



Cairde Turas
Oirthear Bhéal Feirste

Friends of Turas
East Belfast

Annual Trustees Report & Statement of Accounts:

Year Ending 31 December 2023

Operating base address: EBM Skainos Square
239 Newtownards Road
Belfast BT4 1AF

Correspondence address: Cairde Turas
EBM Skainos Square
239 Newtownards Road
Belfast BT4 1AF

Trustees: Andrew McCammon
Elodie Ducloux
Heather Robinson

Main Activities

The objectives in the constitution of Cairde Turas are:

- a) To promote learning opportunities for the historical languages of Ulster.
- b) To encourage reconciliation by promoting understanding of all aspects of shared heritage.
- c) To promote the historical languages and cultures of Ulster through the Arts.
- d) To support the establishment of an Irish language learning community in East Belfast.

The Charity's objectives (the Objectives) are to:-

- (a) Promote and offer practical support to Turas Irish Language Centre in its efforts to establish an Irish language learning community in East Belfast (the "area of benefit").
- (b) Promote learning opportunities for the historical languages and cultures of Ulster through the Arts and other creative and imaginative means.
- (c) Encourage and facilitate reconciliation by promoting acceptance, understanding and appreciation of all aspects of shared heritage.

Turas continues to meet the growing demand for Irish language events in East Belfast. This year has been particularly encouraging, as more and more people from across the city have shown an interest in our charity. Learning through social interaction, discussions, debates, and classroom teaching allows people to immerse themselves in the language and culture, and to meet individuals they wouldn't normally encounter in their daily lives. This approach fosters social cohesion and reconciliation.

It's wonderful to see regular Irish language social events occurring outside the classroom, such as trips to the Gaeltacht, the Conn O'Neill bus tours, the East Belfast Murals bus tour, the pop up Gaeltachts at Boundary Brewery and the new "cumann siúlóide" (walking group). We are grateful for the work put into these events by volunteers and employees which help increase the visibility of the Irish language and prevent its marginalisation. These events also allow us to showcase our friendly and welcoming community, hopefully inspiring others to join us. We look forward to seeing more and more come along in the months and years to come.

Events

17/05/23
East Belfast Murals
The Skainos centre

Here tales were heard of death and tragedy with stories of the world famous ship, the Titanic, and the Ballymacarett train crash, of hope and heroism. Learners visited the mural of the Polish airman and Victoria Cross medal recipients from both World Wars.

07/06/2023
Storytelling workshop
Skainos Centre

Learners came and found out about traditional storytelling techniques - idioms, storytelling phrases, styles, etc, as well as experiencing a range of different stories, both traditional and contemporary, in both Irish and English. This was an excellent opportunity for those interested in storytelling and was provided free of charge!

07/06/23
Pop up Gaeltacht
Boundary Brewery Taproom

After a busy day learners had the opportunity to polish their Irish over a drink at the local bar

15/06/23
Ceiliúradh Dheireadh na Bliana / End of Year Celebration
Skainos

We had an evening to celebrate the end of the academic year on Thursday the 15th June from 7:00pm here in the Skainos Centre. There were refreshments and a bit of music on the night, and it was a great opportunity to celebrate all our achievements this year le chéile.

15/06/23
Presentation: The Loughsiders/Muinntir Chois Locha

Séamas MacAnnaidh, writer, storyteller, historian and broadcaster, from Fermanagh. He has published more than twenty books in both Irish and English, including a novel in Irish - Cuaiteach Mo Londubh Buí (1983) is the most well-known of them. He came to Skainos and gave an excellent presentation about a completely different way of life to what we are used to in Belfast.

11.08.23
MAIDIN CHAIFE / COFFEE MORNING

We organised a coffee morning on Friday the 11th of August to give people the opportunity to speak Irish over a cup of tea/coffee free of charge.

16/08/23
Pop up Gaeltacht
Boundary Brewery Taproom

26/08/23
Summer intensive Irish language course
Skainos

This weekend of irish language classes and craic gave learners the chance to wet their appetite again and warm up for the coming term.

02/09/23
Family Class

A key feature of this year were the family classes that were put on regularly - directed at parents who would like to raise their family with the medium of irish. They are really well received, particularly by parents whose children attend the Naíscoil.

02/09/23
Gaelic East Belfast Bus Tour
The Skainos Centre

Yet again another fantastic tour was put on by the volunteers and staff at turas to take people on a journey and view the local area through a lense that allows them to see the area like never before.

06/09/23
Turas open day
Skainos

This gave anyone the opportunity to come in and see what the fuss is all about at our language and culture centre. There are many who are curious about connecting with Irish but for whatever reason would be tentative about committing to a full term. This session was perfect in giving them a feel for the place and a chance to meet the staff and volunteers. We had taster classes, presentations and exhibitions.



Con Ó Néill



Festival 2023

9-10th September

9-10ú Mí Mheán Fómhair

Saturday - Dé Sathairn

Sunday - Dé Domhnaigh

11-1PM

Con O'Neill bus tour

Turas bus Chon Uí Néill

12-3PM

Prince and princess' fun

Lá spraoi prionsa agus banphrionsa

- Bouncy castles
- Hobby horses
- Games



1-4PM

Family day at

Lisnabreeny

Lá teaghlaigh i

Lios na Bruíne

- Archery
- Music
- Drama



Northern Ireland
Executive



Additional information: stiofan.carson@ebm.org.uk

01/10/23

The Turas walking Group

Skainos

The Turas walking group meets on the first Sunday of every month and allows learners to take their Irish out of the classroom - providing an opportunity to work out

both muscles and brains together as well as forming bonds with other learners and



getting the chance to see our beautiful surroundings.

27/10/23
Halloween night
Skainos Centre



The Belfast Wren boys came around and we had storytelling and singing from the grúpa ceoil. A perfect series of events for this traditionally Irish festival.

04/11/23
Family class

29/11/23
Pop-up Gaeltacht
Hearth bar

29/11/23
Family Class



Skainos
14/12/23
Christmas Party
Skainos

An excellent end of term party and prize given was held for everyone at Turas. It was a lively celebration with a warm atmosphere, music, food and fun. Learners had the chance to immerse in Irish at this Christmas party.

26/01/24
Burns Night
Skainos

Once again Burns Night was celebrated with an Irish twist. We had music, poetry renditions, story telling and even a haggis to try for those who were brave enough.



Family Class
03/02/24
Skainos

07/03/24
Turas Podcast launch
Online

This event marked the launch of our first ever podcast. In this series we explored people/s Irish language journey. We introduced listeners to some of our learners and discussed the highs and lows they experienced while learning Irish.

08/03/24

Presentation about old Irish
Skainos

We were very fortunate to have Jenyth Evans who is currently studying for her DPHIL at Oxford University provide us with an introduction to medieval Ireland and the spoken language at the time - from Old Irish to Middle Irish, with an Ulster focus.

15/03/24

St Patricks Day Pop Up Gaeltacht
The Second Fiddle

We attended a bar in Belfast and set up our very own Gaeltacht corner. Learners spoke what Irish they knew over a pint in a relaxed atmosphere away from the classroom.

16/03/24

Conn O'Neill Bus Tour in Irish!
Skainos

This was a different take on our Bus tour whereby the entire tour was conducted through Irish! This was particularly beneficial to our higher learners and those fluent to hear words and phrases they may not have come across before



Support to our learners

Turas continues to support learners at all levels, from complete beginners to tertiary students. These learners can then contribute as tutors or teachers, completing the cycle of language development.

Our mentoring program, where advanced learners share their knowledge with beginners, has been expanded this year. Between August 2023 and December 2023 we recruited nine new mentors bringing the total to 17. Around 60 learners receive direct mentoring from 15 mentors. We had a training session for all mentors in September 2023. Training for mentors covers several aspects: advanced language training; working with small groups; and developing / identifying appropriate resources for learners. This program helps mentors refine their grammar and teaching skills while providing beginners more opportunities to learn and practice their Irish.

Cairde Turas volunteers consistently staff the library, which is open daily and several evenings a week. Volunteers are available to advise on book and resource selection or simply to converse. Books used in classes can be borrowed from the library. Cairde Turas also supports Turas classes by handling "housekeeping" tasks—making tea, tidying social spaces, and helping wherever needed. This greatly benefits the

classes, as participants enjoy a comfortable atmosphere with tea and snacks during breaks.

Additionally, we provide volunteers for Naíscoil na Seolta, assisting with cleaning and tidying equipment for the teachers. This symbiotic relationship allows volunteers to use their Irish in the Naíscoil while helping teachers, giving them more time for administrative tasks after the children leave.

Cairde Turas Volunteers

Membership of Cairde Turas is open to anyone aged eighteen years or older, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, political affiliation, nationality, or religious beliefs, who is interested in supporting the objectives of the charity. Members of Cairde Turas actively engage in fundraising and securing sponsors for the various activities and projects promoted by Turas and Cairde Turas. All financial details are included in the treasurer's report, which will be presented at the Annual General Meeting (details of which will be shared with members). Our members provide a dedicated group of volunteers who ensure the smooth operation of Turas. They serve tea, coffee, and biscuits during session breaks, greet visiting speakers and guests, and perform clerical tasks on behalf of Turas. Members are also involved in fundraising and promoting the goals and values of Cairde Turas. Our volunteers do excellent work in maintaining our Irish Language Lending Library, which continues to grow and serve as a valuable resource for the community. Cairde Turas volunteers also assist with the Conn O'Neill bus tours, allowing visitors to explore and experience the sites associated with the last Gaelic Lord of East Belfast.

Fund-raising

We are grateful to all our sponsors and funders, and we encourage you to review the Treasurer's Report for full details. We also wish to thank our charity members who have made generous donations.

All classrooms, including the new and refurbished rooms, are well-equipped with whiteboards, suitable tables, and comfortable seating. A wide range of modern audiovisual (AV) equipment is available to all our teachers for use in lesson presentations. Cairde Turas plays a vital role in ensuring that funds are available to keep our AV and communication equipment up to date.

Funding was received to support trips to the Gaeltacht in 2023/24. These trips provided an excellent opportunity for some of our learners to enrich their Irish language skills.

We also received funding to support our mentoring scheme, which enables peer learning. We believe that encouraging one-on-one conversations is the best way to help people use their Irish, solidifying what they have learned in classes. This approach also fosters new friendships and helps combat loneliness.

Public Benefit

Throughout 2022/23, Cairde Turas has remained true to its stated objectives as outlined in the preface to this report.

Turas collects information on the religious affiliation of attendees at classes or activities held under its auspices or those of Cairde Turas. The cross-community aspect of our work continues to grow, attracting sponsor interest in this important role, and we can provide statistics upon request.

In 2023-2024, we offered 17 weekly classes at various levels to nearly 500 registered learners.

In every report, we emphasize the core values that drive our organisation: promoting knowledge, understanding, cross-community cooperation, and tolerance. We do not claim exclusivity or superiority over any individual or organisation working toward similar goals. Although Turas did not initially set out to be a cross-community project, it has naturally evolved into an exemplary one.

Turas is more than an Irish Language Centre; it embodies the achievements that knowledge and respect can bring. It enriches lives, changes attitudes, promotes learning, and fosters friendships. As members of Cairde Turas, we continue to support Turas, uphold its principles and ideals, and promote love and knowledge of the Irish Language and other historical languages of Ulster.

We remain active in seeking additional funding to support future initiatives. If you know of funding agencies that align with the principles and objectives of Cairde Turas, please let us know.

We will continue to support Turas staff, learners, and its objectives. Cairde Turas and its members will remain active in volunteering and fundraising to:

- Maintain and, where possible, improve the quality of facilities for our members and visitors.
- Continue developing the Lending Library.
- Maintain the Cairde Turas website.
- Promote and participate in language-based cross-community projects and further the objectives of our charity.
- Engage in projects that enhance knowledge and understanding of our shared past and present, preparing us for a more tolerant and inclusive future.

In conclusion, the trustees of Cairde Turas express deep gratitude to our executive members, general members, and the staff of Turas. Their continued hard work, determination, and innovation have strengthened Turas significantly. As learners and members of Cairde Turas, we are privileged to support this truly unique cross-community project.

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Skainos on May 30th at 6:30 PM. Notices and the agenda are attached.

Signed/Proposed: Andrew McCammon (Chairman)

Date 30th May 2024

Elodie Ducloux (treasurer)

Date 30th May 2024

Heather Bell (secretary)

Date 30th May 2024