

Friends of Shanklin Theatre AGM 2026 Minutes

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Paul Harris, Friends Chairman, welcomed everyone. There were 43 members in attendance, 10 members had sent their apologies.

2. MINUTES OF 2025 AGM

The minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting were agreed as a true copy and duly signed by the Chairman.

3. ANNUAL FRIENDS REPORT

The Chairman wished everyone a good evening and thanked them all for coming along to the 2026 AGM. He confirmed that apologies had been received from 10 members. The Chairman asked if questions could be kept until the end as, hopefully, many questions would be answered as we went through the various reports. Also, as this was the Friends AGM the Friends Committee were not best placed to answer questions on staffing or volunteering issues. Having said that, there were representatives of Theatre management present and they would do their best to answer any queries.

Minutes of 2025 AGM

As advised in the notification issued to all Members, a copy of the Minutes of last year's AGM had been made available on the Friends area of the Theatre website. The Chairman asked if anyone had any comments. There were none, so the Chairman signed the Minutes as a true record.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman advised that it had been another very busy year for the Friends and the Committee. Instead of changes to the Theatre's organisation, however, this year had seen significant changes to the membership and roles of the Friends Executive Committee. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to the Committee members, new and retiring, who had provided him with such excellent advice and support throughout the year. They all work incredibly hard, all wearing several hats, and contribute massively to the running of the Theatre, both visibly and, crucially, behind the scenes.

The two main Committee changes are that Jacqui Robertson stood down as Friends Promotion Officer at the end of 2025 and Peter Frankling stood down as Treasurer at the end of March 2026. Jacqui's retirement presented a significant challenge as she had, over many years, developed the role to such an extent that it was necessary to find 5 other people to cover all the aspects of the role. The Chairman confirmed that Mandy Beatty had been recruited to take on certain aspects of the Promotion Officer role, and Moira Erwin had taken on a new role of Friends Events Officer, which she would give details on later.

As regards the position of Treasurer, the Chairman extended his personal thanks to Peter Frankling for the excellent job he had done over many years, combining as he did, the role of Treasurer with the very demanding role of Front of House Manager. The Chairman confirmed that the role of Treasurer had been picked up by Ashley Turner, a brand new Volunteer to the Theatre and an experienced accountant. Ashley has brought new insight to the role and the way that the Friends accounts will be managed. He would be presenting the annual Finance Report later in the meeting which would give a flavour of Ashley's new approach.

The Chairman confirmed that during the year, he was pleased to attend the Friends Summer event at Luccombe Hall Hotel which was a sell out again and a real success. As usual, there was great entertainment and excellent food. This year's event will be at the same location, and is, again, a sellout.

The Chairman confirmed that the Friends monthly Coffee, Cake and Chat mornings, organised previously by Jacqui Robertson and now by Moira Erwin, following a cameo by Mandy Beatty, pending Moira's appointment, continue to be a success with a large variety of activities. These have included craft and plant sales, a talk by Matt Wheeler, a local PCSO, about avoiding scams and keeping safe online, and a very well attended talk by John Cooper from the Wildheart Trust in Sandown about, amongst other things, Benji and Balu, the rescue bears.

Of course, one of the Friends' primary aims is to raise funds for the benefit of the Theatre, and the Chairman confirmed that Ashley would be giving details of the "ins and outs" of the Friends finances later. The Chairman highlighted some key items of expenditure, which include funding new laptops and PCs around the Theatre; a new lighting bar in the auditorium – replacing this was a condition of the Theatre's electrical safety sign-off – replacement radios for the Front of House team and removing Virginia Creeper from the rear of the building. Over the last 24 months, the Friends had contributed over £51,000.00 towards the cost of maintaining and improving the Theatre. As could be seen from the accounts, we still have plenty of funds available, which is in no small part due to the amazing efforts of our Prize Draw team. The Chairman confirmed that when he became Friends Chairman he was determined that he would not be standing here with tens of thousands of pounds in the bank account when there is plenty of work needing doing around the Theatre and he assured everyone that the Committee were doing their best to spend the money as quickly, but also as sensibly, as possible.

The Chairman noted that Friends membership is now standing at an all-time high of 747. Indeed, in March alone there were an additional 20 members, and we are averaging about 15 new members each month.

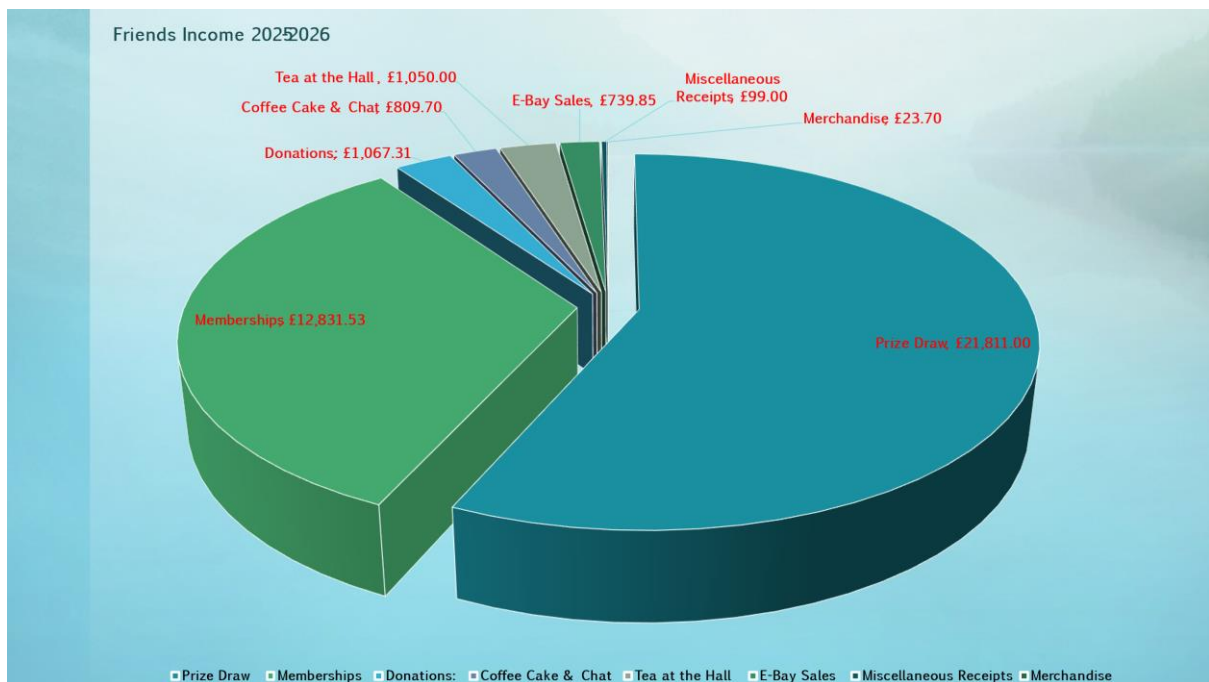
Finally, the Chairman said a massive thank you to all those present, as Friends of the Theatre, for the tremendous support they had given and continued to give to our amazing Theatre.

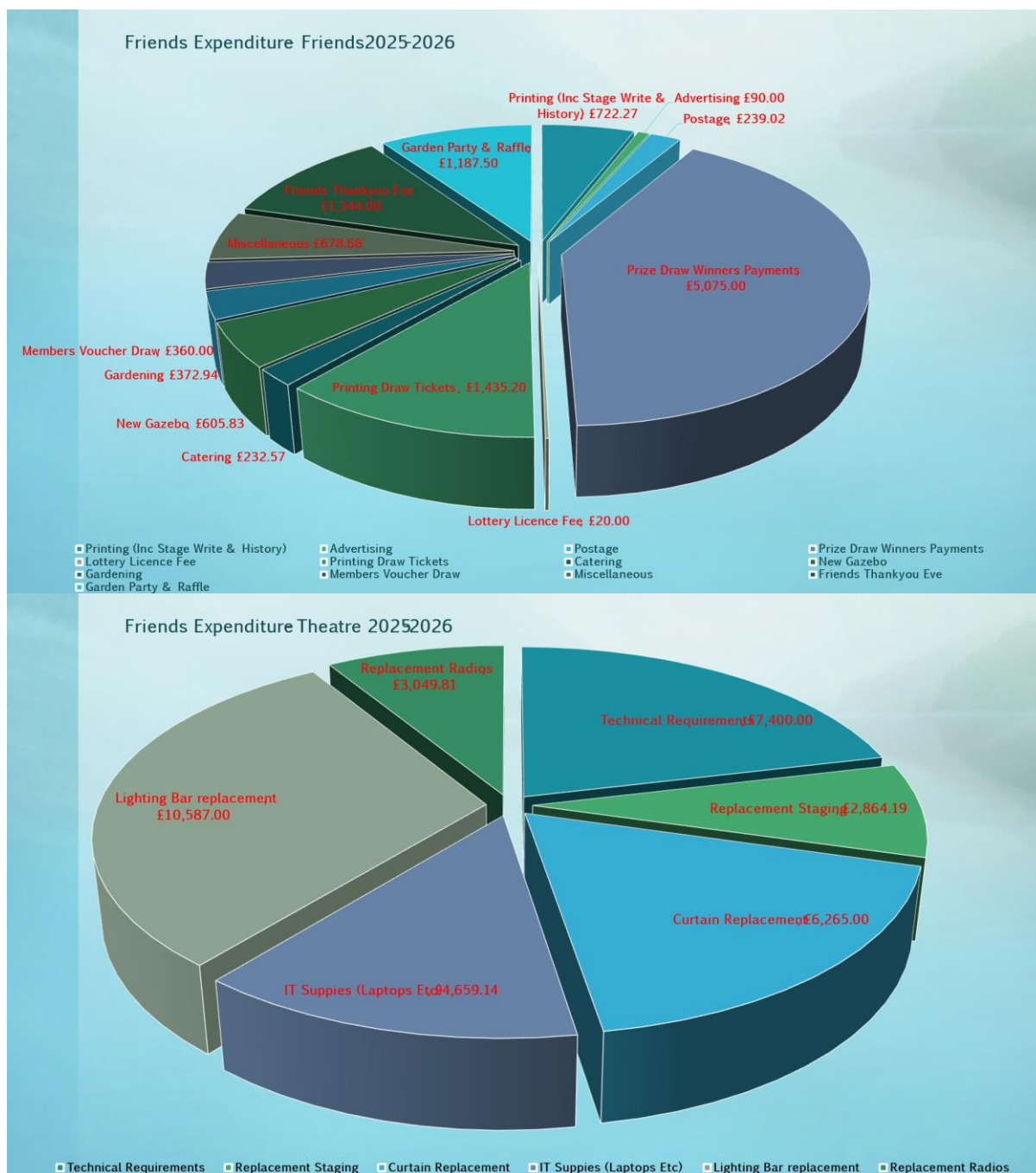
4. TREASURER'S REPORT 2024- 2025

Friends Summary

Accounts 2025 – 2026

Opening Balance	April 2025	£34,958.46	
Income	2025 – 2026	£38,432.09	
Expenditure Theatre	2025 – 2026	£34,825.14	
Expenditure Friends	2025 – 2026	£12,363.01	£26,202.40
Closing Balance	March 2026	£26,202.40	





Auditing of the accounts

Shanklin Theatre and Community Trust assume responsibility for inspecting and scrutinising the Friends accounts. These are now included with their accounts for auditing by Accountants Bright Brown.

5. UPDATES FROM FRIENDS PROMOTION OFFICER

Mandy Beatty introduced herself and confirmed that she had been a volunteer at Shanklin Theatre for 5 years. She advised that she is a member of the Prize Draw team and had decided to expand her role when this opportunity came up. Mandy also organizes social events for the volunteers with her partner Paul and daughter Katie's help.

Mandy took over the Friends Promotions Officer role at the beginning of 2026 and had also organized the first 4 “Coffee, Cake & Chat” speakers of the year.

Mandy works closely with Moira Erwin, the Friends Events Officer who joined us in March. Moira has now taken over organizing the Coffee, Cake and Chat speakers for the remainder of 2026. Mandy had also organized the annual Volunteers Thank You Event in February and the Friends Event “Tea at the Hall” in July. Mandy also sends out emails to Friends paid up members with regular updates and newsletters. Mandy also promotes events on the Friends Facebook page. Mandy’s plans for 2026 include trying to get more corporate sponsors from the local area to support the theatre and to continue promoting the Friends of Shanklin Theatre.

6. UPDATE FROM FRIENDS EVENTS OFFICER

Moira Erwin introduced herself as the Friends Events Officer, having joined the Friends Executive Committee in March.

Moira confirmed that she is primarily responsible for identifying topics and presenters for the Coffee Cake & Chat coffee mornings that take place on the first Saturday of the month, excluding January when the theatre is ‘dark’ and the holiday month of August.

Continuing the success of the programme of events in 2025 Moira was pleased to say that there is a full programme of presentations for 2026 and all the details are on the Theatre’s website. We are focussing on subjects and organisations from the Island which we hope appeal to our Saturday guests.

The coffee mornings run from 10am to midday and the presentations last for about 20 minutes with the opportunity to put questions to the speaker. There is always plenty of time to indulge in coffee & home-made cakes before, during and after the presentations.

During the morning there is also opportunity to discuss the various volunteer roles available in the Theatre.

Moira confirmed that her team also take part in a number of events outside the Theatre. We have slightly reduced the number of external events this year whilst we re-evaluate the promotional benefits for the Theatre. This year we will be at the Ability Dogs Gala on Saturday 6th June, we will be at the Chale Show on 1-2 August and the Sandown Regatta on Sunday 9th August.

Going forward, Moira is currently working on the 2027 schedule. Moira had already identified a number of topics and had agreement from six individuals or organisations with three confirmed bookings which is very encouraging at this early stage of planning. This shows the depth of support for the Theatre from the wider community and that they are keen to participate in our events.

Moira confirmed that she is very happy to receive suggestions for topics for the Coffee Cake & Chat mornings. Two of the confirmed presentations for next year are from suggestions made by two of our volunteers.

7. UPDATE ON CURRENT FRIENDS BENEFITS

The Chairman confirmed that he would like to run through the benefits currently available to Friends. These are as follows:

Reward scheme – receive £1 credit to Theatre account on qualifying shows. These can be redeemed against future ticket purchases

Bar Discount – 10% discount on presentation of Friends Discount Card

Show bookings – Advance notice of forthcoming “big” shows; priority bookings; discounts on ticket prices

Stage-Write – Quarterly Newsletter with latest news on the Friends and the Theatre

Members Free Quarterly Draw – 3 x £10 Theatre Vouchers. All members included automatically

Free ticket exchange for same show – non-member cost is £2 per ticket

Exclusive Friends Events – for example, the main Summer event “Tea at the Hall”

8. RATIFICATION OF FRIENDS COMMITTEE 2025-2026

As a quorum was present at the AGM 2026 meeting a vote was held and the Committee was unanimously adopted, as follows:

Chairman – Paul Harris

Treasurer – Ashley Turner

Promotion Officer – Mandy Beatty

Events Officer – Moira Erwin

Secretary – Liz Hinkes

9. THEATRE OPERATIONS – FUTURE PLANS

Shanklin Theatre Ltd Managing Director gave the following outline of the Theatre’s plans and current situation.

As we begin Volunteer’s Week 2026, it feels especially fitting to open today by thanking all of you, and our volunteers, for the extraordinary commitment you give to this Theatre. Across every department, every show, every audience welcome, our Volunteers’ contribution keeps this beautiful old building alive as a centre of entertainment for our Island community and its visitors.

I’ve said many times since becoming Managing Director that, in today’s economic climate, this Theatre simply could not operate without your support. The Friends were pioneers back in 2008 when the Theatre was saved, and the volunteer-led model we have built is now being followed by Theatres across the UK. You should be proud to be part of that legacy.

I also want to acknowledge our small but dedicated employee team – in finance, technical and stage operations, box office, bookings, administration, and front of house. Their professionalism underpins everything we do.

Speaking of front of house, I want to highlight the new role taken on by Tony Needham last June. In less than a year, Tony has established and led a strong team of Duty Managers and co-ordinated our ushers, ensuring that every performance runs smoothly and safely. It has made a real difference.

Over the past year, we have continued to attract major names in music and comedy, alongside high-quality tribute acts and, of course, our valued amateur and youth groups – Shoreline, Island Savoyards, Theatretrain, Curtain Call Creative and others. Booking and developing these relationships requires real expertise, and I’m grateful that, alongside Roger Coleman, Vic Farrow continues to lend us his considerable knowledge even after stepping down as Theatre Chairman and before that the role of Managing Director which he held for many years.

Vic, we owe you a tremendous amount for your support of the Theatre over many years.

On that note, we are delighted to welcome Ben Pearson as the new Chair of Shanklin Theatre. Ben brings significant commercial and business experience, and we look forward to the leadership he will provide. It has also been a busy year for Theatre maintenance. Under the guidance of Neil Reader, the Maintenance Team has tackled both small and major projects. One of the most visible was the installation of new windows above the Theatre steps. Thanks to a generous legacy, the cost of the windows was covered – and thanks to Neil's team, who undertook much of the preparatory work, we saved a significant amount of money. Another major project was the long – awaited replacement of the fly tower roof. After years of leaks – and the occasional unwelcome waterfall onto the stage – the new roof was fitted in January. Unfortunately, January turned out to be one of the wettest on record, and the work had to extend until February. Despite the conditions, the contractor, John Newton, completed the job, and we are extremely grateful. We now have a secure roof that should serve the Theatre well for many years.

I also want to thank Graham Broadbent and his team for the enormous task of removing all the stage equipment – the flies, the hemp ropes and the lighting, to protect them from the inevitable water ingress during the works. It was a huge undertaking and absolutely essential.

And that brings me to the Friends. Your fundraising has once again enabled us to purchase vital new and replacement stage equipment and support other Theatre needs throughout the year. Linda and her team of prize draw ticket sellers work tirelessly, and their efforts make a real tangible difference. On behalf of the Theatre, thank you for everything you have enabled us to achieve.

So, in closing: thank you to our volunteers, who keep this Theatre operating day after day. Thank you to our Friends members, whose support, fundraising, and belief in what we do continue to sustain us. Thank you for caring – truly caring – about this Theatre and its future.