THE LINEN HALL

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

THE LINEN HALL
BELFAST 1788

The Linen Hall gratefully acknowledges the kind support of the following organisations:

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President's Report

Dr Philip McGarry OBE

2025 proved to be another potentially challenging but successful year for the library. Our senior leadership team led by our Director Julie Andrews, Finance Manager Karen Law and Librarian Samantha McCombe continued to provide an exceptional literary, cultural and educational experience for our members and the people of Belfast and beyond, while still managing the very difficult task of balancing the books. The funding environment is becoming increasingly difficult for cultural institutions, and much time and resourcefulness over the last year has gone into working with the wide range of partners who help to support the library. This year we were particularly grateful to Belfast City Council for its generosity, and in the latter half of the year we had continuing and constructive engagement with the Department for Communities.

Under the watchful eye of our Deputy Librarian Monica Cash our world renowned collections have continued to grow, and we are regularly looking at how we can most effectively display even more of our large archive of material.

Our Arts and Cultural Programmer Patsy Horton has continued to put together a wide range of excellent events throughout the year, many of which have attracted a 'full house'. One of the highlights of the year was a visit by the Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, who engaged with young people from a number of local schools. We have also been delighted to showcase more of Belfast's young and emerging literary talent.

The Charity Bookshop has had another successful year. Our Bookshop Manager Damien Cash would like to remind members that if they have books (in reasonable condition) which they wish to pass on, please make contact with him.

We are fortunate to have a cadre of knowledgeable and hardworking staff in the library, who are completely dedicated to their work, and members frequently tell me how pleasant and helpful they are.

After a hiatus, we were delighted that the cafe reopened towards the end of the year. The early signs are that it is proving extremely popular not only with members, but with the public at large, and it acts as a shop window for all the work that the library does.

I'm now approaching the end of my period as President of the library. I am deeply grateful to all of the Board members who have so generously supported myself and the library with their insights, time and energy over the last three years. I recall being a (relatively) young member many years ago, thinking that I would like to be able to spend time in the library when I retired. Little did I know that I would have the great honour of chairing the Board.

The Linen Hall is one of Belfast's greatest institutions, which since 1788 has played a central role in the cultural and civic life of Belfast. It is a place which is resolutely neutral, but provides a venue for robust but constructive debate. I am entirely confident that the library will continue to promote the very best of enlightenment values for many years to come.

Director's Report

Julie Andrews

2025 continued to be financially challenging for the staff and Board of Governors. Discretionary funding of £175,000 was received from Belfast City Council in the first quarter of 2025. I submitted a robust business case to the Department for Communities in March 2025 for the 2025/6 funding year. There were many meetings throughout the year with difficult conversations with officials, but significant funding was realised. There is an ongoing focus on resilience and sustainability.

Applications were submitted to a variety of funders during the year for projects and collections enhancement which were generally successful. However, core funding tends to be the most challenging.

A Strategy Committee was set up by the Board of Governors in 2024 to consider a future business operating model. An action plan was put in place to consider new sources of funding and strategic partnerships. This action plan was followed and had to pivot on several occasions to fit organisational needs. This was further refined towards the end of 2025.

Legacies and donations are not as plentiful as they were several years ago. We are very grateful for people's support in this way. Membership has remained steady but there has been a decline in corporate membership.

In the 2024 Annual Report, I reported that at the end of 2023 National Lottery Heritage fund awarded the Linen Hall £248,000 for the development of a feasibility study for Linen Hall 2, which would house the NI Political Collection. This feasibility study was completed early in 2025. A third party has bought the preferred site. The project has been paused at that point but there is a genuine hope that this can be pursued at a later stage.

We continued our partnership work with the Ulster-Scots Agency, and the fifth Ulster-Scots Writing Competition took place in 2025. This is gaining popularity and entries for the competition are growing year on year. Unfortunately, we did not receive any funding from Foras na Gaeilge in 2025. I met with the new Languages Commissioners towards the end of 2025 to discuss potential partnership opportunities and areas of co-operation.

Over the course of the year, we held a wide variety of exhibitions including At the Crossroads: The Campaign for Civil Rights; Theatres of Old Belfast with Stuart Marshall; and a partnership exhibition with the Golden Thread Gallery. We were also pleased to partner with Poetry Ireland and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council on Home Again – The Gerald Dawe Bursary. Using archives donated to us by Gerald Dawe's family, we'll work with our partners to support an artist to create new work in his honour, with a particular focus on place. The outputs from this will form part of our activities in 2026-27. Over the course of the year, we held events and launches with some of the writers who have donated their archives to us, such as Moyra Donaldson, Rosemary Jenkinson and Bernie McGill.

Finally, I would like to thank the Board of Governors, staff and volunteers for their help and support throughout 2025. I am supported by very dedicated people who work incredibly hard.

Librarian's Report

Samantha McCombe

I am pleased to report on library collections for 2025.

2025 was a busy year in relation to the collections, and thanks to the dedication and hard work of the team much was achieved, some highlights of which are included below.

Thanks to funding from the Department for Communities, our 'Fragments of Scotch Poetry' project continued with a curation of the Poetry Jukebox. The curation commissioned poets to select and write a contemporary creative response to a poem featured in The Linen Hall's Gibson Collection of Robert Burns; early Belfast and provincial printed books, and Ulster-Scots collections. The Jukebox included the recording of the poets reading the original poems and the newly commissioned poems. The curation launched to a packed room at The Linen Hall as part of the Belfast International Arts Festival, before travelling to the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh. Thanks to all who contributed to make the project such a success.

Our political collection benefited from generous funding from the National Archives as 'We shall overcome: unlocking civil rights archives at The Linen Hall' facilitated the sorting, cataloguing and accessibility of the archive of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and ephemera collected contemporaneously over decades. This archive material reflects a momentous period of history and encompasses significant societal issues such as elections; housing; employment; justice; and the ground-breaking movement for social change and trailblazing grassroots activism. A programme of engagement and tours with groups and schools brought the archive to life, encouraging reflection, discussion and debate.

A parallel project on the civil rights movement was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This brought communities together to reflect on the legacies of the civil rights movement. The engagement informed an exhibition 'At the Crossroads: The Campaign for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland'. To complement the exhibition a series of public events ran alongside, including guided tours, talks by historians, an activism masterclass and musical showcase. The project culminated in a podcast series which brought together academics and community members across generations.

We also continued the conservation and preservation of our collections. Support from the Ulster-Scots Agency facilitated the ongoing comprehensive condition checking and conservation of the Gibson Collection of Robert Burns and allowed us to research the documentation around the acquisition of the collection by public subscription, and material donated to it by descendants of Robert Burns.

And in relation to conservation in general, we refreshed our emergency procedures, disaster preparedness, and salvage training facilitated by Harwell; and funded projects allowed for great strides in preservation across our collections, including our Sport Archive thanks to Sporting Heritage.

Under funding from the Northern Ireland Museums Council, we again took part in The Playful Museums Festival, with pre-school pupils from Naíscoil Bheann Mhadagán visiting us for an 'imagination workout' with children's author Máire Zepf around her book Rita agus an Dineasár. Thanks to Máire and the little ones for their energy, enthusiasm and excellent 'roaring'!

I end, as always, with gratitude to our members who support the collections through membership, and those who have contributed to the endowment fund which facilitates much-needed conservation, and to the hundreds who support us through donations to the collections, a list of whom is included at page 9.

Governors

President
Dr P McGarry, OBE, DL, FRCPsych (to March 2026)

Acting President
Dr F Ferguson, BA, MA, PhD (from March 2026)

Vice-President
Prof M Ó Mainnín, BA, MA, PhD

Honorary Secretary
Dr F Ferguson, BA, MA, PhD (from April 2025 to March 2026)

Honorary Treasurer
Dr S Bridge, MA, MSc, PhD

Governors
Dr G Adams (from October 2025)
Ms O Dawe (from October 2025))
Mr J Fitzsimons, MA (TCD), MSc (QUB)
Ms L Hagan, LLB, DBA, FCA, CTA (to November 2025)
Sir Ian Huddleston (to March 2026)
Prof B Kelly, MA, MD, FRCS, FRCR, FFRRCSI (to March 2025)
Mrs M McGilly (from June 2025)
Mr S McKee, BA
Mr J McVey, OBE, MBA, MSc (to June 2025)
Ms B Napier, LLB (to March 2026)
Ms S Stevenson, ACR

Staff

Management Team
Director: Ms J Andrews, LLB (Hons)
Librarian: Ms S McCombe, MA, MSc
Finance Manager: Mrs K Law, BSSc (Hons) Accounting, FCA
Deputy Librarian: Mrs M Cash BA (Hons), PGDip (LIS)

Library Services
Senior Library Assistants
Ms M Flynn, PGCert (ILS)
Mr S Corr, MSc, PGDip (LIM)

Library Assistants
Mr R Baptiste, BA (Hons) (from June 2025)
Miss C Daly, BA (Hons), MA, PGDip (LIM)
Mr J Danby, BSc (Hons), M. Phil (from July 2025)
Mr A Dunlop, BA (Hons), PGDip (LIM)
Mr R Gallagher, BA (Hons), MA (until May 2025)
Ms J Hoben, PGDip (LIM)
Mrs L Ogryzko, BA (Hons), MA, MSc
Ms H Rooney, BA (Hons), MA (until March 2025)

Museum Engagement Assistant
Mr J Danby, BSc (Hons), M. Phil (until June 2025)

Project Archivist
Ms S Stewart, MA, PGDip (ARM) (June to September 2025)

Special Projects
Engagement Officer: Dr S Manning BA, MA, PhD (from September 2025)

Interns
Daniela Fernandes
Shannon Greene
Emily Higgins
Daisy McCormack
Abigail O'Brien
Jessica Sheldon
Liam Turner

Administrative Services
Head of Marketing, Digital & Communications: Mr S Quate
Arts and Cultural Programmer: Dr P Horton, MA, PhD
Membership Administrator: Mrs A Wallace
Facilities Officer: Mr R Grainger
Charity Bookshop Manager: Mr D Cash, BA (Hons)
Finance Assistant: Mr B Sloan, MIATI
Operations and Visitor Experience Manager: Ms B Hunter (to November 2025)
Operations Manager: Dr A Kearney BA, MA, PhD (from November 2025)

Volunteers & Honorary Members

Volunteer Coordinator
Maria McGilly

Volunteers
Joyce Campbell
Sara Cathcart
Ciaran Crossey
Gerry Devaney
Janice Medley
Tabitha Minson
Lois Newby
Kathryn Wilson

Reading Groups
John Bradbury
Stiofán Ó'Direáin

Meet & Greet
Barbara Forbes
Nigel Killops
Maureen McFarland
Janice Medley
Maria McGilly
Jacqueline O'Brien
Ciaran Spence
Bernadette Walsh

Library Tours
Nigel Killops
Hugh McDowell
Maria McGilly

Charity Bookshop
John Allen
Jennifer Austin
Hari Choudhari
Claire Crawford
Hilary Cromie
William Cross
Teresa FitzBrown
Pearl Garrett
Norma Gillfallen
Ursula Hatton
Tom Kernaghan
Deirdre McAuley
Jim McCartney
Lesley McConnell
Catherine McKinley
Alan McMahon
Conor Mills
Anne O'Rawe
Helen Simmons
Frieda Slevin
Evelyn Moles
James Orchin
Craig Richardson
Liz Taylor
Wesley Thompson
Saffron Shaw
Juliet Wind
Madeleine Yodel

Honorary Members
M J Campbell
Catherine Anne Davies
Polly Devlin OBE
Moyra Donaldson
Pat Donlon
Barry Douglas
Dan Gordon
Tom Hartley
Rosemary Jenkinson
Jennifer Johnston
Brian Keenan
Michael Longley
Neil Martin
Tim McGarry
Bernie McGill
Brian McGilloway
Carol Moore
George Ivan Morrison OBE
Sinéad Morrissey
David Park
Glenn Patterson
John Simms
Brian M Walker

Collection Donations

The Linen Hall would like to thank all donors to our collections:

Alderman Robert Adair, Gerry Adams, the family of the late Fred Andrews, Liam Andrews; James Bacon, Ballinamallard Historical Society, Ballygawley Local History Group, Richard Baptiste, Gail Barry; Alison Black, William Bortrick, Michael Bowers; Alan Boyd, Harmen Elisa Brandsma, Dr Ciara Brennan, Dr Simon Bridge; Tom Brown, Rachael Tomelty Carnegie, Ellen Cash, Stephen J. Cash, Ciaran Clancy, the family of the late Prof R.S.J. Clarke, Clogher Historical Society; Moira Concannon, Seán Corr, Dr Peter Corry, The Corrymeela Community, Ciaran Crossey, Hugh Daly, Joshua Danby, Jacqui Davey, Anne Davies; Kenneth L. Dawson, Leyla Daybelge, Mary Delargy, John Devlin, Seamus Diffin, Documents on Irish Foreign Policy; Tony Donovan, Elliotts Legal Solicitors, Donal Fagan, John G. Faris, Mari Fitzduff, Michael Fleming, Daria Fulton, Paul Fulton, Ruairí Gallagher, Tony Gallinagh, Prof Jacqueline Bates Gaston, Michael Rong Gen-Yin, Brian Gilmore; Richard Graham, David Grant, John Gray, Stephen Gregory, Keith Haines, Michael Hall, Jim Hamilton, James Hardy; Kathleen Harkin, Prof Nigel Hart; Dr Tom Hartley, Cahir Healy, Judith Hoben, Ian Hooper, the family of the late Ted Howell, Howth Singing Circle, Brendan Hughes, Sheenagh Hull, Irish Society of Botanical Artists; J.D.C. Publications Ltd, Rosemary Jenkinson, Myrtle Johnston, Roberta Jordan, Patricia Kernaghan, Donna Kerr, Reggie Killops, Alan King, Irene Kingston, Dr John Kirk, Paul Laughlin, Joanne Laverty, David Little, Mark Lloyd, Christine MacDonald, Tara Mackie, Alasdair MacLaughlin, Brian Madden, Hilary Maginnis, Dr Sam Manning, Margaret Marshall, Stuart Marshall, Carolyn Mason, Graham Mawhinney, Daly Maxwell, Felicity McCall, Fionnuala McCorry, Douglas McCulloch, Colin McCusker, Robert McDowell, David McFarlane, Dr Philip McGarry, Bernie McGill, Fr Thomas McGlynn, David McKee, William McKee; Claire McLaughlin, James McMaster, Margaret McNulty, David McVea, Dr Jennifer Meegan, Dr Hamido Megahead, Derek Menary, Al Mennie, John Molloy, Paula McFetridge from the estate of Mike Moloney, Harry Montgomery, Jonathan Moore, James Morrow, Frank Mulligan, David N. K. Murphy, Yvonne Murphy; Fionnuala Murray, Paul Murray, Paul Nolan, Dr Manus O'Boyle; Séamus Ó Mathúna, Kieran Darragh O'Malley, Tommy Orr, Christopher Owens, Liam Parker, Pierce Parker, Sam Phenix, Dr Paul S. Philippou, Poyntzpass & District Local History Society; Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland, Patrick Quinn, Dr John Rainey, Dr Peter Rigney, Mackie Rooney, Royal Irish Academy, Malcolm Scott, Roselind Shaw, Michael Sheane, Larry Sheeran, Jeremy Shields, Jane Sims, Martin Snoddon, Socialist Party, Ed Spence, Jim Stothers, Nuala Thompson, Tinderbox Theatre Company, Roy Trevelion, Gerry Turnbull, Cate Turner from the estate of RE Turner, Liam Turner, Dr Brian Walker, Dr Colin Walker, Richard T. Wallace, Roseleen Walsh, J.A. Walshe, Emma Warren, the estate of the late Joseph Barry Watson, Dr Fionnuala Carson Williams, The Women's Resource and Development Agency, Jane Woods, Frank Worsford, Monica Wylie, Eduardo Yanga.

Arts & Cultural Programme

During 2025, we held almost over sixty events for the public in the library. Those events supported new writing and new writers and explored Northern Ireland's rich literary heritage. Many writers came to the library to talk about and read from their work, including Moyra Donaldson and Bernie McGill (the literary archives of both writers are now housed in The Linen Hall), as well as David Park, Wendy Erskine and Damian Gorman. It was a particular honour to welcome Poet Laureate Simon Armitage to the library as part of his Laureate's Library Tour and to welcome Scotland's Makar Pàdraig MacAoidh. We also hosted a celebration of the work of Belfast playwright Christina Reid in partnership with The Lyric Theatre, and held events with two new publishing houses, Faerie Press and Macha Press.

It was a strong year for exhibitions in the library. We hosted exhibitions with Cara-Friend, celebrating their fifty years as Northern Ireland's oldest LGBTQIA+ charitable organisation, and with our new neighbours Golden Thread Gallery. The *Theatres of Old Belfast* exhibition brought together set-maker Stuart Marshall's handcrafted miniature models of Belfast's old theatres with items from the library's Theatre and Performing Arts Archive. The Linen Hall also originated its own new exhibition in both a physical and digital format, alongside an accompanying programme of events. *At the Crossroads: The Campaign for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland* drew on our world-renowned political collection and unique archives to examine the impact of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland.

The programme demonstrated the library's role as a space in which difficult conversations can happen in a safe and supportive environment. Our talks and events across the year allowed audiences to engage with topics such as the impact and legacy of mother and baby institutions and the need to break the silence around childhood sexual abuse. There was also ample opportunity for our audiences to engage more widely with the history, politics and culture of Belfast and beyond. Celtic festivals, the cholera epidemic in Belfast, the history of the British Red Cross, naturalist John Templeton, placenames, and the Boundary Commission were just some of the topics covered in our programme.

We worked with a range of festivals and partners across the year, including Imagine Festival of Ideas and Politics, Late Night Art and Aspects Festival. It was a particular highlight to welcome Galway-based theatre Company, Branar, to the library with their adaptation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* as part of Belfast Children's Festival and to host rehearsed readings of *Fortuna and Chips*, a new play by Brenda Winter Palmer, as part of the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival. The end of 2025 saw the library enter into a significant new partnership with Dublin UNESCO City of Literature to deliver Island of Many Voices, an all-island professional development programme for writers from across the island of Ireland in 2026.

Funding from the Department for Communities allowed us to commission new work for our Poetry Jukebox. Based around the theme of 'Fragments of Scotch Poetry', we commissioned ten new poems, hosted launch events in Belfast and Edinburgh and created a partnership with Poetry Ireland that enabled us to place a Poetry Jukebox with the new curation in the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh.

Marketing

In 2025, The Linen Hall continued to utilise a mix of traditional and digital marketing strategies to enhance our visibility, engage audiences, and promote our collections and events.

Our website served as a central hub for information, events, and resources. We observed a 52% increase in website traffic in 2025 compared to 2024, with 7,750 average Active Users per month in 2024 vs 11,833 average Active Users per month in 2025. This was significant growth, given we had already observed an increase of 47% in web traffic from 2023 to 2024.

Our Facebook content was viewed 2,112,090 times in 2025. Facebook remains an important platform for engaging with audiences and promoting events.

On X we saw a drop in impressions throughout the year. From an average of over 16,000 impressions per month in 2024 to just over 7,000 impressions per month in 2025. This may be partially due to external factors relating to audiences shifting away from X as a social media platform for political reasons, as well as changes to their advertising model. Visibility is still significant however and it is worth continuing to distribute content on X.

With Instagram we have increased our visibility, having reached on average over 7,000 accounts per month in 2024, we increased our reach to over 11,000 accounts per month in 2025.

We saw good growth and engagement on LinkedIn which had previously been a relatively unused channel. We averaged around 50 new followers per month throughout 2025.

Our monthly e-newsletter proved effective in disseminating information about upcoming events, exhibitions, and library news to a growing base of subscribers.

We enjoyed widespread press coverage across print and broadcast media, with coverage in prominent local and national publications. We were mentioned in 99 news stories across 34 publications including the Belfast Telegraph, Irish Times, Irish News, Ulster Tatler and Irish Arts Review and had regular mentions across radio including Belfast 89 and BBC NI.

Engagement metrics including likes, shares, and comments, have continued to be substantial and positive across all platforms, indicating a sustained connection with our audience which we will maintain and cultivate.

Library Facilities

IT Infrastructure Upgrades

A major project this year focused on securing support for essential IT upgrades across the organisation. All Linen Hall computers were scheduled to reach end of life by 14 October 2025, driven by the requirement to move to Windows 11 or above, after which Microsoft would no longer provide security updates or technical assistance.

Thanks to the generous support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, we secured the funding necessary to replace and upgrade all machines. This investment significantly strengthens our cyber security posture, enhances day to day operational efficiency, improves frontline engagement with the public, and supports the effective delivery of our cultural, educational, and heritage programmes.

Telecommunications Upgrade

Our next major project will focus on upgrading telecoms throughout the building in preparation for the nationwide shift to fibre optic communications. This upgrade will further future-proof our infrastructure and ensure reliable, modern communication systems that meet operational demands.

Building and Collections Maintenance

General maintenance remains an ongoing priority. We continue to uphold high safety standards and ensure the preservation of our collections through routine building care, established procedures, and regular staff training. These practices support both the long-term integrity of the building and the safeguarding of The Linen Hall's heritage assets.

Library Facts and Figures

Circulation & Cataloguing Stats 2025

General	4,697
Irish	3,608
Total	8,305

Total Collection Queries	3,396
Irish & Local Studies	2,214
Newspapers	177
NIPC	863
Theatre	142
Other	0
Total items added to the catalogue	4,473

Charity Bookshop

Charity Bookshop

Now in its new location at the corner of Rosemary Street and Lombard Street, The Linen Hall Charity Bookshop continues a remarkable journey that began as a six week experiment in 2012. Eleven shops and fifteen years later, the project remains one of our most enduring and successful initiatives.

Its continued success is thanks to the unwavering dedication of our volunteer team, the generosity of our benefactors, and the loyalty of our regular customers. We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who helps make the Bookshop such a vibrant and valued part of The Linen Hall's community.

Bookshop Donations

Timothy Parker
Willie Methven
Brian Quinn
Marion Timbey
Mrs Margaret Kingston
Diana Fitzsimons
Anne O'Rawe
Mrs Roberta Jordan
T. FitzBrown
Miss Vicky Sinton
Robert Mann
John Gervin
Bernadette Donnelly
Nessie Kernaghan
Colin Robb
Rebecca Lawlor
Mrs Gayle Boyce
Dr Timothy Bowman
Kathryn V. Neill
Catherine Daly
Mrs Carole Moore
Adrian Leaman
Margo Kenwell
John Angus
Catherine Morrow
Ms Vicky Sinton
Doris Gentemann
Francis Higgins
Ali Hunter
Marie Donnelly
Gerard Forde
Gerry Finnegan
Susan Kelly
Daithi McSithigh
Michael Shaw

Financial Summary

Summaries of the Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2025 and the Statement of Financial Position as at that date are set out on pages 16 and 17. Full financial statements have been published separately and are available on request from The Linen Hall or online at www.linenhall.com.

Overview

The Linen Hall's core funding challenges continued in 2025, following a year in which the Department for Communities had again offered its reduced level of funding at £164,000 for 2024/25, but had later provided £330,000 in Intervention Funding. The experience of recent years has shown that there is a need for reliable core funding of around £500,000 per annum, if The Linen Hall is to be financially sustainable. In 2025, The Department for Communities restored its offer of core funding to the 2022/23 level of £246,000 but later granted £100,000 in additional funding. Belfast City Council was also approached for a one-off intervention in 2025 and contributed £175,000 to shore up The Linen Hall's finances. Core running costs, meanwhile, were carefully managed and rose by less than the UK rate of inflation for 2025.

Despite this ongoing uncertainty around core funding, work on separately funded projects continued, enhancing The Linen Hall's social impact and contributing to its financial sustainability. Funded projects in 2025 included '60 Years of Civil Rights' and 'All Children Together', two Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Reconciliation Fund projects, and 'Fragments of Scotch Poetry', funded by the Department for Communities. Northern Ireland Community Relations Council provided core funding to support a 'Leaders of the Future: Understanding Civil Rights and Fostering Civic Leadership' project. The National Archives contributed an 'Archives Revealed' grant for a project entitled 'We shall overcome: unlocking civil rights archives at The Linen Hall'. Ulster-Scots Agency funding allowed work to continue in conserving and making accessible the Gibson Collection and Ulster-Scots material, as well as supporting the Ulster-Scots Writing Competition.

The Linen Hall's operating deficit, before actuarial movements on the pension scheme and gains on revaluation of investments and fixed assets, was £105k in 2025 (2024: surplus £163k). Its overdraft balance increased from £101k at the end of 2024, to £123k on 31st December 2025. The Linen Hall normally operates within a bank overdraft facility of £150k to finance its day-to-day operations and aims to minimise reliance on this facility in the medium term.

In 2026, The Linen Hall will work to increase and diversify its income streams by continuing to engage with public sector organisations; developing an Income Generation Strategy to include targeted appeals, fundraising events, membership, a new 'Friends' organisation, and seeking support from outside Northern Ireland; developing a Communications Strategy; continuing discussions with potential funders for Linen Hall 2, for which a fully-funded feasibility study has been completed. Domestic and international partnerships will be strengthened.

Income

The Linen Hall's grant income from all sources was £745k in 2025, compared to £1.1m in 2024, with funding for special projects down by £205k and close to previous levels, and grants towards core operating costs down by £149k from their peak in 2024. Other income, excluding pension scheme adjustments, increased by £15k or 6% in 2025.

Income from membership subscriptions and associated Gift Aid was £149k in 2025 (2024: £146k), and the Governors and staff remain grateful for the loyal support of The Linen Hall by its members; they will strive to nurture engaging and meaningful membership experiences in 2026 and beyond.

Financial Summary

Commercial rents from the two ground-floor shop units contributed £130k to core income in 2025. The Linen Hall Charity Bookshop continued to flourish in its Royal Avenue premises, making a net profit of £18k in the year. However, café income and gift shop sales suffered from the closure of The Linen Hall Café from April until a new operator was installed in September.

Income from donations and legacies fell from £58k in 2024 to £17k in 2025; all gifts and legacies are gratefully received, whether to general funds or to The Linen Hall Library Endowment Fund.

Expenditure

Core staff costs represented 59% of The Linen Hall's core expenditure in 2025, and employment costs overall remain the largest single area of expenditure. Average staff numbers in both 2025 and 2024 were 17 on a full-time equivalent basis, including additional project staff, and overall employment costs including pension scheme adjustments fell from £765k to £743k. Other running costs are closely monitored and controlled, and a detailed breakdown of all expenditure is set out in notes 6 to 11 to the separately published financial statements.

Pension Scheme

The Linen Hall operates a defined benefit pension scheme through NILGOSC, and The Linen Hall's section of the scheme was in surplus by £3,160k on 31st December 2025, an improvement of £620k over the previous year's surplus position; however following a change in the advised accounting treatment of such surpluses, this pension asset is no longer included in the Statement of Financial Position. Actuarial movements on the pension scheme are beyond The Linen Hall's control. Net finance income and operating charges related to the pension scheme amounted to a return of £24k (2024: £61k) and this is included in reported net operating income.

Grants

The following table sets out recent levels of support from each of The Linen Hall's top five funders in 2025.

Funder	2025	2024	2023	2022
	£k	£k	£k	£k
Department for Communities	356	660	213	309
Belfast City Council	214	53	36	34
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Reconciliation Fund	58	28	28	34
Community Relations Council	46	50	0	0
Arts Council of Northern Ireland	26	25	17	14

Grants awarded for defined projects in pursuit of The Linen Hall's mission, from all sources, fell from £417k in 2024 to £212k in 2025, and grants towards core operating costs fell from £683k to £534k. Full details of all grant income and the awarding bodies are set out in Note 2 to the separately published financial statements, and further information on the funded projects undertaken in 2025 can be found at note 24.

Donations

We are grateful to all those who made donations to The Linen Hall in 2025; your continuing generosity supports our charitable mission and unique cultural impact.

Financial Summary

Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 December 2025

	Endowment Funds £'000	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Restricted Funds £'000	**Total Funds 2025 £'000**	**Total Funds 2024 £'000**
Income and endowments from					
Donations and legacies	-	695	217	**912**	**1,304**
Rental income	-	130	-	**130**	**131**
Income from investments	-	13	2	**15**	**84**
Income from charitable activities					
Other trading activities	-	124	-	**124**	**109**
Total income	-	962	219	**1,181**	**1,628**
Expenditure on					
Rental expenses	-	2	-	**2**	**2**
Raising funds	-	58	-	**58**	**63**
	-	60	-	**60**	**65**
Expenditure on charitable activities					
Projects and events	-	-	285	**285**	**437**
Library operating costs	-	941	-	**941**	**963**
	-	941	285	**1,226**	**1,400**
Total expenditure	-	1,001	285	**1,286**	**1,465**
Net (expenditure)/income	-	(39)	(66)	**(105)**	**163**
Transfers between funds	-	(9)	9	**-**	**-**
Net (expenditure)/income before recognised gains and losses	-	(48)	(57)	**(105)**	**163**
Net gains on investments	31	-	-	**31**	**13**
Gain/(loss) on revaluation of fixed assets	-	20	-	**20**	**(592)**
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension scheme	-	456	-	**456**	**918**
Adjustment for restriction on pension asset recognised	-	(480)	-	**(480)**	**(2,541)**
Net movement in funds	31	(52)	(57)	**(78)**	**(2,039)**
Fund balance brought forward	413	5,732	252	**6,397**	**8,436**
Total funds carried forward	444	5,680	195	**6,319**	**6,397**

Financial Summary

Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2025

	2025 £'000	2024 £'000
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	**3,351**	**3,438**
Heritage assets	**2,779**	**2,760**
Investments	**382**	**350**
	6,512	**6,548**
Current assets		
Stocks	**6**	**11**
Debtors	**71**	**93**
Cash at bank and in hand	**66**	**63**
	143	**167**
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**(336)**	**(318)**
Net current liabilities	**(193)**	**(151)**
Net assets excluding pension asset	**6,319**	**6,397**
Pension asset	**-**	**-**
Net assets including pension asset	**6,319**	**6,397**
Funds		
Unrestricted funds		
- General fund	**(783)**	**(712)**
- Revaluation fund	**6,463**	**6,444**
	5,680	**5,732**
Restricted funds	**195**	**252**
Endowment funds	**444**	**413**
Total funds	**6,319**	**6,397**

THE LINEN HALL
BELFAST 1788

www.linenhall.com

17 Donegall Square North | Belfast | BT1 5GB | +44 (0)28 9032 1707 | info@linenhall.com

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