>○ Water supplier is being changed to produce some savings.</li> <li>• <u>INCOME/HIRERS</u></li> <li>○ Income 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September £22,244.</li> <li>○ Current forecast income to year-end is £41,150 (compared to £37,980 2024/25) and 2244 hours usage.</li> <li>○ Enquiries and bookings remain constant.</li> <li>○ Benenden Players are using the hall for auditions and rehearsals but will not be invoiced until after the pantomime performances in January/February 2026.</li> <li>○ New Pilates class on Friday mornings which has taken slot vacated by Charlie Hartley who moved classes to Sissinghurst Village Hall.</li> <li>○ Enquiries are ongoing regarding karate classes at the hall from January 2026.</li> <li>○ Ami Piper School of Dance remains the highest income generating regular hirer with predicted income to year-end of £9,500, 508 hours usage, and 23% of the total income for BVH.</li> <li>○ Benenden Art Fair is the highest income generating 'other hirer' at £1,368.00.</li> <li>○ Increase in bookings from Greenfields School in Biddenden means that it has moved from other to regular hirer.</li> </ul>	
8. HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff performance appraisals have been carried out for CL and JB. JB has yet to complete JG's appraisal.</li> <li>• New Employment Rights Bill is currently going through parliament and is expected to become law later this year with changes effective in 2026 and 2027. BVT conditions of employment and employment policies will be updated as necessary in due course.</li> <li>• The Healthy and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers with five or more employees to have a written health and safety policy. This does not apply to BVT but the Trust has a duty of</li> </ul>	JL/ CL

	care to its employees, and it was agreed that the risks associated with each employed role would be considered and risk assessments specific to each role would be attached to job descriptions.	JL/ CL
9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Benenden Bonfire Society</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ BBS has contacted BVT, as an organisation which received funding, with a request for volunteer support running the event on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>• <u>Funfair Request</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Trustees considered a request from Festivals Amusements about the possibility of hosting a children's fun fair on Benenden Recreation Ground. CL to request more information.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>• <u>Chairman</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ MD advised that he will be stepping down as Chairman from January for personal reasons, and will resign as a Trustee.</li> <li>○ TD will remain as Deputy Chair and it is hoped that a new Chair will be in place by the end of January.</li> </ul> </li>   <li>• <u>Film Night</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ PT gave an update on preparations for BVT Film Night on 6<sup>th</sup> December.</li> <li>○ PT asked for additional volunteers to help, given previous commitments on the evening by many Players' members who had helped previously.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	CL
	Date of next meeting 26 <sup>th</sup> January, 7pm	
	Meeting closed at 8.30pm	