

# Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

Northern Ireland · Charity number 107301

## Details

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Known as	Friends of Botanic Gardens
Status	Received
Company number	<a href="#">58223</a>
Registered	2020-07-17
Register	<a href="#">View on the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland register</a>

## Contact

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Address	The Bothy College Park Avenue Belfast BT7 1lp BT7 1LP
Phone	07808156856
Email	<a href="mailto:info@fobbg.co.uk">info@fobbg.co.uk</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.fobbg.co.uk">www.fobbg.co.uk</a>

## Activities

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**Purposes:** a) to provide a forum for all those interested in the welfare of the Botanic Gardens; b) to advance the knowledge of botany, horticulture and the horticultural legacy of Belfast Botanic Gardens for the public benefit and to promote the Gardens as a centre for horticultural excellence, botanical education and public amenity; c) to promote, or assist in promoting, the conservation, maintenance and development of Belfast Botanic Gardens and the buildings and monuments therein; d) to enhance or assist in the enhancement of the scientific value of the plant collections in Belfast Botanic Gardens, both in the gardens and under glass, and to support the environmental worth of the gardens as a habitat for wildlife in the City of Belfast; e) to support the value and unique standing of Belfast Botanic Gardens by providing or helping to provide equipment, plants and other materials or facilities in line with our charitable aims f) doing all other such things as are necessary or conducive to the attainment of the above objects

**What the charity does:** The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science, Other charitable purposes

**How the charity works:** Heritage/historical

**Who the charity helps:** Children (5-13 year olds), General public, Men, Older people, Parents, Preschool (0-5 year olds), Women, Youth (14-25 year olds)

## Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£7,908	£4,511	£0	0

## Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Cathy Mcgee		
Miss Brigid Mcelhill		
Mr Adrian Peter Walsh		
Mr Frank Caddy		

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107301

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# Accounts

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**Company number: NI058223**

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Company Limited by Guarantee**

**Trustees' Report and financial statements**

**for the period ended 31 March 2025**

## Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

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**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Legal and administrative information**

Trustees	Mr Adrian Walsh Miss Ann McBrien Mr Frank Caddy Miss Brigid McElhill
Company Number	NI058223
Charity Number	107301
Registered Office	Suite 5, Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast Co. Antrim BT7 1SH
Accountants	Cleaver Black Suite 5 Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 1SH
Bankers	Santander PO Box 1109 Bradford BD1 5ZF
Solicitors	

## TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

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The trustees present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the company for the period ended 31 Mar 24

### REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Reference and administrative details are shown in the schedule of members of the board and professional advisers on page 1 of the financial statements.

### THE TRUSTEES

The trustees who served the company during the period were as follows:

Mr Adrian Peter Walsh  
Miss Ann McBrien  
Mr Frank Caddy  
Miss Brigid McElhill

### STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens is a charity and operates as a company limited by guarantee. The company is managed by the directors of the company.

### OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens (FoBBG) group works to advance the knowledge of botany, horticulture and the horticultural legacy of Belfast Botanic Gardens for the public benefit and to promote Belfast Botanic Gardens as a centre for horticultural excellence, botanical education and public amenity. It aims to promote the conservation, maintenance and development of the Gardens, buildings and monuments therein, enhance the scientific value of the plant collections and support the environmental worth of the gardens as a habitat for wildlife in Belfast city.

### ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

This is our fourth year of reporting to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on the achievement of our charitable objects for public benefit.

2024/2025 was another busy year for the Friends group. In April 2024, at the Tropical Ravine, members attended the unveiling of an Ulster Historical Circle 'blue plaque', championed by a long-standing member to commemorate John Templeton (1766-1825). John Templeton had advocated for a botanic garden for Belfast for many years but unfortunately died before the current site was acquired.

We were invited to give a short speech at the event. The speech highlighted Templeton's vision for a botanic garden in Belfast and the Friends' resolve to keep Templeton's vision at the forefront of our minds in continuing to help Belfast City Council (BCC) promote and further develop the Botanic Gardens in the future and in an uncertain age of climate change.

Also in April 2024 at the Spring Fair in Malone House, Barnett's Demesne, we had a stall promoting the Friends group and the history of the Gardens. In preparation for that we produced a membership leaflet highlighting and promoting our activities, to hand out to members of the public.

On 20th May 2024 we gave a presentation in the City Hall to the South Belfast Area Working Group of BCC. This working group comprises Councillors from the Botanic and Balmoral wards of Belfast. We explained how FoBBG may be of further support to BCC in conserving and developing the Botanic Gardens for the future and promoting the Gardens as a valuable asset.

We highlighted the upcoming 200th anniversary of the Botanic Gardens in 2028 and how important it is that its status as the only botanic gardens in Northern Ireland is recognised and celebrated.

At the meeting we sought and obtained approval from the working group to formalise discussions with BCC officers in the Neighbourhood Services Directorate to draft a specification for an independent report on the Gardens. A working group comprising Botanic Gardeners, Council staff and FoBBG members has now been established and is focusing on the specification for the independent report for the 200th anniversary of the Gardens. included within this is preliminary work on a volunteering scheme for the Gardens.

## TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

### Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens (a company limited by guarantee)

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#### ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE contd.

We continue to engage with those who are interested in the welfare of Belfast Botanic Gardens via the [www.fobbg.co.uk](http://www.fobbg.co.uk) website, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). We have now 1,083 followers of the FoBBG Facebook page and 682 followers on X. The website holds a vast amount of information on the Gardens and the plant collections therein including a Tree database, Cycads, Ferns and plants in the Global Medicine Garden (GMG).

The GMC itself continues to be an important educational asset in helping us to attain our charitable objects. Members continued to volunteer and helped out with maintenance and planting GMG on Sunday mornings between April 2024 and March 2025.

Increasing the number of signs in the GMG and highlighting a 'Plant of the Month' in the GMG noticeboard continues to help us meet our objective of advancing the knowledge of botany for public benefit.

We continue to harvest seeds from the plants in the GMG and these are available for visitors to take and grow in their own garden which helps advance the knowledge of horticulture. We gave tours of the GMG to a number of gardening groups in 2024/25 including the Belfast Naturalist Field Club, the Paradise Gardening Club (Ballywalter) and Fermanagh Gardening Club.

Our tree labelling initiative, which started with the labelling of over 200 trees, continues. The initiative has been extended to include plants in the Tropical Ravine and Palm House and a range of shrubs in the Gardens.

In January 2025 we gave an illustrated Powerpoint presentation on the history of the Botanic Gardens to Comber Horticultural Society and in February gave a similar presentation to the Botanic Gardeners, "Bot Crew", garden wardens and garden attendants.

During the year, thanks to an introduction from a member, the Friends group was invited by the editor of the Garden and Landscape Designers Association's Journal, 'Compass', to submit an article for their 91st volume themed "Embracing 2050 Sustainably: Global Resilience"

We submitted an article titled, 'Belfast Botanic Gardens - Past, Present and Future'. This article highlighted the history of the Botanic Gardens and the influence of John Templeton, the history of the Palm House and Tropical Ravine, the creation of the new GMG, its design, layout and planting, and resilience for the future. This latter section highlighted the sustainable methods of maintaining the GMG, how it has increased the biodiversity of the Gardens and how cultivation techniques and careful growing medium manipulation can help mitigate the effects of climate change. These are techniques that we will use in the plot that the Friends group has been allocated within the 'UPSURGE' project site in the Lower Botanic Gardens. The article was published in December 2024.

In September 2024 we participated in and UPSURGE Climate Change Event hosted by BCC and QUB for the five UPSURGE city partners (Belfast, Breda, Budapest, Katowice and Maribor) which included a visit to the UPSURGE site in Lower Botanic Gardens. For the event, we created a large poster to present the work of FoBBG, our charitable objectives and our plans for a 'climate change' garden on our plot in the Lower Botanic Gardens. We were able to explain our plans to Lord Mayor Mickey Murray who visited the site.  
<https://www.upsurge-project.eu/demo-cases/belfast-northern-ireland/>

In terms of promoting the Gardens as a centre of horticultural excellence, FoBBG continues to be a member of the UK 'Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum' and holds the Secretary's post. Their newsletter lets FoBBG gain an insight into the educational work and activities that other UK Botanic Gardens are involved in which helps FoBBG to get ideas for meeting its charitable objects and enhancing public benefit.

In August, the BBC recorded three episodes of the Antiques Roadshow in the Botanic Gardens. The Friends group helped in writing and proof-reading the script that was used by the presenter in the recording of the programme and as voiceovers in the editing stages. The focus was on the history of the Gardens, the Palm House and Tropical Ravine, plant hunters and ferns, with a particular focus on the Killarney fern. We also provided a range of props that were used in the filming: a modern replica of a Warden case, a lead label printer, an old soil testing kit and a vasculum for carrying plant samples and keeping them moist. The opening sequence of the first programme was filmed in the Global Medicine Garden and our plant stall at the event was featured in the third programme. The programmes, with our input, helped promote the Botanic Gardens to a wide TV and online audience, with a focus on its historical development, unique historical buildings, botanical collections and its value for the city of Belfast and Northern Ireland.

Unfortunately 2024/25 was a busy year for the Trustees in terms of submitting letters to BCC to oppose proposals for the Gardens brought forward by various committees of the Council. Along with other community groupings in the locality who also submitted letters of opposition, we successfully halted an ice skating rink that was proposed for December 2024 and two events in June and July 2025 that would have limited access to the Great Lawn for almost six weeks in summer. The most worrying proposal included the Botanic Gardens in a consultation process on an extension to existing opening hours for parks within Belfast, including the possibility of 24/7 opening. We submitted a strong and reasoned rebuttal to the proposal and encouraged members and others to do the same. We await the outcome of the consultation and maintain our perspective that any extension to the current opening hours is totally inappropriate for the Botanic Gardens, with its historically important and iconic buildings (the Palm House and Tropical Ravine), its plant collections and monuments, even though extended opening may be of convenience to others in the locale.

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

FUNDRAISING

The Friends group continues to raise funds from membership subscriptions, plant sales and sales of ceramics.

During 2024/25, we had plant and ceramics sales in May, in August at the Antiques Roadshow and that the Mela Festival and at the Autumn Fair in September. Thanks to the work of a member who established links with Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, we were unable to hold dedicated ceramics sales there in December and February. An application has also been submitted to BCC for permission to hold a number of pop-up ceramics stalls in the Tropical Ravine between July and September 2025.

The Friends group continues to get an administrative grant of £300 from Belfast City Council.

At our last AGM we held our membership subscription is £12 for a single membership, £20 for joint membership and £5 for student membership. In March a sub-group was set up to look at ideas for increasing membership.

EVENTS

As well as business meetings, a number of social events (including garden visits and talks about subjects related to gardening) continued during 2024/25.

Average attendances at meetings in 2024/25 compared to prior years is shown below.

Summary of attendees at meetings (averaged)		
*Zoom		
Year	Attendees	Apologies
2017/18	13	9
2018/19	17	9
2019/20	16	9
2020/21	16 *	6
2021/22	10 *	9
2022/23	12	11
2023/24	12	12
2024/25	13	13

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

We will continue to develop our website and social media pages to advance the knowledge of botany, horticulture and the horticultural legacy of Belfast Botanic Gardens for the public benefit and to promote Belfast Botanic Gardens as a centre for horticultural excellence, botanical education and public amenity.

We will continue to work with BCC working group established for a specification for an independent report on the Gardens and planning for the 200th anniversary in 2028, to maintain focus on the promotion of the Gardens as a valuable attraction for visitors. In addition we will work collaboratively with BCC and its officers on key priority projects within the Gardens that will benefit the public and promote the conservation, maintenance and development of the Gardens, the buildings and monuments therein and enhance the scientific value of the plant collections. This includes promoting the restoration of the Palm House, one of the most iconic buildings in Belfast.

We will continue to work with BCC and Queen's University on the development of the FoBBG 'climate change' garden as part of the UPSURGE project within the lower Botanic Gardens. Work on building our plot is estimated to be completed in August 2025 and details of its further development will be provided in next year's report.

We continue to hold the post of Secretary for the Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum in 202/26 and we will use this opportunity to continue to liaise with fellow Friend's groups and promote Belfast Botanic Gardens.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Cleaver Black has been re-appointed as independent examiner for the ensuing year.

SMALL COMPANY PROVISIONS

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

Signed on behalf of the trustees



Adrian Walsh  
Director

Date: 4th August 2025

**Independent Examiner's Report**

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**  
(a company limited by guarantee)

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I report on the accounts of the charity for the period ended 31 March 2025 which are set out on pages 5 to 10.

**RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES AND EXAMINER**

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

Having satisfied myself that the company 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
- to 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 of 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 disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state 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
- 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 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 the Republic of Ireland.
- 4) That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**BASIS OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT**

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



Cleaver Black  
Independent examiner  
Suite 5 Ormeau House  
91-97 Ormeau Road  
Belfast  
BT7 1SH

Date:

4 August 2025

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

Statement of Financial Activities  
for the period ended 31 March 2025

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
<b>Incoming Resources</b>					
Incoming resources from generated funds:					
Voluntary Income	2	1,104	-	1,104	712
Incoming resources from					
Charitable Activities	3	6,165	-	6,165	2,055
Other Incoming Resources	4	639	-	639	644
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>		<u>7,908</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7,908</u>	<u>3,411</u>
<b>Resources Expended</b>					
Costs of generating funds:					
Charitable Activities	5	3,536	-	3,536	1,801
Governance Costs	6	975	-	975	875
		-	-	-	-
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>		<u>4,511</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,511</u>	<u>2,676</u>
<b>Net incoming / (outgoing) resources for the year before revaluations</b>					
		3,397	-	3,397	735
<b>Transfers between funds</b>					
		-	-	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>					
		3,397	-	3,397	735
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>					
		<u>38,187</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>38,187</u>	<u>37,451</u>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>					
		<u>41,584</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>41,584</u>	<u>38,186</u>

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared.

All of the above amounts relate to continuing activities.

The notes on pages 9 to 12 form part of these financial statements.

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

Balance Sheet  
as at 31 March 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors		-	-
Cash at Bank & in hand		42,384	38,907
		<u>42,384</u>	<u>38,907</u>
<b>CREDITORS - Amounts falling due within one year</b>			
	7	800	720
		<u>800</u>	<u>720</u>
<b>NET CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
		41,584	38,187
<b>Net assets</b>			
		<u>41,584</u>	<u>38,187</u>
<b>FUNDS</b>			
Unrestricted Income Funds	8	41,584	38,187
Restricted Revenue Funds		-	-
		<u>41,584</u>	<u>38,187</u>

For the period ended 31 March 2025 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Trustees responsibilities:

- 1 The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476; and
- 2 The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

These financial statements were approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by

  
Adrian Walsh  
Director

  
Date

Company number: NI058223

The notes on pages 9 to 12 form part of these financial statements.

## Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

### Notes to the Financial Statements for the period ended 31 March 2025

#### 1. Accounting Policies

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items in the company's financial statements.

##### 1.1 Basis of Accounting

The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland' and Charities SORP (FRS 102).

The financial statements are prepared in pounds sterling which is the function currency of the company.

This entity is a Public Benefit Entity.

##### 1.2 Fund Accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Trustees for particular purposes.

General funds may be transferred to designate funds where Trustees wish to use these funds for a specific purpose. Such funds may be transferred back to general funds once the criteria for the designation have been met or are no longer applicable.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of restricted funds is set out in the notes to the financial statements. Restricted funds may only be transferred to general or designated funds once the criteria for restriction have been discharged or no longer apply.

##### 1.3 Incoming Resources

All incoming resources are included in the Statement of Financial Activities when the charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy. Grants, service agreement, fee income and grants for equipment are recognised in the SOFA in the period in which they are receivable.

##### 1.4 Resources Expended

Resources expended are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on an accruals basis, inclusive of any VAT which cannot be recovered.

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Notes to the Financial Statements  
for the period ended 31 March 2025**

**1.4 Resources Expended ctd...**

Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity and include the audit fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the charity.

All costs are allocated between the expenditure categories of the Statement of Financial Activities on a basis designed to reflect the use of the resource. Costs relating to a particular activity are allocated directly, others are apportioned on an appropriate basis.

**1.5 Value Added Tax**

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens is not registered for VAT

**1.6 Taxation**

The company is a charity and the charitable tax exemptions are therefore being claimed to the extent that income and/or gains are applicable and applied to charitable purposes only. These exemptions will remain in place as long as income and expenditure is applied to charitable purposes only.

**1.7 Cash and cash equivalents**

Cash consists of cash on hand and demand deposits. Cash equivalents consist of short term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash that are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.



**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**  
**Notes to the Financial Statements**  
**for the period ended 31 March 2025**

**7 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year**

	2025 £	2024 £
Accruals and deferred income	800	720
	800	720

**8 Unrestricted funds**

	Opening £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers £	Revaluation Loss £	Closing £
Unrestricted Fund	38,187	7,908	(4,511)	-	-	41,584
	38,187	7,908	(4,511)	-	-	41,584

**9 Company limited by guarantee**

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens is a company limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital. The liability of each member is limited to an amount not exceeding £1.



**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107301

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# Accounts

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**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**  
**Company Limited by Guarantee**  
**Trustees' Report and financial statements**  
**for the period ended 31 March 2024**

SATURDAY



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A15

07/09/2024

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COMPANIES HOUSE

Suite 5, Ormeau House, 91-97 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 1SH  
Telephone 028 90 322904 Facsimile: 028 90 439296  
e-mail: [office@cleaverblack.com](mailto:office@cleaverblack.com)

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

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**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Legal and administrative information**

<b>Trustees</b>	Mr Adrian Walsh Miss Ann McBrien Mr Frank Caddy Miss Brigid McElhill
<b>Company Number</b>	NI058223
<b>Charity Number</b>	NI01251
<b>Registered Office</b>	Suite 5, Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast Co. Antrim BT7 1SH
<b>Accountants</b>	Cleaver Black Suite 5 Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 1SH
<b>Bankers</b>	Santander PO Box 1109 Bradford BD1 5ZF
<b>Solicitors</b>	

## TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

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The trustees present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the company for the period ended 31 Mar 24

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### THE TRUSTEES

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Mr Adrian Peter Walsh  
Miss Ann McBrien  
Mr Frank Caddy  
Miss Brigid McElhill

### STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

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### OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens (FoBBG) group works to advance the knowledge of botany, horticulture and the horticultural legacy of Belfast Botanic Gardens for the public benefit and to promote Belfast Botanic Gardens as a centre for horticultural excellence, botanical education and public amenity. It aims to promote the conservation, maintenance and development of the Gardens, buildings and monuments therein, enhance the scientific value of the plant collections and support the environmental worth of the gardens as a habitat for wildlife in Belfast city.

### ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

This year, 2023/24, is our third year of reporting to the Charity Commission NI on the achievement of our charitable objects for public benefit.

It has been a busy year for us as we continue to promote the Botanic Gardens and fulfil our objects as a Charity in law.

Throughout 2023/24 we held face to face monthly meetings and continued to engage with those who are interested in the welfare of Belfast Botanic Gardens via the [www.fobbg.co.uk](http://www.fobbg.co.uk) website, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). We now have 998 followers of the FoBBG Facebook page and 662 followers on X. We find X to be especially important in quickly updating our followers with news about the gardens and this ensures that followers can retweet to share this information with a wider audience.

With help from our friends at Kainos, we launched our new website on 21st February 2024.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The website holds a vast amount of information on the gardens and the plant collections therein including a Tree database, Cyads, Ferns and plants in the Global Medicine Gardn (GMG). The new design helps visitors access this information more easily.

The GMG itself continues to be an important educational asset in helping us to attain our charitable objects.

Members continued to be enthusiastic in volunteering to help out with the maintenance and planting in the GMC on Sunday mornings between April 2023 and March 2024.

The signage within the GMC continues to help us meet our object of advancing the knowledge of botany for public benefit.

In November 2023 we finalised the design of a large formal sign for the entrance to the GMG.

This was a collaborative project with Belfast City Council (BCC) and the sign has recently been installed.

The sign informs the public about medicinal plants, including examples of plants by country within the GMG, and also displays a map of the GMG and the history of the site on which the GMG is located.

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

**ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

The GMC continues to be open to the public every day from 10.00am to 4.30pm. When we are working on it, members of the public who walk through it continue to comment on how much they like the garden and we are able to answer any questions they have about the plants. Visitors include local residents and others from across the UK and Ireland, and international visitors.

We continue to harvest seeds from the plants in the GMG and members help package these in hand-made pocket envelopes between October and January. These seeds continue to be available for visitors to take and grow in their own garden which helps advance the knowledge of horticulture.

On 5th July 2023, author Shirley Lanigan visited the GMG to review it for inclusion in her recently launched book 'The Open Gardens of Ireland'.

Some quotes about the GMG and the work of the Friends in the article about the Botanic Gardens include:

.....for those who do love to study plants, there has been a fascinating new garden added to the Belfast Botanical offering.

"The labelling is wonderful, educational and informative."

"The friendly gardeners told me that they spend a great deal of time answering questions from visitors. I saw this for myself. There is something about a medicinal garden that fascinates people and this is a particularly welcoming as well as attractive and valuable example."

This will help in our efforts in promoting the Botanic Gardens and also educating the public about the specific plants within the GMG.

On Sunday May 28th the Irish Tree Society, including their Chairman, Thomas Pakenham (who has written many books on trees), visited the gardens to discuss its interesting collection of trees. The tour was conducted by Reg Maxwell (a retired Area Manager in BCC's Parks Department) who had responsibility for the Botanic Gardens for many years. The Friends group was represented on this informative tour, including our member Professor Jonathan Pilcher (who compiled the tree archive on our website) who led the group through the pinetum. The group also visited the GMG. We look forward to a continuing working relationship with the Irish Tree Society.

At the end of the tour they presented a *Tetracentron sinense*, an Augustine Henry discovery, to the Friends group to add to the tree collection in the gardens.

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Following consultation, the proposal was accepted by BCC Managers with the funding being shared between FoBBG and BCC. Over 200 labels have now been attached to trees in the Botanic Gardens and work is ongoing for extension of this labelling project to the shrubs in the gardens and plants in the Tropical Ravine and Palm House.

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The Chair and Professor Jonathan Pilcher were also invited to attend the launch of the BCC wide Tree Strategy on 5th October 2023 in the Tropical Ravine.

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In November 2023 we made a presentation to BCC managers on how the Friends Group can help BCC to do this.

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

**ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

In February 2024 we also wrote to the ten Councillors on BCC South Belfast Area Working Group, (copied to the five MLAs and one MP), asking if we could give a presentation on how FoBBG may be of further support to BCC in conserving and developing the Botanic Gardens for the future and promoting the gardens as a valuable asset.

The 200th anniversary of the Botanic Gardens occurs in 2028 and it is important that its status as the only botanic garden in Northern Ireland is recognised and celebrated.

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One member has assembled a list of some of these trees and shrubs from records of the plant collection in Templeton's garden. We are pleased to report that during 2023/2024 four trees have been planted at the start of the trail (three of them to mark the retirement of senior gardening staff). Additional trees will be added in the coming years.

In terms of promoting the gardens as a centre of horticultural excellence, FoBBG continues to be a member of the UK 'Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum' whose purpose is to provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas to promote the use, value and role of Friends of Botanic Gardens groups in their support and engagement of the mission of their respective botanic gardens.

Our Chair was the Secretary of the Forum throughout 2023/24 and this helps to further promote FoBBG and the Belfast Botanic Gardens to the wider UK and world audience through the Friends Forum website ([www.fbqf.org](http://www.fbqf.org)). It also enables FoBBG to gain access to the educational work and activities that other UK Botanic Gardens are involved with which helps FoBBG to get ideas for meeting its charitable objects and enhancing public benefit.

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We have submitted a plan to BCC for the plot that the Friends group has been allocated within the site and we continue to discuss with BCC the purpose for which we use this plot to fulfill the brief of the project and to meet our charitable objects.

**FUNDRAISING**

The Friends group continues to raise funds from membership subscriptions, plant sales and sales of ceramics that are hand-made by two members using ferns from the Botanic Gardens and Queen's Quarter. The ceramics are accompanied by an information card about Belfast Botanic Gardens.

During 2023/24 we had plant sales at the Lord Mayor's Fun Day in Botanic Gardens in May 2023, at the Mela Festival in August 2023 and at the Autumn Fair in September 2023. We also held a small 'pop up' sale at the GMG in July 2023. These plant sales help us promote the Botanic Gardens and advice about plants to visitors to our stalls.

The Friends group continues to get an administrative grant of £300 from Belfast City Council.

Our membership subscription is £12 for a single membership, £20 for joint membership and £5 for student membership.

We have not increased our membership subscriptions for a number of years to ensure that they still remain affordable.



TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (continued)

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

EVENTS

As well as business meetings, a number of social events (including garden visits and talks about subjects related to gardening) continued during 2023/24.

Average attendances at meetings in 2023/24 compared to prior years is shown below.

Summary of attendees at meetings (averaged) *Zoom		
Year	Attendees	Apologies
2017/18	13	9
2018/19	17	9
2019/20	16	9
2020/21	16 *	6
2021/22	10 *	9
2022/23	12	11
2023/24	11	11

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

We will continue to develop our website and social media pages to advance the knowledge of botany, horticulture and the horticultural legacy of Belfast Botanic Gardens for the public benefit and to promote Belfast Botanic Gardens as a centre for horticultural excellence, botanical education and public amenity.

We will continue to work with BCC South Belfast Area Working Group and the Gardens Focus Group and focus on the promotion of the gardens as a valuable attraction for visitors, as well as on key priority projects within the gardens that will benefit the public and promote conservation, maintenance and development of the gardens, buildings, monuments therein and enhance the scientific value of the plant collections.

We will continue to work with BCC and Queens University on the development of the FoBBG plot within the lower Botanic Gardens as part of the 'UPSURGE' project.

The Chair continues to hold the post of Secretary for the Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum in 2024/25 and we will use this opportunity to continue to liaise with fellow Friend's groups and promote Belfast Botanic Gardens.


INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Cleaver Black has been re-appointed as independent examiner for the ensuing year.

SMALL COMPANY PROVISIONS

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

  
Adrian Walsh  
Director

Date: 27th August 2024

Independent Examiner's Report

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

I report on the accounts of the charity for the period ended 31 March 2024 which are set out on pages 5 to 10.

**RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES AND EXAMINER**

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

Having satisfied myself that the company 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
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**BASIS OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT**

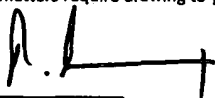
I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act. The examination included a review of the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

My role is to state 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
- 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 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 the Republic of Ireland.
- 4) That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**BASIS OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT**

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



Cleaver Black  
Independent examiner  
Suite 5 Ormeau House  
91-97 Ormeau Road  
Belfast  
BT7 1SH

Date:

27 August 2024

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Statement of Financial Activities  
for the period ended 31 March 2024**

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
<b>Incoming Resources</b>					
Incoming resources from generated funds:					
Voluntary Income	2	712	-	712	915
Incoming resources from Charitable Activities	3	2,056	-	2,056	4,346
Other Incoming Resources	4	644	-	644	367
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>		<b>3,412</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,412</b>	<b>5,628</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>					
Costs of generating funds:					
Charitable Activities	5	1,801	-	1,801	1,831
Governance Costs	6	875	-	875	865
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>		<b>2,676</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,676</b>	<b>2,696</b>
<b>Net incoming / (outgoing) resources for the year before revaluations</b>		<b>736</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>736</b>	<b>2,932</b>
<b>Transfers between funds</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>736</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>736</b>	<b>2,932</b>
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>		<b>37,451</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>37,451</b>	<b>34,519</b>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<b>38,187</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>38,187</b>	<b>37,451</b>

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared.

All of the above amounts relate to continuing activities.

The notes on pages 9 to 12 form part of these financial statements.

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

Balance Sheet  
as at 31 March 2024

	Notes	2024 £	20263 £
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors		-	1,717
Cash at Bank & in hand		38,907	36,454
		<u>38,907</u>	<u>38,171</u>
<b>CREDITORS - Amounts falling due within one year</b>			
	7	720	720
<b>NET CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
		38,187	37,451
<b>Net assets</b>			
		<u>38,187</u>	<u>37,451</u>
<b>FUNDS</b>			
Unrestricted Income Funds	8	38,187	37,451
Restricted Revenue Funds		-	-
		<u>38,187</u>	<u>37,451</u>

For the period ended 31 March 2024 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Trustees responsibilities:

- 1 The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476; and
- 2 The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

These financial statements were approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by

  
Adrian Walsh  
Director

27th August 2024  
Date

Company number: NI058223

The notes on pages 9 to 12 form part of these financial statements.

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Notes to the Financial Statements  
for the period ended 31 March 2024**

**1. Accounting Policies**

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items in the company's financial statements.

**1.1 Basis of Accounting**

The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland' and Charities SORP (FRS 102).

The financial statements are prepared in pounds sterling which is the function currency of the company.

This entity is a Public Benefit Entity.

**1.2 Fund Accounting**

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Trustees for particular purposes.

General funds may be transferred to designate funds where Trustees wish to use these funds for a specific purpose. Such funds may be transferred back to general funds once the criteria for the designation have been met or are no longer applicable.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of restricted funds is set out in the notes to the financial statements. Restricted funds may only be transferred to general or designated funds once the criteria for restriction have been discharged or no longer apply.

**1.3 Incoming Resources**

All incoming resources are included in the Statement of Financial Activities when the charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy. Grants, service agreement, fee income and grants for equipment are recognised in the SOFA in the period in which they are receivable.

**1.4 Resources Expended**

Resources expended are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on an accruals basis, inclusive of any VAT which cannot be recovered.

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Notes to the Financial Statements  
for the period ended 31 March 2024**

**1.4 Resources Expended ctd...**

Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity and include the audit fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the charity.

All costs are allocated between the expenditure categories of the Statement of Financial Activities on a basis designed to reflect the use of the resource. Costs relating to a particular activity are allocated directly, others are apportioned on an appropriate basis.

**1.5 Value Added Tax**

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens is not registered for VAT

**1.6 Taxation**

The company is a charity and the charitable tax exemptions are therefore being claimed to the extent that income and/or gains are applicable and applied to charitable purposes only. These exemptions will remain in place as long as income and expenditure is applied to charitable purposes only.

**1.7 Cash and cash equivalents**

Cash consists of cash on hand and demand deposits. Cash equivalents consist of short term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash that are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

Notes to the Financial Statements  
for the period ended 31 March 2024

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
<b>2 Voluntary Income</b>				
Donations & Membership Fees	712	-	712	915
	<u>712</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>712</u>	<u>915</u>

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
<b>3 Charitable Activities</b>				
Plant sales	1,542	-	1,542	930
Workshops	-	-	-	-
Educational visits	-	-	-	-
Sale of ceramics	514	-	514	3,416
	<u>2,056</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,056</u>	<u>4,346</u>

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
<b>4 Other Incoming Resources</b>				
Government Grant	300	-	300	300
Deposit account interest	344	-	344	67
	<u>644</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>644</u>	<u>367</u>

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
<b>5 Charitable Activities Costs</b>				
Purchases	465	-	465	1119
Sundry expenses	25	-	25	20
Global Medicine Garden expense	115	-	115	128
Expenses re labelling of trees	632	-	632	-
Website & E mail costs	564	-	564	564
	<u>1,801</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,801</u>	<u>1,831</u>

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
<b>6 Governance Costs</b>				
Insurance	155	-	155	145
Accountancy	690	-	690	690
Companies House	30	-	30	30
	<u>875</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>875</u>	<u>865</u>

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**  
**Notes to the Financial Statements**  
**for the period ended 31 March 2024**

**7 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year**

	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Accruals and deferred income	720	910
	720	910

**8 Unrestricted funds**

	Opening	Incoming	Outgoing	Transfers	Revaluation Loss	Closing
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Unrestricted Fund	37,451	3,412	(2,676)	-	-	38,187
	37,451	3,412	(2,676)	-	-	38,187

**9 Company limited by guarantee**

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens is a company limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital. The liability of each member is limited to an amount not exceeding £1.

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107301

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# Annual report

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# FRIENDS OF BELFAST BOTANIC GARDENS

## TRUSTEES' REPORT 2023/24

### 1. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

This year, 2023/24, is our third year of reporting to the Charity Commission NI on the achievement of our charitable objects for public benefit.

It has been a busy year for us as we continue to promote the Botanic Gardens and fulfil our objects as a Charity in law.

Throughout 2023/24 we held face to face monthly meetings and continued to engage with those who are interested in the welfare of Belfast Botanic Gardens via the [www.fobbg.co.uk](http://www.fobbg.co.uk) website, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). We now have 998 followers of the FoBBG Facebook page and 662 followers on X. We find X to be especially important in quickly updating our followers with news about the gardens and this ensures that followers can retweet to share this information with a wider audience.

With help from our Friends at kainos, we launched our new website on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The website holds a vast amount of information on the gardens and the plant collections therein including a Tree database, Cycads, Ferns and plants in the Global Medicine Garden (GMG). The new design helps visitors access this information more easily.

The GMG itself continues to be an important educational asset in helping us to attain our charitable objects.

Members continued to be enthusiastic in volunteering to help out with the maintenance and planting in the GMG on Sunday mornings between April 2023 and March 2024.

The signage within the GMG continues to help us meet our object of advancing the knowledge of botany for public benefit.

In November 2023 we finalised the design of a large formal sign for the entrance to the GMG. This was a collaborative project with Belfast City Council (BCC) and the sign has been recently installed. This sign informs the public about medicinal plants, including examples of plants by country within the GMG, and also displays a map of the GMG and the history of the site on which the GMG is located.

The GMG continues to be open to the public every day from 10.00 to 4.30pm. When we are working in it, members of the public who walk through it continue to comment on how much they like the garden and we are able to answer any questions they have about the plants. Visitors include local residents and others from across the UK and Ireland, and international visitors.

We continued to harvest seeds from plants in the GMG and members helped package these in hand made pocket envelopes between October and January. These seeds continue to be available for visitors to take and grow in their own garden which helps advance the knowledge of horticulture.

On 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023, author Shirley Lanigan visited the GMG to review it for inclusion in her recently launched book 'The Open Gardens of Ireland'.

Some quotes about the GMG and the work of the Friends in the article about the Botanic Gardens include:

“.....for those who do love to study plants, there has been a fascinating new garden added to the Belfast Botanical offering”.

“The labelling is wonderful, educational and informative.”

“The friendly gardeners told me that they spend a great deal of time answering questions from visitors. I saw this for myself. There is something about a medicinal garden that fascinates people and this is a particularly welcoming as well as attractive and valuable example.”

This will help in our efforts in promoting the Botanic Gardens and also educating the public about the specific plants within the GMG.

On Sunday May 28<sup>th</sup> the Irish Tree Society, including their Chairman, Thomas Pakenham (who has written many books on trees), visited the gardens to discuss its interesting collection of trees. The tour was conducted by Reg Maxwell (a retired Area Manager in BCC's Parks Department) who had responsibility for the Botanic Gardens for many years. The Friends group was represented on this informative tour, including our member Professor Jonathan Pilcher (who compiled the tree archive on our website) who led the group through the pinetum. The group also visited the GMG. We look forward to a continuing working relationship with the Irish Tree Society. At the end of the tour they presented a *Tetracentron sinense*, an Augustine Henry discovery, to the Friends group to add to the tree collection in the gardens.

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In March 2024 the Chair gave an illustrated Powerpoint presentation on the history of the Botanic Gardens to the Alpine Garden Society Ulster Group.

In our efforts to fulfil our object of educating the public, we brought a proposal for Tree and Shrub labelling to one of our 'Gardens Focus Group' meetings with BCC managers of the gardens and representatives of the gardening staff. The proposal was to progress the installation of modern botanical labels to a significant number of the many rare and interesting trees in the Botanic Gardens collection. These new long-lasting labels would include the English name, together with the Latin name; this is particularly appreciated by botanists and naturalists as well as the many international visitors to the Botanic Gardens. The labels would also include the botanical family and the country of origin together with an accession number that links the tree to more detailed information in the Botanic Gardens database, such as the date it came into the gardens and from where it was sourced. The naming follows the accepted botanical protocol common to Kew and other botanical institutions.

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Over 200 labels have now been attached to trees in the Botanic Gardens and work is ongoing for extension of this labelling project to the shrubs in the gardens and plants in the Tropical Ravine and Palm House.

The Botanic Gardens Tree Labelling Project was officially launched by Councillor Micky Murray, Chair of the BCC South Belfast Area Working Group, at an event on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023 in the Botanic Gardens. Our member Professor Jonathan Pilcher was invited to speak about tree labelling at the event and its importance and necessity within a botanic garden.

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At the Gardens Focus Group meeting we continue to raise the need to promote the gardens, maintain and enhance the plant collections in the gardens and preserve and maintain the architectural heritage of buildings and monuments within the gardens such as the Palm House and the Kelvin memorial statue.

In November 2023 we made a presentation to BCC managers on how the Friends Group can help BCC to do this.

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The 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Botanic Gardens occurs in 2028 and it is important that its status as the only botanic garden in Northern Ireland is recognised and celebrated.

We received permission to address the South Belfast Area Working Group at their meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and we will give an update on this in our next report.

In our last report we mentioned the creation of a 'John Templeton Trail' within the garden. This will contain a selection of trees and shrubs that the naturalist John Templeton (1766 – 1825) had in his garden in Cranmore, Malone Road. One member has assembled a list of some of these trees and shrubs from records of the plant collection in Templeton's garden. We are pleased to report that during 2023/24 four trees have been planted as the start of the trail (three of them to mark the retirement of senior gardening staff). Additional trees will be added in the coming years.

In terms of promoting the gardens as a centre of horticultural excellence, FoBBG continues to be a member of the UK 'Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum' whose purpose is to provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas to promote the use, value and role of Friends of Botanic Gardens groups in their support and engagement of the mission of their respective botanic gardens.

Our Chair was the Secretary of the Forum throughout 2023/24 and this helps to further promote FoBBG and the Belfast Botanic Gardens to the wider UK and world audience through the Friends Forum website ([www.fbgf.org](http://www.fbgf.org)). It also enables FoBBG to gain access to the educational work and activities that other UK Botanic Gardens are involved with which helps FoBBG to get ideas for meeting its charitable objects and enhancing public benefit.

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<https://www.upsurge-project.eu/demo-cases/belfast-northern-ireland/>

We have submitted a plan to BCC for the plot that the Friends group has been allocated within the site and we continue to discuss with BCC the purpose for which we will use this plot to fulfil the brief of the project and to meet our charitable objects.

## **Fundraising**

The Friends group continues to raise funds from membership subscriptions, plant sales and sales of ceramics hand-made by two members using ferns from the Botanic Gardens and Queen’s Quarter. The ceramics are accompanied by a card with information about Belfast Botanic Gardens.

During 2023/24, we had plant sales at the Lord Mayor’s Fun Day in Botanic Gardens in May 2023, at the Mela Festival in August 2023 and at the Autumn Fair in September 2023. We also held a small ‘pop up’ sale at the GMG in July 2023. These plant sales help us promote the Botanic Gardens and give information and advice about plants to visitors to our stalls.

The Friends group continues to get an administrative grant of £300 from BCC. Our membership subscription is £12 for a single membership, £20 for joint membership and £5 for student membership.

We have not increased our membership subscriptions for a number of years to ensure that they still remain affordable.

## **Events**

As well as business meetings, a number of social events (including garden visits and talks about subjects related to gardening) continued during 2023/4. Average attendance at meetings in 2023/24 compared to prior years is shown in the table below.

<b>Summary of attendees at meetings (averaged) *Zoom</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
2017/18	13	9
2018/19	17	9
2019/20	16	9
2020/21	*16	6
2021/22	*10	9
2022/23	12	11
2023/24	11	11

### **3. PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS**

We will continue to develop our website and social media pages to advance the knowledge of botany, horticulture and the horticultural legacy of Belfast Botanic Gardens for the public benefit and to promote Belfast Botanic Gardens as a centre for horticultural excellence, botanical education and public amenity.

We will continue to work with the BCC South Belfast Area Working Group and the Gardens Focus Group and focus on the promotion of the gardens as a valuable attraction for visitors, as well as on key priority projects within the gardens that will benefit the public and promote the conservation, maintenance and development of the gardens, buildings and monuments therein and enhance the scientific value of the plant collections.

We will continue to work with BCC and Queens University on the development of the FoBBG plot within the lower Botanic Gardens as part of the 'UPSURGE' project.

The Chair continues to hold the post of Secretary for the Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum in 2024/25 and we will use this opportunity to continue to liaise with fellow Friends groups and promote the Belfast Botanic Gardens.

Trustees     Adrian Walsh  
                  Frank Caddy  
                  Ann McBrien  
                  Brigid McElhill

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107301

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# Annual return

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Independent Examiner's Report

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

I report on the accounts of the charity for the period ended 31 March 2024 which are set out on pages 5 to 10.

**RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES AND EXAMINER**

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

Having satisfied myself that the company 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
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**BASIS OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT**

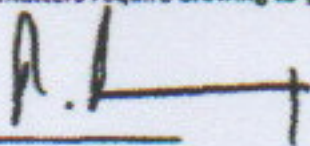
I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act. The examination included a review of the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

My role is to state 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
- 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 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 the Republic of Ireland.
- 4) That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**BASIS OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT**

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



Cleaver Black  
Independent examiner  
Suite 5 Ormeau House  
91-97 Ormeau Road  
Belfast  
BT7 1SH

Date: 27 August 2024

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107301

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# Accounts

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**Company number: NI058223**

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Company Limited by Guarantee**

**Trustees' Report and financial statements**

**for the period ended 31 March 2023**

## Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

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Balance sheet	7
Notes to the financial statements	8

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Legal and administrative information**

Trustees	Mr Adrian Walsh Miss Ann McBrien Mr Frank Caddy Miss Brigid McElhill
Company Number	NI058223
Charity Number	107301
Registered Office	Suite 5, Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast Co. Antrim BT7 1SH
Accountants	Cleaver Black Suite 5 Ormeau House 91-97 Ormeau Road Belfast BT7 1SH
Bankers	Santander PO Box 1109 Bradford BD1 5ZF
Solicitors	

## TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

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The trustees present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the company for the period ended 31 March 2023.

### REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Reference and administrative details are shown in the schedule of members of the board and professional advisers on page 1 of the financial statements.

### THE TRUSTEES

The trustees who served the company during the period were as follows:

Mr Adrian Peter Walsh  
Miss Ann McBrien  
Mr Frank Caddy  
Miss Brigid McElhill

### STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens is a charity and operates as a company limited by guarantee. The company is managed by the directors of the company.

### OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens (FoBBG) group works to advance the knowledge of botany, horticulture and the horticultural legacy of Belfast Botanic Gardens for the public benefit and to promote Belfast Botanic Gardens as a centre for horticultural excellence, botanical education and public amenity. It aims to promote the conservation, maintenance and development of the Gardens, buildings and monuments therein, enhance the scientific value of the plant collections and support the environmental worth of the gardens as a habitat for wildlife in Belfast city.

### ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

This year, 2022/23, is our second year of reporting to the Charity Commission NI on the achievement of our charitable objects for public benefit

In 2022/23 we resumed our face to face meetings rather than meeting by Zoom.

This was a very welcome development. We continued to engage with those who are interested in the welfare of Belfast Botanic Gardens via the [www.fobbg.co.uk](http://www.fobbg.co.uk) website, Facebook and Twitter.

We now have 947 followers of the FoBBG Facebook page and 604 followers on Twitter.

The Global Medicine Garden (GMG) in the Botanic Gardens continues to be an important educational asset in helping us to attain our charitable objects.

The scientific value of this collection continues to be documented on the website with descriptions and photographs. Members continued to be enthusiastic in volunteering to help out with the maintenance and planting in the garden on Sunday mornings between April and November 2022.

The range of signage has been considerably expanded by two of our members and there are now approximately 70 signs within the garden. Each geographical area has a sign that identifies it, a sign with the names of the main plants in that area and signs for some of the individual plants that give the name of the plant and in some cases its medicinal uses. These signs help advance the knowledge of botany for public benefit.

We have also been working with Belfast City Council to develop a larger formal sign at the entrance to the GMG that will show a map of the garden, some background historical information on the development of herbal/physic gardens and the uses of some of the key plants together with some information on the history of the site within the Botanic gardens.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

In 2022/23 we opened the GMG to the public on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10.00 am to 4.00pm. This was so successful that the GMG is now open to the public every day. Members of the public continue to engage with members when we are working in the garden on Sundays. We have been able to talk to local residents and visitors from across Northern Ireland, other parts of the UK and international visitors about the GMG, its plants and history.

Seeds are harvested from the plants in the GMG and a member packages them in hand-made pocket envelopes made from pages of re-used brochures. When members are working in the GMG or at plant sales, these seeds are available for visitors to take and grow in their own garden which helps advance the knowledge of horticulture.

During 2022/23 we have hosted visits by some prestigious groups to the GMG, some in response to direct requests and some passed on from Belfast City Council. The GMG is now accepted as an attraction worth visiting. We have had visits from a group of horticulturalists from Vancouver, a group of American and UK scientists on a conference visit to Belfast, Groomsport Gardening Group, Ballynahinch Gardening Club and Castle Espie Wetland Centre. We have been helped by the 'Bot Crew', who are part of the gardening staff within the gardens, in facilitating these visits and we are very grateful for this support.

In August 2022 our member, Professor John Pilcher, gave a public talk entitled 'Bogs – a window into the past and hope for the future' in the Braid Centre in Ballymena. This was very well received and advanced the knowledge and understanding of botany in relation to the development of bogs over thousands of years and their importance as a natural asset.

In terms of promoting the gardens as a centre of horticultural excellence, FoBBG continues to be a member of the UK 'Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum'. Its purpose is to provide a forum for the exchange of information between Friends of Botanic Gardens groups in their support and engagement of the mission of their respective botanic gardens.

The Chairman of Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens holds a key role as Secretary of this Forum which helps to further promote FoBBG and the Belfast Botanic Gardens to the wider UK and world audience through the Friends Forum website ([www.fbgf.org](http://www.fbgf.org)). It also enables FoBBG to gain access to the educational work and activities that other UK Botanic Gardens are involved in and generate ideas to help FoBBG meet its charitable objects.

We continue our 'Gardens Focus Group' meetings with Belfast City Council managers for the gardens and representatives of the gardening staff. At the meetings in 2022/23 FoBBG discussed establishing a collection of woody plants in an area that once held a collection of bamboos and grasses but which is now grassed. Initial discussions centred around a collection that had associations with Irish gardeners or plant hunters. At the January 2023 meeting this idea formalised into the creation of a 'John Templeton Trail' within the garden. This will contain a selection of trees and shrubs that the naturalist John Templeton (1766 – 1825) had in his garden in Cranmore, Malone. One member has assembled a list of some of these trees and shrubs from records of the plant collection in Templeton's garden. In our 2023/24 report we will report on the commencement of the planting.

At the Gardens Focus Group meeting we continue to raise the need to preserve and maintain the architectural heritage of buildings and monuments within the gardens such as the Palm House and the Kelvin memorial statue.

During 2022/23 we have attended stakeholder meetings, hosted by Belfast City Council and Queens University Belfast, on the 'UPSURGE' project for the Lower Botanic Gardens. This is a nature based solution for public and environmental benefit which is funded from EU Horizon 2020 funds.

<https://www.upsurge-project.eu/demo-cases/belfast-northern-ireland/>

These meetings have resulted in a draft outline plan for the use of the area. Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens has been allocated a plot within the site and we have been discussing with Belfast City Council the purpose for which we will use this plot to fulfil the brief of the project and to meet our charitable objects.

## FUNDRAISING

The Friends group continues to raise funds from membership subscriptions, plant sales and sales of ceramics that are hand-made by two members using fens from the Botanic Gardens and Queen's Quarter. The ceramics are accompanied by an information card about Belfast Botanic Gardens.

During 2022/23 we continued to have small 'pop-up' sales in the area beside the GMG. This gives us additional opportunities to talk to the public about the Botanic Gardens and the plants they are buying, some of which have been raised in the gardens.

The Friends group continues to get an administrative grant of £300 from Belfast City Council. Our membership subscription is £12 for a single membership, £20 for joint membership and £5 for student membership.

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT (continued)

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

EVENTS

As well as monthly business meetings, the Friends group arranges social events for members. These events were re-established during 2022/23 after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Average attendances at meetings in 2022/23 compared to prior years is shown below.

Summary of attendees at meetings (averaged) *Zoom		
Year	Attendees	Apologies
2017/18	13	9
2018/19	17	9
2019/20	16	9
2020/21	16 *	6
2021/22	10 *	9
2022/23	12	11

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

We will continue to develop our website to advance the knowledge of botany, horticulture and the horticultural legacy of Belfast Botanic Gardens for the public benefit and to promote Belfast Botanic Gardens as a centre for horticultural excellence, botanical education and public amenity. During 2022/23 we have been working with a group of employees from a software company who are giving their time for free to help refresh the website. We hope to relaunch the new website in 2023/24.

We will continue to work with Belfast City Council in the 'Gardens Focus Group' to develop a list of priority projects within the gardens that will benefit the public and promote the conservation, maintenance and development of the Gardens, buildings and monuments therein and enhance the scientific value of the plant collections. This work will include the start of planting for the 'John Templeton Trail' and also the inclusion of more labelling in the gardens.

We will continue to work with Belfast City Council and Queens University Belfast on the 'UPSURGE' project.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Cleaver Black has been re-appointed as independent examiner for the ensuing year.

SMALL COMPANY PROVISIONS

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

Signed on behalf of the trustees



Adrian Walsh  
Director

Date: 24th July 2023

**Independent Examiner's Report**

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**  
(a company limited by guarantee)

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I report on the accounts of the charity for the period ended 31 March 2023 which are set out on pages 5 to 10.

**RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES AND EXAMINER**

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

Having satisfied myself that the company 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
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**BASIS OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT**

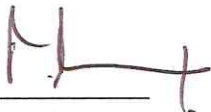
I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act. The examination included a review of the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

My role is to state 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
- 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 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 the Republic of Ireland.
- 4) That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**BASIS OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT**

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



Cleaver Black  
Independent examiner  
Suite 5 Ormeau House  
91-97 Ormeau Road  
Belfast  
BT7 1SH

Date:

24 July 2023

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Statement of Financial Activities  
for the period ended 31 March 2023**

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
<b>Incoming Resources</b>					
Incoming resources from generated funds:					
Voluntary Income	2	915	-	915	641
Incoming resources from Charitable Activities	3	4,346	-	4,346	2,867
Other Incoming Resources	4	367	-	367	303
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>		<u>5,628</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,628</u>	<u>3,811</u>
<b>Resources Expended</b>					
Costs of generating funds:					
Charitable Activities	5	1,831	-	1,831	1,327
Governance Costs	6	865	-	865	863
		-	-	-	
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>		<u>2,696</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,696</u>	<u>2,190</u>
<b>Net incoming / (outgoing) resources for the year before revaluations</b>		2,932	-	2,932	1,621
<b>Transfers between funds</b>		-	-	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		2,932	-	2,932	1,621
Total funds brought forward		<u>34,519</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>34,519</u>	<u>32,898</u>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<u>37,451</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>37,451</u>	<u>34,519</u>

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared.

All of the above amounts relate to continuing activities.

The notes on pages 7 to 10 form part of these financial statements.

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

Balance Sheet  
as at 31 March 2023

	Notes	2023 £	2022 £
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors		1,717	
Cash at Bank & in hand		<u>36,454</u>	<u>35,429</u>
		38,171	35,429
<b>CREDITORS - Amounts falling due within one year</b>			
	7	<u>720</u>	<u>910</u>
<b>NET CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
		37,451	34,519
<b>Net assets</b>			
		<u><u>37,451</u></u>	<u><u>34,519</u></u>
<b>FUNDS</b>			
Unrestricted Income Funds	8	37,451	34,519
Restricted Revenue Funds		-	-
		<u><u>37,451</u></u>	<u><u>34,519</u></u>

For the period ended 31 March 2022 the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Trustees responsibilities:

- 1 The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476; and
- 2 The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

These financial statements were approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by

  
Adrian Walsh  
Director

24th July 2023  
Date

Company number: NI058223

The notes on pages 7 to 10 form part of these financial statements.

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Notes to the Financial Statements  
for the period ended 31 March 2023**

**1. Accounting Policies**

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items in the company's financial statements.

**1.1 Basis of Accounting**

The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with FRS102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland' and Charities SORP (FRS 102).

The financial statements are prepared in pounds sterling which is the function currency of the company.

This entity is a Public Benefit Entity.

**1.2 Fund Accounting**

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Trustees for particular purposes.

General funds may be transferred to designate funds where Trustees wish to use these funds for a specific purpose. Such funds may be transferred back to general funds once the criteria for the designation have been met or are no longer applicable.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of restricted funds is set out in the notes to the financial statements. Restricted funds may only be transferred to general or designated funds once the criteria for restriction have been discharged or no longer apply.

**1.3 Incoming Resources**

All incoming resources are included in the Statement of Financial Activities when the charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy. Grants, service agreement, fee income and grants for equipment are recognised in the SOFA in the period in which they are receivable.

**1.4 Resources Expended**

Resources expended are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on an accruals basis, inclusive of any VAT which cannot be recovered.

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

**Notes to the Financial Statements  
for the period ended 31 March 2023**

**1.4 Resources Expended ctd...**

Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity and include the audit fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the charity.

All costs are allocated between the expenditure categories of the Statement of Financial Activities on a basis designed to reflect the use of the resource. Costs relating to a particular activity are allocated directly, others are apportioned on an appropriate basis.

**1.5 Value Added Tax**

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens is not registered for VAT

**1.6 Taxation**

The company is a charity and the charitable tax exemptions are therefore being claimed to the extent that income and/or gains are applicable and applied to charitable purposes only. These exemptions will remain in place as long as income and expenditure is applied to charitable purposes only.

**1.7 Cash and cash equivalents**

Cash consists of cash on hand and demand deposits. Cash equivalents consist of short term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash that are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value.

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

Notes to the Financial Statements  
for the period ended 31 March 2023

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
<b>2 Voluntary Income</b>				
Donations & Membership Fees	915	-	915	641
	<u>915</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>915</u>	<u>641</u>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
<b>3 Charitable Activities</b>				
Plant sales	930	-	930	695
Workshops	-	-	-	-
Educational visits	-	-	-	-
Sale of ceramics	3,416	-	3,416	2,172
	<u>4,346</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4,346</u>	<u>2,867</u>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
<b>4 Other Incoming Resources</b>				
Government Grant	300	-	300	300
Deposit account interest	67	-	67	3
	<u>367</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>303</u>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
<b>5 Charitable Activities Costs</b>				
Purchases	1,119	-	1,119	1196
Sundry expenses	20	-	20	109
Global Medicine Garden expense	128	-	128	22
Website & E mail costs	564	-	564	-
	<u>1,831</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,831</u>	<u>1,327</u>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
<b>6 Governance Costs</b>				
Insurance	145	-	145	143
Accountancy	690	-	690	690
Companies House	30	-	30	30
	<u>865</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>865</u>	<u>863</u>

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

Notes to the Financial Statements  
for the period ended 31 March 2023

7 Creditors: amounts falling due  
within one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Accruals and deferred income	720	910
	<u>720</u>	<u>910</u>

8 Unrestricted funds

	Opening £	Incoming £	Outgoing £	Transfers £	Revaluation Loss £	Closing £
Unrestricted Fund	34,519	5,628	(2,696)	-	-	37,451
	<u>34,519</u>	<u>5,628</u>	<u>(2,696)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>37,451</u>

9 Company limited by guarantee

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens Ltd is a company limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital. The liability of each member is limited to an amount not exceeding £1.



**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107301

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# Annual report

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# **FRIENDS OF BELFAST BOTANIC GARDENS TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

## **1. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

The Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens (FoBBG) charity works to advance the knowledge of botany, horticulture and the horticultural legacy of Belfast Botanic Gardens for the public benefit and to promote Belfast Botanic Gardens as a centre for horticultural excellence, botanical education and public amenity. It aims to promote the conservation, maintenance and development of the Gardens, buildings and monuments therein, enhance the scientific value of the plant collections and support the environmental worth of the gardens as a habitat for wildlife in Belfast city.

## **2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

This year, 2022/23, is our second year of reporting to the Charity Commission NI on the achievement of our charitable objects for public benefit.

In 2022/23 we resumed our face to face meetings rather than meeting by Zoom. This was a very welcome development. We continued to engage with those who are interested in the welfare of Belfast Botanic Gardens via the [www.fobbg.co.uk](http://www.fobbg.co.uk) website, Facebook and Twitter. We now have 947 followers of the FoBBG Facebook page and 604 followers on Twitter.

The Global Medicine Garden (GMG) in the Botanic Gardens continues to be an important educational asset in helping us to attain our charitable objects.

The scientific value of this collection continues to be documented on the website with descriptions and photographs. Members continued to be enthusiastic in volunteering to help out with the maintenance and planting in the garden on Sunday mornings between April and November 2022.

The range of signage has been considerably expanded by two of our members and there are now approximately 70 signs within the garden. Each geographical area has a sign that identifies it, a sign with the names of the main plants in that area and signs for some of the individual plants that give the name of the plant and in some cases its medicinal uses. These signs help advance the knowledge of botany for public benefit.

We have also been working with Belfast City Council to develop a larger formal sign at the entrance to the GMG that will show a map of the garden, some background historical information on the development of herbal/physic

gardens and the uses of some of the key plants together with some information on the history of the site within the Botanic gardens.

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In August 2022 our member, Professor John Pilcher, gave a public talk entitled 'Bogs – a window into the past and hope for the future' in the Braid Centre in Ballymena. This was very well received and advanced the knowledge and understanding of botany in relation to the development of bogs over thousands of year and their importance as a natural asset.

In terms of promoting the gardens as a centre of horticultural excellence, FoBBG continues to be a member of the UK 'Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum'. Its purpose is to provide a forum for the exchange of information between Friends of Botanic Gardens groups in their support and engagement of the mission of their respective botanic gardens.

The Chairman of Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens holds a key role as Secretary of this Forum which helps to further promote FoBBG and the Belfast Botanic Gardens to the wider UK and world audience through the Friends Forum website ([www.fbgf.org](http://www.fbgf.org)). It also enables FoBBG to gain access to the educational work and activities that other UK Botanic Gardens are involved in and generate ideas to help FoBBG meet its charitable objects.

We continue our 'Gardens Focus Group' meetings with Belfast City Council managers for the gardens and representatives of the gardening staff. At the meetings in 2022/23 FoBBG discussed establishing a collection of woody plants in an area that once held a collection of bamboos and grasses but which is now grassed. Initial discussions centred around a collection that had associations with Irish gardeners or plant hunters. At the January 2023 meeting this idea formalised into the creation of a 'John Templeton Trail' within the garden. This will contain a selection of trees and shrubs that the naturalist John Templeton (1766 – 1825) had in his garden in Cranmore, Malone. One member has assembled a list of some of these trees and shrubs from records of the plant collection in Templeton's garden. In our 2023/24 report we will report on the commencement of the planting.

At the Gardens Focus Group meeting we continue to raise the need to preserve and maintain the architectural heritage of buildings and monuments within the gardens such as the Palm House and the Kelvin memorial statue.

During 2022/23 we have attended stakeholder meetings, hosted by Belfast City Council and Queens University Belfast, on the 'UPSURGE' project for the Lower Botanic Gardens. This is a nature based solution for public and environmental benefit which is funded from EU Horizon 2020 funds.

<https://www.upsurge-project.eu/demo-cases/belfast-northern-ireland/>

These meetings have resulted in a draft outline plan for the use of the area. Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens has been allocated a plot within the site and we have been discussing with Belfast City Council the purpose for which we will use this plot to fulfil the brief of the project and to meet our charitable objects.

## **Fundraising**

The Friends group continues to raise funds from membership subscriptions, plant sales and sales of ceramics that are hand-made by two members using ferns from the Botanic Gardens and Queen's Quarter. The ceramics are accompanied by an information card about Belfast Botanic Gardens.

During 2022/23 we continued to have small 'pop-up' sales in the area beside the GMG. This gives us additional opportunities to talk to the public about the Botanic Gardens and the plants they are buying, some of which have been raised in the gardens.

The Friends group continues to get an administrative grant of £300 from Belfast City Council. Our membership subscription is £12 for a single membership, £20 for joint membership and £5 for student membership.

## Events

As well as monthly business meetings, the Friends group arranges social events for members. These events were re-established during 2022/23 after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Average attendances at meetings in 2022/23 compared to prior years is shown below.

Summary of attendees at meetings (averaged) *Zoom		
Year	Attendees	Apologies
2017/18	13	9
2018/19	17	9
2019/20	16	9
2020/21	16 *	6
2021/22	10 *	9
2022/23	12	11

### 3. PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

We will continue to develop our website to advance the knowledge of botany, horticulture and the horticultural legacy of Belfast Botanic Gardens for the public benefit and to promote Belfast Botanic Gardens as a centre for horticultural excellence, botanical education and public amenity. During 2022/23 we have been working with a group of employees from a software company who are giving their time for free to help refresh the website. We hope to relaunch the new website in 2023/24.

We will continue to work with Belfast City Council in the 'Gardens Focus Group' and focus on key priority projects within the gardens that will benefit the public and promote the conservation, maintenance and development of the Gardens, buildings and monuments therein and enhance the scientific value of the plant collections. This work will include the start of planting for the 'John Templeton Trail' and also the inclusion of more labelling in the gardens.

We will continue to work with Belfast City Council and Queens University on the 'UPSURGE' project.

Trustees    Adrian Walsh  
               Frank Caddy  
               Ann McBrien  
               Brigid McElhill

**Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107301

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# Annual return

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Independent Examiner's Report

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens  
(a company limited by guarantee)

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I report on the accounts of the charity for the period ended 31 March 2023 which are set out on pages 5 to 10.

**RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES AND EXAMINER**

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

Having satisfied myself that the company 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
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**BASIS OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT**

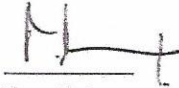
I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act. The examination included a review of the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

My role is to state 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
- 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 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 the Republic of Ireland.
- 4) That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**BASIS OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT**

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



Cleaver Black  
Independent examiner  
Suite 5 Ormeau House  
91-97 Ormeau Road  
Belfast  
BT7 1SH

Date:

24 July 2023