



Cairde Turas
Oirthear Bhéal Feirste

Friends of Turas
East Belfast

Annual Trustees Report & Statement of Accounts:

Year Ending 5th April 2025

Operating base address: EBM Skainos Square
239 Newtownards Road
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Correspondence address: Cairde Turas
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239 Newtownards Road
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Trustees: Andrew McCammon
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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 respond to the growing demand for Irish language events in East Belfast, and this year has been especially heartening. We've welcomed increasing interest from people across the city, many of whom are encountering our work for the first time. Through social interaction, discussions, debates, and classroom learning, participants are able to immerse themselves in the language and culture while meeting others they might not usually cross paths with. This shared experience plays an important role in fostering social cohesion and reconciliation.



It has been particularly encouraging to see Irish language social activities thriving outside of the formal classroom setting. Highlights include Gaeltacht trips, the mentor scheme, Conn O'Neill bus tours, pop-up Gaeltachtaí at Boundary Brewery, and *grúpa siúloide*, our own Irish language walking group. We have also provided *Ranganna Teaghlaigh* (family classes) throughout the year to encourage Irish language use in the home—especially supporting families with children attending Irish-medium education, such as Naíscoil na Seolta.

We are deeply grateful to both our volunteers and staff for their dedication in making these events possible. Their work not only increases the visibility of the Irish language and counters its marginalisation, but also helps to showcase our warm and inclusive community. We hope that by doing so, more people will feel inspired to join us.

We look forward to welcoming even more participants in the months and years ahead.

Events

10/05/2024

Over two hundred people from our Turas community gathered to celebrate the end of another year. In addition to our learners, volunteers, teachers and members of staff from Turas, RTÉ, Raidió Fáilte and Meon Eile were present to film and record the evening and to interview some of our learners.

Our music group (Grúpa Ceoil) started the night off and sang three songs in Irish. Afterwards, Linda Ervine gave an account of the year we've had in Turas.



Caption

The host of the night, Stíofán Carson, introduced our special guests, Seán Mac Seáin and Máire Mhic Sheáin, two of the founders of the Shaw's road Gaeltacht. Afterwards, Máire gave a fantastic speech about her experiences regarding Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland. Máire described that they started the school as they wanted their children to have the opportunity to learn through the medium of Irish and about some of the challenges they faced when starting the school, which resonated with many people that were present when thinking about our own school, Scoil na Seolta.

We were fortunate as Máire and Seán then presented the certificates and fáinní to the learners who were successful in the fáinne exams. One hundred people received their Cúpla Focal badge and over thirty people also managed to earn a Silver fáinne.



Caption

Our Grúpa Ceoil sang a few songs to end the evening and then some of those present went on to the local bar, Boundary. I personally was delighted when I saw our learners, both young and old, in beginners classes and advanced classes, sitting together enjoying each other's company.

Is ar scáth a chéile a mhaireas na daoine. – People live in the shadow of each other



Caption

01/06/2024

This marked our last rang teaghlaigh (family class) of the semester. The rang teaghlaigh is attended by those who would like to use their Irish more in and around the home.

17/08/2024

Dianchúrsa Turas - to kickstart the new year we had a Dianchúrsa (intensive course) to provide a day of classes for all levels. Approximately 80 people attended this day which was very well received.

20/09/2024

Úna Walsh and her nephew, Aodh Mac Murchaidh were in Turas speaking about the history associated with Creggan Graveyard as part of Good Relations week. This graveyard is one of the most historic graveyards in Ulster and both Úna and Aodh told plenty of stories about the important historic people buried within this Graveyard!



Caption

31/10/2024

Cóisir Oíche Shamhna: we held a Hallowe'en party in Skainos which included food, stories and music with Cleamairí Feirste joining us

13/11/2024

Turas took part in Gaeilge24 which included a breakfast morning, classes, a coffee afternoon and a pop up Gaeltacht

04/12/2024

We held a pop up Gaeltacht especially for Christmas at Boundary Brewery. This was a great opportunity for learnings to get some last minute practice in before the Christmas break.

13/12/2024

Cóisir na Nollag - We held a Christmas party at Skainos for all the learning. Approximately 70 learners came along for food, music and a quiz. Events like this provide a fantastic opportunity for learning to use their cúpla focal with each other outside of the classroom.

24/01/2025

Oíche Burns / Burns night - We held a burnss night celebration at Skainos. There were stories, music, poetry and even haggis to share around. This is always an excellent night that sees integration of irish language and ulster scots heritage. Approximately 30 people attended.

08/02/2025

Dianchúrsa (intensive course) - we held an intensive course at Skainos for those in the Dara rang (second class) in particular to improve their irish.

07/03/2025

For Seachtain na Gaeilge we held an Oíche Scannáin (a film night). We showed An Cailín Ciúin (the quiet girl). Tickets were free of charge and snacks were provided.

08/03/2025

Ceardlann ar Líne (online workshop) - Stiofán held an online workshop focusing particularly on the past tense, irregular verbs, the first and second conjugation, the present tense, the future tense, nár and nach as well as indirect speech.

Briathra na Gaeilge | Verbs in Irish

10:00-11:00 Seisiún 1

An aimsir chaite agus na briathra mírialta

The past tense and irregular verbs

11:15-12:15 Seisiún 2

An lú agus an 2ú réimniú agus an aimsir láithreach

The 1st and 2nd conjugation and present tense

12:30-13:30 Seisiún 3

An aimsir fháistineach, 'nár' agus 'nach' agus caint indíreach

The future tense, 'nár' and 'nach' and indirect speech

Caption

Support to our learners

Turas continues to support learners at every stage, from complete beginners to university-level students. Many of these learners go on to contribute as tutors or teachers themselves, helping to sustain and grow the language learning cycle.

The mentoring scheme continues to be a success. We now have 20 mentors and over seventy mentees. Most of our mentoring groups met weekly. Mentors liaise with teachers to ensure their group activities reflect or in some way amplify what is taught during formal classes. Attendance at the mentoring groups is extremely high and we have had very few drop outs. We held several training sessions for mentors during 2024 and provided structured activities for mentees. Several mentors took their mentees to visit other Irish language organisations, including Raidió Fáilte and the Culturlann in West Belfast and Aras Mhic Reachtain in North Belfast. In February, we brought a group of mentors to the Donegal Gaeltacht for a weekend of intensive classes. We also had structured activities conducted through Irish by local native speakers, including a historical tour of the area. In June, we had an end of year celebration / feedback session. We had over 60 participants comprising both mentors and mentees.

Additionally, we provide volunteers to Naíscoil na Seolta, where they assist with cleaning and organising equipment for teachers. This mutually beneficial relationship enables volunteers to use their Irish in a real-world setting while helping staff free up time for administrative work once the children have gone home.

Cairde Turas Volunteers

Membership of *Cairde Turas* is open to anyone aged eighteen or over who supports the aims of the charity, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, political affiliation, nationality, or religious belief.

Members play an active role in fundraising and securing sponsorships for the various initiatives and projects run by Turas and Cairde Turas. All financial matters are detailed in the Treasurer's Report, which will be presented at the Annual General Meeting (dates and details will be provided to members).

Our members form a committed volunteer base that helps ensure the smooth running of Turas. They carry out a range of supportive tasks, including serving tea, coffee, and biscuits during session breaks, welcoming guest speakers and visitors, and assisting with clerical duties. Members are also involved in fundraising efforts and in promoting the vision and values of Cairde Turas.

Volunteers continue to do excellent work in maintaining our Irish Language Lending Library, which is expanding steadily and remains a valuable resource for the community.

In addition, Cairde Turas volunteers support the delivery of the Conn O'Neill bus tours, helping visitors explore and engage with the heritage of the last Gaelic Lord of East Belfast.

Fund-raising

We are deeply grateful to all our sponsors and funders, and we encourage everyone to consult the Treasurer's Report for full financial details. We would also like to express our sincere thanks to our charity members for their generous donations.

All classrooms—including our newly developed and refurbished spaces—are fully equipped with whiteboards, appropriate tables, and comfortable seating. Teachers also have access to a wide range of modern audiovisual (AV) tools to enhance lesson delivery. Cairde Turas continues to play a key role in securing funding to ensure that our AV and communication equipment remains current and effective.

We were fortunate to receive funding to support Gaeltacht trips during 2024/25, which offered valuable opportunities for learners to deepen their Irish language skills through immersive experiences.

Funding also enabled the continuation of our mentoring scheme, which promotes peer learning through one-to-one conversations. We believe this is one of the most effective ways to build confidence in using Irish, reinforcing classroom learning while also fostering new friendships and helping to reduce social isolation.

Public Benefit

Throughout 2024/25, Cairde Turas has remained committed to the objectives outlined in the preface to this report.

Turas continues to collect data on the religious affiliation of participants attending classes and activities organised by Turas or Cairde Turas. The cross-community dimension of our work has grown steadily, attracting increased interest from funders and sponsors who value this aspect of our mission. Statistical information can be provided upon request.

During 2024–2025, we delivered **19 weekly classes** across a range of levels, with **nearly 700 registered learners**—an increase of **two additional classes and 200 more learners** compared to the previous year.

Each year, we reaffirm the core values that underpin our work: the promotion of knowledge, mutual understanding, cross-community collaboration, and tolerance. We do not seek exclusivity or superiority over others engaged in similar efforts. Although Turas was not originally established as a cross-community project, it has naturally developed into a powerful and respected example of one.

Turas is more than an Irish language centre—it stands as a testament to what can be achieved through respect, learning, and shared cultural engagement. It transforms lives, shifts perspectives, supports education, and builds friendships. As members of Cairde Turas, we remain dedicated to supporting Turas, championing its principles, and promoting a love and understanding of the Irish language and other historic languages of Ulster.

We continue to actively seek funding to sustain and grow future initiatives. If you are aware of funding bodies whose aims align with the principles and objectives of Cairde Turas, we would greatly appreciate your guidance.

Looking ahead, Cairde Turas and its members will remain committed to supporting Turas, its staff, learners, and objectives. We will continue to volunteer, fundraise, and contribute to efforts that:

- Maintain and, where possible, enhance the quality of facilities for our members and visitors.
- Continue developing and expanding the Lending Library.
- Maintain and update the Cairde Turas website.
- Promote and participate in cross-community language projects that advance our charitable aims.
- Support initiatives that deepen understanding of our shared heritage and contribute to a more tolerant and inclusive future.

In conclusion, the trustees of Cairde Turas extend heartfelt thanks to our executive and general members, as well as the staff of Turas. Their dedication, resilience, and creativity have significantly strengthened the organisation. As learners and members

of Cairde Turas, we are privileged to contribute to such a unique and impactful cross-community initiative.

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

Signed/Proposed: Andrew McCammon (Chairman) Date

Elodie Ducloux (treasurer) Date

Heather Robinson (secretary) Date