



Company number: NI058223

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Report and financial statements

for the period ended 31 March 2024

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COMPANIES HOUSE

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Philip D. Black FCA, Anthony Bradley FCA, John C. Stewart BSc FCA (Consultant)

Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

Contents

	Page
Legal and administrative information	1
Trustees' report	2
Independent Examiners' report to the members	6
Statement of financial activities	7
Balance sheet	8
Notes to the financial statements	9



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	NI01251
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)

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 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 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 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 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
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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.

We also hosted a visit to the GMG during the summer by a gardening group from Holywood.

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 our 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 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 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 garden and from where it was sourced. The naming follows the accepted botanical protocol to Kew and other botanical institutions.

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.

The Botanic Gardens Tree Labelling project was officially launched by Councillor Micky Murray, Chair BCC South Belfast Area Working Group, at an event on 19th 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.

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.

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.

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. We received permission to address the South Belfast Area Working Group at their meeting on 20th 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 2023/2024 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.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.

During 2023/24 we have attended stakeholder meetings, hosted by Belfast City Council and Queen's 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/>

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.

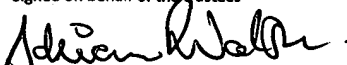
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

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

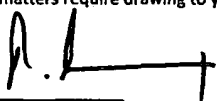
I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act. The examination included a review of the 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "A. L.", followed by a horizontal line.

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 £
Incoming Resources					
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
Total Incoming Resources		3,412	-	3,412	5,628
Resources Expended					
Costs of generating funds:					
Charitable Activities	5	1,801	-	1,801	1,831
Governance Costs	6	875	-	875	865
Total Resources Expended		2,676	-	2,676	2,696
Net incoming / (outgoing) resources for the year before revaluations		736	-	736	2,932
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		736	-	736	2,932
Total funds brought forward		37,451	-	37,451	34,519
Total funds carried forward		38,187	-	38,187	37,451

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 £
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors		-	1,717
Cash at Bank & in hand		38,907	36,454
		<u>38,907</u>	<u>38,171</u>
CREDITORS - Amounts falling due within one year	7	<u>720</u>	<u>720</u>
NET CURRENT LIABILITIES		38,187	37,451
Net assets		<u>38,187</u>	<u>37,451</u>
FUNDS			
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.

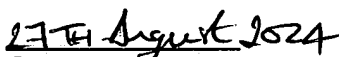
Trustees responsibilities:

- 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


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 £
2 Voluntary Income				
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 £
3 Charitable Activities				
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 £
4 Other Incoming Resources				
Government Grant	300	-	300	300
Deposit account interest	344	-	344	67
	<u>644</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>344</u>	<u>367</u>

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
5 Charitable Activities Costs				
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 £
6 Governance Costs				
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**

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

8 Unrestricted funds

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

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.