

# Annual Trustees' Report for the Friends of the Zoo

This report relates to the charity's financial year 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024.

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 provision of dinosaur models for specific areas around the zoo. These have proven very popular with the public, especially the children! These were primarily funded by donations from two businesses. These businesses were thanked by means of a plaque – this private benefit was incidental and necessary, as we could not have afforded the costs of providing the models on our own. This will hopefully lead to future donations from private enterprise, allowing us to further our charitable aims. These dinosaur models also serve as an educational reminder of the ongoing extinction of species, and the need for conservation.

We further provided funding for the *William Brown Award*. William Brown was a founder member and former Chair of the *Friends of the Zoo*. He had a passion for education and ecology. The award in his memory is for schools in Northern Ireland in Key Stages 2–4 who have undertaken projects to enhance the habitat for native species. In 2024, the top prize was given to Knocknagoney Primary School for their work in making, maintaining and studying a butterfly- and bee-friendly garden in the school grounds. Second prize went to Kilcooley Primary School who undertook a litter pick in Kilcooley Woods. They then continued to maintain a litter-free environment in these woods and publicised their work with hand-made posters in the school.

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.

We undertook a major job, pruning and tidying shrubbery in three parrot dens which had not been in use for some years. It is hoped to provide more species for these dens and enhance the experience of the public. We also provided general maintenance around the cheetah, elephant, yellow mongoose, penguin, and sea lion enclosures – this frees up keepers' time to communicate with the public, while also giving us an opportunity to do the same while we work. This allows us to provide information about animals present at the zoo and the conservation aims of the zoo.

Furthermore, we have provided plants for two garden areas, as well as labour for general maintenance of these. This enhances the general appearance of the zoo, giving a more pleasant aspect for visitors, as well as being environmentally friendly through the use of bee- and butterfly-friendly planting.

Throughout the year we have engaged in fundraising activities. This has involved bucket collections 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.

At the end of 2024, the charity was not in deficit of funds. We had a total of £2428.07 in the bank at the end of the year, and had pledged a total of £748.90 to ongoing activities. Please see the financial report for further details.

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

Katie Christie  
Noele Christie  
Gayle Hanna  
Tom Hanna  
Laura Jones  
Ann Neill  
Alison Whann  
Veronika Dušičková (until 8 May 2024)  
Bryan Green (until 8 May 2024)  
Shannon Wilkinson (until 8 May 2024)  
Aimee Coulter (from 8 May 2024)  
Matthew Jamison (from 8 May 2024)  
Emma O'Boyle (from 8 May 2024)

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 4 September 2025 by the management committee, consisting of:

Katie Christie  
Noele Christie  
Michaela Doherty  
Gayle Hanna  
Tom Hanna  
Laura Jones  
Lauren Kelleattie  
Daniel Kennedy  
Aisling McKnight  
Grainne McKnight  
Alison Whann