

Annual Trustees' Report for the *Friends of the Zoo*.

This report relates to the charity's financial year 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

The charity aims to promote and support Belfast Zoo in a variety of exclusively charitable ways, including its conservation and education programmes, and fundraising for projects.

During the year, our biggest expense was providing funding for a purpose-built Sloth Snug. The sloths settled in well and have since bred, enhancing the visitor experience and making them more visible, so the money given to a contractor to complete this work was incidental and necessary in making this project happen.

We assisted zoo staff and the zoo gardeners with preparation of the site for the new Kingdom of the Barbary Lion, which was opened in August 2023. These animals (previously from north Africa) are extinct in the wild, and the new enclosure has given them much more space, with specialist very large viewing windows. As a result, the visitor experience is enhanced by a much better view of these amazing creatures.

Throughout the year, we have staffed a number of touch tables, including at the zoo's Sensory Days (for those with additional needs). These consist of animal artefacts and confiscated items contravening CITES and allow us to stress regulations regarding animal imports. The artefacts also have a variety of different textures and shapes for those with additional needs. The zoo has received positive feedback from the public regarding these, with one visitor describing the touch table as their favourite bit of the zoo.

Throughout the year we have engaged in fundraising activities, both on and off the zoo site. This has involved bucket collections in retail venues and our ever-popular tombola. We have taken in far more than we have spent on prizes, so this private benefit is incidental and necessary. Some of our prizes also benefit native species (for example a bug hotel), enhancing the urban environment for all. This gives us further opportunities to engage with the public and explain the conservation projects in which the zoo is involved.

We also regularly run enclosure work sessions, which help the keepers with the upkeep of enclosures. We also maintain a bee and butterfly friendly garden. This allows us to have contact with the public and provide information about animals present at the zoo and the conservation aims of the zoo. It also enhances the look of the zoo, for a better visitor experience.

At the end of 2023, the charity was not in deficit of funds. We had a total of £2664.74 in the bank at the end of the year, and had pledged a total of £587.05 to ongoing activities. Please see the financial report for further details.

During the charity's financial year, our trustees were as follows:

Bryan Green

Gayle Hanna

Tom Hanna

Laura Jones

Ann Neill

Alison Whann

Helen Curtis (until 24 January 2023)

Michaela Dowey (until 26 April 2023)

Claire Morrison-Donaldson (until 26 April 2023)

Katie Christie (from 26 April 2023)

Noele Christie (from 26 April 2023)

Veronika Dušičková (from 26 April 2023)

Shannon Wilkinson (from 26 April 2023)

All our trustees are elected by the whole membership at an annual general meeting and serve until the next one, which must be held within fifteen months. We have no other way of appointing trustees. The charity trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit requirement statutory guidance in determining what we have done throughout the year.

The charity's governing document is a constitution, dated 2 November 2021.

The *Friends of the Zoo* is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC 107494).

Registered address:

Friends of the Zoo

Belfast Zoological Gardens

Antrim Road

NEWTOWNABBEY

BT36 7PN

This report has been approved on 18 September 2024 by the management committee, consisting of:

Katie Christie

Noele Christie

Aimee Coulter

Gayle Hanna

Tom Hanna

Matthew Jamison

Laura Jones

Ann Neill

Emma O'Boyle

Alison Whann

Tom Hanna
18/9/2024