

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: NI032251 (Northern Ireland)
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: NIC 102004

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025**

for

Belfast Film Festival Limited
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

Lynn Drake & Co Ltd
Chartered Accountants
1st Floor
34 B-D Main Street
Moira
Co. Armagh
BT67 OLE

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for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

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Belfast Film Festival Limited

Reference and Administrative Details
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

TRUSTEES

Dr Laurence McKeown Treasurer
Kevin Jackson (resigned 5/4/2024)
Mark Cousins
Lisa Barros D'sa
Lucy Baxter
Nisha Tandon
Marie-Therese McGivern
Maeve McAdam (appointed 5/4/2024)

COMPANY SECRETARY

Michele Devlin

REGISTERED OFFICE

23 Donegall Street
Belfast
Co. Antrim
BT1 2FF

**REGISTERED COMPANY
NUMBER**

NI032251 (Northern Ireland)

**REGISTERED CHARITY
NUMBER**

NIC 102004

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Lynn Drake & Co Ltd
Chartered Accountants
1st Floor
34 B-D Main Street
Moir
Co. Armagh
BT67 OLE

CHIEF EXEC OFFICER

Ms Michele Devlin

FINANCIAL ADVISERS

CRN Financial Group
1 Forestgrove Business Park
Newtownbreda Road
Belfast
BT86AW

Belfast Film Festival Limited

Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2025. The trustees have adopted the provisions of 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 2019).

Belfast Film Festival Limited

Report of the Trustees

for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to promote a diverse and dynamic programme of film events, and outreach activity, which is entertaining, provocative and provides a platform for cultural expression and debate.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim 1

Deliver the annual Belfast Film Festival and Docs Ireland, which will exhibit local and international films

Related Objectives:-

- (i) Organise a citywide film festival each year in November and a documentary festival in June involving film exhibition, seminars, workshops and master classes.
- (ii) Bring national and international film premieres to Belfast.
- (iii) Showcase the work of local film - makers
- (iv) Provide an industry marketplace as part of Docs Ireland.

Aim2

Enhance the profile & status of the Belfast Film Festival within the cultural life of Belfast

Related Objectives:-

- (i) Actively contribute to the establishment of a Belfast Film Centre
- (ii) Develop a year-long programme of film events.
- (iii) Develop and implement an effective PR strategy.
- (iv) Contribute towards making Belfast a more attractive destination for visitors.

Aim3

Promote access to film and the film making process

Related Objectives

- (i) Build relationships between local communities and the film industry
- (ii) Facilitate opportunities for volunteers to gain experience in film related events.
- (iii) Consult communities in order to enhance their involvement in the Festival programme.
- (iv) Contribute to enhancing the profile of the local film industry.

Aim4

Maintain a sustainable structure and funding base for the Belfast Film Festival

Related Objectives

- (i) Obtain funding for BFF activities
- (ii) Employ staff to carry out BFF's programme of work
- (iii) Undertake regular planning, monitoring and evaluation of BFF strategy and activities
- (iv) Develop and implement a training plan.
- (v) Build partnerships as required with relevant stakeholders

Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Public benefit

The purpose of Belfast Film Festival Ltd is to present, promote, organise, provide, manage and produce such specialized (cultural, lesser seen, archive) film screenings and events, community based film activities, film related outreach work in marginalized communities, broadcasts, concerts, musical pieces, entertainment and exhibitions, whether on any premises of the Company or elsewhere, as are conducive to the promotion, maintenance, improvement and advancement of education or to the encouragement of the art of film, or the arts.

The direct benefits flowing from this purpose include;
the promotion and enjoyment, better understanding and general advancement of the arts and film, for the benefit of the general public in Northern Ireland through exposure to, as an audience member or participant through outreach work in marginalized communities and schools, the arts and film.

These benefits can be demonstrated by regular internal and external qualitative assessment; audiences and participation; photo and video documentation; regular reporting of charitable activities and financial performance in annual reports, audited annual accounts, and reports to grant funders.

The purposes of our charity will not lead to any harm, although there are policies and procedures in place to address certain risks, for example

- safeguarding and child protection policies
- health and safety policy
- code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- equal opportunities policy
- disability policy and safeguarding policy.

The charity's beneficiaries are the general public in Northern Ireland. Specific projects may address the needs of specific sections of society (e.g. access to film and the arts project targeting social needs in particular electoral wards).

The only private benefit flowing from the purpose is artists and filmmakers benefit from exposure to a wider audience, which may result in their gaining a higher profile. This is incidental to the achievement of the purpose and, while a private benefit, is necessary to help the charity achieve our charitable purpose.

Report of the Trustees

for _Jb_ e Year Ended 31 March 2025

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Docs Ireland was delivered 18-23 June 2024 with highlights including

Oscar and BAFTA-winning documentary director, Asif Kapadia who received the Outstanding contribution to Documentary.

David Hammond - Outstanding Contribution to Irish Documentary - series of Hammond screenings well attended by both young and old and a great first collaboration with the Seamus Heaney centre, which may well lead to further events. A particular positive outcome has been discussion of a new digital restoration of the Hammond works, potentially in conjunction with other major partners at BBC and Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive.

The largest event was WOMENFOLK, an amazing collaboration with local archives in partnership with NI Screen DFA and musical artists. Great audience feedback. Some partners have already mentioned ideas of a touring version of WOMENFOLK - could result in a life after Docs Ireland.

The industry marketplace is clearly showing its importance in the development of projects:

The winner of the 2024 Pull Focus competition for Irish documentary features was *The Flats*, about the residents of Belfast's New Lodge estate, whose linear journey can be traced back to the first of the Docs Ireland festival in 2019 and again in 2023. Significantly in 2023, the filmmakers met with CPH:DOX Director of Programming Mads Mikkelsen, who programmed the film in the world-renowned Danish festival CPH:DOX Main Competition. The film went on to win the main DOX Award at the festival, it gained great recognition, came home to win this year's Pull Focus Award.

Another notable project from the market is *No Place Like Home* dir Myrid Carten, which had its first industry outing at the Docs Ireland Marketplace in 2019, winning its first award at the NI Screen Development Pitch. The project went on to be funded by Screen Ireland, Doc Society, Netherlands Film Fund and New Dawn, and will premiere in late 2024 / early 2025. These, and other projects, show the importance of Docs Ireland marketplace as the incubator for documentary success worldwide. It remains the only industry market for documentary on the island of Ireland where projects can find finance, sales and distribution.

35 Irish, UK and international projects took part in the market. Most projects were chosen by open submission, and two were nominated by festival partners at Doc Society and East Doc Platform. 7 of the participating projects were also a part of the IGNITE Talent Development programme, with this being their first market pitching experience.

This year we introduced the pilot of the 'Doc-Shop' section of the marketplace, which invites a selection of new films screening at Docs Ireland 2024 that are seeking sales and distribution to meet with buyers.

Training programme, IGNITE-Docs, has now completed 4 successful editions, and we are delighted that the projects of various alumni are being financed and completed. Notably, the project *Beyond the Fold*, directed by Ross McClean, is almost complete, and has been funded by Doc Society, NI Screen and Screen Ireland, and acquired by ARTE SWR.

Another project, *Searching for Space*, by Cara Holmes, is now in active production, having been funded by Screen Ireland, Coimisiun na Meán, RTE and New Dawn. In addition to this, a large number of the projects have received development funding through either NI Screen or Screen Ireland and are making their way through the development and financing process.

Belfast Film Festival Limited

Report of the Trustees **for the Year Ended 31 March 2025**

Belfast Film Festival took place 31st October to 9th November 2024.

Overall, the year in film was not a particularly robust one, with programmers not having the same choice of bumper and critically acclaimed films as 2023. This is also borne out in the awards season.

The decision was taken during early planning that the festival would decrease the overall number of screenings and events - not only due to the choices available, but also for financial reasons.

Festival kicked off perfectly on Halloween Night with the Irish premiere of Aislinn Clarke's Irish language horror *Frewaka*, produced by Dermot Lavery (DoubleBand) and Patrick O'Neill (Wildcard). Closing night (9 November) was the UK premiere of *The Wise Guy* directed by Sam O'Mahony, produced by Leon Coole and executive produced by Belfast-based Out of Orbit Films (*Ordinary Love*, *The Dig*).

Festival survey shows local/home-grown and Irish film overall is the highest category for audience interest - 87.68%, followed by new cinema 64.49% and 60.14% for international cinema.

One of Ireland's most prolific actors was celebrated as Lalor Roddy was presented with the Realta award for Outstanding Contribution to Irish Film in recognition of his many years of excellence on the big screen.

To mark the 40th anniversary of Pat Murphy's astonishing film *Anne Devlin*, the festival will presented a special screening with a Q&A with Pat Murphy, Brid Brennan who played the title role and cinematographer, Thaddeus O'Sullivan.

Anecdotal comments in the marketing survey attest to the popularity of panel events and Q&As, but audience would like the Chair to be properly briefed on the subject! Site-specific screenings are not particularly liked - something which BFF has undertaken for many years which should be reviewed.

The international competition will be reviewed. It is a resource-heavy and costly section of the festival and the consideration is that until we secure a new sponsorship, we may have to defer.

Although not part of the main festival, the new Business Development Manager made inroads with Translink and hosted a Christmas screening in the new Grand Central Station. We are hopeful this will lead to further engagement.

Outreach

We continue to make good use of our own LED mobile screen for partnership events throughout the summer.

Summer Cinema in the grounds of Belfast City Hall was delivered over 2 Sundays this year. The 2 days of 4 film screenings each day saw approximately 6,000 admissions in total.

A new partnership this year with Maritime Mile delivered an evening of Riverbox screenings along the Lagan. As a trial run, they wanted a small event, which was attended by around 100 people. We are in discussion about next year and whether they want something bigger.

Pride on the Big Screen, which took place on the Belfast Stories site, was a full day and evening of family fun and film screenings where around 4,500 people engaged.

Belfast Exposed's Late Night Arts strand delivered over 6 weeks with film screenings in our Beanbag Cinema resulted in around 1,000 total admissions

Belfast Film Festival Limited

Report of the Trustees **for the Year Ended 31 March 2025**

The Normal Cinema Club, also in the Beanbag Cinema, continued its eclectic programming with full capacity of 70 over 3 nights, while around 20 people attended an LGBT Heritage Project film night in the Beanbag Cinema

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial position

The company had net outgoing resources for the year of £169 (2024: net outgoing resources of £95,741), which reflected the completion of a number of projects during the year. At 31 March 2025 Unrestricted funds decreased by £16,819, while restricted funds increased by £16,650.

Reserves policy

The charity's policy is to retain a level of free reserves, which matches the needs of the organisation both at the current time and in the foreseeable future. The reserves required should be sufficient to meet committed grant expenditure and the running costs for a period equivalent to six months annual expenditure. The charity has developed a plan to establish and maintain this agreed level of free reserves. The charity will continue to monitor compliance with this policy on a regular basis and the Committee will review the appropriateness of the policy annually.

FUTURE PLANS

We have an aim to double our audience figures annually over the next 5 years. Future planning is hampered by the fact that the organisation works on an annual funding basis, it would benefit greatly from a longer-term funding agreement from core funders.

With the recruitment of a new, dynamic team it is intended to raise the festival to a whole new level, with innovative and exciting initiatives including an international competition.

Over the coming 4 years we plan to continue to build audiences for all our activity, in particular we will focus on audience building for the new Belfast Stories site.

We continue to seek and apply for new funding revenues.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

The charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust, and constitutes a limited company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006.

Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Organisational structure

LIST OF BOARD MEMBERS

Marie- Therese McGivern (Co-chair)

Marie-Therese recently served as Principal and Chief Executive of Belfast Metropolitan College. Prior to that, she was Director of Development at Belfast City Council where she was responsible for economic development, arts, tourism, events and community services. She is Chair of Maritime Belfast and also Chair for the Employability and Skills Advisory Board for the £10b Belfast Region City Deal. She is a Non-Executive Director of the Strategic Investment Board for Northern Ireland.

Lisa Barros D'Sa (Co-chair)

Film director, writer and producer; studied English at University of Oxford; MA in Screenwriting from London University of the Arts. Born in Belfast, she is best known for co-directing and producing Saipan (2025) and Ordinary Love (2019); co-directed the films Good Vibrations and Cherrybomb with Glenn Leyburn; Based on three of these three 'strikingly different' feature films, the Irish Times described Barros D'Sa and Leyburn as "the most important contemporary filmmakers working from Northern Ireland".

Dr. Laurence McKeown (Treasurer)

Author, playwright, screen writer 2001 - present; Writer of the Les Blair directed feature film H3, co-written with long-time collaborator Brian Campbell (d.2005); The pair wrote two plays together, The Laughter of Our Children (2001), and A Cold House (2003); first solo play, The Official Version, (2006); Two Roads West with Kabosh Theatre company. Writer of the Green and Blue, Belfast International Festival (2016). Produced by Kabosh: Publications Nor Meekly Serve My Time: The H-Block Struggle 1976-1981 (1994, co-written with Brian Campbell and Felim O'Hagan); Out Of Time: Irish Republican Prisoners, Long Kesh, 1972-2000 (2001); Threads (2019); Time Shadows: A Prison Memoir (2021);

Mark Cousins

Northern Irish director and writer based in Edinburgh; he is a prolific documentarian, directed A Sudden Glimpse to Deeper Things, 2024 Winner of Best Film Award at Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, known for his 15-hour documentary The Story of Film: An Odyssey (2011); interviewed many famous filmmakers and actors including Jane Russell, David Lynch, Martin Scorsese and Roman Polanski in the TV series Scene by Scene; presented the BBC cult film series Moviedrome from June 1997 to July 2000; He introduced 66 films for the show; has made over 50 documentaries; was director of Edinburgh Film Festival; Cousins joined the jury of the BFI London Film Festival 2021; Co-Artistic Director of 'Cinema China', 'The Ballerina Ballroom Cinema of Dreams' and 'A Pilgrimage' with Tilda Swinton; along with Antonia Bird, Robert Carlyle and Irvine Welsh, Cousins is a director of the production company 4Way Pictures; Between 2001 and 2011 wrote for Prospect; now writes for Sight & Sound and Filmkrant.

Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Nisha Tandon

Nisha is a social entrepreneur, founder & director of ArtsEkta - one of the few organisations on the island of Ireland promoting ethnic arts, culture and heritage. She founded ArtsEkta in 2006 after pinpointing a gap for quality ethnic arts engagement in the sector. Studied and obtained a degree from the National School of Drama in New Delhi. Former member of the executive board of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland; Member of the Intercultural Arts Steering Group which oversees the implementation of the Intercultural Arts Strategy developed by ACNI; Member of Belfast City Council's Festival Forum strategy sub group; NI representative for Voluntary Arts BAME Advisory UK Panel; Former trustee of Cahoots NI Theatre Company; Community Arts Forum; European Mela Network; Member of UTV's Regional Advisory Board; Founding member of 'Stronger Together', a collaboration of organisations in the field of racial equality, supporting an integrated community development approach to tackling racism, and promoting good relations.

Lucy Baxter

Lecturer, Centre for Documentary Research, QUB

18 years' experience in TV, film and digital content; ran a production company in London; producer and director of documentary, drama, independent film and digital content for TV/digital broadcast and theatrical release; Research currently is across creative enterprise, creative producing in documentary and fiction, Irish cross border co-production and the applications of digital content and XR/ virtual reality film in health and social care, particularly emotional trauma; produced and directed an animated film; PI on a Future Screens NI funded VR project as part of her inter disciplinary research project Mental Abuse Matters, which is the subject of her PhD.

Michele Devlin (Company Secretary) - CEO

PROGRAMMING SUB COMMITTEE - Mark Cousins, Michele Devlin

STAFFING SUB COMMITTEE - Laurence McKeown, Michele Devlin

PATRONS

Terry George - Film-maker

Hotel Rwanda, In The Name of the Father, Some Mother's Son, Reservation Road, The Shore

David Holmes - Composer, Producer

Good Vibes, I Am Belfast, Oceans 11, Five Minutes of Heaven, Cherrybomb, Ordinary Love

William Crawley - Presenter BBCNI

Stephen Rea - Actor

Multiple titles including V for Vendetta, Michael Collins, The Crying Game; Founding member Field Day Theatre.

Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Wider network

LIST OF STAFF MEMBERS

Michele Devlin (CEO); Mary Lindsay (Head of Marketing); Sara Morrison (Inclusion/ Audience Development) Resigned November 2024; Moyra Lock (provides Finance/Admin Services (Freelance)).

Temp Staff 2024-25

Jessica Kiang (Programmer); Rose Baker (Programmer); Stuart Sloan (Programmer); Roisin Geraghty (Marketplace and Industry Co-ordinator); Ronan McCann (Box Office Manager); Simeon Costello (Box Office Support); Benen Dillon (Events Manager); James Hall (Programming Assistant); Tresca Mallon (Marketing Assistant); Mitchell Harper (Guest Coordinator); Lizzie Howard (Box Office Manager); Aine Grogan (Volunteer Coordinator); Jennifer Hamilton ((Social Media Assistant).

Risk management

The principles of good governance are embedded within all aspects of Belfast Film Festival Limited, operations with management and staff being keenly aware of the Boards responsibility of ensuring that the organisation protects itself from financial exposure and reputational damage, A close working relationship is maintained between the Board and management to ensure that operationally staff are aware of the standards required of them by the Board and the Board are always in a position to provide guidance and support to management in the discharge of their duties. This two way relationship is the key feature of Belfast Film Festival Limited governance arrangements and is a key strength in the company.

A conscientious approach to ensuring that contractual project requirements are achieved has been maintained at all times both in the accounting period being reported on and since Belfast Film Festival Limited establishment. Very tight financial controls on expenditure and all financial commitments are maintained at all times and project staff have been trained and have become experienced in budgetary controls. In both these areas ie Project delivery and financial controls management all staff have established close working relationships with funding organisations to ensure all mandatory standards are consistently achieved. Board representatives also actively engage with funding bodies.

The Board, management and staff are fully aware that the nature of the work in which Belfast Film Festival Limited is involved can bring with it a high level of scrutiny to ensure that all activities are fully compliant with funding requirements and, therefore, beyond reproach. The Board of Belfast Film Festival Limited is, therefore, greatly reassured of the company's compliance with the highest of standards of governance on the basis that all monitoring and evaluation of project delivery demonstrates achievement of all funders objectives and that funders' audits and vouching of financial expenditure and the independent examiners report confirm compliance with both probity and regularity in the use of monies received.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Belfast Film Festival Limited for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) including Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES - continued

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 8 September 2025 and signed on its behalf by:



Michele Devlin - Secretary

**Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of
Belfast Film Festival Limited**

I report on the accounts of the company for the year ended 31 March 2025, which are set out on pages fourteen to twenty nine.

Respective responsibilities of charity trustees and examiner

As the charity's trustees (and also the directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under Section 65 of the Charities Act
- follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under Section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of the independent examiner's report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under Section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under Section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act. The examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with Section 386 of the Companies Act 2006
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of Section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the 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
4. That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent examiner's statement

Since your charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a listed body. I can confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention.



Mr Billy Drake

Lynn Drake & Co Ltd
Chartered Accountants
1st Floor 34 B-D Main
St Moira
Co. Armagh BT67 OLE
8 September 2025

**Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of
Belfast Film Festival Limited**