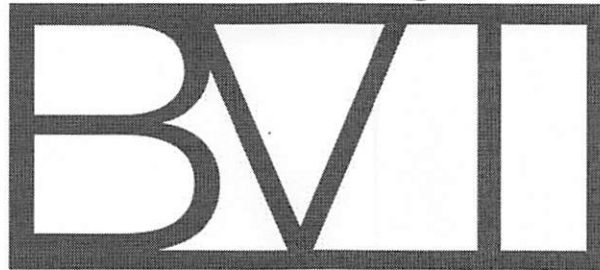


Benenden Village Trust



BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

Report and Financial Statements

Year ended: 31st March 2025

Charity No: 1176351

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31st March 2025

The Trustees present their annual report and financial statements of the Charity for the year ended 31st March 2025. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in Note 1 to the accounts and comply with the Charity's Constitution.

Objectives and activities for the public benefit

The purposes of the Trust are :

1. To further or benefit the residents of the parish of Benenden in the county of Kent and the neighbourhood, without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or other opinions by associating together the said residents and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupation with the objective of improving the conditions of life for the residents. In furtherance of these objects but not otherwise, the Trustees shall have power to establish or secure the establishment of community centres and to maintain or manage or co-operate with any statutory authority in the maintenance and management of such centres for activities promoted by the charity in furtherance of the above objects.
2. To promote for the benefit of the inhabitants of Benenden in the county of Kent and the surrounding area the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of the said inhabitants.

Benenden Village Trust – Organisation and Governance

The Benenden Village Trust was registered with the Charity Commission on 18th December 2017 as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and with the Registered No. 1176351.

Office : Benenden Village Hall, The Street, Benenden, TN17 4DE

Independent Examiner of Accounts : Manningtons Chartered Accountants, 39 High Street, Battle, East Sussex TN33 0EE

Bankers : Barclays Bank plc , Longer House, High Street, Rye TN31 7JL

Manager of the Trust : Caroline Levett

The Trustees during the year were : Kent Barker; Simon Brown; Athena Cripps (retired July 2024); Tom Dawlings; Martin Dickson; Peta Grant (appointed September 2024) Julie Lewis; Sally Ann Marks; Chris Parkinson; Richard Stubbings (retired May 2024); Mike Taylor (appointed January 2025); Paul Tolhurst. BVT thanks them for their hard work on behalf of the trust over many years.

Review of activities during the past year

Benenden Village Trust's 2024-25 year has been dominated by work to get our troubling finances into a healthier balance, in order that BVT can continue to provide recreational facilities for residents of the parish for many decades to come.

Other highlights included important improvements to the structure and running of Benenden Village Hall; the return of regular football matches to the Benenden recreation field after many years of absence; the start of very popular film nights at the village hall to raise funds for the work of the Trust; and our celebration of the centenary of recreational gifts to the village by the first Viscount Rothermere

Charitable Purpose

In the 2023-24 annual report BVT gave details of an in-depth, year-long review, led by trustee Simon Brown, into the historical background to BVT's legally defined charitable purpose and into its financial reserves. The inquiry covered events as far back as the 1920s when a predecessor charity to BVT was founded to oversee generous gifts to Benenden village for recreational purposes by the first Viscount Rothermere. BVT replaced the Harmsworth Memorial Trust (HMT) as the charitable body responsible for the Rothermere assets in 2018.

This historical exercise was deemed necessary because, with the passage of time and changes in the charity responsible for the Rothermere gifts, it had become unclear to trustees precisely how far BVT's charitable purpose extended and the degree to which its financial reserves were "permanent endowment" involving major restrictions on the deployment of these funds.

The review involved extensive discussions with the Charity Commission which were finally concluded during 2024-25. The review reached the following key conclusions, based on discussions with the Charity Commission and legal advice given to HMT in previous decades.

- 1) The Trust's charitable purpose is purely to provide recreational facilities open to all the residents of the parish of Benenden. In particular, "open to all" excludes private fee-paying sports or recreation clubs or other private fee-paying institutions, whether they be charitable or not. To the extent BVT's assets provide a home for such institutions, BVT is legally obliged by its charitable purpose to charge them a full commercial market rent. Trustees have no discretion in this matter.
- 2) The Trust's charitable purpose excludes the support of education.
- 3) Most of the Trust's financial reserves comprise permanent endowment. This means that these assets must stay permanently in the Trust, to ensure it has funds to support its purpose for future generations. However, the income produced by the assets can be used to fund day-to-day operations, maintenance or capital investment in BVT's buildings. The permanent endowment comprised two separate funds until 2024-25 when the Trust was advised by the Charity Commission that these could be combined into one fund. BVT duly combined the two and also took this opportunity to move these funds from the Accumulation Section of the COIF Charitable Investment Fund to the Income section of the fund, where they could produce a regular stream of income for fund operations.

Strategy Review

Linked to BVT's worrying financial situation, and our renewed focus on our charitable purpose, trustees embarked on an in-depth review of the charity's strategy in the autumn of 2023, with the aim of reaching consensus on the best way forward to fulfil the trust's charitable purpose, both now and in future generations, within a constrained financial framework.

The review was led by Paul Tolhurst and a second brain-storming meeting was held at the start of the 2024-25 financial year. A further meeting was envisaged during the 2024-25 year or early in 2025-26 to decide on the way forward in detail. But this meeting was postponed until there was greater clarity on various financial and other matters.

The sessions so far produced a consensus that the trust was asset rich, but cash poor; that the finances needed to be brought back into balance; and that BVT's highest priority assets - in terms of fulfilling its charitable purpose - were Benenden Village Hall, the Iden Green Pavilion, and the recreation grounds and playgrounds at both locations.

Benenden Village Hall

The Village Hall and the adjoining recreation ground saw some important developments during the year.

The Hall's ancient and unreliable boiler, employed to heat the building's central hall, was finally replaced with a new one with a more powerful heat exchanger at a cost of £8,790. In conjunction with this, elderly curtains along the west facing windows of the hall, which were poor at retaining heat, were replaced with more efficient blinds. A further £5,406 was spent on necessary work to upgrade the hall's electricity circuits.

Improvements were also made to the hall's sound system, thanks to work by John Betts and the Arts Society, which sponsored the purchase of the new microphone system. John and members of the Benenden Players also worked together on making huge improvements to the hall's stage lighting.

New and favourable contracts were negotiated with suppliers of both gas and electricity to the hall, but the Trust remains concerned about the hall's electricity bills and, thanks to a new smart meter, will be able to monitor usage much more efficiently from the summer of 2025.

The Trust has been pleased to see the return of football to Benenden Recreation Ground. Our resident team, The Staplehurst Monarchs Development Team, was formed at the beginning of the season and working with John Betts and Wayne Totterdell, the Development Team manager, it made Benenden its home ground. Brand new goalposts were installed thanks to the work of Staplehurst Monarchs, fundraising they carried out and grant funding from the Football Foundation. Other teams which have played at Benenden are Staplehurst Women's, Staplehurst U18s, Staplehurst U16s, Staplehurst U15s, Staplehurst U14s and Staplehurst U15s. Staplehurst U13s also trained there.

BVT would like to remind the community that the car park at the village hall is Trust property and reserved for users of the village hall. This is clearly stated on a notice at the entrance to the car park. There are times when hall users are unable to park because of improper use by others, including parents dropping

off and picking up school children at the primary school. Improper overuse of the car park can also create safety risks, while excessive wear has created ruts in the surface that will be expensive to repair.

Centenary Celebration

During September a ceremony was held to commemorate 100 years of Viscount Rothermere's gifts of recreational facilities to the village. Benenden Village Trust is the charity responsible for overseeing these gifts and their more modern incarnations, such as the village hall.

An English oak sapling was planted in the Northeast corner of the recreation field, replacing an oak which fell in this spot several years ago. Thanks were given to Lord Rothermere and the hope was expressed that his gifts would continue to serve villagers' recreation needs into the next century when the new oak would be mature.

St George's Hall

The key development at St George's Hall during the year was the commissioning by the Trust of Bracketts, the surveyors, to carry out a study of the market leasehold value of the two commercial properties owned by BVT: St George's Club and the Benenden Pre-School.

This followed advice to the Trust, outlined above, that BVT is required to charge market rates for these properties.

Following receipt of Brackett's report, the Trust opened discussions with the Club and the Pre-School about new leases reflecting current market rates.

The Trust also discovered that our water supplier, Castle Water, had been incorrectly billing the Trust and other tenants for water supplies to the Hall for a substantial period of time. Discussions were ongoing into 2025-26 to try to resolve this unhappy tangle.

Financial Review

The Trust recorded an apparently positive cash flow during the year but this was only achieved after drawing down £35,000 from BVT's reserves in the COIF Charities Investment Fund; by a generous £5,000 grant from the Parish Council towards the cost of a new heating boiler at the Village Hall, and £550 from the Bonfire Society to support repairs at our playgrounds. In the absence of these contributions our headline £10,399 surplus of income over expenditure would have turned into a deficit of £30,151 - and this in a year when the Trust clamped down on all but unavoidable expenditure.

In other words, the Trust's income of £115,541, compared to expenditure of £105,141, disguised a continuing underlying drain on financial resources.

The trust holds sizeable financial reserves in the COIF Charities Investment Fund, which totalled £783,563 at the year-end. However all but £24,464 of these holdings comprised Permanent Endowment. This means that these assets must stay permanently in the Trust, to ensure it has funds to support its purpose for future generations. However, the income produced by the assets can be used to fund day-to-day operations, maintenance or capital investment in BVT's buildings.

The Permanent Endowment currently produces income of circa £22,000 a year, which the trust can use to help plug its cash flow deficit. But trustees estimate that to fully offset the deficit and allow for essential repairs to its ageing properties requires roughly an additional £20,000 a year, either from increased revenues, reduced costs or grants and gifts.

The Trust has been taking action in all these areas:

- ❖ Revenues from hiring the Village Hall rose from £36,083 in 2023-24 to £37,980 in 2024-25 and a further increase is currently forecast for 2025-26.
- ❖ Thanks to the initiative of trustee Paul Tolhurst, we held a very successful initial film night during the year and followed that up with a second just after the year-end. Together they raised £2,638 for BVT funds. The first was a showing of the wartime classic Casablanca and the second the iconic 1960s film The Italian Job. More film nights are planned for the year ahead and we hope these will become a regular part of the village calendar. The success of both evenings owed much to a group of volunteers, including members of Benenden Players (Bev and Graham Beveridge, Peter Ellis and Nancy Tolhurst) and lighting effects from Clare Jacques and John Betts, the Village Hall Manager. Particular thanks were given to Grant Matthews of WoW Cooking who contributed (at cost) delicious meals for both events.
- ❖ The Trust initiated discussions with our commercial property tenants at St George's Hall - the St George's Club and the Pre-School - with a view to negotiating new leases and raising the rental of their premises to what the trust has been advised are market rates.
- ❖ To reduce costs, trustees decided to limit spending during the year to essential work only, and important work that was already in train. At the start of the 2025-26 year the Finance Group decided to undertake a review of all lines of expenditure in the hope of eliminating or reducing costs. This is being led by trustee Mike Taylor.
- ❖ The Trust has been extremely fortunate during the year in the generous support it has been given by Benenden Parish Council. The Council gave us a £5,000 grant towards the cost of the village hall's new heating system, installed during the year, and undertook to pay the cost of mowing and hedge cutting at the Benenden and Iden Green recreation grounds for five years from 2025-26 - a saving to BVT of £5,000 to £6,000 a year.

The trust is grateful to other members of the community who volunteered in various ways during the year to perform services that have saved us money or contributed to the general well-being of the parish.

We hope all these actions will help us substantially diminish our negative cash-flow in the coming year but we remain hostage to unexpected large costs resulting from the elderly nature of our two main buildings, Benenden Village Hall and St George's Hall, which have incurred very large repair and replacement costs in recent years, which we see no sign of diminishing.

Trustees' responsibilities in relation to the financial statements

The Charity's Trustees are responsible for preparing a Trustees' annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice). The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures that must be disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the applicable Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations, and the provisions of the Trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included on the charity's website in accordance with legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements.

Approved by the Trustees on and signed on their behalf by:

Martin Dickson (Chairman of Trustees)

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Benenden Village Trust (the Trust) for the year ended 31st March 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of 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 all 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 giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act;
or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do 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.

R Walsh FCCA
Manningtons, Chartered Accountants
39 High Street
Battle, East Sussex TN33 0EE

Date:

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCORPORATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund £	Permanent Endowment £	Recoupment Fund £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Incoming Resources						
Income from Charitable Activities						
Rental income		23,425	-	-	23,425	20,350
Hall income		37,980	-	-	37,980	36,083
Income from Generated Funds						
Investment Income	2	92	10,956	-	11,048	98
Grants, donations, legacies and and similar Income		8,088	-	-	8,088	332
Total Incoming Resources		<u>69,585</u>	<u>10,956</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>80,541</u>	<u>56,863</u>
Resources Expended						
Charitable Activities	3	102,997	-	-	102,997	105,882
Governance Costs	4	1,500	-	-	1,500	1,500
Total Resources Expended		<u>104,497</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>104,497</u>	<u>107,382</u>
Net Income/(Expenditure) Before Investment						
Gains/(Losses)		(34,912)	10,956	-	(23,956)	(50,519)
Transfer between funds	5	10,956	(10,956)	-	-	-
Transfer of recoupment fund to permanent Endowment			267,236	(267,236)	-	-
Net Gains/(Losses) on Investments		20,286	(52,390)		(32,104)	94,271
Net Movement in Funds		<u>(3,670)</u>	<u>214,846</u>	<u>(267,236)</u>	<u>(56,060)</u>	<u>43,752</u>
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total Funds Brought Forward		<u>59,471</u>	<u>544,253</u>	<u>267,236</u>	<u>870,960</u>	<u>827,208</u>
Total Funds Carried Forward		<u>55,801</u>	<u>759,099</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>814,900</u>	<u>870,960</u>

The notes on Pages 10 to 13 form part of these Financial Statements.

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH 2025

		2025		2024	
	Notes	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	6		1,050		1,245
Investments	7		<u>783,563</u>		<u>850,668</u>
			784,613		851,913
Current Assets					
Debtors and prepayments			-		-
Barclays bank accounts		22,773		7,211	
Barclays deposit account		9,013		14,176	
Cash in hand		<u>-</u>		<u>-</u>	
		31,787		21,387	
Current Liabilities					
due within one year	8	<u>1,500</u>		<u>2,340</u>	
Net current assets			30,287		19,047
Net Assets			<u>814,900</u>		<u>870,960</u>
Funds	9				
Unrestricted Funds			55,801		59,471
Permanent Endowment Fund			759,099		544,253
Recoupment Fund			-		267,236
Total Charity Funds			<u>814,900</u>		<u>870,960</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on
and signed on its behalf by

..... Trustee

Date:

The notes on Pages 8 to 11 form part of these Financial Statements

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

1. Accounting Policies

1.1 Basis of preparation of accounts

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.

Benenden Village Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy notes.

1.2 Grants receivable, donations and similar incoming resources

Grants, donations and similar incoming resources are included in the year when received.

1.3 Investment income, rental and hire charges

Income from investment, rental and hire charges is included in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year in which it is receivable.

1.4 Resources expended

Resources expended are included on an accruals basis and include Value Added Tax which cannot be recovered.

1.5 Tangible fixed assets for use by the charity and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets for use by the charity are stated at cost less depreciation.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost or valuation of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following bases:

Fittings and equipment 25% written down value.

1.6 Fixed Asset Investments

Fixed asset investments are included at closing mid-market value at the balance sheet date. Realised gains and losses on investments are calculated as the difference between sale proceeds and their market value at the start of the year or their subsequent cost, and are charged or credited to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period of disposal.

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

1.7 Governance costs

Expenditure on governance costs of the charity includes all expenditure not directly related to the charitable activity or fundraising ventures.

1.8 Funds

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources receivable or generated for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose and are available as general funds. Funds are restricted where the amounts received have a specified purpose.

2. Investment income

	Unrestricted Fund £	Permanent Endowment £	Total £	2024 £
Charities investment fund		2	2	3
Dividends		10,954	10,954	-
Interest on deposits	92	-	92	95
	92	10,956	11,048	98

The Charities investment fund and dividend income received have been treated as Permanent Endowment income and then transferred to unrestricted funds in the Statement of Financial activities to fund operations. Further detail can be found in the Trustees report.

3. Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Fund £	Permanent Endowment £	Total £	2024 £
Running costs	21,440	-	21,440	17,825
St. Georges	13,225	-	13,225	27,215
Iden Green	2,754	-	2,754	2,462
Village Hall expenses	61,888	-	61,888	51,814
Playgrounds	1,078	-	1,078	1,183
Recreation ground	2,417	-	2,417	3,201
Trees	-	-	-	1,560
Depreciation	195	-	195	622
	102,997	-	102,997	105,882

The Charity had on average 3 employees (2024 - 3). Included above are total salaries of £44,542 (2024: £42,799) and pension contributions of £248 (2024: £297).

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025**

4. Governance costs	Unrestricted	Total	2024
	£	£	£
Independent examiner's fee	1,500	1,500	1,500
	<u>1,500</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>1,500</u>

Trustees are not remunerated and no expenses were paid to them in the period.

5. Transfer between funds	Unrestricted	Permanent	Total	2024
	Fund	Endowment fund	£	£
	10,956	(10,956)	-	-
	<u>10,956</u>	<u>(10,956)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

During the year the dividend income from the permanent endowment fund has been transferred to the unrestricted fund to fund day to day operations. See Trustees Report for more information.

6. Fixed assets	Freehold	Fittings and	Total
	Properties	Equipment	£
	£	£	£
Cost or Written Down value			
At 1st April 2024	-	7,864	7,864
Additions	-		0
At 31st March 2025	<u>-</u>	<u>7,864</u>	<u>7,864</u>
Depreciation			
At 1st April 2024	-	6,619	6,619
Charge for the year	-	195	195
At 31st March 2025	<u>-</u>	<u>6,814</u>	<u>6,814</u>
Net book values			
At 31st March 2025	<u>-</u>	<u>1,050</u>	<u>1,050</u>
At 31st March 2024	<u>-</u>	<u>1,245</u>	<u>1,245</u>

The Trustees have decided not to have the open market value of the properties assessed and that, as there was no consideration paid for them, they are shown at nil cost/value.

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025**

6. Fixed Asset Investments

	2025	2024
	£	£
Valuation at 31 March 2024	850,668	806,397
Withdrawals	(35,000)	(50,000)
Revaluation - Unrestricted Fund	20,286	54,253
Revaluation - Permanent Endowment	(52,390)	11,019
Revaluation - Recoupment Fund	(1)	28,999
Net book value at 31 March 2025	783,563	850,668

The Charity's permanent endowment investments consist of income units in the Charities Official Investment Fund, whilst its unrestricted investments are invested in Accumulation units of the same fund. During 2024-25 the permanent endowment funds were moved from the Accumulation section to the Income section.

7. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Accruals and deferred income (Unrestricted)	1,500	2,340
	1,500	2,340

8. Funds

	2025	2024
	£	£
Unrestricted Funds	55,801	59,471
Permanent Endowment Fund	759,099	544,253
Recoupment Fund	-	267,236
	814,900	870,960

Permanent Endowment Funds form part of the charity's permanent charitable assets and only income produced by them can be used to fund operations.

Recoupment Funds form a section of the permanent endowment, being funds built up over 47 years to recoup the cost of building Benenden Village Hall. During the year to 31st March 2025 the Recoupment fund was incorporated into the permanent endowment fund figures.

9. Net Assets By Fund

	Unrestricted Fund	Permanent Endowment	Recoupment Fund	Total	2024
	£	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets	25,514	759,099	-	784,613	851,913
Current Assets	31,787	-	-	31,787	21,387
Current Liabilities	1,500	-	-	1,500	2,340
	55,801	759,099	-	814,900	870,960