

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)

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.

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Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens
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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 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

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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)

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 £
Incoming Resources					
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
Total Incoming Resources		7,908	-	7,908	3,411
Resources Expended					
Costs of generating funds:					
Charitable Activities	5	3,536	-	3,536	1,801
Governance Costs	6	975	-	975	875
		-	-	-	-
Total Resources Expended		4,511	-	4,511	2,676
Net incoming / (outgoing) resources for the year before revaluations		3,397	-	3,397	735
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		3,397	-	3,397	735
Total funds brought forward		38,187	-	38,187	37,451
Total funds carried forward		41,584	-	41,584	38,186

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 £
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors		-	-
Cash at Bank & in hand		42,384	38,907
		<u>42,384</u>	<u>38,907</u>
CREDITORS - Amounts falling due within one year	7	800	720
		<u>800</u>	<u>720</u>
NET CURRENT LIABILITIES		41,584	38,187
Net assets		<u>41,584</u>	<u>38,187</u>
FUNDS			
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

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
2 Voluntary Income				
Donations & Membership Fees	1,104	-	1,104	712
	<u>1,104</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,104</u>	<u>712</u>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
3 Charitable Activities				
Plant sales	2,464	-	2,464	1,541
Sale of ceramics	3,701	-	3,701	514
	<u>6,165</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,165</u>	<u>2,055</u>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
4 Other Incoming Resources				
Government Grant	300	-	300	300
Deposit account interest	339	-	339	344
	<u>639</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>339</u>	<u>644</u>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
5 Charitable Activities Costs				
Purchases	2,500	-	2,500	465
Sundry expenses	104	-	104	25
Global Medicine Garden expense	-	-	-	115
Expenses re labelling of trees	593	-	593	632
Website & E mail costs	80	-	80	564
Promotional Materials	259	-	259	
	<u>3,536</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,536</u>	<u>1,801</u>
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Revenue Funds £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
6 Governance Costs				
Insurance	155	-	155	155
Accountancy	750	-	750	690
Companies House	70	-	70	30
	<u>975</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>975</u>	<u>875</u>

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
	<u>800</u>	<u>720</u>

8 Unrestricted funds

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

