Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

Year to 31 March 2026



Friends of the
F.E. McWILLIAM
Gallery & Studio

NIC106019

Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio
Annual Report
Year to 31 March 2026

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Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio

Chair's Introduction

It is with great pleasure that I present the Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio Annual Report for 2025–26. Once again, it has been a busy and successful year for both the gallery and the Friends with a varied programme of exhibitions and events continuing to attract audiences from across the region and beyond.

One of the highlights of the year was *100 Years of British & Irish Art – A Fermanagh Collection*, which became one of the most visited exhibitions in the gallery's history. Friends were especially delighted to attend Dr Riann Coulter and Jason Diamond's tour of the exhibition as part of our Christmas event. Their knowledge and entertaining insights made it a really memorable evening.

It has also been wonderful to see the progress being made on the gallery extension. Despite the building work, visitor numbers have remained strong and the gallery has continued to deliver its excellent programme of exhibitions, talks and events throughout the year.

As always, the Friends are proud to support the work of the gallery and we thank all our members and supporters for their continued enthusiasm and generosity.

The Purpose of the Charity

The purpose of the Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio charity is to "stimulate and promote an understanding and appreciation of art, in particular the work of Banbridge-born and internationally renowned sculptor Frederick Edward McWilliam (1909-1992), and thereby enhance the lives of people of all ages locally, nationally and internationally".

The charity's beneficiary is the general public.

Public Benefit

The direct benefits flowing from our purpose are: an increased accessibility to and improved understanding and appreciation of culture, heritage, and the arts, including the work of sculptor Frederick Edward McWilliam (F.E. McWilliam 1909-1992)

To achieve this purpose from April 2025 to March 2026 we:

1. Attended a talk with ceramicist Peter Meanley at the Island Arts Centre, Lisburn – celebrating over 60 years of his career in ceramics (16 April 2025).
2. Joined a guided tour of the private Mahee Island Gardens, led by Tara Mackie, exploring the legacy of Paddy and Julie Mackie's garden and its historical setting on Strangford Lough (22 May 2025).
3. Took part in a guided tour by Riann Coulter of *Barbara Freeman: A Retrospective* (26 September 2025).
4. Attended 'One Woman and an Island' – an illustrated talk by artist Rosie McGurran on the Inishlacken Project and its history (6 November 2025).
5. Attended 'Cakes to Clay' – a talk by James Stanley Watson, winner of *The Great Pottery Throw Down 2025*, discussing his creative journey from baking cakes to designing and making award-winning ceramics (27 November 2025).
6. Participated in a 'Tipple & Tour' festive event at the F.E. McWilliam Gallery, including a tour by Riann Coulter of *100 Years of British & Irish Art – A Fermanagh Collection*, (Lord Belmore's private collection), followed by wine and canapés (5 December 2025).

7. Attended a talk by researcher Matthew Maw on *The Lyric Theatre's New Gallery* and the work of Viennese-Belfast artist Alice Berger Hammerschlag (11 December 2025).
8. Joined an art-themed Film Night featuring film *Frida* at the Pot Belly Restaurant, Gilford, with Mexican-inspired refreshments (21 January 2026).
9. Took part in a private guided tour of 'Picasso: From the Studio' exhibition at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, showcasing Picasso's studios and creative processes (18 February 2026).
10. Attended a tour and talk by Riann Coulter of exhibition '*CONSTELLATIONS: Selected Work from Crawford Art Gallery'*, featuring fourteen contemporary Irish artists (20 March 2026).
11. Provided a bursary for artist Sharon Kelly, to attend the Tyrone Guthrie Arts Centre in Monaghan.
12. Funded the F.E. McWilliam prize through the Belfast School of Art - awarded to Christine Donaghy in June 2025.
13. Provided transportation funding to the gallery for ten schools and a scout group from across the broad Council area.

Activities and Achievements

1. Artists talking about their practice

Throughout 2025–26, the Friends' programme provided members and visitors with valuable opportunities to hear directly from artists about their creative processes, inspirations, and professional journeys. These events encouraged discussion, learning, and engagement with contemporary artistic practice across a wide range of disciplines.

In April 2025, Friends attended a special talk and tour by renowned ceramicist **Peter Meanley** at the Island Arts Centre. Celebrating more than sixty years as a potter, Peter shared insights into his distinguished career creating salt-glazed stoneware pouring vessels inspired by museum collections and the natural world. This fun and entertaining event provided members with a rare opportunity to hear first-hand reflections from one of Northern Ireland's most respected ceramic artists.

In November 2025, **artist Rosie McGurran** delivered an illustrated talk entitled ***One Woman and an Island***, sharing the story of the Inishlacken Project. Inspired by the book *Three Men on an Island*, Rosie described how she established an artists' residency and creative community on the island of Inishlacken near Roundstone. Her enthusiasm and dedication to supporting artists over many years made for a fascinating and inspiring evening.

Later that month, ceramics **artist James Watson** spoke about his remarkable journey from baking cakes to winning the TV series ***The Great Pottery Throw Down***. His talk, *Cakes to Clay*, was both entertaining and motivational, highlighting the possibilities of pursuing creativity later in life and developing artistic success through determination and passion.

2. Tours by Riann Coulter of Exhibitions at the F.E. McWilliam Gallery

Curator Dr Riann Coulter continued to provide Friends' members with informative and engaging tours of exhibitions taking place at the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio.

In September 2025, Riann led a guided tour of the fascinating ***Barbara Freeman: A Retrospective*** exhibition, offering members an opportunity to gain deeper insight into the artist's work, influences, and significance within Irish art history.

In December 2025, Friends enjoyed a **festive *Tipple & Tour*** event focusing on ***100 Years of British & Irish Art – A Fermanagh Collection***, drawn from Lord Belmore's private collection. Riann explored the artistic and historical context of the exhibition, while Jason Diamond provided enthusiastic and amusing additional insight into the family history connected to Castle Coole. The evening concluded with wine, canapés, and convivial conversation in a warm Christmas atmosphere.

In March 2026, Riann guided members through ***CONSTELLATIONS: Selected Work from Crawford Art Gallery***, an exhibition bringing together the work of fourteen artists from across the island of Ireland. Her tour highlighted the richness of the Crawford's contemporary collection and introduced members to both established and emerging artists represented in the exhibition. This exhibition contained an interesting range of mixed media .

3. Specialist Speakers

The Friends programme continues to attract specialist speakers whose expertise enriches understanding of art history, cultural heritage, and contemporary practice. This is especially enjoyable when the topic is specific to Northern Ireland.

In December 2025**, art historian and researcher Matthew Maw** delivered a fascinating illustrated talk on *The Lyric Theatre's New Gallery: Connecting Belfast to the Post War Golden Age*. Drawing upon extensive archival research and interviews, Matthew explored the life and work of Viennese-Belfast artist Alice Berger Hammerschlag and examined Belfast's vibrant but often overlooked post-war artistic scene. The talk attracted a large audience and was particularly appreciated for the speaker's enthusiasm, passion and depth of knowledge.

4. Private Tours at the National Gallery of Ireland

The Friends continue their valued relationship with the **National Gallery of Ireland** through organised visits to major exhibitions.

In February 2026, members travelled to Dublin for a **private guided tour of *Picasso: From the Studio***. The exhibition explored the close relationship between Pablo Picasso's personal life and artistic practice through the various studios in which he worked throughout his career. Featuring paintings, sculpture, ceramics, works on paper, and rare archival material from the Musée National Picasso-Paris, the exhibition offered a rich insight into Picasso's extraordinary creative life. Members greatly appreciated the expertise of the guide and the opportunity to experience an exhibition of international significance.

5. Visits to Gardens

In May 2025, Friends were given the rare privilege of visiting the **private gardens of Mahee Island on Strangford Lough**, guided by Tara and Julie Mackie. Established in the 1960s by Paddy and Julie Mackie, the gardens are renowned for their remarkable rhododendron collection and their unique setting within the historic landscape of Mahee Island and nearby Nendrum Monastic Site.

The visit began with morning coffee in the gracefully decorated living room. Tara shared reflections written by her late father about the development of the gardens and the careful selection of trees and planting that shaped the distinctive character of the site. In beautiful sunshine, members enjoyed exploring this exceptional garden, which combines natural beauty, horticultural expertise, and historical significance.

6. Maurna Crozier Bursary and the F.E. McWilliam Prize

Supporting emerging artists remained an important aspect of the Friends' work during 2025–26.

The Friends once again funded the **Maurna Crozier Bursary**, offering a two-week residency at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre together with financial support towards expenses. Open to visual artists born in or resident in Northern Ireland, the bursary attracted eleven applications during the year. Following assessment by a selection panel of committee members, the award was presented to artist **Sharon Kelly.**

The Friends also continued their long-standing support for emerging talent through the funding of the **F.E. McWilliam Prize at the Belfast School of Art**. In June 2025, the prize for the best end-of-year student exhibition was awarded to **Christine Donaghy**. The Committee regards this award as both an important investment in young artistic talent and a valuable way of raising awareness of the Friends' charity among new generations of artists.

7. Schools Transportation

The Friends remain committed to supporting access to the arts for children and young people across the wider community.

During 2025–26, the Friends successfully secured transportation funding through an Arts Council Grant. This enabled ten schools and one scout group from across the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council area to visit the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio. As a result, 469 young people were able to experience the gallery's exhibitions and participate in hands-on educational workshops including clay sculpting, painting, and creative activities.

The Committee recognises the importance of these visits in encouraging creativity, broadening cultural experience, and ensuring that young people have meaningful opportunities to visit galleries and engage directly with art and artists.

Other arts related activities

In January 2026, Friends attended a special **art-themed film** evening at the Pot Belly Restaurant featuring a screening of *Frida*, the acclaimed biographical film about **Mexican artist Frida Kahlo**. Guests enjoyed Mexican-inspired refreshments and lively conversation, making this a memorable social event within the annual programme.

Impact

The benefit of the charity's work can be demonstrated through the wider dissemination of knowledge about the artist Frederick Edward McWilliam, the gallery and art in general, in the following ways:

1. The exhibition tours, artists' talks and lectures by specialist speakers (most of which took place at the gallery), increased participants' knowledge and appreciation not only of art, but its place in the history of arts in Ireland and beyond. Talks are advertised directly to members via mailchimp email and occasionally social media. This means the general public can also attend. Members are encouraged to bring guests to events.

2. The private guided tour of 'Picasso: From the Studio' exhibition at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, directly increased art appreciation of an international significance.
3. Feedback about the schools' visits through the subsidised transportation costs, running for the fourth year, continues to be excellent. The opportunity for young people to see exhibitions, take part in workshops and events, and visit the gallery space is, we believe, key to increasing art appreciation. The earlier this takes place in life, the better.
4. A condition of receiving the Maurna Crozier bursary is for the artist to share with the charity's membership their experience of the residency at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre. This involves describing their work and artistic practice, thus increasing the audience's learning and appreciation of art. We look forward to hearing about Sharon Kelly's experience at the centre at a forthcoming event in 2026/27.
5. Funding the Belfast School of Art / F.E. McWilliam art prize helps to increase awareness of the artist F.E McWilliam and the gallery, as well as helping support the development of young talented artists. We were delighted to award the prize to Christine Donaghy in June 2025.

Private Benefit

Fees of £150 are paid to lecturers and invited speakers such as art historian Matthew Maw. These payments are considered a justified expenditure and are often mitigated by ticket sales which generally range from £5 for members of the Friends and students, to £15 for non-members, depending on the nature of the event.

The charity pays for other miscellaneous services provided, such as refreshments at events and considers such payments necessary, although some private benefit may be gained.

Payments totalling £371.53 were made to five Trustees in reimbursement of charity expenses they paid relating to hospitality, postage and reimbursement for tickets bought for the Picasso exhibition. There were no other payments made to Trustees, their close relations, or businesses in 2025-26 or to third parties on their behalf.

Statement of Compliance

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year, the Trustees considered the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit. The guidance is designed to ensure that objectives and planned activities provide benefit to the intended audiences. We believe the events that took place in 2025-26, did so.

Financial Review: FY 2025-2026

1. Executive Summary

The Friends of F.E. McWilliam concludes the 2025–26 financial year in a strong fiscal position, with a closing bank balance of **£8,477.94**. The year was marked by significant membership growth and a successful transition in funding for our educational outreach. By securing grant support from the Arts Council, the charity has ensured the continuity of its core mission to promote the arts locally following the dissolution of the Banbridge Art Club.

2. Fund Balances & Liquidity

Fund Category	Opening Balance (01 Apr 2025)	Closing Balance (31 Mar 2026)
Total Bank Funds	**£5,913.81**	**£8,478**
Petty Cash	**£10.00**	**£34.23**

Note on Receivables: The **£1,145** balance owed by the Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Council from the previous period was successfully reconciled and credited to the accounts during this financial year.

3. Income Generation

- **Membership:** Supporter numbers continue a strong upward trajectory, rising from 134 to **148 active members**. This growth has provided a stable core of unrestricted funding for the charity's operations. We received £2745 in membership payments.
- **Grants & Donations:** Following the conclusion of the Banbridge Art Club's operations, the charity successfully applied for and received a grant from the **Arts Council NI** of £4875 in two instalments. £4387.50 was received in this financial year and the remainder in the next financial year. This funding was specifically utilised to sustain our school engagement programmes. The children from these schools benefit from both seeing the art on show and getting "hands on" with activities such as clay sculpting, painting activity etc. The donation box provided £153.64.
- **Event Revenue:** Ticket sales for the year remained a key income stream, totaling **£2,550**, showing a healthy recovery and strong engagement with our scheduled events.

4. Charitable Activities & "Gallery Projects"

The charity remains dedicated to fostering artistic talent and facilitating community access to the gallery:

- **Educational Outreach:** School transport costs totalled £2,455. Of this, £1,630 was paid from the remaining Banbridge Art Club restricted funds before the Arts Council grant commenced, and £825 was paid from the Arts Council restricted fund. This funding supported school visits to the gallery, including Drumgor Primary School, Killylea Primary School, Tandragee Junior High School and St Colman's Primary School.
- **The FE McWilliam Prize:** The annual £500 prize was awarded in June 2025 to **Christine Donaghy**, a promising graduate from the University of Ulster.
- **Tyrone Guthrie Residency:** Funding was provided to support **two** artists **Susan Mannion (£1052.99)** - this was awarded in 2025 and booked in 2026 – and **Sharon Kelly (£745.05)** was awarded in 2026, for their accommodation and material fees.

5. Operational Expenditure

- **Lecture Series:** The charity hosted four speakers during the year. In line with the previously agreed professional rate of £150, speaker fees totalled **£600**.
- **Hospitality:** Costs for food and drink at exhibitions and social events totalled **£473**. This included a major Christmas event catered by Quails (£380.70) and smaller disbursements for milk, tea, and biscuits via petty cash.
- **Governance & Overheads:** Essential costs including public liability insurance (£90), bank fees, and accountancy fees remained consistent with previous years, ensuring the charity meets its legal and financial obligations.
- **Miscellaneous: £27.84** was spent on postage and stationery (primarily stamps) to facilitate communication with our expanding membership base. **Gallery visit:** The treasurer was reimbursed £227.24 for block booking tickets to the Picasso exhibition in The National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin (Admission fees).

6. Trustee Reimbursements

Date	Recipient	Cheque/ Ref	Amount £	Purpose
07.05.25	L. McFadden	228	28.00	Hospitality
19.05.25	Dermot Hutchinson	229	30.00	Added to Petty cash
21.11.25	P. McAteer	Bank Transfer	15.65	Hospitality (Tea/Biscuits)
23.12.25	J. Boyce	Bank Transfer	42.80	Hospitality (Wine/Tea/Biscuits)
18.03.26	L. McFadden	234	27.84	Postage & Stamps
19.03.26	G McCullough	Bank transfer	227.24	Reimbursement for tickets bought for Picasso show
Total			371.53	

Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio
Annual Report
Year to 31 March 2026

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity Name
The Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio

Charity Number
Registered Charity in Northern Ireland NIC 106019

Address
Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio
F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio
200 Newry Road
Banbridge
BT32 3NB

Charity Trustees during the year
Mrs Jane Boyce - Chair (from 25 April 2023)
Miss Gail McCullough - Treasurer (appointed 2025)
Miss Lynda Fyffe-McFadden
Mrs Della McKinney
Mrs Helen Blane
Mrs Emily Neill-Dalzell
Miss Patricia McAteer
Ms Miriam Dudley
Mr Colin Mathews
Mr Brian Jardine (appointed 2024)
Mr Horace de Courcy-Wheeler (appointed 2024)
Robert Robinson MBE (appointed 2025)
Dermott Hutchinson – Treasurer (departed September AGM 2025)

Ex officios Dr Riann Coulter – Gallery Curator/Manager and Mr Jason Diamond

Governance and Constitution

The charity is an unincorporated charitable association governed under Northern Ireland law by a constitution adopted on Friday the 23rd of September 2016. The charity operates within the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council area of Northern Ireland.

Its purpose is to stimulate and promote an understanding and appreciation of art, in particular the work of Banbridge-born and internationally renowned sculptor Frederick Edward McWilliam (1909 to 1992), thereby enhancing the lives of people of all ages locally, nationally and internationally.

The charity is run by a committee of Trustees appointed at an annual general meeting, who pay an annual subscription. Following a change to the Friends' constitution, approved at the 2025 AGM, the charity now only requires two officers: Chair and Treasurer. Officers may serve for seven consecutive years but may be re-elected after two years. As of 31 March 2026, there are 12 Trustees plus the Curator of the gallery and one other gallery representative.

The charity has a membership who pay annual fees of £25 for an individual member, £40 for two from the same household and £18 for students and under 18 years of age.

The committee meets typically once per month except for July and August. In the year to 31 March 2026 the committee met on ten occasions. The 2025 AGM took place on 17 September 2025.

At each meeting the Treasurer presents the latest accounts, and these are reviewed against budgets and forecast. Spending is discussed and approved. Officers may authorise some spending between meetings but must ensure that spending is reported at the next meeting. The meetings offer a forum to review activities within the annual programme of events and to plan forthcoming events. Further ad-hoc meetings are called if required, for example, to plan and manage special events or projects. The annual report and statement of accounts are approved by the Trustees and then presented to the members at the annual general meeting.

Carrying out the charitable purpose

To carry out the charitable purpose the Trustees have the power to:

(1) provide money by receipt of subscriptions, grants, and donations to pay the costs of running the charity and furthering its purpose
(2) organise and promote exhibitions, lectures, recitals, and other social activities that encourage the appreciation of art including the collection of sculptor F.E McWilliam
(3) provide grants for artists and/or commissioned art works
(4) establish strategic relationships with educators to promote visits to the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio for learning
(5) support other charities with similar charitable purposes
(6) do anything that is lawful and necessary to achieve the charity's purpose.

Related organisations

The charity is a member of the Federation of Ulster Local Studies (FULS) providing value for money membership insurance.

Approved on behalf of the Committee and signed by:

E.J Boyce.

Mrs Jane Boyce, Chairperson

Date 30.9.26

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2026 which are set out on pages 14 to 17.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

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; and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of 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 for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.

My 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 or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act;
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records;
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act; and
4. That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention.

Grace Taggart

Grace Taggart FCA
CG Taggart Accountancy Services
Chartered Accountants

17 Cypress Crescent
Donaghadee
Co Down
BT21 0QG

30.9.26

Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio
Receipts & Payments
Year ended 31st March 2026

	Unrestricted funds 2026	Restricted funds 2026	Total 2026	Total 2025
Receipts	£	£	£	£
Donations	154		154	149
Event ticket sales	2,550	-	2,550	884
Membership subscriptions	2,745	-	2,745	2,560
Gift aid	-	-	-	125
Arts Council Grant	-	4,387	4,387	-
Total receipts	5,449	4,387	9,836	3,718
Payments	£	£	£	£
Gallery projects (grants, prize etc.)	2,298	3,032	5,330	3,425
Hospitality and gifts	473	-	473	488
Visits admission fees	377	-	377	1,434
FULS public liability insurance	90	-	90	80
Independent examination fee	300	-	300	300
Bank Fees	49	-	49	61
Postage & stationary	28	-	28	40

Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio
Receipts & Payments
Year ended 31st March 2026

Speaker Fees	**600**		**600**	600
Total Payments	**4,215**	**3,032**	**7,247**	6,428
Excess of Receipts over Payments for the year	**1,234**	**1,355**	**2,589**	(2,710)
Opening Bank & Cash balances	**4,293**	**1,630**	**5,923**	8,633
Closing Bank & Cash balances	**5,527**	**2,985**	**8,512**	5,923

Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio
Asset and Liabilities
Year ended 31st March 2026

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2026	Restricted funds 2026	Total 2026	Total 2025
Bank and Cash		£	£	£	£
Current Account		**5,493**	**2,985**	**8,478**	5,913
Petty cash		**34**	**-**	**34**	10
Total Bank and Cash		**5,527**	**2,985**	**8,512**	5,923
Other monetary assets		**-**	**487**	**487**	1,145
Liabilities		**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**

Approved on behalf of the Committee on **and signed by:**

Mrs Jane Boyce
Chairperson E.J Boyce 30.9.26

Gail McCullough
Treasurer Gail McCullough 30.9.26

Friends of the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio
Notes to the Accounts
Year ended 31st March 2026

1. Accounting policies

Set out below are the principal accounting policies which have been adopted in the compilation of the Receipts and Payments Accounts and the Statement of Assets and Liabilities:

(a) Receipts and Payments Accounts

All items of income and expenditure included within the Receipts and Payments Accounts have been accounted for on a cash basis.

2. Restricted Funds

	Bank balance at 1st April 2025 £	Receipts £ 25/26	Payments £ 25/26	Bank balance at 31st March 2026 £
Banbridge Art Club (Art Education for Young People)	1,630	-	(1,630)	-
Arts Council of Northern Ireland (Transport for Schools)	-	4,387	(1,402)	2,985
Total	1,630	4,387	(3,032)	2,985