



The Old Church Centre Cushendun

Chair's Report

Financial Year: 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Presented by: William Colvin, Chairperson

1. Introduction

Good evening, everyone and thank you for joining us for our AGM — and for staying on for our volunteer celebration straight after. It's always nicer to deliver a report when you know there's food, craic, and a room full of friendly faces waiting on the other side.

This past year has been one of progress, perseverance, and plenty of activity at the Old Church Centre. As Chair, I've had the privilege of watching our community continue to grow, our programming expand, and our wee Centre punch well above its weight. None of that happens by accident — and absolutely none of it happens without the people in this room.

2. Highlights of the Year (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)

The year covered by this report is 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 and was a year packed with energy, effort, and events. Our regular groups continued to flourish — Reading Circle, Painting for Pleasure, Whist, and especially the Tuesday Get Togethers, which remain the beating heart of community connection in Cushendun.

Big Arts Weekend 2024 brought the usual mix of chaos, heavy rain, creativity, and full houses. Culture Month in September was our most ambitious yet, with musicians, writers, broadcasters, chefs, and everyone in between stepping through our doors. And throughout the year we delivered workshops, family events, storytelling, music, and heritage activities that kept the Centre alive.

Behind the scenes, we kept strengthening governance, building partnerships, and improving how we run the Centre — all of it laying foundations for the busy years ahead.

3. Our Volunteers

Now, let's be honest: this place runs on tea, goodwill, and volunteers.

To our volunteer team — whether you sell tickets, move chairs, make soup, decorate halls, run events, manage bookings, help with marketing, or simply keep spirits high when we're running on fumes... **you are the reason this Centre works.**

Your generosity is the backbone of everything we do. Tonight is for you — a small thank-you for a huge contribution.

4. Financial Health & Stability

You'll hear the full details shortly from Tony, but in short:

- We ended the year with a **surplus**,
- Our **programming has grown**,
- And despite rising costs, the Centre is operating responsibly and sustainably.

This puts us in a much stronger position than in previous years and allows us to look ahead with more confidence.

5. Looking Ahead

The coming year will bring new challenges, but also real opportunities.

A major positive is that we were awarded **around £20,000 from National Lottery Awards for All**, which will part-fund our Centre Manager post for another 12 months. This funding is invaluable — it gives us stability, continuity, and the ability to keep growing our programme and our impact.

I want to express sincere thanks to **Steve**, who will continue in post for another year. Working on fixed-term contracts is never easy — the uncertainty alone is enough to put most people off — but Steve has shown patience, resilience, and a genuine commitment to helping us build something lasting here. We are very grateful he's chosen to stick with us through 2026.

We acknowledge the National Lottery Awards for All programme and the National Lottery players whose funding makes this support possible.

Their contribution directly benefits Cushendun and the wider Glens, and we are thankful for it.

Alongside this, our aims remain clear:

- Continue strengthening reserves
 - Grow community programming
 - Keep building partnerships
 - Improve systems and governance
 - And above all, maintain the Centre as a welcoming, vibrant hub for everyone
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6. Thanks & Closing Remarks

A few essential acknowledgements:

- **Our Board**, who give countless hours, advice, and... occasional restraint.
- **Steve**, for keeping the Centre running day to day.
- **Our Members** for your continued monthly donations

- **Our funders**, local partners, and supporters.
- And most importantly: **our volunteers – our Board and our Welcome Hosts**, without whom none of this would happen.

Cushendun Building Preservation Trust is in a strong, hopeful place — and that's because of all of you.

Thank you.

AGM Closing Remarks (Chairperson)

Before I hand over to Steve for the volunteer celebrations, I want to say a few words to close this year's AGM.

First, to the newly re-elected Board — thank you for your confidence in installing me as Chairperson for another year. It is genuinely an honour and a privilege to serve in this role, and I don't take that trust for granted. We've a busy year ahead, but I'm proud to be doing it alongside all of you.

I also want to formally welcome the newest members of the Board — **Gerard McHugh** and **Anne Murphy** — who were co-opted earlier in the year and confirmed tonight. I hope your time with us is positive, rewarding, and that you feel you're getting as much value back as you're putting in. We're a hands-on Board, but we're also a supportive one, and your skills, perspectives, and energy are already making a difference.

Of course, the bittersweet part of welcoming new members is saying farewell to those who've stepped down.

This year we said goodbye to **Claire McKay**, who contributed enormously throughout her time with CBPT — stepping down only due to work commitments. We also say our thanks and warm farewell to **James Skivington**, a long serving and dedicated Board member whose time, commitment, and steady wisdom supported this organisation through some of its most defining years.

On behalf of us all — thank you, Claire and James, for everything you've given to CBPT and to the Old Church Centre.

With that, I'll now hand over to Steve, who will take us into the Volunteer Evening — a chance to celebrate the people who actually make everything we've just talked about possible.