

The Friends of Saint Columb's Cathedral
Registered Charity No. NIC 105701
Trustees Annual Report for the Financial Year 2023/2024

The objects of the Friends of Saint Columb's Cathedral are to promote a greater interest in the Cathedral, its traditions of worship and history and to support the Dean, Chapter and Select Vestry in maintaining the fabric and furnishings. The Friends support the Cathedral's participation in the civic and cultural life of the City of Londonderry. They also support the Cathedral's Choirs which consists of approximately 12 male choristers, 20 Girl and 15 Boy Choristers. The choirs have members from all sections of the community and give public recitals both in the Cathedral and in other venues.

The Charity is based within the City of Londonderry but draws members from all over the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The charity is governed by a board of trustees which meets regularly to agree a programme of events, manage the finances and ensure compliance to the constitution.

Saint Columb's Cathedral is the City of Londonderry's most historic building. It was built between 1628 and 1633 on the highest point within the walled city it attracts large numbers of visitors each year.

The Cathedral is seen as a shared space within the city and is used by many organisations for events. The Cathedral is a member of the Community of The Cross of Nails, based in Coventry Cathedral and is active in promoting peace and reconciliation.

In this financial period the cathedral is open to the public for visits on five days per week and at other times to hold recitals and exhibitions. "The Friends" have provided support by volunteering to guide visitors around the building and to assist at events. Our members are to be congratulated for their support in this and also for their ongoing help in assisting with the cleaning and maintenance of the building.

Recitals included one in July by the Cathedral's organist and three by visiting organists. In September the Cathedral organists and Boy Choristers gave a recital in support of the City Council's Culture Night, The choirs also performed at the special Advent events and at the Festival on Nine Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve.

The Friends continued to support an ongoing project to preserve the Cathedral's archive of historic books and documents by paying for the repair, conservation and rebinding of a number of historic books and prints/paintings. This is the fifth consecutive year that this project has been financed by the charity.

Derry City & Strabane District Council have generously provided funding from their Heritage Venues Fund to assist with the cost of the various events and exhibitions. "The Friends" manage and account for the monies provided through these grants.

Donations were made to the Cathedral to assist with the general running costs and maintenance of the building and to pay a gratuity to the Assistant Organist who has undertaken the training of the Boy & Girl Choristers.

Financial support was provided for the design and construction of a major exhibition "The Treasures of Saint Columb's Cathedral" which was open to the public throughout 2023/2024. A special souvenir booklet was commissioned for this exhibition.

The Friends continue to maintain links with and co-operate with other bodies to promote the history and cultural activities which are held in the Cathedral. These include The North West Historical & Archaeological Society, Derry Central Library, The Derry Tower Heritage Group, Tourism NI, Derry City & Strabane District Council, The Friends of Derry's Walls, The Honourable The Irish Society and The Hervey Heritage Group. The City Council continues to use the Cathedral's spaces, both internal and external, to hold events.

We believe that people in general benefit from our various activities as we continue to make them aware of the importance of the role played by the Cathedral in society, of its history and heritage and of its outstanding cultural and musical traditions. We also support the musical and cultural traditions of other organisations by assisting with events held by them in the cathedral.

Finance

As can be seen from our Receipts and Payments statement, the Friends ended the 2023/2024 Financial Year with a credit balance of £4613. The main sources of income were from Members Subscriptions, Donations, Shop Sales and Derry City & Strabane District Council grants. These monies were used for Tourism publications, exhibitions, event advertising and cultural events.

Income from members has been reduced due to the ongoing effects of the Covid restrictions.

Trustees

The Trustees continue to be active in supporting the organisation and give of their time freely and often to ensure that the aims and objectives of "The Friends" are carried out in adherence to the constitution.

There were no changes to the membership of the Trustees.

Public Benefit

As well as the public benefits indicated above, the Trustees confirm that they have had regard to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit. We have given careful consideration to the guidance to ensure that our activities have helped to achieve the charity's purpose and provide a benefit to our beneficiaries.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees.

D I Bartlett
10/01/25

M Hamilton
10/01/25